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Where great musicians gather.
Welcome to the third issue of La Scena Musicale published in the midst of a new reality. This is not the way we imagined our 25th year. At the beginning of the fall, with COVID-19 stabilized in Canada, the arts community reopened with live performances following all government protocols; in Quebec, venues were limited to a maximum of 250 spectators, although most small and midsize halls were at 20% capacity, while in Ontario, the limit was 50. However, the second wave of the coronavirus has ended all live attendance, and the recent extension of the 28-day lockdown in Quebec to Nov. 23 has everyone on edge.

People in the arts community were left asking what more they could have done. Unfortunately, given the high numbers of infections, governments will invariably act to reduce those numbers. The arts community must encourage all to keep vigilant with physical and social distancing, washing hands and wearing masks, reducing the number of contacts by 25% and downloading the COVID Alert App.

In our last issue, Sept/Oct 2020, we reported on the results of our COVID-19 survey which found that 70% of respondents favour the wearing of masks during performances, something inexplicably absent in Quebec protocols. The government must improve and sharpen its approach, including the wearing of masks during performances so that the next reopening is more durable.

In our ongoing special on COVID-19 & the Arts (13 pages), we hear from cellist Denis Brott, who gives his first-hand harrowing experience of surviving COVID-19 on a ventilator and his long road back to performance. We look at how musicians are dealing with the ongoing pandemic: cover artist mezzo-soprano Rihab Chaieb, conductor and violinist Alexandre Da Costa and the Elora Singers.

Still, the show goes on, as organizations begin to embrace streaming to both exercise their need to perform and to reach their audiences. A number of new platforms have launched to fill the void, some funded by grants while others are more entrepreneurial. We discuss leconcertbleu.com with Festival Classica’s founder Marc Boucher, as well as BaroqueQuebec.com from the Festival Bach Montréal. Check out our calendar of web streaming events and visit our web calendar at mySCENA.org for the latest updates.

Despite the pandemic, the recording industry is still issuing new releases. This fall sees the first two CDs from Leaf Music of compositions by cover artist Jaap Nico Hamburger, who recently left his job as a cardiologist to return to music full-time. We also catch up with Ofra Harnoy who’s making a comeback with a new album and with baroque violinist Marie Nadeau-Tremblay of Barocudas. Our Gift and CD reviews section offers many ideas and selections to consider before the holiday season. Our audio section features a look back at the career of David P. Leonard, founder of Trebas Institute, and a discussion with George Doxas on the challenge of recording Jazz.

This November/December national issue comes to you thanks to advertising support for our annual Higher Arts Education special and guide, including 13 pages of news and stories about how schools and musicians are dealing with the pandemic.

Finally, the issue includes an interview with Jesse Wente, new president of the Canada Council, a blog from pianist Luke Welch on being a black pianist in a white industry, and a visit with conductor Jean-Marie Zeitouni, who will conduct his 10th and last season with I Musici de Montréal. We also pay tribute to soprano Erin Wall and philanthropist Noël Spinelli, who left us in the last month, and to composer Jacques Hétu on the 10th anniversary of his passing.

With this issue, we have changed our distribution from street distribution to home delivery, and many of you are holding a free sample issue. We hope we have sparked your interest with our passionate team of writers and editors. To make sure you continue to receive the magazine at home, please take out a subscription for yourself, or give it to a loved one; it is ideal for parents or an artist. All new subscribers until Dec. 31 will receive our new 10-pack Musical Greeting Cards (a $20 value, see ad on page 67) or a free CD.

SUBSCRIPTION AND DONATION DRIVE

The pandemic has its consequences for publishing. We are pleased to plan a subscription year of five issues for 2020-21, a small cutback from our usual schedule of seven. Although we were able to bring back most of our staff through the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy, the amount of subsidy has decreased from 75% to 40%. Since our annual budget depends largely on advertising revenues (about 70% of which are related to concerts), we saw a decrease in advertising of 88% in spring and summer, to 60% in September and 50% in November. We hope you will consider supporting our magazine through a donation or a subscription.

As always, La Scena Musicale maintains a vigorous presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The website offers new resources daily. Pandemic or no pandemic, the arts will thrive. As will La Scena Musicale.

Have a great musical and artistic holiday season!

WAH KEUNG CHAN, Founding Editor
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YANNICK AU PIANO

Sequestered in his hometown, Nézet-Séguin found time to join Montreal’s Allegra chamber ensemble as a pianist for its 40th gala in Pollack Hall. One highlight of the virtual event in October was the Adagio middle movement of Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 1 as reduced by clarinetist (and Orchestre Métropolitain principal) Simon Aldrich for an accompaniment of string quartet and clarinet. “Brahms is Yannick’s favourite composer,” Aldrich comments at about the 50-minute mark of the video, which is available on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=g8y-L3V0D1k) and the Allegra Facebook page. Same goes for himself and Allegra’s usual keyboard quarter-back, Dorothy Fraiberg. Keep in mind that YNS was a piano student — not a conducting student — at the Montreal Conservatoire. The conductor also functions as a master of ceremonies in a post-concert gathering at Fraiberg’s residence.

NEW THEREMIN READY TO MAKE WAVES

A non-celebratory year in many respects, 2020 does mark the centenary of the invention of the theremin by its name-sake, Leon Theremin. This pioneering electronic instrument — the only instrument that does not require the application of a human touch — enjoyed limited success in the 1920s and 30s through the performing advocacy of Clara Rockmore. The gadget got something of a boost from its use in 1950s sci-fi films and a production revival by Robert Moog, later of synthesizer fame. Now the Moog company has launched the Claravox Centennial, which is dubbed “the most versatile Moog theremin in history” on account of its switchable analog and digital modes and other bells and whistles. If you want “DIN MIDI, USB, and CV inputs and outputs for integrating with DAWs,” then you are in luck. The sticker: US$1,999. www.moogmusic.com

MAYNARD SOLOMON 1930-2020

The American recording-executive-turned-biographer died in New York on Sept. 28 at age 90. Co-founder with his brother Seymour of Vanguard Records, a label with jazz and folk as well as classical titles, Solomon produced a biography of Beethoven in 1977 that relied on psychoanalytical speculation (including the proposal that the composer in 1801 “felt himself to be more deaf than his actual condition warranted at the time”). He also popularized the notion that Antonie Brentano (rather than the more widely nominated Josephine...
Brunsvik) was the composer’s “Immortal Beloved.” Father Leopold comes out as a baleful influence in Mozart: A Life (1995). Possibly Solomon’s greatest scholarly exploit, in 1989, was “Franz Schubert and the Peacocks of Benvenuto Cellini,” a paper published in 19th-Century Music that portrayed Schubert as gay. While the evidence was far from conclusive, Solomon did produce a classic of what used to be called the New Musicology.

SHUTDOWNS AND SOME RELIEF

As disruptive as this autumn is for the arts sector in Quebec, it is not as bad as it could be in dollars and cents. On Oct. 2, Premier François Legault and Culture Minister Nathalie Roy promised $50 million in funding to compensate arts presenters for lost ticket sales through March. The MSO quickly issued a communiqué expressing thanks. Seven days later, the Opéra de Montréal was on the business end of a commitment of $700,000 in provincial funding to explore digital production options. The company pointed out in a press release that the grant will result in 900 fees paid to artists and production people. After webcasting a 2017 performance of Puccini’s La Bohème, the OdM is making available its new chamber double bill of La voix humaine and L’hiver attend beaucoup de moi until Nov. 19.

www.operademontreal.com

THINKING POSITIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco Ballet and Opera, like most companies, have shut down for the balance of 2020. They have also accelerated a seat-replacement project originally scheduled for next summer to take advantage of the down time. Improved sight lines, better ergonomics and expanded handicapped seating are promised in the lavishly Beaux-Arts 1932 War Memorial Opera House. The opera orchestra has accepted substantial cuts in a contract running through midsummer 2023. The first performance on the books, on April 25, is of Rossini’s The Barber of Seville.

THUS SPAKE ZUBIN MEHTA

“Let’s leave the blacklists to American puritanism,” Zubin Mehta, 84, told the Milan-based Corriere della Sera. “[James] Levine has been destroyed by the U.S. media. Domingo had to leave the Los Angeles Opera, which was worth nothing before him. And all because of complaints that come from failed artists after 30 years. They are well versed in revenge.” The former MSO music director views the pandemic from the perspective of a person who has recovered fully from surgery for kidney cancer. “Theatres are among the safest places,” he points out. On opera directors: some are geniuses, others a pain in the neck (“rompiscatole”). Mehta now asks to meet the director before accepting an opera engagement. His November and December gigs at press time: Verdi’s Oтеллo at the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino (where he is honorary director for life) and concerts with the Vienna Philharmonic highlighted by Strauss’s Also sprach Zarathustra.

CLIBURN LOOKS TO 2022

The 16th edition of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition will take place in June 2022 instead of June 2021. “The Cliburn is there to help young artists to launch careers,” said CEO Jacques Marquis in a Facebook announcement. “We can do better work and [provide] better support for 2022 and after.” The postponement is clearly good news for the Concours musical international de Montréal, which itself moved its 2020 session – devoted to the piano – to May 22–June 2, 2021. Former Cliburn hopefuls can try their luck in Montreal. Assuming, of course, that COVID-19 by then is under control. Other piano competitions with spring 2021 plans are Queen Elisabeth (May in Brussels) and Géza Anda (May–June in Zürich).

AN ABOVE-AVERAGE CONTROVERSY

Philp Ewell, an associate professor at the City College of New York who describes himself as an activist for racial, gender, and social justice in the field of music theory,” has attracted attention by calling Beethoven “an above-average composer” who is “proped up by white supremacy; including descriptors such as genius, master and masterwork.” (The word master, Ewell argues, cannot be disentangled from the institution of slavery.) Tonality? “[A fine example of a racialized structure].” And so on. Reaction and debate have been fiery and divisive. But a secondary controversy has erupted over Ewell’s characterization (in a plenary address in 2019 to the Society of Music Theory and later a paper published on the SMT website) of the music theorist Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935) as “an ardent racist and German nationalist” whose approach to music analysis is consequently tainted. Contributors to the Journal of Schenkerian Studies were not exactly unanimous in their praise. One of the publication’s editors, University of North Texas professor (and McGill alumnus) Timothy Jackson, wrote: “Ewell’s denunciation of Schenker and Schenkerians may be seen as part and parcel of the much broader current of Black anti-Semitism. Given the history of racism against African Americans, there is a strong tendency today to excuse or downplay these phenomena, but they are real – and toxic. [N.B. The second sentence is usually omitted by journalists reporting on the controversy.] They currently manifest themselves in myriad ways, including the pattern of violence against Jews, the obnoxious lyrics of some hip-hop songs, etc.” Hundreds of music theorists, including noted practitioners of Schenkerian analysis, signed a condemnation of the journal. Keep in mind that music theory is distinct from musicology, the former traditionally concerning itself with hardcore analysis, the latter being the more likely arena for cultural studies and race-and-gender reasoning.

WOKE RECKONING AT U OF T

As a leading Canadian institution of western classical and jazz music, the University of Toronto Faculty of Music is fundamentally implicated in the establishment and perpetuation of these racist, colonial, and otherwise oppressive structures.” No, this is not a statement drawn from the U of T welcome webpage. It is an excerpt from a “call to action by alumni” signed by 372 former students and addressed on June 4 to the Faculty of Music’s strategic academic planning committee. The statement perhaps claims new territory by including “institutionalized jazz music” as an area of creative endeavour that “can perpetuate trauma and oppression” – even if jazz “owes its existence to the labour of BIPOC communities.” The call to arms comes not only from the outside: “We acknowledge that North American music theory urgently needs to reckon with its racist, anti-Black, white supremacist roots in order to evolve and grow,” reads a statement from the music theory faculty on the Heinrich Schenker controversy (see above) that alludes to (but does not name) a former dean as a culprit.

OPERA TRIUMVIRATE IN BANFF

Joel Irvany is no longer the sole director of opera at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. His new colleagues are composer Ian Curson and soprano Karen Slack. The former, identified as Métis and French-Canadian, will “imagine new ways to create music and collaborate within and across Indigenous cultures.” The latter, an American, will “focus on the contribution of Black composers to classical music.” Among Curson’s assignments is to create a new opera with a BIPOC librettist. Opera has been part of Banff programming since the 1950s. The centre administers the well-known Banff International String Quartet Competition. Next edition of the BISQC: 2022. If all goes well.
Jacques Hétu enjoyed a prolific career as a composer for 50 years and as a university professor for almost 40 years. Although best known for his well-crafted and beautifully orchestrated works for large performing ensembles, including five symphonies and some 20 concertos, Hétu also wrote many fine works for piano, voice, and chamber ensemble. Hétu’s works are available in beautifully engraved editions from the publisher Doberman-Yppan, and most can be heard on excellent professional recordings. Hétu is equally popular with performers and audiences; his music can be appreciated and enjoyed at first hearing, but also reveals new depths with repeated listenings.

Although his music is often labelled as conservative, it is imaginative, original, richly detailed, and has an unmistakable personal imprint. Unusually for a composer in the late 20th century, he gave his works opus numbers; these range from Op. 1, a Toccata for piano dating from 1959, to Opus 82, a Trio for oboe, violin and piano that was completed in 2009, shortly before his death at the age of 71. One of his grandest works, his Fifth Symphony in four movements with a choral finale, was commissioned by the Toronto Symphony, which gave the first performance under Peter Oundjian in March 2010, less than a month after the composer’s death.

In thinking about how to honour Hétu in this short tribute, I decided to tell the story of Hétu’s life in chronological order, by showing and commenting on a series of photos.

This first photo dates from 1942. Hétu was born in Trois-Rivières on Aug. 8, 1938. Trois-Rivières is located half-way between Quebec City and Montreal, and eventually Hétu would gravitate to both of those major centres, spending the first part of his career in Quebec City and the last part of it in Montreal. In this photo, the four-year-old Hétu looks at the camera somewhat apprehensively, with the family bulldog by his side. The photo was taken in a military training camp in Sorel, where his father, a doctor, had been relocated during the war. A year after this photo was taken, Hétu was sent to boarding school in Montreal, where he would spend 10 not particularly happy years. In 1946, four years after this photo was taken, an event took place which would change his life forever; he bought a recording of Schubert’s “Unfinished” Symphony and fell deeply and permanently in love with music.

It would take another seven years before he acted decisively upon that love, dropping out of Brebeuf College in Montreal at the age of 15 to devote himself to music studies. Although he had left Trois-Rivières behind by then, he did not forget the city of his birth, nor did it forget him. A music school in Trois-Rivières was named École de musique Jacques-Hétu in his honour 25 years ago, and late in his career, Hétu wrote a series of major works for the Orchestre symphonique de Trois-Rivières: Variations concertantes Op. 74 in 2005, a Viola Concerto in 2006, and Sur les rives du Saint-Maurice in 2008.

Beginning serious music studies only at the age of 15, Hétu was a late starter but a quick learner. Within six months he was already writing music prolifically. One night while he was listening to the radio, he had another transformative experience. He was spellbound by a performance of a piece of modern music and decided immediately to seek out the composer of that work, who was Clermont Pépin. And so, at the age of 18, he began his studies with Pépin at the Conservatoire de musique du Québec à Montréal. Five years later he earned a premier prix in composition. The prestigious Prix d’Europe and a grant from the Canada Council allowed Hétu to spend two years in Paris, from 1961 to 1963. He absorbed the exciting musical atmosphere of the French capital, attending concerts by Pierre Boulez among others, and studying analysis with Olivier Messiaen. After briefly exploring an avant-garde compositional idiom à la Boulez, Hétu decided that his heart was not in the more experimental trends of music in the 1960s. He found an ideal composition teacher in Henri Dutilleux, recently appointed to teach composition at the École normale in Paris. Dutilleux encouraged Hétu to remain true to his convictions, which Hétu pithily described as “neo-classical forms and neo-romantic effects in a musical language using 20th-century techniques.” Upon returning to Canada in 1963, Hétu took up a position at Laval University in Quebec City, which would be his home for the next 14 years. The first composition Hétu wrote after returning to Canada is the opening work on this recital and is the work that made Hétu’s reputation as a composer: his Variations for piano Op. 8 of 1964.

In this third photo, dating from 1967, Hétu studies a page of his orchestral music while casually smoking a cigarette; he has not yet taken up the pipe that would become his constant companion in later years. It was in this year that Glenn Gould recorded Hétu’s Variations. In 1992 Hétu told me jokingly that he was sick for three days when he first heard Gould’s recording, as it was so at odds with Hétu’s own vision of the work. “But,” he added, “I also realized that how Gould played the work was less important than..."
the fact that he had recorded it.” Indeed, the Gould recording instantly lifted Hétu’s career to a new level; he quickly received four new commissions on the strength of Gould’s advocacy, and from that point onwards the commissions and performances continued without letting up to the end of his life.

In this fourth photo, we skip ahead to 1980.7 Hétu moved from Quebec City to Montreal in 1978, and after teaching at the Université de Montréal for a year, he took up a position at the Université du Québec à Montréal in 1979. He would remain there for 21 years, until his retirement from academic life in 2000. UQÀM had only been founded 10 years before Hétu arrived; he was instrumental in growing the music offerings and served two terms as the director of the department of music in the 1980s.

Teaching music analysis was Hétu’s day job; files preserved among the Hétu papers at Library and Archives Canada attest to the seriousness with which he approached his activities as a teacher of music students, as well as students from other disciplines and community members, during his time at UQÀM. Note that Hétu has by now grown the beard that was to define his appearance for the rest of his life. Here it is still professorial in nature, but eventually it turned white and grew to positively Biblical proportions. Incidentally earlier this year, the department of music at UQÀM honoured Hétu’s memory by giving a commemorative recital of his works.

Our sixth and final image of Hétu dates from 2010, just 10 days before his death on Feb. 9 of that year. In this photo by François Gélinas, Hétu accepts an Opus Award for lifetime achievement from the Conseil québécois de la musique. This was the last in a long list of honours that he received, including being elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 1989, and being named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1999 and of the Order of Québec in 2007. But perhaps the most significant recognition he received came from the performances of his music by leading musicians across Canada, and also abroad by groups such as the New York Philharmonic and l’Orchestra national de France, among many others.

The interest in Hétu’s music remains high, as recent recordings of his orchestral music by the Laval Symphony under Alain Trudel and of his complete chamber music for strings by the New Orford String Quartet reveal. I hope that this 10th anniversary of Hétu’s death will encourage readers and listeners to learn more about this remarkable and hugely talented composer.

3 The story of hearing a work by Pépin on the radio and deciding to study with him is related in the Jacques Hétu audio documentary produced and presented by Eitan Cornfield and released on the CD Canadian Composers Portraits: Jacques Hétu, Centrediscs CD-CMCCD 8302 (2002).
4 This photo is taken from Stéphane Jean, The Jacques Hétu Fonds: Numerical List, p. 19.
6 This photo is taken from Stéphane Jean, The Jacques Hétu Fonds: Numerical List, p. 3.
7 This photo is taken from Stéphane Jean, The Jacques Hétu Fonds: Numerical List, p. 17.
8 This photo is taken from Stéphane Jean, The Jacques Hétu Fonds: Numerical List, p. 3.
9 Jacques Hétu, as told to Eitan Cornfield (see n. 3).
NOËL SPINELLI, PHILANTHROPIST
1927-2020

by WAH KEUNG CHAN / DEC. 17, 2007

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. Growing up in a family business, Spinelli’s father finally retired at age 70 in 1962. Two years later, Spinelli took over the garage and, at age 70 in 1962. Two years later, the Spinelli garage started to sell cars made by Studebaker and Willys, which paid much more than working for his father. When Spinelli’s children were small, it took one hour each day to take them to daycare and to see how it affects people.”

While running his garage/dealership, music had taken a back seat. “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. 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 archbishop.

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. “It shows that people who were not ‘sophisticated’ were coming out, and that what inspires me.”

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 L’Aubaudière
• Pavarotti at Notre-Dame Basilica at Christmas
• Domingo and Behrens directed by Zeffirelli
• Montose to the OSM concert hall and we need the Opéra de Montréal to thrive.

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.
Erin Wall, a Calgary native whose sumptuous voice and dignified stage presence kept her busy as both a concert and opera singer, has died at age 44.

It was known as early as January 2018 that the soprano was suffering from breast cancer. In one of her own tweets she made a reference to having contracted COVID-19.

“Once I was an opera singer,” reads what appears to be her last message. “Then COVID-19 and stage IV cancer changed everything.”

A regular on major stages around the world, Wall in 2017 performed both as Strauss’s Arabella with the Canadian Opera Company and in Brahms’s Ein deutsches Requiem with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

The strength of her voice from top to bottom made her a frequent choice for symphonic work. According to the Montreal Gazette, Wall “made the notoriously taxing soprano part seem no effort at all” in a 2006 performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Place des Arts that marked the first appearance of Kent Nagano as music director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

Her last performances appear to have been as Magna Peccatrix in Mahler’s Symphony No. 8 on Jan. 18 and 19, 2020, with the City of Birmingham Orchestra under Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. “...Her voice cut through clearly and dramatically at the big moments, despite all the musical tumult surrounding her,” one reviewer reported.

According to The Canadian Encyclopedia, Wall earned a Bachelor of Music degree at Western Washington University in 1998 before pursuing a master’s at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston.

“...In 2000, Wall attended the Aspen Music Festival and the Music Academy of the West, where Marilyn Horne and Warren Jones were her teachers. She then made her professional debut in 2001 as a member of the Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. She was the recipient of a Sara Tucker Study Grant (2002) and a Richard Tucker Award (2004) from the Richard Tucker Foundation. In 2003, she earned critical acclaim when she represented Canada in the finals of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition in Wales.”

A dual citizen, Wall lived in Chicago from 2001 to 2009, when she moved back to Canada. According to her website Wall lived in Toronto with her husband and children. As desert island disc she referenced a Bach recording featuring Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, 1954-2006, a singer known for her courageous work in spite of what turned out to be a fatal case of breast cancer.

Wall’s last tweets included a plea not to use the word “battle” in reference to her illness. Memorial plans were not known at press time.
JESSE WENTE

“WE NEED A SHARING OF POWER AND RESOURCES”

by OLIVIER BERGERON

Born in Toronto, University of Toronto alumnus Jesse Wente is a writer, broadcaster, speaker and arts leader. He spent seven years as director of film programs at the TIFF Bell Lightbox and in 2017 was named the inaugural recipient of the Reelworld Film Festival’s Reel Activist Award. He has served on the boards of the Toronto Arts Council, imagineNATIVE Film and Media Festival, and Native Earth Performing Arts.

Jesse Wente is an Ojibwe man and a member of the Serpent River First Nation. An ardent advocate for Indigenous rights and a strong proponent of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit art, he first became a member of the Canada Council for the Arts in 2017. On July 28, he was appointed for a five-year term as Chair of the Canada Council, becoming the first Indigenous person to occupy the position.

What made you want to be involved in the arts?

I’ve always loved art. My first memory is of watching a movie. My childhood was filled with art of all kinds, movies, music, theatre, ballet. One of the benefits of growing up in Toronto was having access to so much art. When it came time to begin my career, I knew I wanted it to be in the arts somehow, if for no other reason than little else held my interest.

How has your relationship with art developed through time?

It has moved from the arena of appreciation to the professional arena. I’ve spent much of my career in the arts in one way or another, as a critic and journalist, as a board member, as a curator and programmer, as an administrator, trying to stay involved however I could, trying to help however I could. I still appreciate [these roles], but now I show that appreciation by actively trying to help artists, to celebrate them and help them make their art. And I hope, at some point, to join them in that pursuit.

What does it mean to you to be the first Indigenous chairperson of the Canadian Council for the Arts?

It’s an honour and a privilege to be the first chairperson of the Canada Council for the Arts who is also First Nations. I acknowledge that I’m here because of so many that have come before me and worked to make this moment possible for First Nations, the Council and for Canada. A role like this is an opportunity to further that work. It’s important for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to take on these kinds of leadership roles within the systems and structures that govern us, even if these places were not designed with us in mind. A role like this presents an opportunity to serve my communities, to work on making things better and more equitable and to help build right relations in service of a shared culture we can all be proud of.

How will the Canadian Council for the Arts continue to help Canadian artists and organizations through the Coronavirus crisis – specifically with regard to promoting and developing Indigenous culture?

The Canada Council has been quick to provide relief funding and programs to the artistic and cultural sector during the COVID pandemic and its related economic crises. Most recently, these efforts have been focused on First Nations, Métis and Inuit artists and organizations, as well as those from other racialized communities. This is an addition to the Council’s recent strategic efforts to engage with more artists and organizations from racialized communities within its central funding programs. This will remain a focus of the council for the foreseeable future.

How can we build bridges between BIPOC and non-BIPOC artists and artistic communities? What kind of exchanges would you like to see happening?

I think we already see many of these bridges being built on the ground by communities, artists and organizations. What is lacking is institutional support for those efforts and the people and organizations engaged in that work. We need to see the institutions, companies and organizations that have benefitted from years of support provide that same support to communities that have yet to receive it. We need a sharing of power and resources, across this sector and many others.

Do you think it’s possible for non-Indigenous artists to respectfully incorporate Indigenous art into their practice? If so, what advice would you give them? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?

I think it’s possible, but it requires due diligence and relationship keeping that is not typical in Western art practices. Community relations are key in order to understand and adhere to protocols around cultural practices that are not your own and to build the trust necessary to collaborate properly. It’s always important to ask yourself why you are the best person to tell any story. Is there someone else who is better positioned to do it? What is the potential harm to your telling a story if it’s not yours? Too often cultural and artistic practices can be as extractive as natural resource industries, and we should avoid recreating the same conditions of loss and harm that we have witnessed there.
by LUKE WELCH

From an early age I was quick to realize that there were not many other young black pianists who were learning how to play classical music – at least that I had ever met. Fast forward a couple of decades, and nothing has changed. No "growth of the sport," no "catering to a wider audience."

Why? The question invites a chicken-and-egg analysis. Is there a lack of interest in classical music within the black community because it is so underrepresented at the highest levels? Or is the lack of representation another form of systemic discouragement directed toward a certain group?

I have always loved classical music and its seemingly endless possibilities. No matter how many hours of practice, there will always be more work to do and new heights to reach. The works of J.S. Bach and Domenico Scarlatti could by themselves offer a pianist a lifetime of exploration. As a "musically gifted" youth, I knew that many other pianists seemed to be light years ahead of me. Still I remained fixed on the goal of becoming the best version of my musical self that I could be.

While I was committed to my own improvement, I was often met with confusion, resentment, discouragement and sometimes disdain. I don’t "look" the part of a classical musician, nor do I talk as such (whatever that means). I have often been told – especially during my time living abroad – to consider switching my focus to something supposedly more in my lane, such as jazz.

I have even been stopped – in the reputedly tolerant Netherlands! – from entering a concert venue in which I was the performer until I was able to convince the unidentified individual (thankfully not the concert promoter) to look at the advertising poster to confirm that I should be allowed inside. In another instance I was questioned at a music store while looking for recordings of Chopin, Liszt and other composers whose works I intended to perform, as to whether the music I sought was actually for me. "Wow, you definitely can’t judge a book by its cover!" was the blatantly prejudiced response.

The restraint it took to not lose my temper took every fibre of my being. I remember discussing the situation with my father shortly afterwards and was even more disheartened to hear his candidly matter-of-fact yet sincere response: "Well, son, get used to it."

During all of my academic years, from elementary school through university, I did not encounter another black pianist. This interesting observation extends to competitions, professional performances and piano masterclasses. It was not something I dwelt on at the time, as I was so preoccupied with building my career and completing my education. I noticed the imbalance only when meeting people backstage after my own performances. "Do you perform this kind of music often?" I have been asked. "We don't see people like you performing classical music very often."

Such episodes made me realize that the stakes were much higher than making a name for myself. I came to understand that I represented a community within the community – a black classical musician (see: unicorn) in an already marginalized society (the classical music community). Not only was it – as it still is – of paramount importance to be at my best on stage, but it was imperative to remain aware that the lights, camera and attention may not stop when the performance is over. I am not one to theorize on whether my ethnicity impacts my career opportunities. I believe that quality will always succeed. So as long as I prepare well, push myself to be a better musician tomorrow than I am today, maintain a respectful attitude, and appreciate the incredible support of those who have contributed to my career, the rest will take care of itself.

Diving even deeper into the seemingly infinite pool of classical music, traveling the world, seeing new places, meeting new people, performing, recording albums; these are my passions. If part of the job description involves being an ambassador of sorts, I welcome the opportunity, especially if it has the potential to encourage young black individuals to explore a world they may not know exists or feel entirely comfortable stepping into. It is a wonderful feeling to do what you love, regardless of perception.

The same sentiments hold true between performances. As an independent artist, I devote many of my waking hours to building the practical component of my career. I have focused on teaching as well, working with students of all ages and abilities, first in the Netherlands, where I lived from 2008 to 2017, and now back in Canada. It has been a longstanding dream to achieve a position in a college or university.

How many institutions in this vast expanse of the Great White North employ teachers/ professors/music educators who look like me? As recently as a month or so ago, I applied for an associate professorship at a Canadian university not far from where I live. I expected that my background on multiple continents in addition to my performance and teaching experience would have warranted at least a cursory response. Unfortunately, there was not even so much as an acknowledgement, let alone an invitation for a conversation.

Gullible or optimistic, I await the next opportunity.
OFRA HARNOY FINDS A NEW HOME
AND MAKES A RECORDING THAT REALLY ROCKS

by MICHAEL SCHULMAN

In the summer of 2018, cellist Ofra Harnoy and her husband, classical and jazz musician Mike Herriott, went on vacation to Newfoundland, where the British-born Herriott had lived between the ages of 7 and 21. That same year, they left Toronto and moved to St. John’s.

“I was struck by the beauty of the place,” recalls Harnoy, “and the wonderful energy of the people there. Mike and I discussed it, and we decided to look at houses during that visit. We had a few criteria that we wanted to fulfill. Mike needed to have a space that could be used for writing and recording, and I have always loved living near water.

“We were very happy to find the perfect spot. The area where I practise overlooks the lake that’s part of our backyard, a continually changing natural wonder. We’re close to some beautiful walking trails. We love to hike and experience nature at its finest. And St. John’s is a wonderful city – world-class restaurants, great live music, warm and friendly people.”

With her fervently expressive, rhapsodic style of music-making, Harnoy has enjoyed a stellar career, going back to when, as a teenager, she won the International Artists Guild Award (1982) and was named Young Musician of the Year by Musical America magazine (1983). She has recorded more than 40 albums, winning five Juno Awards as Best Classical Soloist as well as France’s Grand Prix du Disque. Her recitals and performances with major orchestras around the world have garnered her rave reviews and innumerable devoted fans.

Her brilliant career was interrupted, however, when, she sustained stress injuries related to playing, and regular workouts are part of my daily routine to keep strength and endurance.”

Readers can experience Harnoy’s fully-recovered artistry on Nov. 20, when she will perform Haydn’s Cello Concerto in C Major with the Newfoundland Symphony Orchestra, plus an excerpt from her latest CD as part of a live-streamed concert on YouTube. (For information and tickets, go to www.nsomusic.ca.)

The recording studio in the couple’s home is the source of their first two collaborative CDs on Canada’s Analekta label: last year’s Back to Bach and the just-released On the Rock, devoted to the songs of Newfoundland. (See [inset].) In his booklet notes for On the Rock, Mike Herriott suggests that there may be more recordings of Newfoundland songs forthcoming. Asked about this, Harnoy says, “For the Newfoundland album, we had to pick and choose what would be on it and there’s plenty more that we liked that could make up another. Without giving too much away, we have several projects in various stages of development. We are planning a concerto album, another duo album and there will be a solo unaccompanied cello album as well. We’ll be sure to keep everyone posted!”

As with all musicians these days, Harnoy and Herriott are trying to remain active any way they can. “Our touring schedule is in a holding pattern,” she says, “but we look forward to resuming our activities performing in front of audiences as soon as it is safe and possible. In the meantime, we will continue to work and develop projects in the studio and create more videos to connect with our audience.

“After having been on hiatus for as long as I was, it has been something of a learning curve to navigate this new world of social media, streaming music services, YouTube, et cetera. But, together with Mike, I am enjoying exploring this challenge and reconnecting with fans around the world.”

Recorded at an in-home studio between December 2019 and June 2020, this collection of 15 traditional and popular Newfoundland songs, all in arrangements by Mike Herriott, features Ofra Harnoy on cello (and multi-track cellos) and Herriott on trumpet, flügelhorn, horn, trombone, bass trombone, electric bass and percussion (!).

In nine of the songs, Harnoy and Herriott are joined by some of Newfoundland’s leading singers and instrumentalists: Amanda Cash provides the vocals in Saltwater Joys; Alan Doyle sings St. John’s Waltz and Cara’s Waltz, which he co-wrote with Maureen Ennis, on guitar; Kelly-Ann Evans performs Ron Hynes’s Sonny’s Dream; Fergus O’Byrne sings The Cliffs of Baccalieu as well as playing guitar and banjo – his guitar and banjo also add to the mix in Green Shores of Fogo; Heather Bambrick sings Petty Harbour Bait Skiff; Kendel Carson plays fiddle in Harbour Buffett Double with Bob Hallett on accordion; Hallett plays accordion, mandolin and Irish flute in Mussel in the Corner, along with “a rowdy pub crowd”!

Harnoy says, “All the selections go together to tell the story that Mike and I had in mind. I had heard Let Me Fish off Cape St. Mary’s and She’s Like the Swallow many times before, and some of the other songs were familiar to me. But after a bit of digging around, I discovered that there was no shortage of great music from this province.

“We’re so thrilled that we had such wonderful guests to share this music with. I even had the great opportunity to learn from fiddler Kendel Carson some fiddling techniques I can use on the cello. It was all a labour of love!”
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Presented by Bourgie Hall
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LES BAROCUDAS
FIRST ALBUM ON ATMA – OF THE PERIOD

by JUSTIN BERNARD

Newcomers to the world of early music, Les Barocudas offer a hint or two of their outlook by virtue of their very name. This young threesome – Marie Nadeau-Tremblay, violin; Ryan Gallagher, viola da gamba; and Nathan Mondry, harpsichord – seems intent on tugging at the edges of a well-defined musical genre. When they record a video on their YouTube channel they take as much pleasure in dressing in period costumes as in performing the music.

Les Barocudas are much talked about these days, not least because of their debut release on ATMA Classique. Here again they stand out by selecting a timely theme, the plague, that dreaded pandemic of the 17th century that claimed the life of many a composer and performer. Among its reported victims were Johann Heinrich Schmelzer, Dario Castello, Giovanni Battista Fontana, Salomone Rossi and Michelangelo Rossi, whose works are heard on this recording. Add to that Giovanni Antonio Pandolfi Mealli, born at that time (1624), and Carlo Farina, whose Sonata detta la Desperata perfectly captures the extent of the tragedy by its name.

But the album actually came together during the summer of 2019, long before the health crisis reared its ugly head. At that time the label contacted the violinist following her prize-winning performance at the Concours de musique ancienne Mathieu-Duguay, an event partnered by the Festival international de Musique baroque de Lamèque in New Brunswick. “They [ATMA representatives] asked me to do a record with my group on a theme of my choosing,” says Nadeau-Tremblay. “I came back with a proposal for an album of works by composers who had died from the plague – a topic I had been interested in for some time – and they agreed. I did my research on the subject and investigated the literature from various periods of the 17th century, and found quite a few composers, too – enough for me to go ahead with that initial idea of mine. Actually, I knew a little about each one of them and already liked their works as a whole, all of these by violinists who composed very beautiful music for that instrument.”

In choosing that specific theme for their first outing, Les Barocudas might just have had a premonition. But then again, it would be a stretch to think that they foresaw the events that would unfold in the current year, so chalk that one up to mere coincidence rather than fortune-telling. In reality, the group had been mulling over the idea for a few years before bringing it to fruition. In 2016-17, they had already performed some of the works eventually included, those of Schmelzer and Fontana, uploading video versions afterwards on YouTube. They are now considering other such projects.

“This is how things unfolded,” recalls Nadeau-Tremblay during a recent conversation. “We wanted to make videos of ourselves having fun rather than being too serious, but not at the expense of performance. Our intention then was to do it for the better enjoyment of the audience, to keep them smiling in the process, and us too. Being all at McGill, we had full access to Redpath Hall and the music department’s recording studios, and got plenty of help from the students in the sound recording program. We really had a blast doing that, and plan to make more videos in the future. In fact, we have a promotional one for the record that should come shortly” [this interview was conducted on Oct. 24].

Beyond this project, Les Barocudas have produced other videos, inspired by the pioneering films of Georges Méliès, silent cinema, horror films and the Belle Époque. One video even combines elements of these. The group’s promotional video, notes Nadeau-Tremblay, will be shot with them wearing 1980s costumes, all in front of a period backdrop.

The violinist’s embrace of Baroque music is recent. After completing her BA in music, with studies in modern violin, she thought of moving on to another discipline, her interests shifting towards language, specifically Mandarin. In the third and final year of her language studies, she was asked to join McGill’s baroque orchestra as the behest of a teacher. “I agreed to give it a try,” she recalls. “But I froze, so to speak: I could not play a single note, simply because I have perfect pitch and those instruments were not tuned to the usual A440 but A415. But that did not prevent me from really liking the people I was now working with, their repertoire, the style, the mood. That egged me on to pursue studies in Baroque music and obtain a certificate in performance, but it still took me three years to adjust my ear. And one thing led to the next, as I decided to pursue a master’s in baroque musical performance.”

In her first year of graduate studies, she met her bandmates, Gallagher and Mondry. The band’s name first emerged during one of their conversations. Nadeau-Tremblay contends to have come up with Les Baroncudas (sic) on a whim, before everyone settled on its present moniker. This kind of wordplay was in fact very en vogue in the 18th century, much to the disapproval of those who viewed such puns as contemptible and unfined. It may well be that these three musical partners in crime were on to something really baroque in choosing that name, even if they were not wholly aware of it at the time.

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

Released by ATMA Classique on Oct. 15, La Peste is also available on a variety of online streaming platforms. Visit the group’s page at www.lesbarocudas.com
New Releases

Jaap Nico Hamburger
Composer

Assaf Weisman, piano
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& Ensemble Caprice
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Jaap Nico
HAMBURGER
Doctor-Composer

by WAH KEUNG CHAN
The music just comes to me; I just write down what I hear," says Jaap Nico Hamburger. Only two years after quitting his full-time job as a cardiologist and devoting his life to composing, Hamburger, 62, has released two recordings and can lay claim to an impressive list of commissions and premieres, including an opera at Lincoln Center in New York, originally slated for March 2020, and now rescheduled for a post-COVID season.

Music was always in Hamburger’s life. At the age of three, Hamburger took over the 78-RPM record player originally given as a birthday gift to his older brother who was more interested in a train set. “I played the 1920s recording of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony by the Berlin Philharmonic over and over again,” explained Hamburger. (He couldn’t relate to a recording of a Wagner opera.) When he went to preschool at age four, and the teacher asked him to sing a song to introduce himself to the other kids, he sang the entire Ode to Joy fourth movement from memory – to the chagrin of all. “My mom also gave me music theory lessons with a lady,” he recalls. “She was also a piano teacher.”

Hamburger’s second musical influence was attending his first live concert at age six at the Concertgebouw with his uncle and aunt. The performance was of Bruckner’s Eighth Symphony. “It completely opened my soul to a different language,” he says. His third major influence occurred when he heard Mahler’s Fifth Symphony when he was 13. “Mahler had a deep understanding of who he was and how his music related to the society in Vienna in the early 20th century,” Hamburger says. “He had an impressive technical ability to put it in sound.”

After high school, Hamburger applied to the conservatory to be a concert pianist and at the same time, he was accepted to medical school. “My mother said you will also go to med school and wanted me to be secure and safe, and do both,” Hamburger said. He graduated from the conservatory in 1984 and then in 1986 in medicine.

By this time, Hamburger was on his way to a promising career as a concert pianist, so much so that in 1985 when the Concertgebouw replaced its 1957 Hamburg Steinway, they offered it to Hamburger for a modest fee. This is the same Steinway that Arthur Rubinstein had coveted over the years. “From 1957 to 1976, every time Rubinstein came to perform, he offered to buy it, he loved its endless singing tone.”

Hamburger pursued both occupations until 1993, when he had to make a decision. “I was booked for a recital tour of the United States, Europe and the Middle East, and at the same time, as a cardiologist, I was offered a directorship at Erasmus University. I chose to accept the position, cancelled the tour and have not gone back onto the stage ever since.”

Hamburger was trained in minimally invasive heart surgery and practised for 25 years. “When I was only doing music or medicine, I was not happy,” he says. “It’s the combination that gave me direction and purpose. We don’t live in isolation, we live in society. We have responsibilities to other people, and writing music and helping people are different elements of the same story. It’s about communicating with others and concepts, trying to give a positive contribution to society.”

COMPOSING

Hamburger refocused on composing and found that he enjoyed this more than playing piano. “I had been playing with composing,” he says. “For many years, I was a member of a rock group, I was writing songs.”

Hamburger’s first serious composition came in 1995 as a “commission” from a friend. “I got an invitation from a painter to compose a large-scale work for full orchestra that would be played during her exhibition at a major museum.” Somehow, that opus 1 is now lost, but it led to a few commissions for Dutch television, universities and the Discovery channel for a film.

“I was doing heart surgery during the day, then I had dinner with my kids and helped them with homework. And then when it was quiet, I composed. And in 2009, when I moved to Canada, it became more serious, writing art for art’s sake.”
At the same time, Hamburger’s medical career was taking off. It allowed him to travel outside of the Netherlands. He received five job offers from Europe and North America. Hamburger chose the University of British Columbia and Vancouver’s two main hospitals to work in their program in Interventional Cardiology.

“Canadians liberated the Netherlands and freed my parents,” explained Hamburger. “I thought the right thing to do was to come to Canada to give back to Canadian society.”

During the Vancouver years, Hamburger sat on boards of local musical organizations. It was, however, his ties to his mother that propelled him.

“After my father passed away when my mother was in her late 80s, I urged her to write a biography,” he recalled. “Both my parents were among the few survivors of the Dutch Holocaust. About 75% did not survive. They met in the 1930s and were in their late teens when the war broke out. She basically wrote a history of the Jewish community of Amsterdam during her lifetime.”

Hamburger joined his mother when she was invited by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, to present her book in 2010. “One of the most impressive memories is the Children’s Pavilion in the Holocaust Museum, a separate pavilion that tries with architecture to describe the image of the murders.

“It’s overwhelming in its starkness and simplicity. I walked into that shaken to the bone and then came out into the sunlight, and that was where I got the concept of the Second Chamber Symphony. The outline of the symphony was a moment of deep inspiration. I sketched it right afterward.”

Hamburger’s mother passed away four years ago at the age of 95, but not before changing his course once again. “She sat me down for dinner and said ‘enough is enough.’ You’ve been doing your medical career for decades, why don’t you go back to being a musician?”

It took a few years for Hamburger to wind down his practice to the point in 2018 when he quit his medical work to devote himself full-time to music. “I said, if not now, then when? It was an adventure, because nobody knew me and I had no network. Within months, people started to listen and said yes, let’s do something.”

Hamburger then met Barbara Scales, who became his manager, and Jeremy VanSlyke at Leaf Music, agreeing to a number of albums: the Piano Concerto, a disc of the two Chamber Symphonies and a third album of chamber music. In his second year, he’s already getting new commissions.

So far, Hamburger has a catalogue of about 56 movements. “The commissions are mostly musicians listening to my work and knocking on my door and asking for it,” said Hamburger. Six months ago, the Dutch harpist Lavinia Meijer arranged a commission for a concerto from the United Nations and the Dutch government to mark the 75th anniversary of the International Court of Justice in the Hague.
24-minute work, I wrote out the entire score in 45 minutes. And I never go back. I don’t make sketches. I start with the concept of the orchestration, I know the size of the band and who plays, and I write from scratch into a full score. It’s weird. But it’s real. And it makes me very grateful. It’s all gifted. It makes me scared as I never know if it will ever happen again.”

Hamburger nevertheless holds common-sense views on music composition. “I have definitely no interest in using music to innovate for the sake of innovation,” he says. “Everything is about communication. If I seek pleasure in writing in a style that people cannot relate to, then I’ve lost the ability to communicate. I’m not preoccupied by whether my music is tonal or not. It comes from inspiration rather than deliberation. ‘The real answer is there is good music and not so good music and independent of time and style. I adore Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Bruckner, Mahler, Shostakovich, Bartok; the giants wrote good music, but so did Prince and Led Zeppelin, Stevie Wonder. I’ve been everywhere twice, and you see different languages and cultures. There is good music everywhere. There is not one composer that I model myself after.”

**GOLDWASSER**

Hamburger’s upcoming opera *Goldwasser* is based on *De Familie Goldwasser* (The Goldwasser Family) by Ariëlla Kornmehl. It is a Dutch novel about a Jewish girl who falls in love with a non-Jew and is expelled from her family. “When I read it in the early 2000s, I thought it was a story for an opera,” Hamburger says. “It started to compose scenes from what I had read, one scene at a time.”

Once completed in 2017, Hamburger sent the MIDI soundtrack to a New York contemporary opera company. Subsequently, Barry Tucker of the Richard Tucker Foundation heard about it and invited Hamburger for a meeting. Even though Tucker claimed interest only in Mozart, Verdi and Puccini, after listening to the MIDI CD, he contacted Hamburger to have the opera performed at Alice Tully Hall in New York with winners of the Richard Tucker Foundation.

“I completed the majority of the score purely in orchestral music before I had a libretto,” Hamburger explains. “Because of the genius of Joel Ivany, he is able to work the libretto to my music. There are some scenes where he is writing original libretto without music and I’m writing new music for those scenes. The original was 18 tracks, and the final version will have 10 minutes more, totalling 90 minutes. And Joel Ivany will also be the stage director.”

It was in 2017 at a reception in New York for *Goldwasser* that Hamburger met his second wife, Kathy, a Montrealer. For two years he travelled between Vancouver and Montreal, finally settling in Côte-St-Luc in June 2020. “We sold our two homes and found a house in which we could move the nine-foot Steinway through the front door,” he says.

When asked if he regrets not doing music full-time from the start, Hamburger was quite pragmatic. “If I had not pursued medicine, I would not be in Canada, not met Kathy, not be in Montreal, not worked with the Orchestre Métropolitain. Who knows? I might not have written a single note at all, or be alive. My medical career allowed me to see all of that and changed me as a human being, and all these perspectives are communicated in my music.”

Having already composed an opera, symphonies and concertos, what is on his wish list? “If God allows me to write a string quartet, I would be deeply grateful.”

www.jaaophamburger.com

www.leaf-music.ca
BEETHOVEN’S NINTH SYMPHONY

LANDMARK RECORDINGS

by PIERRE CHÉNIER

In the space of a single-page survey, it would be impossible to give a comprehensive overview of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony on record, so we will devote the following lines to some of the more outstanding versions on disc, both old and new.

Among those of older vintage, Wilhelm Furtwängler’s 1951 performance and Arturo Toscanini’s a year later are benchmarks. While the first of these took place at the Bayreuth Festival at its re-opening six years after the end of World War II, the second is part of the 85-year old conductor’s late-life undertaking of committing the complete cycle of Beethoven’s symphonies to disc.

Furtwängler’s reading is larger than life, both mysterious and solemn, like a cathedral of sound marked by constant shifts in tempos, the conductor electing to stress some passages for greater expressive effect. In the third movement, for instance, the music almost grinds to a halt in one spot; as it teeters on the edge of silence, the musicians are put to the test, the brass in particular, who have to sustain the sound to a point of almost running out of breath. We are there, in the midst of a formidably constructed, full of solemn moments, notably towards the end of the first movement, where brass and timpani thunder over the mysterious chords sustained by the strings.

Toscanini, in stark contrast, goes full throttle and never stops to rest. Rather than worrying over the music, he pushes it constantly. His charges have little time to sit back and take a breath because it is so unrelenting and energetic. The reading is precise, clear, fast-paced, but never rushed. Most importantly, it sings, as if Toscanini had finally succeeded in making do on that almost impossible feat of sustaining breath because it is so unrelenting and energetic. The charges have little time to sit back and take a breath.

In 1963, Herbert von Karajan produced his own Beethoven cycle, all of which have become reference recordings. The layers of sound are now clearer than ever thanks to the rise of stereophonic recording techniques. In contrast to Furtwängler’s orchestra, Karajan’s sounds much lighter, the conductor intent on creating a more voluptuous texture through perfect intonation of the woodwinds and brass, blended to a tee with the strings. If you are looking for rough edges in Beethoven’s music, Karajan is not your choice. His ideal was that of elegance, albeit at a cost in expression, as certain dissenting voices would contend.

In the 1950s, period instruments found their way into the public eye, first through Baroque music, then within the 18th and 19th century repertoires. This raises the question of how these instruments have affected the performance of music. One notable difference is the downsizing of orchestras from traditional symphonic strength; another relates to rhythm and its much livelier and contrasted treatment; a third is the lessening of string vibrato; a fourth is the lighter sound of the timpani, closer to that of a snare drum. In the beginning, these characteristics were not viewed favourably in certain circles who found them not opulent enough. Opinions have changed since, the quicker tempos now better appreciated for the sake of giving the music a livelier edge.

Of the recordings of the Ninth Symphony with period instruments, John Eliot Gardiner’s 1994 take with the Orchestre révolutionnaire et romantique stands out the most. The ensemble’s name is revealing in itself as it makes us understand that the performance of 19th century music on period instruments had finally come of age. It offers the best of two worlds, one edgy, contrasted, dramatic and dynamic (the latter in the string attacks), the other singing and lyrical, even grandiose.

The use of period instruments has even rubbed off to a degree on current performance practices. Beethoven’s symphonies are approached nowadays in a much lighter fashion, at faster tempos and in a more lively way. A case in point is the 1991 Royal Liverpool Orchestra release under Charles Mackerras: it is at once animated, imaginative and rhythmically charged. Ditto Kent Nagano in his fast-paced and luminous MSO readings issued on Analekta. That said, I do believe the Mackerras and Gardiner versions to be the defining recordings of the years leading up to the new century. This surely invites the question of leading contenders to the title in our time. My selection would be the 2006 version of Osmo Vänskä and the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra. It is a good illustration of today’s concern about playing with precision, where motifs are brought to the fore across the whole orchestra in continuous and richly contrasted flow. I have never heard such clarity in the fugal development of the opening movement. Not only are the individual parts readily discerned, but each has its own vitality. The conductor has a discerning ear, seizing on details and drawing them out accordingly.

In this year marking the 250th anniversary of Beethoven’s birth, a listen to the Ninth Symphony is pretty well de rigueur. The composer spent a good part of his life on it and was adamant on incorporating Schiller’s Ode to Joy, a text that loudly proclaims the brotherhood of all men!

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD
NEW RELEASES SECTION

MON AMI, mon amour
Cello sonatas by Debussy and Poulenc, with additional works by Fauré, Ravel, Milhaud, and Lili and Nadia Boulanger
Matt Haimovitz, cello/violoncelle; Mari Kodama, piano
Pentatone

The vibrant musical palette of cellist Matt Haimovitz and the graceful insight of pianist Mari Kodama meld in MON AMI, Mon amour. Cello and piano flow together in colorful conversation for rarities by sisters Lili and Nadia Boulanger, in the poignant Kaddish by Ravel and the melancholic Elegie by Milhaud, for sonatas by Poulenc and Debussy, and in gems by Fauré. These French composers overcome profound moments of darkness, never losing sight of their joie de vivre.

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI
String Quartets 1-3, Unterbrochen gedanke, Clarinet Quartet, String Trio
Quatuor Molinari: Olga Ranzenhofer, first violin, Frédéric Bednarz, second violin, Frédéric Lambert, viola, Pierre-Alain Bourvette, cello. guest artist André Moisan, clarinet
Release date: November 6, 2020
ACD2 2736

The latest recording by the award-winning Molinari Quartet presents Krzysztof Penderecki’s major chamber music works, including three string quartets, a clarinet quartet, a string trio, and some short pieces for strings. An outstanding figure in contemporary Polish music, Krzysztof Penderecki died on 29 March 2020 in Krakow. His catalogue includes more than 160 works covering a wide range of styles, from sonorism to post-Romanticism, from folkloric to religious music, from dodecaphonism to tonal music.

Chamber Symphonies Nos.1&2
Jaap Nico Hamburger: Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal, Vincent de Kort, conductor / Ensemble Caprice, Matthias Maute, conductor
Leaf Music, LM235
Release Date: November 6, 2020

In honour of Remembrance Day and the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands, Jaap Nico Hamburger presents Chamber Symphonies Nos.1&2, featuring Ensemble Caprice and l’Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal.

"Remember to Forget" was inspired by the biography of György Ligeti and “Children’s War Diaries” - a symphony inspired by a visit to the Children’s Memorial at Yad Vashem and the overwhelming starkness of the Children’s Memorial in contrast to the blazing Jerusalem sunlight.

SOLFEGGIO
Bach | Handel | Vivaldi | Vinci | Mozart
Hélène Brunet, soprano
L’harmonie des Saisons Eric Milnes, direction
Release Date: November 6, 2020

For her first solo album with ATMA Classique, the celebrated Canadian soprano Hélène Brunet has chosen baroque and classical arias that have always been part of her life and for which she feels a deep affinity. Under the direction of Eric Milnes, the period ensemble L’Harmonie des saisons accompanies her in this program featuring music by Bach Handel, Vivaldi, Mozart, and Leonardo Vinci, whose two arias are recorded here as world premieres.

Northwest Passage
Stan Rogers
Saint John String Quartet
Leaf Music, LM227
Release Date: November 20, 2020

For over 30 years the Saint John String Quartet (SJ SQ) has stood among Canada’s leading chamber music ensembles. From their sixth recording Canadian Hits: Unplugged, the ensemble takes us on a visual journey through Stan Rogers iconic “Northwest Passage”. Through the depths of a lush forest canopy to the cliffs overlooking the ocean, SJ SQ highlights the beauty of New Brunswick, Canada perfectly while effortlessly serenading us with one of Canada’s best-known folk songs.

ADIU, ADIU DOUS DAME
Chants d’Italie du XIVe siècle
La Rota
Sarah Barnes, soprano, Emilie Brûlé, medieval fiddle, Esteban La Rotta, guitar, Gothic harp, lute, Tobie Miller, recorder, hurdy-gurdy
Release date: December 4, 2020 (Digital-Only)

Fourteenth-century Florence was one of the most important centres of music and culture in medieval Europe. Despite such setbacks as war, political strife, and the plague, art and music flourished, giving rise to such composers as Francesco Landini, Lorenzo da Firenze (Lorenzo Masini), Donato da Firenze and Gherardello da Firenze. The music on this recording comes from rare medieval manuscripts preserved in libraries in Florence, Paris, and London.
GIFT IDEAS

by OLIVIER BERGERON, JUSTIN BERNARD, TOM INOUE, ARTHUR KAPTAINIS, DINO SPAZIANI AND ANDRÉANNE VENNE

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GADGETS OF ALL KINDS

Handmade Music Boxes
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SoundHandMade, an online distributor that ships worldwide from Spain, stocks a number of hand-crafted retro-style music boxes. Musical selections range from the classics, show tunes, songs from Walt Disney films and cult classics like Star Wars. You know how it works: crank it up and just let it play. This nifty gift for the Holiday Season will sit perfectly atop a fireplace or on a bookcase shelf. At $25 per item this is a steal, but the offer is limited, so don’t delay before it lists again at its retail price of $85. JB

2021 Vintage Opera Posters Wall Calendar from the Met
www.metopera.org

US$24.95

For fans of opera: To help us look forward to what we all hope will be a better new year, the Metropolitan Opera has put together a lovely new wall calendar for 2021. It consists of a fine selection of 12 beautifully detailed, colour illustrations from the early 20th century featuring posters and artwork from Tosca, Madama Butterfly, La Bohème, Turandot, La Traviata and more. While these magnificent works of art are vintage by date, their appeal is no doubt timeless. TI

Tune Out Musical Sleep Mask
www.uncommongoods.com

$50.77 / $58.11 (Bluetooth)

Sleep masks can be of use in either getting a nice rest or falling sound asleep when it’s not possible to be in the dark (during a daytime nap, when your partner is reading, etc.). And speaking of sound...well, here’s a new dimension to achieving that rest or sleep. This sleep mask features padded headphones so that you can wirelessly add any soothing music, podcast, nature sound, etc. to your soothing light-blocked environment. TI

Aromatherapy and essential oil diffusers
www.avril.ca

($45-$100)

In today’s trying times, why not offer a diffuser of essential oils to enhance the well-being of a loved one? The Comptoir Aroma line offers several ultrasonic models such as its AGUNG light purified diffuser or some theme-based ones like JINGLE (perfectly suitable for the Holiday Season), if not CRISTAL, with its added lucky charm that can also be worn around the neck. Essential oils are beneficial for all occasions, even when working from home. It takes no more than two drops of peppermint and cinnamon oil, and a single drop of rosemary to clear the mind and improve concentration. You can even do this when wearing a mask (if at all possible) by inserting a piece of gauze or strip of paper wetted by a few drops of your favourite essential oils. Both these oils and diffusers are sold at all Avril supermarkets. AV

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For eclectic minds

According to a VPN Atlas study conducted in 2019, online music streaming has become the single most important source of income for artists marketing their wares. Some 63.6% (or US$7 billion) of the total US$11 billion revenues have been doled out that way. This study has also shown that there is no uniform scheme of remuneration, each platform establishing its own rate. This, of course, leads to inequities in payments to artists, much to the benefit of the consumer who can shop around for the best deal. Napster actually offers the best rate at $0.00916 per play. Next is Apple Music at $0.00675 followed by Deezer at $0.00562. Of the seven main players in the market today, Spotify and YouTube are the most talked about, not least because they are at the lower end of the scale at $0.00203 and $0.00154 respectively. If you want to support artists in their work, we encourage you to make use of any of the first three services rather than the last two. Your musical friends will be grateful. Napster subscriptions start at $4.99. Apple Music and Deezer start at $9.99. JB

The Idagio and Primephonic apps are the best providers of classical music performances online. If you are a committed Beethoven fan and receptive to new technologies, what better option than to have access to all the music you love at the touch of your cellphone? An annual Idagio Premium+ subscription costs €99.99 or $155. Primephonic, for its part, offers a slightly better annual deal for around $190. JB
“Alle Menschen werden Brüder!” The fundamental message of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is not a bad one for fractious 2020. Nor does a full-size facsimile of the autograph manuscript, uniting elements from Berlin, Bonn and Paris, make a bad gift. If the price of US$995 is a little beyond your budget, the Old Manuscripts and Incunabula company also offers a facsimile of a sketch of Für Elise for US$18. AK

**CÔTÉ LIVRES / BOOK SECTION**

**Beethoven’s Ninth**
www.omifacsimiles.com

The fundamental message of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is not a bad one for fractious 2020. Nor does a full-size facsimile of the autograph manuscript, uniting elements from Berlin, Bonn and Paris, make a bad gift. If the price of US$995 is a little beyond your budget, the Old Manuscripts and Incunabula company also offers a facsimile of a sketch of Für Elise for US$18. AK

**CONDUCTING OPERA**

Joseph Rescigno, formerly of the Orchestre Métropolitain, takes a close look at popular scores from the Mozart-to-Strauss canon. The book is aimed primarily at Rescigno’s fellow conductors but will speak volumes to singers and cultivated opera fans who know the standards and read music. If you ever wondered about the advisability of replacing a cimbasso in Verdi with a bass trombone or rewriting the traditional (but quite inauthentic) cadenza in the Mad Scene of Lucia di Lammermoor, this is your book. University of North Texas Press. Listed at US$27.86 on Amazon. AK

**ZOOM H2N HANDY RECORDER**

Available on Amazon
$227.70

The Zoom H2n has been a constant companion for me as a singer. I’ve used it to record lessons, performances and even continue to make great quality demos with it. Other than the fact that it makes great recordings, it’s also very sturdy. Mine has been at the bottom of a backpack or in a suitcase for most of its life and it still looks new. This would make a great gift for a student or a young professional musician. OB

**MUSICIANS’ CORNER**

Sound adjustments for string instruments
Contact: 514-827-3163 (www.michelgagnonluthier.com)
$65

If you know a string player or are one yourself, here is a good offer to consider, one that will enhance the acoustical mechanics of the instrument through adjustments of the bridge, sound post and sound board. Those three components are crucial in transmitting the impulses generated by the strings. It is important then: 1) to properly adjust the sound post inside the instrument; 2) to straighten the bridge and 3) to have it well positioned.

Based in Varennes, Quebec, Michel Gagnon, is a luthier with expertise in this field. After listening to the instrument and inspecting it closely, he will make the smallest modifications in the axis of rotation of the bridge, thus producing more ringing sounds than ever before. Such work will be of great benefit to any violinist, violist or cellist, and surely welcomed as a holiday gift. DS

**WAGNERISM: ART AND POLITICS IN THE SHADOW OF MUSIC, BY ALEX ROSS**

us.macmillan.com

I highly recommend Alex Ross’ latest work on Wagner and his influence on Western history and culture. Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in September, this is the perfect gift for those interested in deepening their knowledge about the composer himself, his music and how his genius helped shape different aspects of modern art, society and politics. OB

**TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD**
Equated in the public mind with peppy concerti, Vivaldi was similarly prolific (and predictable) as a vocal composer. This program spotlighting the young lyric soprano Myriam Leblanc mixes melancholy and up-tempo numbers with instrumental entr’actes by a trio of flute, cello and harp and uptempo numbers with instrumental soloists. Vivaldi’s Luce e ombra (“From the opera Il Farnace”) from the opera track, an extended aria (“Gelido in ogni vena”) from the opera Il Farnace, brings to mind Winter with the layered sonorities of the introduction. The steady and implacable flute of Grégoire Jeay is almost a second soprano pouring out intensity and support. The impression sometimes is of a boy soprano pouring out improbably adult emotions. Still, this is a pleasing program, closely recorded in keeping with the modest forces. The booklet includes complete texts but no explanatory notes to speak of.

Like Beethoven’s Mass in C, which is overshadowed by the mighty Missa Solemnis, Benjamin Britten’s Sinfonia da Requiem is sometimes mistaken for the War Requiem, although the two works have nothing in common. The Sinfonia, for orchestra alone, lasts just 20 minutes and is riddled with personal ambivalence. Britten was commissioned to write it in 1939, having recently settled in New York and been exposed to its cosmopolitan lifestyle, so much more colourful than London’s greys. The commission came from the Japanese government, to mark the 2,600th anniversary of its ruling dynasty. Japan had brutally invaded China. Britten was a pacificist. He told a newspaper reporter: “I’m making it as anti-war as possible.” But he took the fee. The following year he was summoned to the Japanese consulate to be accused of insulting the nation (they did not ask for the money back).

The work was premiered at Carnegie Hall on March 29, 1941 by the New York Philharmonic and its chief conductor John Barbirolli. Its next performance, in Boston, was more important. The conductor Serge Koussevitzky liked it so much that he commissioned Britten to write his first major opera, Peter Grimes. Amid Japan’s entry into the Second World War and his new preoccupation with opera, the Sinfonia da Requiem got sidelined. To this day, it seldom commands centre stage as a formative work by a brilliant composer in his 20s. Cast in two sombre outer movements and an agitated centre, all with Roman Catholic titles, the Sinfonia covers a gamut of moods, from pity to passion. Mahler is an unmissable influence, notably the Ninth Symphony, while the brass and percussion eruptions belong to Stravinsky and the atmosphere to wartime fragility and the composer’s moral unease. Britten was living in U.S. comfort while his homeland was being blitzed by the Germans.

These conflicts are powerfully projected in a hypertense new recording by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and its Lithuanian music director Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. Unlike many respectful English performances I have heard, this one reflects life at the edge, its continuance uncertain, its faith flickering to extinction. You are unsure from one bar to the next which way the world will go. It is the least English interpretation I have ever encountered, and all the better for that. Mirga stretches rubato to the point of transparency and admits hints of atonality. Does she sense the composer’s mixed feelings? It’s a completely absorbing narrative, available on instant download from DG.

Earlier this year, the Canadian Music Centre released a recording that we strongly recommend: The Spirit and the Dust. It creates a psychedelic atmosphere with otherworldly sounds and features percussionist Beverley Johnston, violinist Marc Djokic and the Amici Chamber Ensemble. The sounds of the marimba and vibraphone occasionally transport us into a trance, making the music pleasant to hear despite the modern musical language. These appealing and accessible works are by Dinuk Wijeratne, Christos Hatzis, Norbert Palej and Richard Mascall, four active composers in the contemporary field. Wijeratne’s The Spirit and the Dust gives the album its title and is characterized by an ethereal, floating atmosphere that is sometimes met with anxiety and horror. Divided into three movements, Hatzis’s Vignette cycle is a nice dialogue between the marimba and violin, whereas Palej’s Ser con El combines music with spoken texts. To end the album, Johnston and Djokic come together once again in Mascall’s Quantum Hologram, a masterful work that lasts more than 17 minutes and never runs short of musical ideas. This album will appeal to people who are still reluctant to listen to contemporary music.
Andrew Wan, violin. Charles Richard-Hamelin, piano
Analekta AN2 8795
Total time: 69:58

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This disc works well as a COVID-era blues-chaser as well as a timely reminder of how comprehensive a genius Beethoven is for everyone everywhere (notwithstanding contemporary ideological effusions to the contrary). All four sonatas – and indeed all movements but one – are in a major key. Not that the radiant bonhomie ever seems easily won, Beethoven being the greatest of all masters of the art of representing life in its shade as well as sunshine. Andrew Wan of MSO fame is able to make incisive points with subtle means. He is aptly matched at the piano by the thoughtful Charles Richard-Hamelin. We feel throughout that these great works are expressions not simply of equality but of friendship. It would be hard to ask for better-natured chirping in the first movement of Op. 12 No. 2, taken at a relatively relaxed Allegro vivace. The opening of the “Spring” Sonata Op. 24 soars sweetly and there much chiaroscuro in the slow movement. My only objection is to the non-observance of first-movement repeats. Of course, I have only my old-fashioned fondness for compact discs to blame. I am told that the stream or the download gives you the whole shebang.

AK

Herbert von Karajan
The Complete Decca Recordings
Decca 483 4903 (33 CDs)
˒˒˒˒˒
There was a time, about 60 years ago, when Herbert von Karajan was called unofficially the “General Music Director of Europe.” In 1960 he was conductor for life of the Berlin Philharmonic, artistic director of the Vienna State Opera, chief conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, and a frequent conductor with the Vienna Philharmonic, La Scala and the Salzburg Festival. He was also under contract to all three of the leading record companies: EMI, Deutsche Grammophon and Decca. At Decca he had the good fortune to work regularly with John Culshaw, perhaps the leading producer of his generation. With Culshaw at the controls Karajan made dozens of recordings, including most of the nine operas in this new set. Many commemorate legendary productions at the Vienna State Opera, each featuring the finest singers of the day. In this box you will find La Bohème with Pavarotti, Freni and Ghiaurov; Madame Butterfly with Pavarotti, Freni and Ludwig; Tosca with Leoncine Price, Di Stefano and Taddei; Carmen with Price, Corelli, Freni and Merrill; Otello with Del Monaco, Tebaldi and Protti; Boris Godunov with Ghiaurov in the title role; Le Nozze di Figaro with van Dam, Krause, Cotrubas and von Stade; Aida with Tebaldi, Bergonzi and Simionato; and Die Fledermaus in a gala performance starring Gueden, Kmentt, Waechter and Berry, with cameo appearances by Nilsson, Björling, Tebaldi, Price, Sutherland and many others. Many of these performances are nearly definitive and each repays repeated listening.

The rest of the recordings feature Karajan with the Vienna Philharmonic in performances that he did better with other orchestras either before or after. The exceptions would be an extraordinarily powerful reading of Holst’s The Planets and coruscating performances of Strauss’s Don Juan and Death and Transfiguration. Obviously, the main reason for investing in this box set is to complete your Karajan collection or because you somehow failed to acquire the opera recordings over the years. There are no librettos but they are readily available at www.booklets.deccaclassics.com.
Radiant and/or relaxing choral recordings are not exactly in short supply. There is always room for another. Here the Calgary-based and accurately self-descriptive Luminous Voices under their music director Timothy Shantz make an admirable case for the sacred scores of the Nova Scotia composer Peter-Anthony Togni. We start with a calmly uplifting and mostly consonant Totus Tuus addressed to the Virgin. The simple texture of a Requiem et Lux is gently animated by subtle dynamics. Dissonances are so purely rendered by these singers (31 are listed in the booklet) they project a paradoxical stasis. A setting in French of Psalm 98 turns the words “chantez au Seigneur” into a lively ostinato figure. The three-movement title composition opens with an alluring flute duet and swells nicely. The treatment of the T.S. Eliot text is as much devotional as maritime. Seas are predominantly calm but there are flickers of spray and sunshine. “Getting into a boat or on a ship is a kind of leap of faith,” says the composer. “We can only pray and trust that the journey will be successful.” This one is. AK

You’ll often hear me telling people a couple of generations down the line that they should listen to new music of our time rather than Beethoven and Mahler, which they will enjoy better once they are in their 50s. Can’t say I’ve made many converts. All the usual excuses: get home from work, make supper, put the kids to bed, veg out on the sofa, no concentration left for the squeaks and squawks of contemporary composers.

Yeah, been there, done that. But I’m not giving up trying to persuade younger people to listen to the new. Wrap your ears, for instance, around Eighth Blackbird’s new album, which engages three US composers – David Lang, Julia Wolfe and Michael Gordon – with fragments from the Beatles’ ornithological song. Remember the Beatles? They were contemporary composers of the mid-20th century, not much heard today.

I love what these tonalists do with the Beatles’ bits and pieces. A snippet of “Eleanor Rigby” catches my ear, in between arrays of bathroom noises, interactions and actual tunes. The album’s only 45 minutes long but I could sit and listen to it for hours.

The Navarra Quartet’s Love and Death flickers from sombre to sombrero. A bullfighter’s lament by Joaquin Turina (1882-1949) is utterly new to me. I’ve dropped a line to the toreador advising him to retrain as a musician for post-Covid employment.

The star turns on the album are by the Hungarian microminimalist György Kurtág (b. 1926), who requires all of your attention for all of one or two minutes and rewards your effort more richly than you could ever imagine. The rest is Puccini’s Chrysanthemums, Janacek’s “Kreutzer Sonata” Quartet and Schubert’s “Death and the Maiden” – all beautifully played but not a patch on the three novelties. New music is good. Try some. NL
This recording by the two-dozen strong Elora Singers under Mark Vourinen clearly aligns with the contemporary emphasis on cultural diversity. The longer work, by the Indian-American composer Reena Esmail, incorporates multiple languages and attempts to survey the world’s major religions in seven movements – in Indian and Western musical styles. A tall order. The score (involving an orchestra of more than 20, including sitar and tabla) is most convincing in the “Hinduism” section, in which soloists alternate long legato lines in Hindi and English. Choral writing honours Western practice more in the breach than the observance. Many are the open intervals and sudden modulations; repetition abounds. A greater success is Giishkaapkag (“Where the rock is cut through”) by the Odawa First Nations composer Barbara Croall. Rocks here are portrayed as crucibles of the souls of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Souls emerge through vocalizations that are integrated with nature imagery. The results are entirely organic. Indeed, extended choral techniques sound more primeval than modern. Despite the context, the score achieves a quiet affirmation of life, not least through the evocative obbligatos of the papigwan (traditional cedar flute) as performed by the composer. Not easy from a technical standpoint – the Elora Singers are clearly pros – this impressive work deserves swift and wide dissemination.

Like a little Bach with your Beethoven? Angela Hewitt obliges with a splendidly pointillistic version of the 33 Variations in C Minor, which once was the repertoire of Horowitz and should be revived more often. The virtuoso rat-a-tat comes across impressively on Hewitt’s beloved (and bright) Fazioli piano, but so do the whispers of the calmer variations, including Var. 30, done tranquillamente, as the composer requires. We get incisive performances of Op. 34 and Op. 35, the latter known as the “Eroica” Variations for their use of the theme of the finale of the eponymous symphony, one year in advance. Beethoven’s exuberance is constantly on the verge of bursting forth in this masterpiece; Hewitt gives value to both its energy and decorum. No one will be surprised to learn that the fugue goes well. The seldom-heard variations on themes by Paisiello are fetching. The Variations on “God Save the King” seem a little too dignified but spirits rise with the Variations on (shock and horror) “Rule Britannia.” Hewitt’s extrovert personality aligns nicely with this repertoire. At almost 80 minutes the recording, however acquired, represents good value. Yet another plus: Hewitt’s perceptive and personal booklet notes. About the Fazioli: This recording represents its swan song. This instrument came to an untimely and accidental end after the sessions last January in the Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin. Sad story. Happy disc.

Reena Esmail: This Love Between Us: Prayers for Unity
Barbara Croall: Giishkaapkag
The Elora Singers/Mark Vourinen
TESR 001
Total time: 54:06

Beethoven: Variations
(Op. 34, Op. 35, WoO69, 70, 78, 79, 80)
Angela Hewitt, piano. Hyperion CD96546
Total time: 79:40

***☆***
Some people settle for a single epiphany. David P. Leonard, the Montreal native who founded the Trebas Institute, has had a few. One was in 1949 at the Layton audio shop, then as now on St. Catherine St. near Stanley. The recording studio upstairs was not much larger than the upright piano it contained.

“With a little window,” Leonard recalled from his home in Hampstead. “I look through the little window, I play my Chopin waltz. I walk out. Then they drop the needle on the turntable, and I hear myself played back instantly.”

Remarkable as this revelation was for the nine-year-old, it was not as decisive as the one he had three years later after performing a piece (it was either Bach or Chopin) at a Red Cross charity show. Rising from the piano bench to accept applause, young David discovered that dozens of listeners had walked out.

“I was devastated,” Leonard said. “I didn’t realize they were into pop, not classical.”

And so, henceforward, was he. Part of the transition was picking up the clarinet. There was no music instruction at Outremont High, at least for boys, of whom greater things were expected. Leonard had to join the Mount Royal High School marching band to log some time on his new instrument.

Pursuing his interest in sound recording was less problematic. His parents, both immigrants from Europe, used to hold musicales on Park Avenue and later in Outremont. Cellist Lotte Brott, violist Otto Joachim and contralto Maureen Forrester were among the regulars.

The living room was outfitted with a Knabe concert grand purchased from Willis Musical Instruments. Jean-Marc Audet of Marko Studios supplied the tape recorder, until Leonard’s father, a doctor, decided to buy a professional model for himself.

Leonard’s fascination with the gadget was immediate. “Something like American Idol,” is how he describes the scene in the living room when he started bringing in musicians to make demos.

The home business took off. Leonard recorded more than 100 bands. Some were recruited from a Sunday-night show put on by the CKVL radio station at the Queen Mary Veterans’ Hospital.

Performers were drawn from young performers who could not afford RCA Studio rates. The Beau-Marks (noted for “Clap Your Hands”) were among Leonard’s early clients. Others were René Angélil and Patsy Gallant. Many recordings on Leonard’s Monticana Records label were reissued by majors like Columbia and Decca.

As a record producer, Leonard was never far from the live circuit. In 1964, when he booked the Montreal band Bartholomew Plus 3 as a warmup act at the famous Peppermint Lounge off Times Square. “Major people – like the Righteous Brothers – would come in and they thought these guys were good,” he recalls.

The Montreal upstarts wanted to get a “real” manager from New York. The option of releasing them from their contract was presented to Leonard – one of the Bartholomew Plus 3 members had a father with underworld ties – as an offer he couldn’t refuse.

All was not lost. This was New York. Walking down Broadway, Leonard presented himself at Beltone Studios with a clutch of his homemade recordings.

He was promptly offered a job. Canadian citizenship was an advantage. Young American employees had a habit, at the beginning of the Vietnam War, of getting drafted.

“Let us know by Friday, you start on Monday,” is how Leonard recalls the all-business conversation. “We’ll take care of the paperwork.”

Tina Turner, Miles Davis, Chet Atkins, Phil Spector, Dee Dee Warwick, Roy Orbison – the parade of luminaries at Beltone was impressive. At first Leonard was allowed only to observe these sessions but he caught a break in 1965 when he worked as the mastering engineer on Otis Blue, an acclaimed album by the soul singer Otis Redding.

Another highlight, to put it mildly, was meeting the Beatles between their afternoon and evening shows on Sept. 8, 1964 in the Montreal Forum. “John Lennon puts his hand on my shoulder and says, ‘Imagine, what’s happened to us,’” Leonard recalls. The album Imagine was a thing of the future.
By the late 1960s Leonard was back in Montreal pursuing a degree in educational technology at Sir George Williams (part of what is now Concordia) University. He got started in a doctoral program in communications at McGill and worked on teleconferencing systems when that technology was in its infancy.


The result, in 1979, in was the first private recording-arts career college in North America. (The name Trebas combines “treble” and “bass,” although Leonard notes with satisfaction that Trebas name spelt backwards is Saber – with an added “t.”) Faculty in the early years included some notables. Dixon van Winkle, a veteran of Phil Ramone’s A & R Records studio, had worked with Barbra Streisand, Simon & Garfunkel and James Taylor. “No wonder we quadrupled the enrolment,” Leonard says.

Most Trebas students were English-speaking, although the francophone presence rose steadily over the years. Trebas alumni have won more than a dozen Grammys. Some have pursued further studies at Sir Paul McCartney’s Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

A few students started rival schools. “I have a saying,” Leonard comments. “We train our graduates and our competitors.”

Curiously, the early graduates were not necessarily music-minded. “A technical kid who maybe never heard anything bigger than a three-piece rock and roll band,” is how Leonard paints the portrait.

Over the years – and especially over the last decade – Trebas students have been more likely to arrive with a musical background. Indeed, music theory and ear training are now part of the curriculum.

“I want the audio students to understand the language,” Leonard says. “When the producer says, ‘Can we go to the eighth bar?’ I don’t want them to head down the street looking for it.”

From its audio core, the school on Sherbrooke Street (which started on Bleury, coincidentally near the former headquarters of the audio pioneer Emile Berliner) has expanded to film and television production, business technology and concert and event management.

The Toronto branch opened in 1983. Courses were given in other cities. Widespread advertising made the Trebas brand familiar.

Last February Leonard sold Trebas to Global University Systems (GUS), a college network operating in 40 countries. Part of its appeal of Trebas to the Amsterdam-based company was the relativeliberality of laws in Quebec governing international students and employment.

“I personally have no children,” Leonard says. “I’d like to think that Trebas will be around like Harvard or McGill for the next hundred, two hundred years. So far GUS is maintaining the name and the image. That’s one reason they bought it – because Trebas is renowned.

“They’ll probably add some programs in general computers to attract people to come here. Are they going to continue the audio programs? Right now, absolutely, yes.”
SOUNDS ABOUT RIGHT

THE MUSICIAN AS RECORDING ENGINEER

by MARC CHÉNARD

As much as musicians are celebrated for having fashioned this art form called jazz, their efforts would probably have never reached a wider audience if sound recordings had not been invented. And this is where the sound engineer fits into the picture. Were it not for these hard-working individuals, whose names go unnoticed by the public, jazz might never have left such a large imprint on the music of the last century or so.

Whatever the style may be – pop, jazz, classical or anything else that may come to mind – each one needs to be approached in a specific way when being recorded. Jazz, as usual, presents its own challenges: because of its spontaneity, so much happens on the fly, hence the need of the engineer to be on his toes all the time. To provide some insights into the art of recording jazz, four specialists in the field share some of their experiences in these and other matters.

ANDRÉ WHITE

The son of a jazz musician, André White broke into the scene some 40 years ago, playing both piano and drums. In the late 1980s, he was the first jazzman to enter the sound recording program at McGill University. A period of intense activity ensued after he graduated in 1990, to the point of leading him to a burnout 18 years later. Nowadays, he has become more choosy in his pursuits, both as a performer and sound engineer, so as not to overlook his McGill teaching duties.

“In 1988, I was fortunate enough to witness a session held at Rudy van Gelder’s famous studio in Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey. To me, he set the standard for all jazz recording; after all, he single-handedly created the sound for Blue Note and Impulse. Back then, he had turned his back on analog and embraced digital instead. I, on the other hand, have never subscribed to one over the other. But the thing I don’t like is when things are too clean; if there are imperfections, so be it, that’s the nature of jazz anyway. In studio, I generally prefer to put the drummer in a booth to avoid its sounds bleeding into other tracks, but I never do that for the bass.”

JACQUES LAURIN

At the onset of his career in the mid-1970s, Jacques Laurin played double bass while dabbling in recording and mixing. After a five-year leave from the business, he returned in 1987, this time devoting himself fully to sound engineering. In the following decade, he went back to school, first earning a BA in music, then a masters in sound recording, also at McGill. After a decade or so of freelance work, which continues to this day, he founded the Orchestre national de jazz de Montréal in 2012, a full-size big band he is always in charge of and whose every concert he records and mixes.

“Before I take on a new project, my priorities are clear: artistic value comes first, never the technical aspects. Next is the space to record in, an issue in itself. Honestly, there are hardly any rooms suitable for jazz, both here and elsewhere, the exception being the three halls at New York’s Lincoln Center that were specifically devised for this music. When it comes to studio set-ups, I can go both ways, depending on the context, either by putting bass and drums in separate booths, or together with the rest of the band. For the ONJ, I record all of its concerts multi-track using the hall’s soundboard and then mix it down. Outside of that, I also mix recordings brought to me by musicians.”

GEORGE DOXAS

In 1989, George Doxas retired from a teaching job to devote himself to sound engineering full-time. This trained classical guitarist, who subsequently picked up the bass, credits his very understanding wife and two musician sons, saxophonist Chet and drummer Jim, for encouraging him to open a studio, Effendi Records in Quebec City, in the basement of the family’s Pointe-Claire home. Over time, he has welcomed musicians from across the country to take advantage of his fully equipped facilities (including a drum kit and a new concert grand piano). The basement was expanded not too long ago and is divided into four separate rooms, all wired to a control room.

“There are so many upsides to owning a recording studio, like the time saved in getting a session underway; it’s all there, ready to go. Jazz musicians don’t have big bucks to spend, so they appreciate that, likewise for my rates. In the beginning, all was analog, but I was easily won over by digital; it makes life so much easier in terms of mixing and editing, even mastering, a wholly different task requiring a different set of tools. Because I do all of these, which is not the case for all engineers, I can have a whole recording ready for commercial production by day’s end.”

ALAIN BÉDARD

Long before starting Effendi Records in 1998, Alain Bédard played bass professionally in his native Quebec City. Parallel to that, he was drawn to recording, first by learning on his own then picking the brains of established engineers in the field. Studies at Université du Québec à Montréal apprised him of the more technical aspects of the job. In the early days of his label, he recorded the music and mixed the sessions, and still does the latter nowadays, but now relegates the former task to others.

“Since improvisation is the bread and butter of jazz, it is so much a music of the moment, and has to be played on the spot, as if happening in a live setting. That is the major difference with pop, where you can bring people in separately and lay down tracks one by one, after which you assemble the whole thing. So a proper placement of musicians in the studio is essential for jazz. I go about it by setting the bass apart from the others, in a booth. Given its much more delicate sound, it can be easily intruded upon by the other instruments in the band. On the other hand, I never isolate drums as some do, otherwise they sound muffled and unnatural.”
MARC CHÉNARD

BOOK NOTES AND BLUE NOTES

**Of Stars and Strings**

A Biography of Sonny Greenwich

Mark Miller

Since his first book in 1983, a collection of musician profiles entitled *Fourteen Lives*, Mark Miller has established himself as Canada’s jazz historian laureate. While the bulk of his work has dealt with Canadian subjects, the one-time music writer for *The Globe and Mail* has ventured beyond our borders on several occasions, producing biographies of pianist Herbie Nichols and trumpeter-vocalist Valaida Snow, among others. Last June, he issued his 12th book, a biography of guitarist Sonny Greenwich. Two years after his widely acclaimed bio of drummer Claude Ranger, whose legendary status is shrouded in mystery following his disappearance in Y2K, Miller set his sights on a subject still with us, albeit retired for close to 20 years. In addition to conducting extensive interviews with the guitarist at this home outside Montreal, Miller draws numerous quotes from his exchanges with several of Greenwich’s former associates. Beyond these first-person accounts, the narrative contains a good deal of original research gleaned from secondary sources such as newspaper and magazine reviews of concerts and recordings.

Born Herbert Greenidge in Hamilton on New Year’s Day 1936 (his son, Sonny Jr., coincidentally born the same day 26 years later), the guitarist picked up his current name in the 1950s during his Toronto days. Basically self-taught, he developed a technique and sound of his own making, even a musical concept that allowed him to soar over the open harmonies much favoured in modal music. These characteristics, plus his marked preference for single-note lines rather than the strumming of chords, drew him closer to saxophonists, in particular to John Coltrane, whose spiritual aspirations very much imbued his playing.

By the mid-1960s, Sonny was breaking in on the Montreal scene. From there, he would venture southwards to the Big Apple and even make an appearance as a sideman on a Blue Note record. Yet he returned to Canada, held back in part by his diffident nature, if not by certain ongoing health issues (a subject of wide speculation before the publication of this book). Overall, his career was one of recurring starts and stops, with spurts of activity interspersed with more or less lengthy lulls. His recorded output, outlined in a discography at the end of the book, is not the most prolific, but sufficient to have something to show for.

True to this literary genre, the story unfolds chronologically, from Greenwich’s youth in Southern Ontario to his curtain call in 2002 with pianist Marilyn Lerner. Most importantly, the narrative comes to grips directly with the music by discussing each album in layman’s rather than musical-theoretical terms. Miller upholds his standards by successfully walking that fine line between factual insight and critical assessment, both of which are essential to any credible endeavour in this field.

Available in Canada through Indigo Books (in store and online)

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**OFF THE RECORD**

JUST OUT ON JUSTIN TIME

by MARC CHÉNARD

Since first appearing on the Montreal scene shortly after Y2K, the Doxas brothers have made good headway in the music world. As the elder of the two, Jim has proven to be one of the most versatile drummers in and about town; brother saxman Chet, for his part, took off a few years ago to test his mettle in the Big Apple, a major break for him (and his brother) being an association with Dave Douglas, Carla Bley and Steve Swallow in a band called Riverside. Just out is this new side that pairs the siblings in a good deal of original research gleaned from secondary sources such as newspaper and magazine reviews of concerts and recordings.
THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AND THE GLENN GOULD SCHOOL

Fourteen artists connected to the Royal Conservatory of Music, including pianists, string players and singers, as well as a percussionist, are included in the 2020 CBC 30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30 list. Pianist Stewart Goodyear, an alumnus of the RCM Certificate Program and the Glenn Gould School, has been named as an Honorary Fellow of the RCM during the first ever online convocation ceremony for the RCM Certificate Program last September. Angela Schwarzkopf, faculty member at the Glenn Gould School (GGS), took home a major prize at the 2020 JUNO Awards, as did two RCM alumni. Ernesto Cervini won Jazz Album of the Year: Group for the Turboprop Abundance album, while Stefan Babcock, also an alumnus and a member of the band PUP, took home the prize for Alternative Album of the Year for Morbid Stuff.

SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MUSIC, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

The Schulich School of Music welcomes two new faculty members. The American bass Matthew Treviño has started teaching in the voice area; and a newly created position in music pedagogy that ties with the school’s focus on teaching and learning has been given to Andrea Creech. On the research side, there are two new Canada research chairs in the school: musicologist David Brackett and music theorist Edward Klorman. The violin professor Jinjoo Cho is one of the 18 new William Dawson Scholars. The master’s level conducting student Kelly Lin recently won the prestigious Hnatyshyn Foundation Christa and Franz-Paul Decker Fellowship in Conducting.

ORFORD MUSIQUE

As it prepares to celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2021, Orford Musique has entered an important period of strategic analysis. As part of this dynamic renewal process, the organization will begin opening its doors to artists and university students looking for a peaceful setting in which to pursue their creative goals. Artist residencies are planned for the fall, involving cellist Stéphane Tétreault, harpist Valérie Milot, pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin and violinist Andrew Wan.

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The School of Music welcomed two new full-time faculty this year: music theorist Leigh VanHandel and mezzo-soprano Krisztina Szabó. Professor VanHandel is a leading expert on teaching music theory and the editor of The Routledge Companion to Music Theory Pedagogy (2020). Professor Szabó has performed on some of the biggest stages in North America and Europe. She most recently taught at the University of Toronto. The School of Music is seeking to fill the position of assistant professor of piano. The ideal candidate has experience beyond classical music but is grounded strongly in that tradition. One of
the school’s larger projects this year is a cross-collaboration with the Belkin Gallery, the First Nations House of Learning and the Chan Centre. The project is an installation at the Belkin Gallery called Soundings.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY

The Don Wright Faculty of Music is pleased to announce that Mark Ramsay has joined the faculty as coordinator of choral activities. Also, Professor Emerita Victoria Meredith received the Choral Canada Distinguished Service Award. Student Leslie Higgins, BMus (Voice), received the Outstanding Student Essay award with “To Blend or not to Blend: A Solo Singer’s Guide to Singing in Choral Ensembles.”

UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTÉRÉAL

The Université de Montréal music faculty is strengthening its singing sector with the addition of the acclaimed tenor Richard Margison as vocal teacher. Margison, who was already teaching as a visiting professor, was very appreciative of the students. The faculty enhances the diversity of its composition sector by welcoming three young teacher-composers: Myriam Boucher, Jimmie Leblanc and Dominic Thibault. Boucher, a former student of Jean Fiché with an audiovisual practice, works on music video with an innovative outlook. Leblanc develops his compositional approach by making connections between the visual arts and the theoretical reflections that are part of the philosophy of perception. Thibault, who is oriented to musical technology, has experience ranging from music production to technical direction.

CONCORDIA

The music department has hired Josh Reger as a full-time professor. This vibrant up-and-coming jazz pianist who graduated from McGill was hired not long after his graduation and will be taking over the jazz area after the long-standing founding member Charles Ellison. Professor Ricardo Dal Farra teaches an intensive course as part of ISEA2020, the world’s largest conference dedicated to art, culture and technology. Moreover, 17 fine-arts students will also be showing their work. Last June, during a special online celebration of the 2020 Juno Awards, Dawn Tyler Watson, BFA 94, won Blues Album of the Year.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Carleton University has a new venue for their students: the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, an historic church that has been transformed into an arts, performance and learning space. Individuals such as local cellist Bryan Cheng booked the CDCC to livestream his participation in a national competition, playing Dvořák’s Cello Concerto and winning the $20,000 first prize. The university’s School for Studies in Art and Culture has announced that genre-defying multi-instrumentalist Petr Cancura will be the artist-in-residence in Carleton’s music program for the winter 2021 semester.

UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

This fall, the Université de Sherbrooke’s school of music is implementing the second phase of the first professionalizing baccalaureate in music. With this second phase, the school finalizes the project with the addition of teaching tools that are specific to professional practice. Professor Jean-François Desrosby, a guitar specialist, who is interested in optimizing instrumental performance, joins the faculty. New lecturers include: Malika Tirolien, in vocals; Zoé Dumas, in jazz, world and pop violin; Jean Fernand Girard, in jazz piano; Philippe Turcotte, in pop keyboard; Dimitri Lebel-Alexandre, in pop guitar; and Marlène Provencher-Leduc, in flute.

VANIER COLLEGE CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Despite the COVID response, which has effectively closed the college to classes and live activities, the Vanier College music department is continuing to stage events celebrating its 50 years through streaming services. These will include the Noon Concert Series, which begins this month with visits from successful alumni and a jazz combo concert on Nov. 25. Nov. 7 sees the 2020 Virtual Open House for Music, which will include online visits with area teachers from Nov. 10 to 12 in the evenings, and virtual workshops on Saturday, Nov. 28. The Vanier College Choir will round out the fall semester with a streamed concert from Église Saint-Laurent during the week of Dec. 7 to 11. Plans for concerts and other events during the winter semester are on hold pending the outcome of the pandemic and alert levels for the city of Montreal. Major events for Winter 2021 are currently scheduled for March 31 (Annual Noel Spinnelli Vocal Scholarships Recital); April 19 (23rd Annual Big Band Benefit) and May 7 (End of Year Choir Concert). The year will end with a gala and dinner/dance on June 19, 2021, with a band that will feature current faculty, students, and alumni on stage for a consummate musical extravaganza.

OBERLIN CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

The Oberlin Conservatory of Music has five new interdisciplinary programs, announced last fall and launched this semester. For students interested in the science of how music gets inside our heads, there is the Music and Cognition minor; for those interested in how music has been shaped by the society, there is the Music and Popular Culture minor; to explore performance across the arts, there is the Interdisciplinary Performance minor; for the students with interest in technologies, there is the Arts and Creative Technologies minor; finally, for those interested in the administrative side of music, there is the Arts Administration and Leadership Integrative non-concentration. Also, the conservatory announced a new program in Recording Arts and Production that will begin in fall 2021. Designed for students with an undergraduate degree, the program offers training for careers in the recording arts, with a multitude of opportunities for hands-on learning and a distinctive emphasis on engineering and producing classical and jazz music.
Nobody was expecting what is happening at the moment. Like all organizations, schools and universities had to adapt. Masks and hand sanitizer are required in every building. Protocols have been developed in response to the pandemic, at the price of much hardship for many people.

“We had to go through a fairly big process within the university for safety protocols,” says Patrick Carrabré, director of the University of British Columbia school of music. “A lot of time was spent with cleaning procedures: what kind of wipes can you use on a piano, etc.”

Most music schools and faculties across the country are offering face-to-face as well as online education in a blended model. There has been a general push for all music theory and music history classes and seminars to go online. One-on-one, in-person instrument and voice lessons are the most difficult elements of musical training to transition into a remote environment.

Just rethinking the use of the premises for ensemble rehearsal and individual practice has been a real puzzle. As a matter of fact, the in-person option for orchestra, band, choir and opera rehearsals often depends on the size of the facilities at the institution’s disposal.

Some schools, such as UBC’s, have been privileged to have access to larger buildings and therefore can manage in-person ensemble rehearsals. As for Université de Montréal, the music faculty extended the stage of Salle Claude-Champagne to give students the possibility of working in groups.

“We tried to bring the orchestra and other instrumental or vocal ensembles together as much as possible to ensure that we maintain a certain faculty life for our students,” explains dean Nathalie Fernando. Other schools, like Western University’s Don Wright Faculty of Music, are offering ensemble courses in a blended model – online and in-person – without having meetings of the full group.

While it is not a policy they necessarily wish to pursue after the pandemic, Concordia University’s department of music decided that instead of cancelling the season, they would embrace the idea of the virtual ensemble in their curriculum. “All the musicians around the world who are isolated do the same thing, they cannot play together so they play virtually,” says dean Mark Corwyn. “There is a lot we can learn from that process.” The Schulich School of Music at McGill University is also offering virtual ensembles at the moment but will implement in-person large and small ensemble activities starting in January.

Regarding classrooms and practice rooms, they can only be used by a certain number during a certain time. For some universities, depending on the efficiency of the air circulation systems, students and staff have to wait up to 45 minutes between activities. That is to say that a student can use a practice room for 45 minutes and must leave it vacant for 45 minutes before the next student arrives. In addition, in order to accommodate one-on-one, in-person lessons, institutions have to implement a multitude of new physical setups such as plexiglass sheets for brass and voice lessons.

One positive side of remote teaching is that institutions are reaching out to guest lecturers from around the world and are also rethinking the way they train students. “We normally have quite a few lectures and masterclasses given by guests from outside the university but this term we have been able to expand that significantly and have 90 international guests just for the fall semester,” says Brenda Raven-scroft, dean of McGill University’s Schulich School of Music. “Because we are doing so much of the teaching remotely, we have been thoughtful about learning and what it is that we really need the students to learn and how we can teach that best.” Also, the current situation forces most institutions to webcast concerts, which means that many faculty concerts and students recitals are now available to the general public to watch online.

Even though university life is limited to what can be done in a time of pandemic, institutions do their best to enable music students to maintain training. “Students want to be heard making music and they are working hard to keep safe and healthy,” says Betty Anne Younker, dean of the Don Wright Faculty of Music. “When they first came back to the faculty and were able to make music, there was much emotion. People can email me if they have concerns but most of the emails I get are from students just thanking the faculty for making the spaces available for them to keep going. It is quite touching.”
With major renovations to its facilities now complete and following an overhaul of its teaching programs, Université de Sherbrooke’s music school has devised a whole new curriculum grounded in the concepts of versatility and creativity. The school also claims to be innovative by adopting an approach developed at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

Jean-François Desrosby, professor in charge of studies in performance and composition, explains: “We redesigned our program from scratch, first by examining the very foundations on which the pursuit of a musical career rests, then by considering the most suitable means towards that goal. We therefore used what I would call a ‘program approach,’ one where courses crosscut each other so as to form an integrated whole.”

All learning materials are conceived with the view of stimulating a sense of entrepreneurship among young musicians; given the rapid evolution of the profession and the steadily changing norms, it is important to have them measure up to real-life situations. Not only do they receive a solid training in the arts of performance and composition, but they also learn about recording, production and all business-related matters. Students are given the chance to acquaint themselves with the demands of a music career by simulating day-to-day-situations encountered by professionals. The trainees are required to build specific projects and acquaint themselves with various means to make them happen, be it the definition of an identity and their goals to the writing of grant proposals, to the creation of press kits and use of demos, all of which are part and parcel of an overall business plan. Whatever the area of study may be — performance, composition or audio-visuals — students have to work on tight schedules and seek out students in disciplines others than their own.

Because everything hinges on creativity, concerts and recitals must be conceived in a completely different way. “Students are in charge of all projects,” Desrosby says. “Being good performers with plenty of technique is not enough in today’s musical world; they have to create added value in everything they do. There is more to it now than just playing the music; one has to be a producer and a marketer. But there is no one way to go about that. It’s up to every individual to put his or her best foot forward.”

To best achieve this, a multidisciplinary approach is needed, one where individuals are encouraged to perform with practitioners of other styles. In light of the current pandemic and the challenges that have arisen, students and teachers of all stripes are more creatively motivated than ever. “We view the situation as an opportunity to develop new ways of thinking and doing,” says Desrosby, “And I believe our students are well equipped to meet this reality head on.”

Université de Sherbrooke is also determined to offer in situ learning with added psychological counselling for those in need of it. “Studies in the psychology of performance are part of the first-year program offered to all musicians,” notes Desrosby. “That is a definite asset for them, even more so now.”

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

www.usherbrooke.ca/musique
IS IT WORTH STUDYING MUSIC NOW?

by JACQUELINE VANASSE

Music will not cease to exist because of a pandemic. What we have witnessed in the past months proves this. There has been an unprecedented influx of music on social networks and a thirst for music-making and listening. Somehow, not being able to make and share music through live performance has highlighted how important music is for us. For Jean-François Rivest, conductor and educator, what we are going through today is only a temporary setback, a difficult time testing the music community on a global level. “Music connects the past with the future,” he says. “It is a catalyst for the very role of tradition. Tradition is not just a funny old-fashioned word but has always been a springboard that allows us to project ourselves into the future from the past, and music is a vehicle for doing that.”

Music is one of the most fundamental aspects of human life. To make that music, we need professionals, we need people who continue to pass on that heritage to those who will create the music of tomorrow. For Nathalie Fernando, dean of Université de Montréal faculty of music, the pandemic cannot undermine the importance of the human relationship we have with music. “There is not a society in the world that does not have that emotional, almost spiritual, connection to music,” she says. “People will always need music, it is part of being human. It is a fact that the sector is extremely affected economically, but the human relationship we have with music has not changed, and even has developed. That is a strong argument for not giving up studying music. You just have to put your head above the clouds a little, look to the future and keep believing in it.”

The students chose to come back. “They have not questioned whether this is the right thing to do,” says Brenda Ravenscroft, dean of McGill University’s Schulich School of Music. “They have accepted that it is not perfect at the moment and this is still what they want to do. That is telling us something.” As for Betty Anne Younker, dean of Western University’s Don Wright Faculty of Music, she notices that student engagement with music has not diminished. “They are seeking out ways to engage with music however they can. They are given the opportunity to work differently with aspects of the music and to be creative.” For André Cayer, director of Université de Sherbrooke’s music school, this crisis might even enable students to adapt better to future changes.

The pandemic has challenged our normal way of doing things. Schools and universities were forced to look more closely at how they were training students and preparing them for the real world – a world that we know now can change so radically, so quickly. “It is questioning everything that we are doing,” says Patrick Carrabré, director of University of British Columbia’s school of music, “and it can only make our understanding deeper. It points out the flaws in our systems and encourages us to experiment and try to figure out what could be a good musical experience in that world.”

“It is kind of clarifying in a way,” says Ravenscroft. “We should not pretend everything is great, because it is not, but at the same time, there are all sorts of interesting, positive things that are coming out of this.” She also reminds us how studying music has always been about so much more than just developing musical skills. “An important part of the study of music is that you come to it because you love your instrument, but what you gain in the process of the training is so much more than just playing your instrument. Communication, problem-solving, leadership, focus, resilience, dedication; those are all transferable skills that one gets from practicing their instrument and from working towards a goal over a very long period of time.”

Working, studying and performing largely from home is not incompatible with a commitment to advancing the transformative effect that music has on society and human connection. Students and faculty at the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto find themselves inspired by Gould, the great Canadian pianist, who explored the frontiers of performance practice through technology and multimedia.

To return to the central question: If by “worth” we mean practical and convenient, then no, it is not worth studying music now. But, has it ever been the convenient thing to do? You are a musician, or you are not – it is not a choice – it is something that cannot be ignored. No one knows what the implication of the current situation will be in five or 10 years, but there is no reason not to hope for the future.

While everyone agrees that the situation is devastating for independent artists and frightening for arts organizations, many in the sector predict that good things can come out of it. “What COVID did is that it brought that timeline for absolute change to now,” explains Tricia Baldwin, director of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts at Queen’s University. “The outcome will depend on the urgency we have individually and collectively to get through this period.” Humans have always used the difficulties of their journey to transcend themselves. There have always been difficulties. Difficulty leads people to invent, to be creative and to find solutions. If anything, the awareness that we cannot take music for granted will make us better musicians, teachers and students.
The National Youth Orchestra of Canada (NYO Canada) enjoys an iconic reputation as Canada’s orchestral finishing school, providing in-depth training for the country’s top young classical musicians. Each summer, NYO Canada discovers and inspires young orchestral musicians, supports emerging composers and artists and builds an appreciation for classical music. One-third of Canada’s professional orchestral musicians are alumni of NYO Canada.

For its 61st season, NYO Canada is poised to launch a comprehensive online training institute with expanded programs, internationalized masterclasses and scholarships for all.

“With uncertainty around the virus set to continue well into 2021, we have been hard at work reimagining the future,” comments Barbara Smith, President and CEO of the National Youth Orchestra Canada, “Rather than taking a step back, we are innovating and growing forward.”

SCHOLARSHIPS, AWARDS AND EQUIPMENT
As well as free tuition, each musician receives a $1,000 scholarship and has the chance to compete for 10 new Awards of Excellence of $5,000 each. These awards are in addition to the annual Michael Measures Prizes ($25,000 and $15,000 for first and second prizes, respectively).

Special microphones for use during the session will be provided free to all musicians who need them. Faculty also receive training to create an optimal online teaching environment.

INTERNATIONALIZED MASTERCLASSES
With online instruction opening unlimited geographical possibilities, NYO Canada has assembled an unprecedented international faculty for 2021. NYO Canada musicians not only enjoy the guidance of a core faculty from Canada, but also gain insights from international guests hailing from renowned schools and orchestras in the United States, Germany, Austria and Japan.

EXPANDED MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM
The onset of the pandemic has reinforced the need for ongoing mental health support. This year, the NYO Canada launches an expanded mental health program that emphasizes performance focus training and mindfulness support.

MORE LESSONS, WORKSHOPS AND PERFORMANCES
Musicians will benefit from triple the number of individual lessons as compared to previous years. Newly added workshops explore audio capture, video production, online marketing, earning royalties, and how to use social media as an artistic medium. The work of the training institute will flow into a series of online public performances, which will be accessible not only to Canadian audiences, but to an expanded global audience.

Applications for NYO Canada 2021 open from November 1 to January 1. www.NYOC.org/auditions
MARC-ANTOINE D’ARAGON
THE PERSPECTIVE OF VERSATILITY
by ANDRÉANNE VENNE

He is of the opinion that three factors are paramount in achieving great sound quality in a recording: the quality of the performance first, of course; then the director; and finally the acoustics. D’Aragon insists that it is not necessary to use $3,000 - $4,000 microphones: “Even though the microphones are of some importance, the real game changers are the director who positions them effectively as well as the acoustics.”

The career of a singer is a demanding one. After having sustained the lifestyle for a few years, D’Aragon is now focused on his related passions. He cannot overstate the importance of giving thought early on about what he likes to call the “alternative career.”

ALTERNATIVE CAREER
Singing is a demanding career physically, because one has to stay in shape at all times; psychologically, because criticism is omnipresent in classical music; and financially, because even after paying for studies and investing large sums in order to break through (travel costs, audition fees, pianist, rehearsals), the opera singer must continue to pay a vocal coach throughout his career.

The financial outlook for those pursuing a singing career is not very encouraging: “Twenty-seven percent of professional singers in Quebec earn less than $10,000 and 60% earn less than $20,000 a year.”

One of the observations he presents in his doctoral thesis and in his forthcoming book Guide pratique pour chanteurs lyriques émergents is the absence of consideration in educational institutions of a Plan B. “In university, we are taught that there is only one career, the great career of an opera singer. Institutions even discourage students from joining choirs or becoming church singers, even though there is a lot to be learned by doing choir and the majority of students will work in choirs or as church singers, which are in fact very laudable professions.”

“Fewer than 10% of people who are trained in the most renowned institutions will achieve careers as great singers. Thinking about having a Plan B should therefore be an integral part of what is taught, starting from the baccalaureate.”

AN AILING BUSINESS
D’Aragon expresses dismay at the financial burden that singers have to bear throughout their careers, especially at the onset, and is critical of audition fees in particular. He notably helped to abolish these fees within the Société d’art lyrique du royaume in 2011 while he was artistic director.

“Singers have to pay $50 to audition, in addition to having to pay their pianist and their plane tickets. It’s sick! On top of that, the fees for programs for young artists, which often take place in the summer, are used for all intents and purposes to offer paid vacations to university professors who travel first class to hear singers in another city and are treated like royalty, staying in five-star accommodations in luxurious resorts where they can take it easy. It’s indecent.”

Promotional material for artists starting their careers is also very expensive. Accordingly, it is with the aim of helping artists to launch and manage their careers that D’Aragon has created, in extension of his web company OpéraOp.com, the site ArtistsCenter.com. (Note to those who would be inclined to invest in the project: $30,000 is still needed to put it online.) “It is a tool for opera singers, performing artists, symphony orchestras, agents and producers to find jobs, do interviews directly on the platform, as well as post their CVs and material at a much lower cost than that of maintaining their own websites.”

IS SCHOOL OF ANY USE?
Despite his grievances against singing institutions, having himself acquired diplomas and training from different schools and becoming enamoured of teaching, D’Aragon believes that studying singing is not all in vain. “It is possible, of course, if you have an exceptional private teacher, to be given opportunities to start with independent opera companies without going through the university circuit. But my singing training has allowed me, in addition to studying what I like, to build contacts that I would not have had otherwise and to work with people who have helped me enormously.”

www.marcantoinedaragon.com

O
nce active on the opera stage, baritone Marc-Antoine D’Aragon now enjoys the pleasure of singing in the Bohème group along with his friends Nadia Monczak (violin), Steven Massicotte (piano) and Denis Chabot (double bass). He is also the current Artistic Director of Choeur de la Montagne, is operating a recording studio and caring for the Tourneson studio he founded in 2002, Marc-Antoine D’Aragon now enjoys the baccalaureate.”

ROLE OF THE DIRECTOR
A word of caution to musicians just starting their careers: if there’s one thing you need to know before recording a demo, it’s that you need a director. As a recording engineer and director of the Tourneson studio he founded in 2002, Marc-Antoine D’Aragon has helped several young artists accede to the first rounds of international competitions, get auditions, or even clinch roles thanks to the quality of their demos.

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www.marcantoinedaragon.com
With all of the uncertainties that young musicians now face in finding work in their field, many have elected to adjust their plans to pursue careers elsewhere, including the field of arts administration. The next step for some is the HEC’s diplôme d’études supérieures spécialisées (DESS) program in arts management. Olivier Delaire enrolled in the master’s program at Montreal’s Hautes Études Commerciales. A tenor by training, Delaire was directed by his school towards Ambiances Ambigües, a cultural enterprise where he works as an administrative assistant. Both the program and its highly qualified teaching personnel have enabled him to understand first hand the stakes involved in ensuring success for a business operating in this sector.

Another Montreal-based graduate program worth mentioning is the Master in International Arts Management (MMIAM). Concert pianist Yumi Palleschi was in the program’s sixth and most recent graduating class. Originally from Italy, she got her performance degree in the United States and then settled in Montreal. At this writing, she is the accountant and budget director for the Joe, Jack and John theatre company, sharing responsibilities in project financing, strategic partnerships and market development, including public relations. “The program’s scope has been a real asset to me,” says Palleschi, “so much so that I can apply pretty well everything I learned in my daily chores.”

Students enrolled in the MMIAM spend a year of intensive studies at five different universities – in Dallas, Montreal, Bogota, Beijing, Milan – as well as two seminars in Mumbai and New Delhi, providing ample opportunities to establish ties with arts managers around the world and personally experience other cultures. Fellow recent graduate Elise Sharron still takes on assignments as a piano accompanist, but the American’s main gig is that of director of operations for the Punta Gorda Symphony in Florida. MMIAM alumni Daniela Alzate and Wenhan Ou – from the first and second graduating classes, respectively – have both landed full-time jobs as arts administrators far from Montreal. Alzate stepped away from the piano to retrain herself before moving back to her native Colombia. She now works as a marketing specialist for the Teatro Mayor Julio Mario Santo Domingo in the capital, Bogota. Ou, yet another pianist, now teaches arts administration at the Xingai music conservatory in Guangzhou, in his home country of China.

We encourage those thinking of a career in arts management to look into the MMIAM program and consider it on the merits of global outreach.

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

For further information, go to: hec.ca/etudiants/mon-programme/dess/index.html and www.master-in-international-arts-management.com
THROUGH HARDSHIP TO THE STARS
BROTT MUSIC ADAPTS TO THE PANDEMIC

by CAROL XJONG

In a world shaken by COVID-19, Brott Music has responded with courage and an inventive spirit. “When faced with the possibility of closing its doors this summer, the Brott Music Festival saw the crisis as an opportunity to innovate,” says artistic director Boris Brott. “It was felt the show must go on.”

“This year, our motto might as well be ad astra per aspera, which translates as ‘through hardships to the stars.’ We are going to pass through some rocky times trying to reach the outer limits of what we want.”

A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER
Since the pandemic hit, Brott Music has already accomplished much in the face of adversity. This past summer, Brott Music not only ran a highly successful National Academy Orchestra online virtual training program, but also staged a full-scale virtual opera with the BrottOpera emerging artists program.

Testimony from both instructors and participants highlight the success. Pinchas Zukerman, who reigns as one of today’s most sought-after and versatile musicians, says, “I had the pleasure of teaching members of the National Academy Orchestra on July 10. The virtual experience with the young musicians was wonderful. I found that the level of playing was excellent and their enthusiasm remarkable.”

In addition to the NAO online program, Brott Music continued its 2020 plans for BrottOpera. The singers participated in the same vital professional development activities those that had been originally scheduled, including training in business, career advice, stage movement, dance, simulated swordfighting and Italian.

The BrottOpera virtual program culminated in a virtual production of Mozart’s Don Giovanni on July 30 on the festival’s Facebook and YouTube pages.

Soprano Stephanie DeCiantis says of her experience: “Not only did [the festival] decide to do a full opera, but they hired the professionals necessary to really explore this medium. They cut and crafted a well-loved opera, Don Giovanni, into something that stayed true to the original intention of the music, was more accessible online, and something that would appeal to large audiences. I was so happy to be a part of this this summer, this show is innovative, brand new, and most importantly I think it will turn out beautifully.”

PERFORMANCES IN WINTER 2020
Brott Music continues at full momentum as it prepares to present two operas in November and December 2020: John Estacio’s historical opera Filumena, starring soprano Sydney Baedke, tenor Ernesto Ramirez, and baritone Gregory Dahl, as well as a world premiere of Odawa First Nations and Canadian composer Barbara Croal’s Hide and Seek with an all-Indigenous cast.

Brott Music will be presenting its annual performance of Handel’s Messiah on Dec. 2 at St. Anne’s Catholic Church (Ancaster, Ontario). Soprano Shantelle Przybylo, alto Andrea Ludwig, tenor Bud Roach and baritone David Pike will perform with the Arcady chorus.

A limited audience of 50 observing social distancing will be available, health conditions permitting. All performances will be available online at brottmusic.com.

"TRIPLE PREPARED" FOR SUMMER 2021
“I am hoping that by the time July rolls around we will have found a way to return to a more normal existence,” Brott says. “We have been invited to appear live at the Toronto Summer Music Festival, the Festival of the Sound in Parry Sound, and the Collingwood Festival. Our opera will be Mozart’s Così fan tutte. The Festival will close with a full production of The Sound of Music.”

Canadian artists between 18 and 30 are encouraged to apply to the National Academy Orchestra (June 14 to Aug. 15) and BrottOpera (June 14 to Aug. 15). All members receive full tuition and a scholarship.

Says Brott of the ideal candidate: “We are seeking the most accomplished professional musicians recently graduated from university or conservatory programs, who are seeking practical knowledge and experience in areas often not available in educational institutions.”

He adds: “I am most looking forward to making live music for an appreciative audience. However, though I am optimistic I am also practical. The safety of our participants and of our audience is paramount.”

To be ready for all possible scenarios in 2021, Brott Music has “triple prepared,” having explored every possible means of making and sharing music, ranging from online livestreams to outdoor performances for audiences in cars. All the reinvention has already paid off. Online performances at Brott Music have garnered 1,000 views per performance, and have reached, collectively, audiences in 46 different countries.

“I would like to encourage all music lovers and all musicians to embrace this new world,” Brott concludes. “More than ever, we musicians have something special to give the world: optimism, beauty, an international language, a communication between heart and head.” www.brottmusic.com
BACK TO SCHOOL
THE MASKED SHOW MUST GO ON
by JUSTIN BERNARD

The challenge of returning to school is particularly complicated for opera workshops, which often include a large number of students and participants. But McGill University and the Université de Montréal, among others, are finding their way forward.

At McGill, everything is now being done online … or nearly everything. Most rehearsals and classes are being done remotely, by videoconference. These at least allow the advantage of bridging the distance between orchestra conductors and coaches in faraway countries and gathering the entire team together. The increased use of digital tools also sparked the creation of the Digital Opera Projects series, which brings together several members including Michael Hide toshi Mori, executive and artistic director of Tapestry Opera in Toronto; Michael Shannon of the Canadian Opera Company; and Jordan de Souza of the Komische Oper in Berlin and Bregenz Festival in Austria. Patrick Hansen, director of Opera McGill, and Stephen Hargreaves, head vocal coach, are overseeing this series, whose first steps we outline here.

On Sept. 23, nearly a month after the school year began, some Opera McGill students gathered for a first rehearsal of The Old Maid and the Thief by Gian Carlo Menotti (an opera composed specifically for radio, with no stage directions). This opera in one act will be the pièce de résistance of a program that will also include various opera scenes, to be presented in November. The choice of works was made so that a maximum of three students at a time will perform on stage with piano accompaniment. The Old Maid and the Thief, for example, has only four characters. Owing to pandemic protocols, Bir gid Lucey and Ingrid Johnson rehearsed in masks on Oct. 13 under Hargreaves’ direction. They were also separated by a Plexiglas shield throughout the exercise (see photo). The next day, Digital Opera Projects coordinator Zach Salsburg-Frank coached singer Nicole Ross remotely for the same opera. As many around the world have found, Zoom has become a valuable work tool.

At the Université de Montréal, voice students are actively preparing the next production of their opera workshop: Venus and Adonis by John Blow. For the past five years, program director Robin Wheeler and his team have presented a Baroque opera in the fall, taking advantage of the expertise of harpsichordist Luc Beauséjour, who runs the baroque music workshop. He had performed this work with Clavecin en Concert a few years ago at Bourgie Hall, with director Marie-Nathalie Lacoursière. “At the UdeM opera workshop,” Wheeler recalls, “we’d already done a few Purcell operas such as Dido and Aeneas and The Fairy Queen. I love this music and that of another great British composer, Benjamin Britten, but these two great names make us forget people like John Blow. Some say that Venus and Adonis is the first English-language opera in history. We finished choosing our repertoire at the end of February – three weeks before the beginning of this crazy time we are going through. This worked out well since the work has only 45 minutes of music and, because of the pandemic, we can’t work as effectively. We started almost a month late – the month of September was really challenging for all the schools and universities. Now that we are declared a Red Zone, it’s even harder to work face-to-face.”

This summer, the faculty of music announced that the stage in Salle Claude-Cham pagne would be redesigned to meet both health requirements and student needs. “It’s fantastic,” says Robin Wheeler. “We have a lot more space. Since the beginning of the project, in March and April, we have asked Marie-Nathalie to think about a staging that would take into account the necessary distancing between singers. It’s a little odd at times, since there are love scenes, but that’s the way it is. There are more important things you can’t compromise on. As long as we’re in the Red Zone, students will sing with a mask on throughout rehearsals. It isn’t easy for them or for us, the production team.”

The UdeM opera workshop must also deal with the new rules limiting rehearsals in a closed room to one hour. This is followed by a 45-minute period during which the room must be emptied and ventilated as much as possible.

Fortunately, Salle Serge-Garant offers a second space. “We can alternate between the two rooms. I’m especially happy that we can resume face-to-face coaching after the month of remote coaching in September. It turns out that we did the entire run of the opera much earlier in the process than normal. It was so touching to see the students who hadn’t had a chance to sing or make music for five months. Being together with them was quite an experience. We were really happy.”

TRANSLATED BY ISABEL GARRIGA

The performance of Venus and Adonis will not have an audience. It is scheduled to take place during the second week of November, and an audio-video recording will be broadcast later on social media.

More information at www.musique.umontreal.ca; www.mcgill.ca/music

PHOTO: OPERA MCGILL
HIGHER MUSICAL EDUCATION 2020-2021

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

UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE MUSIC SCHOOL
2500, boulevard de l’Université Sherbrooke (Québec) J1K 2R1
Tél. : 819 821-8040
Toll Free : 1 800 267-UdeS, ext. 68040
etudes.musique@USherbrooke.ca
www.usherbrooke.ca/musique

• UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS
  Baccalaureate in music and certificate in music studies:
  • Program in composition and media music
  • Program in performance and interpretation
  • Program in music education (baccalaureate only)
  • Personalized path

• GRADUATE PROGRAMS
  • Minor and DESS in choral conducting
  • Master’s in choral conducting
  • DESS in management and music production

• INSTALLATIONS
  • One concert hall and recording studio (up to 100 musicians) with a large screen, including four isolated sound booths
  • One recital hall with a view of the campus (80 listeners) that can also be used as a soundstage
  • Two studio/performance spaces for pop, jazz and world music
  • One large space for percussion studies
  • Three recording, mixing and post-production control rooms (7.1)

• FACULTY
  57 (lecturers included)

• STUDENTS
  120 full-time and 30 part-time

• TUITION (ESTIMATED)
  Quebec resident: $1,610
  Students from the rest of Canada, French students and francophone students from Belgium: $4,200
  International students: $9,775

• DESCRIPTION
  The School of Music has thoroughly revised its programs and teaching practices. In completely renovated facilities, programs are now focused on practice and synergy between composers and performers. The School of Music has positioned itself as a leader in the training of music production for films, video games and commercials and in the training of studio musicians.

Open houses: Nov. 14 and Feb. 6
Remote auditions: Feb. 6
Live auditions: Feb. 20 and March 20

HEC MONTRÉAL
3000 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Road #4.363
Montréal, Qc, H3T 2A7
Phone: 514-340-6925
Fax: 514-340-6432
mmiam@hec.ca
www.mmiam.com

• PROGRAM OFFERED
  Master of Management in International Arts Management (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 Quimiot 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$45,900 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.

Like everywhere in the world, courses and company visits will be held online until public health authorities declare it safe to travel again.
THE GLENN GOULD SCHOOL
THE ROYAL CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC
The TELUS Centre for Performance and Learning
273 Bloor Street W,
Toronto, ON M5S 1W2
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The baroque instrumental ensemble Les Boréades is celebrating the 25th anniversary of its founding by flutist Francis Colpron. But this is a celebration unlike any other. In spite of the continuing restrictions and uncertainties caused by the pandemic, Colpron wants to keep in touch with subscribers and fellow musicians while continuing to perform in concert. Digital technologies are a godsend, and the ensemble’s members are all set to use them. “For the time being, we’re looking closely at any opportunity to perform in front of cameras, so people can share the concert with us on their screens,” says the artistic director of Les Boréades.

The ensemble’s musicians are both resilient and open to new approaches. They proved this by performing live concerts online for the first time, and also by their choice of repertoire for 2020-21. At their first concert, on Nov. 19, Les Boréades will return to their roots as a small ensemble, with only four musicians – “the heart of Les Boréades,” as Colpron puts it – including violinist Olivier Brault, gambist Mélisande Corriveau and Colpron himself. Jean-Willy Kunz, also a Montreal resident, completes the quartet. They will perform works by Carl Philip Emanuel Bach in an intimate setting.

Les Boréades will do something unusual in February by joining forces with the Bozzini Quartet in a program that includes two works by contemporary composers. “We want to offer something fun that can bring together musicians from different horizons,” said Colpron, “especially for our fellow musicians who play such a vital role in our ensemble. The program will be maintained, whatever happens, but it might go online if there is another lockdown.”

The last concert of the season will be dedicated to Mozart, specifically his youthful operas, composed when he was only 14 to 16. This Boréades concert, scheduled for May, features coloratura soprano Marie-Ève Munger and will be recorded for release by ATMA Classique. The ensemble has already 25 recordings spanning its 25 years of existence, so this will be its 26th release.

THE PAST OPENS UP TO THE FUTURE

Colpron reminisces about the history and artistic approach of Les Boréades: “At the very beginning, the four of us toured a lot. We performed with Jeunesses musicales and we travelled to Europe. But I wanted to explore, I had big dreams. I wanted to work with a larger ensemble. Early on we thought of mixing music with theatre or opera, so we worked with artists such as Karina Gauvin, which was a very educational experience for us. I always wanted to stage productions with a large number of performers mixing several modes of artistic expression. I was able to make it happen first in 2010, when we produced Les Tabarinades [music for the Tabarin theater] with actors like Carl Béchard. We also staged other projects with Sophie Faucher. This allowed us to reach a universe that is still very dear to me.”

Colpron and his fellow musicians have another project in mind: in partnership with Ballet Opéra Pantomime, they want to perform a reconstruction of the opera Atys by Jean-Baptiste Lully, relying once more on the interdisciplinary approach that is so appealing to Les Boréades. Let’s hope the time will soon come when they can celebrate their anniversary properly.

Translation by Anne Stevens
Some people say Rihab Chaieb is just right for Carmen. Others go further and say that the Tunisian-Canadian mezzo-soprano is Carmen. Although the title character of Bizet’s opera has her unfavourable qualities, Chaieb is not troubled by the comparison. “I think Carmen is mindful,” Chaieb says. “Whatever she’s feeling, she’s doing. What you see is what you get. So thanks, that’s a great compliment!”

One could hardly imagine a singer better suited to the most famous and alluring female character in opera. Her artistic ability and natural beauty combine with a sultry mezzo voice and the verve of a dynamic personality.

Her path to an operatic career has been unconventional. Coming from a family of hard-working Tunisian immigrants with traditional values, Chaieb was not encouraged to be a singer. “In my family you get to be a lawyer or a doctor,” she says, with a touch of irony.

Chaieb has always been drawn to music and knew instinctively early on that she wanted to sing. In her adolescent years, she started listening to heavy metal and found of couple of friends to form a band. Her band mates were not impressed by her untrained voice.

Ready for the challenge, she started voice lessons and made progress. Her teacher saw her potential and planted the seed of classical music, making her listen to recordings by Cecilia Bartoli. Soon enough, Chaieb was hooked and decided to register at CEGEP Saint-Laurent in classical voice.

The energetic mezzo then ascended the steps to operatic stardom. She has received several honours, including first place at the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition in 2016; winner of the 2018 George London Competition; prizewinner at the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions; and, most recently, third prize winner at the Operalia international voice competition.

Her operatic highlights include a successful Metropolitan Opera debut in the 2016-17 season as Zulma in Rossini’s L’italiana in Algeri and as the Cretan Mezzo in Mozart’s Idomeneo. Also following are performances as the Sandman in Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel, Lola in Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana, and Laura in Verdi’s Luisa Miller. Last November she made her debut as Carmen with Oper Köln.

OPERALIA AND COMPETITIONS

“I’m not good at competitions,” Chaieb insists. “How many competitions have I lost? But people just seem to remember the ones I’ve won.” Her statement rang on key.

However, remembering my first meeting with her in a coffee shop in Montreal a few months earlier, before her huge success at Operalia, the news wasn’t exactly glorious. Chaieb had just taken an unexpected early exit from the 2018 Concours musical international de Montréal, failing to make it to the finals.

She had performed well, she had even managed to win the prize as Best Canadian Artist, but the award felt like a consolation prize. Some of her fans...
and even some music critics thought that she had earned the right to advance. As the saying goes: a prophet without honour in her own country.

Chaieb’s road to success at Operalia was also paved with obstacles. “Just before Operalia I had a massive breakdown and almost stopped singing,” she reveals. The singer had been dealing with stage performance anxiety and searched for solutions. Finally, she tried meditation.

After a few sessions she became aware of a major hurdle. One mistake in her vocal execution would put her totally off track, following her like a curse until the end of the performance and even post-performance.

“In the past, I was giving up because of the one mistake,” she said, “but I learned it was about allowing the mistake and knowing how to bounce back. One thing that I also realized with mindful meditation and by working with a sports peak-performance coach is that people don’t want me to suck!”

She laughs at her own colloquial language.

“They come to the show wanting to have a good time. It’s not about me receiving their judgement. It’s about giving. Giving love and joy and making them live an experience.”

Like many champions in the quest for stardom, Chaieb had overcome one bump on the road only to encounter another. She hadn’t qualified for Operalia. Instead she was put on a waiting list. She waited patiently and one day she received a notice... a stroke of luck had come her way! Another competitor had pulled out of the competition. Voilà! She was in. But how does one go from being an outsider looking in to placing third in an important competition?

“There is a very clear answer,” she said with confidence. “I went through major vocal changes. I found a teacher who helped me with some technical difficulties, particularly with high notes and with the homogeneity of the vocal registers.

“I also decided to stop being afraid and to have the balls – sorry about the expression – to sing the repertoire that I wanted to sing without being apologetic about it. I think my voice thrives in the bigger operatic lyric mezzo roles and that’s what I decided to showcase for the competition.”

She followed her instinct, believing that in a competition such as Operalia, the jury wants to hear the singers performing flashy arias and also to get a sense of the singer’s potential. She laid her cards on the table and allowed fate to do its work.

The decision obviously paid off. She took third prize in an all-mezzo podium that included her Canadian peer Emily d’Angelo winning first prize and the American Samantha Hankey taking second. Chaieb also received praise from the founder of the competition, Plácido Domingo, who noticed a huge improvement since their last performance together in Luisa Miller at the Metropolitan Opera. He noted vocal evolution and a more mature, secure and aligned instrument.

“I think that for so long I was limiting myself by trying too hard to fit in a box,” Chaieb says. “I’ve never fitted any box, either in my personal life or in my vocal life.”

Only when Chaieb decided to let the walls of confinement crumble did she discover that she was capable of singing much more repertoire than she had thought possible. “Nowadays I can sing Zerlina and Carmen in the same season,” she says. “Yes sir, can do! But you have to be clever about it. You don’t sing your first Delilah at the Met. You got to perform it in smaller places first. Once it’s in the muscles you can move on and try bigger venues.”

COVID-19 AND OPERA

It’s no secret that the equilibrium of the artistic environment has historically been fragile. If we look at our neighbours to the south, USA Today reports an estimated revenue loss of US$150 billion in the cultural industry from April to July 2020. Opera is already part of a delicate ecosystem in danger of extinction. Now one has to wonder if it will survive.

Three important opera houses in the world – the Metropolitan Opera, the Canadian Opera Company and the Royal Opera House – cancelled the remainder of their seasons. According to tenor and founder of the popular blog The Middleclass Artist, Zach Finkelstein, we can conservatively estimate losses of more than US$200 million in ticket revenue in American opera houses alone.

There is a silver lining of sorts and all is not lost. In Quebec the government has made efforts to keep culture alive. Minister of Culture Nathalie Roy announced in October an additional $50 million to help theatres recover from ticket revenue losses. Opéra de Montréal was also granted $700,000 to develop a streaming strategy for their coming productions.

For Chaieb and many other musicians, the pandemic has been an emotional rollercoaster. She made her Carmen debut in Cologne just a few months before the news of the pandemic hit. Talk about a rude awakening! She went from singing one of her dream roles to not knowing if she could make ends meet. Like many other artists and musicians, she had to go into lockdown, leaving an international career on hold.

The summer brought with it hopes of improvement to the performance world. The government relaxed some measures and began allowing outside concerts. Even some indoor performances were permitted, under strict sanitary rules and on the condition of a maximum of 250 spectators. Theatres and venues embraced the new measures and gave their best efforts to make their shows Covid-safe.

We collectively could see the light at the end of the tunnel, the summer rang with fervour and infections were decreasing. Unfortunately, the imaginary light was of short duration and could be compared to the light of a derailed train filled with bad news. A second lockdown was announced. It was back to square one.
“As artists we have learned to be flexible and adaptable,” Chaieb said. “You give us anything and we will make it work. We are focused, we are eager and we love what we do, but please give us something.

“All the concerts that I participated in after the first lockdown were very well organized. At the Festival de Lanaudière, for example, everybody was respecting social distances. The organizers had implemented strict protocols establishing how people entered and how people left. Everyone wore a mask.

“The public demonstrated they were willing to go to shows, to follow the procedures and abide by the social distancing rules. Why are we being punished for a few crazy people who don’t want to wear a mask? They are the ones who should be punished. Not us!”

In her cri de coeur, Chaieb also deplored the lack of a social insurance program tailored to artists. She refers to the French social artist security programs, Agessa and Maison des artistes, as models. Even if the Canadian government improvised a program for the self-employed, she argues, these measures throw everyone, including artists, in the same melting pot, leaving some citizens without access to the appropriate help.

“I really hope this is a learning experience for them to figure out how unprepared they were and how to improve things moving forward,” Chaieb says. “During the pandemic there has been a lot of talk about mental health and a lot of people being lonely and secluded. Now imagine if we didn’t have music, films, or Netflix, or streaming concerts. We would be miserable! As an artist, I feel sometimes we are taken for granted.”

However negative and difficult the confinement has been, the struggle has also helped some artists discover unexplored strengths. Chaieb relies on a morning routine that combines deep and fast breathing exercises with cold showers and meditation. She heard about some of these techniques by listening to Wim Hof, an extreme athlete known for his use of cold conditions and his breathing technique. Hof holds Guinness world records for swimming under ice, prolonged full-body contact with ice and the record for a barefoot half-marathon on ice and snow.

Chaieb says that these unorthodox habits have helped her reconnect with her body and to fortify her immune system. “Our bodies are meant to be strong and to regenerate themselves,” she says. “That rush of air and stillness, it’s like meeting God every morning. Did you know you can actually lower your heart rate just with breathing?”

A change in her mindset, she believes, was necessary. Being project-driven, she had been purposely acting as if every coming show was actually going to happen. “I have given up on the ‘what if’ ideas. What if this project doesn’t happen, what if that concert was cancelled? I have, for example, a recital coming up in November with Société d’art vocal that has already been cancelled twice. I have decided that I’m not giving up, so if a show gets cancelled, I just see it as an opportunity to refine my performance.”

STAGING HER DREAM CARMEN
Chaieb has strong ideas about how to stage Carmen. “We should take the caricature out of Carmen and add more verismo.” Carmen is a far more complex character than the over-the-top sexualized show-off we often see. Chaieb argues instead that the character has opposites colliding within. Her story is more engaging if a production recognizes that duality. “She’s in charge, she takes the space and goes to get what she wants, that’s true,” Chaieb says. “However, we can’t forget that she can also be a dreamer and enjoy moments of tenderness with Don José. You need contrast. Sexy people like Carmen don’t need to show you that they are sexy. They just are.”

She would try a different approach also to the role of Micaëla, who is typically portrayed as an innocent girl. “If I did my own Carmen – don’t steal my idea, eh! – I would have Micaëla have a clear confrontation with Carmen in Act 3. That part should be about getting her man back. Micaëla has balls, she goes out to get him! That girl walked alone through the Pyrenees mountains without being raped or robbed. She sings in her aria: ‘I’m with thieves and killers, but nothing scares me because God is on my side.’”

The mezzo laughs whole-heartedly after her tirade.

Chaieb’s coming performances include Handel’s Messiah with the Orchestre classique de Montréal on Dec. 8. Her next performance of Carmen remains to be scheduled. www.rihachieb.com
The Orchestre classique de Montréal (OCM) is deeply invested in projects, as it has demonstrated in the past by promoting Canadian and Indigenous artists and composers. This year, the orchestra’s support for communities is once again in evidence. On Nov. 20, OCM followers can hear the Canadian premiere of the chamber opera As One to mark Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day paying tribute to transgendered individuals who were persecuted or killed because of their identity. Come what may, the opera will be the season opener and broadcast online. It features two voices – one male, the other female – portraying one character who is transgendered. The opera is based on a true story by co-librettist Kimberly Reed.

As One was a favourite for OCM executive director Taras Kulish: “I heard excerpts from this opera during the 2016 Opera America conference in Montreal. I was hooked from the very first note. I had an interest in, and was touched by, the theme, which is not often tackled. There are no trouser parts [women singing traditionally masculine roles]. We are introduced to a transgendered individual’s life story, from adolescence to adulthood. This was something OCM wanted to set straight from the start, for the transgendered community would have been skeptical if the story had not been authentic. That authenticity is clear as day in As One.”

With a score by Laura Kaminsky, this opera is written for two soloists and string quartet, making it economical to produce. Moreover, it falls in line with two OCM missions: to expand orchestral repertoire and reach a wide array of listeners around Montreal. The willingness to express openness to others has led the orchestra to extend performances beyond two evenings and hold discussion forums in English and French a week before showtime.

“Kimberly Reed will be one of the forum panelists along with two transgendered individuals,” Kulish explained. “Two transgendered opera singers I got to know in the United States and Europe will also be panelists, and they will sing for us online. Invoking the transgendered community in this project has been a great gift.”

This is not the first time that OCM has presented contemporary repertoire. Under the leadership of artistic director Boris Brott, the orchestra has commissioned numerous young composers. This season, a commission will be part of a concert scheduled for March 30: Concerto for Pipigwan (traditional Anishinaabe wooden flute) by the Indigenous composer Barbara Croall. “Croall will play the solos in this four-movement concerto representing the seasons of the year,” said Kulish. “This concerto will be coupled with Astor Piazzolla’s Cuatro estaciones porteñas on the 100th anniversary of the composer’s birth. This concert will be out of the ordinary.”

The OCM is breaking new ground not only with its repertoire but with its concerts. “This new ground dates back to the spring, more specifically in April,” said Kulish. “We were one of the first orchestras to give online concerts. We knew we wanted to do something during lockdown. None of us expected to have close to 3,000 views per broadcast.

“We broadcast a dozen concerts and created a Facebook page unlike any seen before. We now have close to 7,000 followers. Together with our Twitter and Instagram platforms, we have more than 10,000 followers. This is advantageous for us because people talk about us and we gain exposure. The pandemic taught us a valuable lesson in the great power of social media and the importance of having digital presence. Of course, we may never reproduce the full experience of in-person concerts with a live acoustic. But since we can present online concerts that appeal to people, this is encouraging for us to survive in our field.” The orchestra is one of many cultural organizations that picked themselves up and made the best of the pandemic. Many factors worked to the orchestra’s benefit, including good financial health before the pandemic, the orchestra’s size, and its ability to face the new reality. These factors show why OCM is good standing today.

“Everything was going well for us before the pandemic,” Kulish said. “We presented three sold-out concerts, putting us in good shape from the start. Being a chamber orchestra and a small organization was also a definite advantage, making it possible for us to adapt quickly. Although much uncertainty remains, I am not at all worried about the 2020–2021 season.

“However, I am worried about economic readjustment in the next few years, as are many cultural organization managers. Governments are giving us emergency aid. There are sources of support. What will the cultural economy look like in the future? What will sponsorship look like? Let us take it one day at a time. We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it.”

TRANSLATION BY DWAIN RICHARDSON

As One. Music by Laura Kaminsky; libretto by Kimberly Reed and Mark Campbell; film by Kimberly Reed. Cast: Phillip Addis, baritone (Hannah as a teen); Sarah Bissonnette, mezzo-soprano (Hannah as an adult). OCM string quartet; Geneviève Leclair, conductor. Edi Holmes, stage director.

Nov. 20 at 7:30 p.m. at Cirque Étoile. Also note that the forums in English and in French will take place on Nov. 14 and Nov 15. (online event only, available until Dec. 4 for ticket holders)
ALEXANDRE DA COSTA AND THE OSDL

NEW RESTRICTIONS ARE “LIKE A PUNCH IN THE GUT”

by HASSAN LAGHCHA

A t a press conference on Sept. 28, the Orchestre symphonique de Longueuil (OSDL) presented its new season of concerts. Artistic director Alexandre Da Costa was on hand for the announcement. This year’s program, coinciding with its 35th season, hopes to provide some solace through the performance of symphonic music.

Seven concerts had been slated for its main venue, the adjunct co-cathedral of Longueuil. One will be devoted to pop songs from Quebec and elsewhere; another feature local icon Mario Pelchat singing his own material and Christmas evergreens. But all hopes for public performances were dashed that day when the provincial government issued a new round of restrictions to stem the second COVID wave. Included was an edict suspending all concert activities till further notice, a move that left the arts community reeling.

“We were shellshocked,” admits Da Costa. “It hurt us, like a punch in the gut. We were numb for a few days. I’m fearful of the consequences, like lapsing back into that state of stagnation that so undermined us last winter.” This turn of events is all the more difficult for him to accept given the organization’s willingness to incorporate public health measures in its programming.

CHRISTMAS WITH MARIO PELCHAT AND TRIBUTE TO MAURANE

The OSDL’s headline concert, to be broadcast online from Dec. 10 to 24, will include a premiere performance of a work written by its resident guest conductor Airat Ichmouratov. Da Costa will also play his 1701 Stradivarius Deveauil on one piece, the ever-popular Amazing Grace, as arranged by Matt Riley. Pelchat will appear on stage after intermission to sing a few numbers of his own and a handful of Christmas chestnuts dressed up in symphonic garb. Added to that is the very moving Sur le prélude de Bach by the late Belgian singer Maurane, a variant of the famous Ave Maria credited to both Gounod and Bach. This last item, included on Da Costa’s album STRADIVARIUS Barock, is a heartfelt tribute to a diva of popular song who passed away in 2018.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Da Costa is currently working on Mémoire collective, an online performance project of particular relevance to our troubled times. Inspired by his Balcons symphoniques, a similar initiative conceived by the OSDL for essential workers and seniors, this latest concert presentation was launched on Oct. 29 and will run daily till Nov. 11. Says Da Costa: “We wanted to remind everyone of the creative potential we possess as a people, so we have drawn mainly on works from our own pool of writers to illustrate this. It’s something of a cultural grab bag, and we were given the chance to tour it province-wide, from Gatineau to Gaspé, with some 60 outdoor performances held in front of senior residences, hospitals and CHSLDs.”

ARTISTS ARE A MUST

Mémoire collective will present a new take on Luc Plamondon’s hit song Le Blues du businessman, a tune inspired by the We are the World initiative of years past. This revival, spurred by Da Costa, will rally 25 musicians of various stylistic stripes, all of whom have lent their voices pro bono for the cause of the cultural industry. A star-studded cast of personalities will be backed by the virtuoso players of the OSDL in a special stage production directed by Joël Legendre. The lineup reads like a veritable who’s who of Québécois music: Joe Bocan, Brigitte Boisjoli, Gregory Charles, Nathalie Choquette, Marie-Michèle Desrosiers, Sophie Faucher, Fouki, Patzy Gallant, Marc Hervieux, Jonas, Florence K, Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Michel Louvain, Alicia Moffet, Mario Pelchat, Bruno Pelletier, Marie-Denise Pelletier, QW4RTZ, Kim Richardson and Shaut. Le Blues du businessman – Les artistes sont essentiels will surely be worth the watch.

“The pandemic has unleashed several crisis,” says Da Costa, “in public health for sure, but also on more personal and societal levels. Such upheavals have forced us not only to be more aware of the roles we assume in our community but also to be able to respond quickly to the challenges facing us. If we want to make it through these events of historic importance, we must be ready to meet them head on.”

The concept behind the Plamondon song arose out of the necessity to reaffirm the roles artists play in our society and how their works can be of therapeutic and spiritual value. “My awareness of these benefits became so apparent to me during the Balcons symphoniques tour,” explains Da Costa. “The joy was so palpable when the seniors could finally leave their rooms after the March lockdown and hear us play in the parking lots of the CHSLDs. I was deeply moved.”

REVIVING THE DEBATE

Da Costa contends that artists have complied with the decision of closing concert venues for public safety, albeit with a caveat: “We need to get the debate going again, first on the status of the artist and the essential role he or she plays, and next to look for solutions that allow us to make our livings under the safest of working conditions.”

Artists, in his view, have been exemplary in their response to the situation. “Not only did we adhere to the guidelines to the letter from the public health for sure, but also on more personal and societal levels. Such upheavals have forced us not only to be more aware of the roles we assume in our community but also to be able to respond quickly to the challenges facing us. If we want to make it through these events of historic importance, we must be ready to meet them head on.”

The concept behind the Plamondon song arose out of the necessity to reaffirm the roles artists play in our society and how their works can be of therapeutic and spiritual value. “My awareness of these benefits became so apparent to me during the Balcons symphoniques tour,” explains Da Costa. “The joy was so palpable when the seniors could finally leave their rooms after the March lockdown and hear us play in the parking lots of the CHSLDs. I was deeply moved.”

TRANSLATION BY MARC CHÉNARD

Noël avec Mario Pelchat will be available online from Dec. 10 to 24. www.osdl.ca.
I MUSICI DE MONTRÉAL
THE BENEFITS OF AN ONLINE SEASON
by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

It’s a season for discovering things,” says I Musici de Montréal artistic director Jean-Marie Zeitouni. Among the potential discoveries: whether six concerts streamed online from St. Jax Church will appeal to the chamber orchestra’s traditional audience base.

As far as Zeitouni is concerned, the online option is an act of audience building. Those who pay the modest $20 fee can watch a concert from anywhere – even other time zones – at the hour of their choosing.

“I’m not implying that we are competing with the Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall,” Zeitouni says. “But this allows friends and family members who are far away to watch concerts as well.”

Programming has been affected. Most IMDM seasons include a transcription (or two and family members who are far away to watch concerts as well.”

The musicians? “They are sad to see me go, and I am sad to go,” Zeitouni says. “But sometimes we need to think about the future and the collective good.”

LE VIVIER
A HOUSE WITH MANY ROOMS
by JUSTIN BERNARD

Le Vivier is an apt name. It refers both to one of the fathers of contemporary music in Quebec and to a dynamic pool of composers and performers of new music.

An earlier article outlined the 2020-2021 season of this group of musicians and ensembles, which notably include Productions SuperMusique, the Quatuor Bozzini and Ensemble Paramirabo. But Le Vivier is also a house with many rooms, offering numerous opportunities for players in this field to affirm their ties.

First is the international component, which organizes the annual Cartel which brings together more than 25 broadcasters in North America and Europe. “Over the past two years, we have organized numerous meetings in Montreal and online, including several during the pandemic,” explains artistic director Emmanuelle Lizière. “The Cartel has given rise to international exchanges with groups based in Europe, but also for ourselves, Le Vivier. We have built partnerships with the Forum des compositeurs in Wallonia in Belgium and the Belgian Ars Musica festival, which have resulted in 12 concerts in Montréal and 10 in Belgium.”

Another component of Le Vivier is a program of residencies and exchanges with the Hellerau centre of Dresden, Germany, in partnership with the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and the Montreal Goethe-Institut. Since 2015, this program offering residencies for the creation of new music has allowed a young composer from Germany to spend two months in Montreal to experience a new environment and live alongside other artists. In return, the Hellerau centre has committed to welcoming a Quebec artist. The residency also fosters the dissemination of works by composers from Quebec and from Germany, including, recently, the works of Quebecers Alexandre David (2018) and Ida Toninato (2019).

Other facets of Le Vivier are dedicated to Youth and a Mediation. The latter occupies an important place in the activities of Le Vivier, as evidenced by the 80 workshops organized last year.

“We have members who hail from Montreal as well as from other parts of the province, be they the ‘Tour de bras or Erreur de type 27 ensembles,’” Lizière says. “Music mediation is also that: not only to be in Montreal, but also to expand. As part of our new website, we feel it is important for us to show, using multimedia and in particular through the use of prominent digital recordings, all that can be seen and done here.”

Le Vivier mobile, the latest major project, is in great demand and focuses entirely on digital issues. The effort is progressing well, according to the artistic director. “This will allow us to branch out significantly in this area,” she concludes.

www.imusici.com
INNOVATION IN A TIME OF CRISIS

by OLIVIER BERGERON

While most of the musical world has been at a standstill since March, Marc Boucher has not been short of projects. On the musical scene for more than 25 years and with several recordings to his credit, he founded Festival Classica in Saint-Lambert nearly 10 years ago. Hailed by the international press, the festival has quickly become one of Quebec’s staple musical events of the year.

Now he is tackling a new project: leconcertbleu.com. This new digital platform, put forward by Festival Classica, will be developed in collaboration with the Quebec digital transformation firm ellicom/LCI LX.

“We have been thinking about this project for two or three years now, however it was definitely propelled by the pandemic,” Boucher says. “Within six months we developed it by exploring all the aspects of a platform like this one and by studying other existing platforms. Ours is a social economy project for the classical music community. The aim is to create wealth and income for artists and organizations in Quebec.”

The concept is simple: musicians subscribe to the platform for an annual fee, which is expected to be around $100, create a channel where they upload their content — a recital, for example — which they are responsible for producing themselves. Once the content is uploaded, it is made available to its users who can enjoy it in the comfort of their own homes. Seventy percent of the monetization of the content, calculated by the number of views, will go directly to the artists.

“We have to find a way to go back to concerts, of course while respecting public health guidelines, and above all put content online,” Boucher says. “It will become a new way of consuming music which will be complementary to live concerts. What we need to do right now is stop dumping our content on platforms that devalue artistic products.”

Today, streaming services do not allow artists to make a living. Last year, Geneviève Côté, SOCAN’s head of Quebec affairs and visual arts, revealed that for every 1 million streams on Spotify, only $5,000 was generated as revenue to be shared between the distributor, the record company and the artists. As streams in classical music aren’t counted in millions, this new concept will allow Quebec musicians to enjoy a new way to gain exposure while providing them with a new source of income.

The platform will also give people in remote regions access to high-quality artistic products while also allowing them to discover Quebec artists from all around the province. Le Concert Bleu also plans to partner with different regions to offer, for example, a gourmet basket of local products coupled with a musical offering online.

Boucher is also behind another project made possible, or at least facilitated, by the pandemic: a complete recording of Jules Massenet’s songs. The composer, best known for his grand operas, is the author of at least 317 mélodies, which makes him the most prolific composer of the genre. Marie-Nicole Lemieux, Karina Gauvin, Michèle Losier, Julie Boulianne, Magali Simard-Galdès, Anna-Sophie Neher, Florence Bourget, Frédéric Antoun, Étienne Dupuis, Philippe Sly, Antonio Figueroa, Joë Lampron-Dandonneau and Boucher himself will share the duties, accompanied by Olivier Godin, playing on an Érard concert grand piano dating from 1854.

“This is another opportunity that the pandemic is offering us because most of the artists involved in the project would otherwise have been abroad,” Boucher observes. “The current situation will allow us to record about 200 mélodies by December and we expect to finish the recording in the spring.”

Despite his enthusiasm for the projects he is currently developing, Marc Boucher hopes that the pandemic will have the effect of reforming the field of classical music in Quebec.

“The pandemic has shown us just how fragile our field is,” Boucher says. “The classical music industry was not prepared to face this kind of crisis, just like many other industries. In Canada, nearly all musicians are freelancers. This pandemic reveals how there really is no protection system, no safety net for self-employed workers. The entire artistic community in Quebec is at risk of having to find another job, unrelated to its field of study and profession.

“This is a great tragedy because the government invests large sums of money in education to train musicians. In France and Germany there are systems in place to protect them. There needs to be a reform of the status of artists, especially in situations of crisis.”

The 2020 edition of Festival Classica, initially scheduled for last spring, will be held in December. Despite the 35 cancelled concerts, Marc Boucher was adamant about offering a virtual version of the festival. Fifteen concerts will be broadcast from Dec. 10 to 20 on leconcertbleu.com, which will inaugurate the new platform.

LMMC
SEE YOU IN DECEMBER
by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

Hope springs eternal," Constance Pathy said a few days after Premier François Legault extended the performing-arts shutdown in Quebec to Nov. 23. Having been forced to cancel a concert in November by violinist Blake Pouliot, the president of the Ladies’ Morning Musical Club is looking forward to Dec. 6, when the New Oxford String Quartet is booked to appear with two remarkable sidemen: violinist (and violist) James Ehnes and pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin. "I do so hope it comes off," she said.

In an odd way, the program coupling Beethoven’s String Quintet Op. 29 and Chausson’s Concert might be considered a perquisite of the coronavirus outbreak. This gathering of Canadians replaces the recital by French pianist Rémi Geniet that formed part of the original LMMC season announced in March. Federal regulations mandating quarantines have made visits from international artists all but impossible.

“We could not have organized this in a million years and it just fell in place,” Pathy said of the Beethoven-Chausson program.

It is interesting, and perhaps a little ominous, that the new provincial deadline is two weeks before the concert. “The trouble with the announcements is that they come at the very, very last minute,” Pathy commented. “It’s practically impossible to plan.” The LMMC had to cancel recitals in October by cellist Matt Haimovitz and pianist Stewart Goodyear because of a provincial decree. These events were themselves late entries into a season upended by federal restrictions.

As far as Pathy is concerned, these events are postponed. “I have promised that we will reschedule all the cancelled concerts,” she says. “I feel that’s a point of honour. Particularly for the artists who said they would hold the date until the international artists were absolutely cancelled.” Booked. Cancelled. Rebooked. Cancelled again. It is enough to make classical presenters give up. Some have, although the majority in Montreal are organizing online concerts. Not the LMMC.

“I don’t find streamed concerts all that satisfying,” Pathy said. “I am very much a proponent of live music and the LMMC is that kind of organization too.”

McGill and the Schulich School of Music are also part of the equation. Pollack Hall has long been the home of the LMMC. The university made an exception by permitting a Ladies concert on Sept. 20 by the Rolston Quartet before a reduced audience. Protocols were numerous and exacting.

As for Dec. 6, it is sold out. “If we have a hall and we can do it, we’re going to do it, no matter what,” Pathy says. Hope springs eternal.

www.lmmc.ca

FESTIVAL BACH MONTRÉAL
HEAR CONCERTS ANYWHERE ON NEW STREAMING PLATFORM
by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

The Festival Bach Montréal opens its 2020 proceedings on Nov. 19 in St. Joseph’s Oratory, or in your living room, depending on your point of view. The program gathering four organists and the Schola de l’Oratoire starts at 7:30 p.m., or whenever you like — again, according to taste.

The annual celebration of the great J.S. in Montreal is going online and has built a new digital platform — Québec Baroque or www.quebecbaroque.com — to make it feasible.

“Québec Baroque offers you the opportunity to catch up on many of its performances several days after their initial broadcast,” reads an online introduction to the new service.

Many presenters are grappling with the challenges of online performance. PBM is in an unusual position because of the variety of artists it offers and its several venues.

The gala opener, focused on the mighty Rudolf von Beckerath organ in the vast upper sanctuary of the oratory, could hardly be less like the next evening’s offering, a program of Bach sonatas by period flutist Mika Puttermann and fortepianist Gili Loftus in intimate Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours Chapel.

The next concert, on Nov. 22 in the same locale, again offers a contrast, as harpsichordist Luc Beauregard performs Bach’s Trio Sonatas BWV 525-530 with cellist Juan Sebastian Delgado and Kristina Marcoux on the marimba. You might want to look again at the last word of the previous sentence. Yes, marimba. Delgado and Marcoux have enjoyed success recently as the offbeat duo Stick&Bow.

On the following night the action moves to Bourgie Hall as Nicolas Ellis and his Orchestre de l’Agora perform works by Corelli and Telemann and Bach’s Orchestral Suite No. 3. Bourgie is the setting for all- or mostly-Bach programs by pianist Anna Saradjian (Nov. 24), Italian Concerto), violinist Kerson Leong (solo repertoire on Nov. 25, including the Chaconne), the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal under Andrew McAnerney (Nov. 26, the six Motets).

The festival then summons its own orchestra on Nov. 27 to the Maison symphonique under Jean-Claude Picard for a program including the joyous Cantata No. 51 with soprano Anna-Sophie Neher and the more sombre Cantata No. 56 with baritone Stephen Hegedus.

Cellist Stéphane Tétreault deals with the Cello Suites over two nights (Nov. 30 and Dec. 1) in the “Off-Bach” space at 3487 St. Laurent Blvd. Back in Bourgie Hall on Dec. 2 the pianist Serhiy Salov changes the subject by playing Brahms’ Op. 10 Ballades and his own transcriptions of Tchaikovsky’s Nutcracker Suite and excerpts from Bach’s Christmas Oratorio. On Dec. 6 Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Orchestre Métropolitain and its chorus bring it all to a conclusion in the Maison symphonique with Bach’s Mass in B Minor.

Needless to say, the artists are predominantly from Montreal. There is an interesting exception: the Italian pianist Filippo Gorini, who on Nov. 29 will perform Bach’s The Art of Fugue in the National Cinema Museum in Turin, Italy.

Why not? It is an online world.

Most concerts cost $9. The presenting sponsor of PBM is Canimex.

www.festivalbachmontreal.com

www.quebecbaroque.com
THE ELORA SINGERS
HAVE GOT IT COVERED
by ARTHUR KAPTAINIS

Twenty-four people in masks. Twenty-five if you count the leader; 29 if you include the string quartet. Unknown location.

Sounds mysterious. In fact, *Hope & Refuge*, a concert by the Elora Singers, will be available online for all to see and hear starting Nov. 14.

The title is suited to both our troubled times and a program including *Layton’s Letter to Canadians*, a tribute to the late NDP leader by Jeff Enns, a member of the bass section. “It is optimistic and hopeful music,” says Mark Vuorinen, artistic director and conductor of the Ontario-based choir. “The piece is a setting of those wonderful words [Layton] said shortly before his passing. Optimism is better than fear. Hope is better than duality. “It seems to speak to so many things that are going on in the world right now, related to the pandemic and maybe politically too. This was an opportunity to present a concert that would bring our audience together.”

Recorded on Oct. 24, the event also brought together the 24 professional choristers, most under 40, for the first time since February. All but two had participated in remote remixes for the online version of the annual Elora Festival in July. But the choir had given no performances *in situ*.

“This is a very tight group of singers,” said Elora managing director Laura Adlers. “It was emotional for them to gather and sing again.”

Also a little odd, since everyone was wearing a mask. Common as this practice is at the supermarket, it is not often thought to be compatible with the art of singing.

“There’s an adjustment,” Vuorinen said. “You have to work a little bit harder at certain aspects of singing. Singers hear themselves differently, too, because the sound is reflected back at them. Diction becomes an ongoing pursuit.

“It seems to speak to so many things that are going on in the world right now, related to the pandemic and maybe politically too. This was an opportunity to present a concert that would bring our audience together.”

“But as I listen to the sound [from the session], if you were to close your eyes, I am not sure that you would instinctively know, ‘Oh, those singers have masks on.’ It was nice and clear, which was a great surprise.”

To make articulation easier, most choristers used a plastic insert to maintain a comfortable distance between their mouths and the surface of the mask. Some bought masks specifically designed for singing.

It helped that the concert was recorded in a deconsecrated church in Hamilton with resonant acoustics. The name and exact location are undisclosed.

“There is nothing illegal about it,” Adlers assures us, “but the diocese doesn’t want to draw attention to it, because they can’t rent it to many people.”

With pews removed, the spacious facility also permitted singers to maintain a generous 10 feet of social distance.

“We are being extra cautious,” Adlers adds. Temperatures taken, hands disinfected. Sessions are limited to 45 minutes.

*Hope & Refuge* will be followed by three concerts in December, all with a Christmas theme. One assembles highlights from Handel’s *Messiah*. Meaning we get the *Hallelujah Chorus* with masks?

“Meaning we get the *Hallelujah Chorus* with masks?”

“*Messiah* is a joyful piece but there is darkness as well. That is the beauty of *Messiah*. Handel takes us through that darkness and brings us out on the other side. That is part of this experience as well.”

www.elorasingers.ca
The new government directives announced on Sept. 28 should not affect choir and orchestra rehearsals so long as safety regulations are respected and the number of people participating is limited. To recap: private and public gatherings were banned until Oct. 28, except in places of worship or at funerals, where a maximum of 25 people were allowed. Public demonstrations were also permitted, so long as the two-metre rule was applied and masks were worn.

“We would like as many artists as possible to continue working,” said Premier François Legault in a press briefing. “Whether broadcasting or recording, obviously following hygiene rules, that’s part of the job. We want to protect businesses – and they are businesses – but what we don’t want is several people in a hall running the risk of catching something after an hour and a half.”

CANCELLED DATES
While rehearsals themselves are not directly threatened, it may be that music directors and venue owners will reconsider hiring out their halls. The Chœur Métropolitain, which is affiliated with the Orchestre Métropolitain, has unfortunately suffered from this: The Conservatoire de musique de Montréal, where the choir normally rehearses, has suspended choral rehearsals through October. Consequently, the choir, directed by François A. Ouimet and Pierre Tourville, postponed rehearsals planned to begin on Sept. 30.

But this is just a continuation of the changes the choir has endured over the last months. Rehearsals and a concert on April 19 were cancelled, as were summer projects involving the Festival de Lanaudière and a concert in December, which will be replaced by a concert by a small group of professional choristers. Next on the schedule:

A German Requiem by Brahms on April 28, 2021.

FINDING SOLUTIONS
Meanwhile, the directors of the Chœur Métropolitain want to keep reaching out to the public and, crucially, get their usual activities underway. They plan to offer workshops exploring core repertoire and song forms, while organizing rehearsals in two separate groups to limit the number of choristers in one place. “Every workshop is a chance to get together to sing safely and have fun,” said Ouimet in a message to the choir members. “At the end of the evening, participants will have learned something and made some lovely music together.”

Workshops will be led by the two choirmasters alternately, and there will be a lightning tour of different genres such as the Renaissance madrigal, choral music at the time of J.S. Bach, the choral style of the Romantic period, some gems from the Quebec choral repertoire and a look at different sorts of world music for choir.

Together with Jennifer Bourdages, who is head of artistic development and director of choir personnel, Ouimet and Tourville plan to organize two groups and give each workshop twice. So that the workshops are pleasant for the choristers, they need to form stable and well-balanced groups from one music stand to another (sopranos, altos, tenors and basses). The choirmasters are inviting choristers to commit themselves as much as possible through the fall. If a chorister has to be absent from a workshop or a rehearsal, his or her place will be taken by another choir member, which in the long run would be beneficial for all participants.

HEALTH REGULATIONS
A hygiene plan has been set up to keep choristers safe. They must always wear a face covering, even while singing, and keep a distance of two metres from their neighbours, in accordance with government regulations. Before each session, the director will ask those present to sign a form to show they have read the plan, agree to respect it and accept the risks associated with this type of activity.

These health measures taken by the directors of the Chœur Métropolitain follow the recommendations of the Alliance chorale du Québec, set out in a “Guide to a safe return to practice,” made public over the summer. The ACQ recommends organizers restrict movement as far as possible during rehearsals, choose a well-ventilated or air-conditioned venue (in the absence of which all participants must wear a mask), and consider distributing the choir members differently (in a circle or back to back) to avoid contamination via respiratory droplets.

Most choirs have not yet officially announced their plans for the fall. At present, safety measures mean that only a limited number of choristers can sing in concerts. This is why only professional singers belonging to the Union des artistes were on stage at the Maison symphonique to perform Fauré’s Requiem with the Orchestre Métropolitain on Oct. 16. The orchestra, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, will call on them once more for Bach’s Mass in B Minor, which closes the Montreal Bach Festival (Dec. 5 and 6).

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ARTISTS AND THE PANDEMIC
THE OPTION OF FINDING A NEW CAREER

by HASSAN LAGHCHA

A larming reports on the precarious situation of artists are multiplying here as elsewhere. Many artists now have no choice but to put their careers on hold to find living-wage employment. The most recent alarm bell came from the Quebec Musicians’ Guild, which published, at the end of October, the results of a survey stating that one musician in five has chosen to abandon his career.

Guild president Luc Fortin says the artists lost millions with the closing the halls, which had made efforts to comply with sanitary conditions. “It’s pretty serious,” says Fortin. “We have to think of something. It takes good support measures to keep your head above water.”

According to the GMMQ, this survey of 755 professional musicians conducted between Oct. 6 and Oct. 22 covers several elements of the musicians’ financial situation. Despite the money invested in culture by the federal and provincial governments, the money does not seem to have flowed to the musicians, who are among the most vulnerable, the stage representing the main part of their activity. The survey shows that 75% of professional musicians have received the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) and 50% are facing financial difficulties. According to the Guild, in 2019, only 20% of its members earned $20,000 or less; in 2020, that number has increased to 56%.

In response to the question, “Could the problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic mean that you are considering giving up your music career for the long term?”, 57% said yes or were thinking about it, with 18% saying a definite yes. The musicians were also asked to give a rate out of 100 to the provincial and federal governments on the measures taken to support them in the context of the pandemic. The federal government received a score of 62/100 and the provincial government received 25/100. In other words, the federal government’s promptness in creating CERB and CRB was appreciated, according to the survey.

POORLY RECEIVED RESTRICTIONS

The GMMQ appreciates the efforts made by the various governments to support the cultural industry, but the financial situation of musicians remains precarious. Certain programs should therefore be reviewed to ensure that all artists benefit in a concrete way. At the time of the survey, the details of the new provincial support program for the dissemination of Quebec shows to get through the second wave of COVID-19 ($50 million) were not known. The GMMQ, like other artists’ associations, had reacted positively to the announcement of the program at the beginning of October, which was to allow many of its members to be compensated for events cancelled as of Oct. 3.

Members more or less agree at 81% with the restrictions imposed on cultural venues in the red zone. They want to return to work as soon as possible. Since the measures set in place to ensure the safety of the public and the artists were effective and rigorous and that no outbreaks were observed in connection with the performance venues, the GMMQ fully understands the musicians’ dissatisfaction.

It should be noted that the survey was conducted prior to the Quebec government’s announcement of a $50 million assistance plan for the cultural sector, which brought some relief to the community.

DRAWING ON INNER RESOURCES

The context of the pandemic allows us to see the wide diversity of artists’ reactions in finding alternative resources. While some have converted to the health care sectors, among other things, others have drawn on their artistic versatility. This is the case of lyric artist Léa Weilbrenner, who has taken up the business of making face coverings for singers. This ingenious initiative was much appreciated and encouraged Weilbrenner to develop the other artistic activities she practiced before the pandemic, including her passion for pottery and decorative objects in her boutique La Maison de Léa, launched in 2019. This artist was born into a family of ceramic craftsmen and from a young age loved to decorate ceramic pieces created by her parents. Weilbrenner says that the confinement allows her to take advantage of her other artistic skills, including gouache painting and watercolor. After launching her line of face covers for singers, which have the advantage of being thin, made in several layers and designed so as not to touch the mouth, she was pleasantly surprised by the rapid increase in orders from all over the world, Quebec, Canada, the United States, Europe, etc.

Other artists have drawn on their inner resources to use their versatility to ensure the continuity of their creativity. Rose Naggar-Tremblay’s career as an international opera singer came to a halt because of the pandemic, just when she was so happy to see the best season of her life taking shape. So as not to despair, seeing all her contracts, especially in Europe, cancelled or postponed, Rose had no other option but to see the wide diversity of artists’ reactions in finding alternative resources. While some have converted to the health care sectors, among other things, others have drawn on their artistic versatility. This is the case of lyric artist Léa Weilbrenner, who has taken up the business of making face coverings for singers. This ingenious initiative was much appreciated and encouraged Weilbrenner to develop the other artistic activities she practiced before the pandemic, including her passion for pottery and decorative objects in her boutique La Maison de Léa, launched in 2019. This artist was born into a family of ceramic craftsmen and from a young age loved to decorate ceramic pieces created by her parents. Weilbrenner says that the confinement allows her to take advantage of her other artistic skills, including gouache painting and watercolor. After launching her line of face covers for singers, which have the advantage of being thin, made in several layers and designed so as not to touch the mouth, she was pleasantly surprised by the rapid increase in orders from all over the world, Quebec, Canada, the United States, Europe, etc.

To continue earning a living, she began teaching languages: French, Italian, as well as an introduction to creative writing online. This reunion with her other passion for teaching gave Naggar-Tremblay a second breath to take advantage of the confinement and continue her creative momentum in composing booklets, poems and recording songs. “It brought me a serenity and mental stability I had never felt before,” she says. “It felt very good and gave me the energy to turn this disastrous upheaval into a healthy creative whirlwind.”

TRANSLATION BY JACQUELINE VANASSE

LÉA WEILBRENNER

Lyric artist Léa Weilbrenner, who has taken up the business of making face coverings for singers. This ingenious initiative was much appreciated and encouraged Weilbrenner to develop the other artistic activities she practiced before the pandemic, including her passion for pottery and decorative objects in her boutique La Maison de Léa, launched in 2019. This artist was born into a family of ceramic craftsmen and from a young age loved to decorate ceramic pieces created by her parents. Weilbrenner says that the confinement allows her to take advantage of her other artistic skills, including gouache painting and watercolor. After launching her line of face covers for singers, which have the advantage of being thin, made in several layers and designed so as not to touch the mouth, she was pleasantly surprised by the rapid increase in orders from all over the world, Quebec, Canada, the United States, Europe, etc.

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TRANSLATION BY JACQUELINE VANASSE

LÉA WEILBRENNER
AMBASSADEURS 2020-2021 AMBASSADORS

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- ANA SOKOLOVIC

“Votre magazine est un chaînon vital pour le soutien des arts au Canada, plus particulièrement à Montréal et au Québec, où les arts, la musique en particulier, constituent un élément si vivant de notre culture. Au nom de l’Orchestre Classique de Montréal, sur le point de célébrer 80 ans de concerts ininterrompus au Canada, je salue La Scena Musicale, et vous souhaite de continuer à soutenir notre mission.”
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OTHER AMBASSADORS/AUTRES AMBASSADEURS

Tim Brady, Aline Kutan, Stéphane Tétreault
MUSICAL ENTREPRENEURS
IN THE AGE OF COVID-19
by JACQUELINE VANASSE

The pandemic has pushed the whole classical music sector further into the embrace of recorded performance and digital experimentation. What used to be a second option for musicians is now all they have and many of them are seizing the opportunity to connect with friends and audience members. Here are three examples of young Canadian musicians who used their downtime to launch challenging new projects.

One month into the pandemic, Canadian violinist and Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra concertmaster Nikki Chooi and his wife, cellist Joanne Lee-Chooi, started Coffee Chats with Nikki and Jo. Combining two of their favourite things, coffee and music, they started the project from the genuine wish to catch up with and check in on friends.

“The pandemic is hard on musicians because everything we do involves communicating with people, whether it is collaborating with colleagues, performing for an audience, or connecting socially,” says Chooi. “I always thought it was fascinating to interview artists about their life journey, their inspirations, and what they look for in music. The pandemic adds another dimension to discuss and, in our interviews, we make a point in asking our guests for advice; advice from teachers to students, from performers to performers. We hope to bring a sense of inspiration and relatability to our viewers.”

Chooi and Lee-Chooi have a broad network of friends through chamber music festivals, collaborations, and studying with different mentors. Over the past few months, their interview subjects have included Canadian violinist James Ehnes, Berlin Philharmonic concertmaster Noah Bendix-Balgley, Met Opera soprano Susanna Phillips, conductor Ludovic Morlot, and principal French horn of the Chicago Symphony David Cooper. “Although we didn’t have control over the pandemic, we had control over staying connected with our fellow musicians,” Lee-Chooi says.

Frédéric-Alexandre Michaud’s project started on March 18, the day of his mid-master’s recital. It had been canceled five days earlier, but the young maestro decided to go ahead online. However, instead of directing people, he decided to direct two performances that he had previously video recorded on his iPad. He also let people comment live during the recital. After that, assisted by his brother Benjamin, who took on all visual aspects, Michaud started the web series FAM, un maestro en confinement, in which he conducted between three and five pieces every Wednesday evening for the following six months. In each episode, the two brothers introduce the musical pieces and discuss music, art and history.

“There is something very convivial about it,” Michaud says. “If people have questions or want to comment, we can answer them directly on the chat. It helps democratizing classical music in a way. Moreover, this unique concept offers the rare opportunity to see a conductor conducting facing his audience.”

On conducting recordings and not live performances, the young maestro acknowledged the challenge and the gift. “Of course, a conductor needs to relate with musicians to make music. Otherwise it’s a bit like doing karaoke. But this project allowed me to learn a lot of repertoire and share music with people. It allowed me to try and explore my art a little further.”

The pandemic moved Canadian cellist Stéphane Tétreault into a period of reflection. “It made me start wondering about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to occupy my time. Then the thought of launching my own webcast came to me.” From the beginning, the idea behind the project Culture d’abord was to engage with interesting artists to help draw a portrait of the cultural milieu.

“I thought we were not talking enough about culture even though it has been very much present in our lives throughout the pandemic,” says Tétreault. “I thought there was an irony there and I really wanted to take the time to talk about culture and cultural issues.” Wanting to add a personal musical moment to the show, the young cellist surprised each of his guests with a gift, often a piece arranged for two, three or four cellos on which he simultaneously played all parts.

“I think this project showed another side of my personality, my great need for communication and not only with music but also with words,” says Tétreault. “I do not know if this experience made me more accomplished or differently accomplished, but it has been extremely enriching on so many levels and it is definitely something I would like to continue in the future.”

While the past months set much of the live performance world on hold, some musicians seized the time and quiet to experiment and grow. The need to put themselves out there, now more apparent than ever, stimulated artists around the world to reflect on their art and careers. Even though the musicians slowed their online activities as the fall season approached, all three projects are still running. “I think that the musicians who are most creative and most innovative now will get the most benefit out of this pandemic going forwards,” Chooi concludes.
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IN DIFFICULT TIMES

by JACQUELINE VANASSE

Money is a hard thing to ask for when everyone around you needs it at least as much as you do. An appropriate reaction to the current crisis would be to make the assumption that donors will be less able to help this time. Yet, according to Annie Boisclair, fundraising director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, this is the worst thing an organization can do. “The key is to – even in times of a pandemic – never stop communicating with your different categories of donors. Even though donations can potentially be less generous, organizations should continue to communicate with people and tell them about their mission in order to keep what unites them alive.”

We are living through a situation that arguably no one has experienced in the last century, and even though the fundraising structure and tools might stay the same – an annual campaign, a newsletter, etc. – the message is different, the needs are much more urgent. Different times call for different measures and therefore for projects out of the ordinary.

“At the moment, a lot of organizations and foundations still have a fundraising model geared towards events,” points out Gabrielle Blackburn, executive director of the Jeunesses Musicales Foundation. “They should actually think bigger than what they are used to for the simple reason that what we are used to will not be possible this year. Every organization will have to relate to their mission but think differently on how they can serve it in the current situation.”

That is what the JM Foundation did last spring with the Do Mi Si La Do Ré Contest (“Domicile adoré” or “Home sweet home”). The fundraising project, for which Blackburn will receive the outstanding innovative manager award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals this November, has been recognized as pioneering in both the cultural and philanthropy sectors. “The contest was not just about giving money to young talents,” says Blackburn. “It was about creating enthusiasm for them, making them known and investing in their future, which aligns with our mission of helping emerging young musicians. We wanted to help them not just financially, but also re-motivate them to play even though everything had stopped.”

Arts organizations should not underestimate the unifying role that artists and musicians can play in fundraising. As representatives of the organization and the personification of their art, musicians have the power to bring the community together and be compelling figures for donors. Especially now that live performance has been stilled, musicians around the world feel the urge to roll up their sleeves. The musicians of the Orchestre Métropolitain, for instance, support and participate in the organization’s promotional and fundraising campaigns. “They are the soul of our organization,” says Céline Choiselat, the OM director of funding and partnership. “Galvanized by uniting and ambitious projects led by Yannick Nézet-Séguin – even in times of pandemic – they put their shoulder to the wheel to ensure the continuation of our artistic program. The audience cannot fail to sense this determination to offer music for the well-being of our community.”

While we ironically have less of it in our lives today, we need more of the human connection we once took for granted. Since the beginning of the pandemic, there is a greater general awareness of the needs of others, and that is good news. “There is a spirit of global community that is generated when we talk about gifts and needs that did not exist before,” says Blackburn. “More prominently than ever before, we feel that pressing need to be part of a community and that all of us will need to do our best to help others.” Organizations need to ask for help and reach out to their donors more than ever before, and not just because they want to survive, but also because the people who followed them before the crisis need them. Troubled, worried and in need of comfort, people are counting on organizations to carry on providing their good services and products as known and appreciated before the pandemic. It is in times like these that people need to hear from each other the most. Organizations, donors, audience – we are all connected. Donors are no exceptions. Isolated from friends and family as well, they will appreciate the human touch of a phone call or a personalized letter.

The stakes have changed in relation to the pandemic. Living in an unprecedented time, we will all have to start thinking differently. “A situation like this gives us much wider understanding, empathy and perspective,” says Tricia Baldwin, director of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts at Queen’s University. “And arts organizations are given the opportunity to start playing a more integrative role in the society.” More than ever, fundraising is about the human behind the communication. Organizations will have to be creative in finding ways to bring people together. Fundraising in times of COVID is a question of knowing how to reach people and make them understand that our mission is still there – that we are still there – even if the context has changed.
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THOUGHTS AFTER COVID-19
ON YOM KIPPUR
by DENIS BROTTO

No matter the religion, we all have doubt, regret, guilt and weakness within. We all seek absolution without judgement as a means of inner peace. We seek redemption, we seek forgiveness.

Performing Max Bruch’s Kol Nidrei this year was especially meaningful. In mid-March, after returning from concerts in Europe, I was severely stricken with COVID-19. I almost lost my life. I endured 32 days in an induced coma on a ventilator. I suffered both a viral and bronchial infection. My lungs appeared white on X-rays. I dealt with complications affecting my kidneys and liver. I lost 25 kilos, including significant muscle mass, such that I was unable to walk. I suffered terrifying hallucinations. I spent 45 days in hospital and have been recovering and rehabilitating ever since.

When I returned home from the intensive care unit I could barely stand. I needed a walker to balance and to move. The daily functions I had previously taken for granted needed to be relearned. I suffered from post-traumatic stress and nightmares. My hands trembled constantly, making even eating and drinking a challenge. I developed severe neuropathy and swelling, especially in my hands. They tingled as if asleep. They looked like the hands of the Michelin man. The pain was excruciating.

Three weeks later I began the arduous process of returning to play my cello.

For a musician, your instrument is your voice. I liken my experience to someone who has had a stroke and lost the ability to speak. My trembling hands could barely hold the bow. Attempting to make a sound, what came out was barely a whisper. I had almost no strength and the strings under my left hand felt like razor wire.

Three and a half months later, I recorded a video of Kol Nidrei at Temple Emanu-El in Montreal on the occasion of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. It took resolve I did not know I had. The suffering I endured made me appreciate what a privilege it is to speak again. To speak with my cello.

Never have I felt as emotionally implicated in playing this chant of atonement, this song without words, as after having suffered COVID-19. Losing what I love most and finding it again has been somewhat miraculous. It made me delve into my heart and soul and discover what really mattered to me. It was a catharsis.

For the first time in my life I feel I understand the extent of music’s message. I realize how fortunate I am to be able to speak this language. I share this moment with you in humility. I offer this musical prayer with a generosity of spirit filled with love and empathy for the human condition and appreciation for the power within us all to overcome, to discover ourselves and to live again.

Denis Brott is artistic director of the Montreal Chamber Music Festival. To watch his performance of Kol Nidrei, go to www.myscena.org/la-scena-musical-team/thoughts-after-covid-on-yom-kippur-by-denis-brott/
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As the Member of Parliament for Saint-Léonard-Saint-Michel, I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in advance. This year I will have a very special thought for our frontline workers who will still be on the front lines against COVID-19 to protect our families and seniors.

Thank you!

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DID YOU KNOW THAT...

by ROBERT MARKOW

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... THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE FRANZ SCHUBERT? The “other” one was born just 11 years after the famous one, in Dresden, and is often referred to as “François” to distinguish him from his far more famous namesake. François lives on almost exclusively through a little salon piece for violin and piano called L’Abeille (The Bee), a favorite of the comedian Jack Benny.

... THERE WERE MANY OTHER STRAUSSES BESIDES THE VIENNESE JOHANN (THE “WALTZ KING”) AND RICHARD (THE GERMAN COMPOSER OF OPERAS AND TONE POEMS)? To begin with, there were two Johann Strausses — father and son. Then there were Johann Jr.’s brothers Eduard and Josef, both of whom were also fine composers of dance music in their own right. Richard’s father Franz also was a composer as well as Germany’s leading horn player of his time (late 19th century). Oscar Straus (one “s”), also Viennese-born, made his name in the world of operetta.

... JUST ONE WELL-KNOWN COMPOSER HAS WRITTEN A SYMPHONY IN THE RARELY USED KEY OF E-FLAT MINOR? That was Prokofiev, his Sixth. There have been others, of course, but beyond Nikolai Masskovsky (his Sixth also), how many readers have heard of the nineteenth-century Italian Giovanni Sgambati (No. 2), or of the German Felix Woyrsch (No. 3) or the American Philip Gleeley Clapp (No. 9). Another Russian, Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov, composed two symphonies in this key (Nos. 1 and 2).

... AFTER CONCERTOS FOR SOLO VIOLIN (WELL OVER 200), THE NEXT INSTRUMENT IN LINE FOR SHEER QUANTITY OF CONCERTOS BY VIVALDI IS THE BASSOON? He wrote nearly 40 of them, and they were probably the first to be written for this instrument in a solo capacity.

... HOLST WASN’T THE ONLY COMPOSER TO WRITE A SERIES OF PIECES CALLED THE PLANETS? Canadians Walter Boudreau (for solo piano) and Denis Gougeon (for various solo instruments), and Americans Richard Burdick (solo horn), and Kyle Gann (instrumental ensemble) have also written evocations of the planets.

... SAINT-SAËNS WAS NOT JUST A COMPOSER AND PIANIST? He also held interests in archeology, astronomy, botany, geology, lepidopterology (butterflies and moths!), mathematics, philosophy and poetry, some at a scholarly level.

... MOZART WROTE ONLY TWO SYMPHONIES IN A MINOR KEY, BOTH G MINOR? The famous one is No. 40, composed in 1788; the less-well-known one is No. 25, composed when Mozart was just 17, meaning that he had already composed at least two dozen symphonies before that, starting from the age of eight. Mozart reserved G Minor for his most personal, intense, emotion-charged scores. Others include the String Quintet K. 516, the Piano Quartet K. 478, and Pamina’s aria “Ach, ich fühl’s” from The Magic Flute.

... THE FIRST COMPOSER TO REQUIRE EIGHT HIGHS, EACH WITH AN INDEPENDENT PART, WAS WAGNER, FOR THE VERY OPENING OF DAS RHEINGOLD? At the beginning, each musician plays exactly the same part (an E-Flat Major arpeggio spanning more than two octaves), but at staggered time intervals, until all eight are playing. The result is an aural effect that evokes the peaceful depths of a great river, ever-changing yet always the same.

... THE FIRST BUDDHIST OPERA EVER WRITTEN WAS BY A THAI COMPOSER, SOMTOW SUCHARITKUL? This was The Silent Prince, premiered in Houston in 2010 to considerable success. Wagner had toyed with the idea, but that’s as far as it got with him.

... THE FIRST CONCERTO FOR CONTRABASSOON WAS WRITTEN ONLY IN 1978, BY THE AMERICAN GUNTHER SCHULLER? Two years earlier the English composer Ruth Gibbings had written a piece called Levanathan for contrabassoon and chamber orchestra, but that wasn’t technically a “concerto.” Since Schuller there have been concertos by the Americans Donald Erb, Vazgen Muradian, and Daniel Dorff, and the Finn Kalevi Aho. The Dutchman Henk Badings wrote a double concerto for bassoon and contrabassoon, and Quebec composer Jean Papineau-Couture wrote a double concerto for contrabass and contrabassoon, premiered by the Montreal Symphony in 1986.

... OF RACHMANINOFF’S 80-PLUS SONGS, THE ONE WITH NO WORDS IS BY FAR THE BEST KNOWN? This is of course his Vocalise, which has been transcribed for countless instrumental ensembles as well. (A vocalise is a song without words in which singers can concentrate on beauty of tone production and musical phrasing without concerning themselves about projection of a text as well.)

... THE FIRST USE OF THE CELESTA IN ORCHESTRAL MUSIC WAS NOT IN TCHAIKOVSKY’S NUTCRACKER BALLET (DANCE OF THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY, 1891)? Rather it was in a little-known work of Chausson, incidental music for a production of Shakespeare’s last play, The Tempest (La Tempête), composed three years earlier.

... WHILE WESTERN AUDIENCES AT CHRISTMAS TIME ARE FACED WITH A GLUT OF MESSIAH AND NUTCRACKER PERFORMANCES, IN JAPAN IT’S BEETHOVEN’S NINTH? The Japanese go nuts over the Ninth, to the extent that there are somewhere between 250 and 300 performances throughout the country in December, most sold out, and with the chorus often singing from memory.
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Montreal, 18 au 28 février
www.montrealenlumiere.com

TORONTO

BEETHOVEN 250 FESTIVAL
Toronto, November 22 to December 13
416-608-2824 | www.rcmusic.ca

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM SUR L’ART (LE FIFA)
Montreal et ville de Quebec, 16 au 28 mars
514-714-1637 | www.artfifa.com

FESTIVAL DE CASTELIERS
Montréal, 3 au 7 mars
514-270-2717 | festival.casteliers.ca

LE FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM POUR ENFANTS DE MONTRÉAL (FIFEM)
Montréal, 27 février au 7 mars
514-967-8893 | www.fifem.com

LE FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DU FILM SUR L’ART (LE FIFA)
Montreal et ville de Quebec, 16 au 28 mars
514-714-1637 | www.artfifa.com

QUEBEC CITY

CARNIVAL DE QUÉBEC
Québec, 5 au 14 février
418-626-3716 | www.carnavalqc.ca

OTTAWA-GATINEAU

WINTERLUDExx
Ottawa, February 5 to 21
844-878-7593 | www.winterlude.com

UNDERCURRENTS FESTIVAL
Ottawa, February 10 to 20
www.undercurrentsfestival.ca

REDIGONTO
Toronto, January 15 to 29
www.todesignofsite.com

ONTARIO ELSEWHERE

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS
Niagara, November 14 to January 10
www.wfol.com

MANITOBA

FESTIVAL DU VOYAGEUR
Winnipeg, February 12 to 21
204-237-7962 | www.heho.ca

WINNIPEG NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL
Winnipeg, February 24 to March 21
204-949-3950 | www.wnmf.ca

ALBERTA

PROVINCIAL DRAMA FESTIVAL
Okotoks, April 4 to 10
www.theatrealberta.com/playbill/festivals

BRITISH COLUMBIA

PUSH FESTIVAL - INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL
Vancouver, January 26 to February 7
604-605-8284 | www.pushfestival.ca

NOR_TERR

AVAILABLE LIGHTS FILM FESTIVAL
Whitehorse, February 5 to 14
867-393-3456 | www.alff.ca

TORONTO MOZART VOCAL COMPETITION
Toronto, January 29 to 31
647-342-2197 | www.mozartproject.ca

ONTARIO ELSEWHERE

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Niagara, November 14 to January 10
www.wfol.com

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FESTIVAL DU VOYAGEUR
Winnipeg, February 12 to 21
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WINTER FESTIVAL PICKS
par ANDRÉANNE VENNE

BEETHOVEN 250 FESTIVAL
NOV. 22 TO DEC. 13
The Royal Conservatory of Music presents a series of concerts as a homage to Beethoven in late November and early December. Check the schedule, as some concerts have undergone postponements or changes. On the program: two concerts by Charles Richard-Hamelin, including one on Dec. 10 with violinist James Ehnes (co-organizer of this edition of the festival) and the New Orford String Quartet for a program including Beethoven’s Quartet Op. 18 No. 3. Canadian Conservatory graduate pianist and Beethoven specialist Stewart Goodyear will perform three concerts, joining Ehnes to present the violin sonatas. See the website for the different locations. www.rcmusic.com

21C
FEB. 15 TO 29
The Royal Conservatory of Music continues its season with the 21C festival, dedicated to the most dynamic and daring talents of the classical scene. Featured on Jan. 26, 28 and 29, the quartet from San Francisco, Kronos, brings us a program from the seven Muslim countries banned from immigration to the United States – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – as well as other protest music inspired by Pete Seeger. At Koerner Hall. www.rcmusic.com

FESTIVAL CLASSICA
DEC. 11 TO 20
Festival Classica, which aims to provide a unique classical music experience through lively online concerts, usually does not take place in winter, but in spring. For reasons we understand, the 2020 edition, “From Beethoven to Bowie,” scheduled for May and June, was not presented. However, the festival will offer, from Dec. 11 to 20, 2020, an “encore” edition during which some 15 concerts scheduled for the 2020 edition will be presented. This will be an occasion for the festival to launch its new content platform leconcertbleu.com. www.festivalclassica.com

QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL
FEB. 5 TO 14
The Quebec Winter Carnival, which first saw the light of day in 1894 and was interrupted by the two world wars and the economic crisis of 1929, will not be deterred by the pandemic. The schedule is to be determined and health measures are expected. A masked Carnival Bonhomme? Just an idea! www.carnaval.qc.ca

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF FILMS ON ART
MARCH 16 TO 28
FIFA chose to react early to the crisis that has hit us since March by presenting its latest edition online. The programming for its 39th edition will have the same treatment and will be offered across Canada. For $30, art-film lovers will be able to see the entire program. The list of films presented will be kept up to date on the FIFA website, www.artfifa.com

QUEBEC CINEMA RENDEZVOUS
FEB. 24 TO MARCH 5
The 39th edition of the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois will take place this year under a hybrid format depending on how the situation evolves, according to the festival’s Facebook page. The festival presents works of fiction, documentaries, animation, experimentation and student productions in French, English, Aboriginal or other languages by Quebec or Franco-Ontarian directors. www.facebook.com/QcCinema

UNDERCURRENTS
FEB. 10 TO 20
On the theatre side this time, the Undercurrents festival, produced by Ottawa Fringe, highlights the best original contemporary theatrical works by local, Canadian or foreign artists since 2011. The Under Development component allows local artists or groups to work on their new projects during one year at the Arts Court and to present these works in progress as part of the festival’s Discoveries series. The lineup is yet to be determined, but the events will take place from Feb. 10 to 20. www.undercurrentsfestival.ca

RIDM
NOVEMBER 12 TO DECEMBER 2
39th Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal taking place this year on the enligne.ridm.ca platform with two subscription options (access to the full program or access to one of the thematic sections). The different thematic sections present various perspectives on the current reality by granting an equal place to feature, medium and short films. More than 100 films, numerous discussions and several virtual workshops will constitute this edition. From Nov. 12 to 18, we are invited to delve deeper into history, explore nature and find its communities. From Nov. 19 to 25, the meetings seek to reflect on dystopia, on becoming oneself and on ways to challenge power. And, from Dec. 26, we are shown how to rethink privacy and survive violence. www.ridm.ca
National Calendar

NOVEMBER

16 Monday
> 19h30. Conservatoire Mtl. $8-16. Ensemble Paramirabo presents works by Jimmie LeBlanc. 514-487-5190

17 Tuesday
> 19h30. Cirque Éloize. $15-75. Orchestre classique de Montréal: Quebec premiere of the opera Ac one. 514-487-5190

20 Friday

DECEMBER

03 Thursday

08 Tuesday
> 19h30. Oratoire St-J. $8-75. Orchestre classique de Montréal: Haendel’s Messiah. 514-487-5190

09 Wednesday
> 22h00. Conservatoire Mtl. $8-16. Ensemble Paramirabo presents works by Jimmie LeBlanc. 514-487-5190

14h00. Palais Montcalm. $25-65. Les Violons du Roy dans des œuvres de Sibelius, Plamondon, Nielsen, Prokoviev and Grieg. 418-641-6040

12h30. Oratoire St-J. $8-16. Ensemble Paramirabo presents works by Jimmie LeBlanc. 514-487-5190


QUEBEC (ELSEWHERE)

É. Assomption-Vierge Assomption-de-la-Sainte-Vierge Church, 153 rue du Portage, L’Assomption. 450-589-5621

22h15. É. Assomption-Vierge. $40. Festival Sinfonia - Chamber music of Beethoven. 450-589-5621


21 Thursday
> 20h. Jeanne Lamon Hall. Tafelmusik with oboist Alfredo Bernardini. 1-833-964-6337

22 Friday
> 20h. Jeanne Lamon Hall. Tafelmusik with oboist Alfredo Bernardini. 1-833-964-6337

23 Saturday
> 13h. Jeanne Lamon Hall. Tafelmusik with oboist Alfredo Bernardini. 1-833-964-6337

24 Sunday
> 15h30. Jeanne Lamon Hall. Tafelmusik with oboist Alfredo Bernardini. 1-833-964-6337

TORONTO

22 Sunday

15h. Koerner. $50. Soprano Adrienne Pieczonka with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra.

11 Friday

12 Saturday

15h. Koerner. $50. Soprano Adrienne Pieczonka with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra.

Koerner Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor Street West, Toronto. Jeanne Lamon Hall Jeanne Lamon Hall, 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto.

418-641-6040

NATIONAL CALENDAR

DU 6 NOVEMBRE AU 7 FEVRIER 2021 • FROM NOV 6 TO FEB 7, 2021

VISITEZ NOTRE SITE WEB POUR LE CALENDRIER DES EVENEMENTS MYSCENA.ORG

Deadline for the next issue : Jan. 15.
Procedure: mySCENA.org/calendar-instructions/

Date de tombée pour le prochain numéro: 15 janv.
Procédure: mySCENA.org/fr/calendrier-procedure/

NOVEMBER

6 Friday

15h. Carleton University music program: Virtual Masterclass Series. carleton.ca/music

19h30. Free. Theatre: King of Canada by P. Van Dyck, starring Ellen David and Brian Dool. www.infinitetheatre.com

20h. KWSymphony: Royal Wood with the KWS. www.kwsymphony.ca

8 Sunday
> 14h30. Free. Theatre: King of Canada by P. Van Dyck, starring Ellen David and Brian Dool. www.infinitetheatre.com

15h. J. S. Bach: 24 preludes and fugues II at the organ and harpsichord. www.facebook.com/Concertsbon-pasteur
9 Monday
► 12h. Montreal Chamber Music Festival: New series of weekly video, “A day in the life”. festivalmontreal.org

10 Tuesday
► 19h. Free. DACAMERA: Conrad Tao in récital. wwwdacamera.com

11 Wednesday
► 20h. Toronto Mendelssohn Choir: Choral Works about War and an excerpt from Fauré’s Requiem. livestream.com/tmc.

12 Thursday
► 14h. 20h. I Musici perform Stabat Mater by Pergolesi. imusici.com
► 19h30. J. S. Bach: 24 preludes and fugues III at the organ and harpsichord. www.facebook.com/Concertsbonpasteur
► 20h. Tafelmusik perform Erlebach, Biber and Veracini. www.tafelmusik.org

13 Friday
► 12h. Free. Serenata at St-John’s last chance to hear Les Airs de Cours de Chabanceau de la Barre (1633–1678) è Chaplin. www.sasj.ca

14 Saturday

15 Sunday
► 15h. J. S. Bach: 24 preludes and fugues IV at the organ and harpsichord. www.facebook.com/Concertsbonpasteur

16 Monday
► 12h. Montreal Chamber Music Festival: New series of weekly video, “A day in the life”. festivalmontreal.org

19 Thursday
► 20h. Free. Allegra Chamber Music presents an All Beethoven program. wwwallelchambermusic.com

20 Friday
► 20h. KWSymphony: Works by Haydn and Mendelssohn. www.kwsymphony.ca

21 Saturday
► 12h. L’Osl reçoit l’humoriste et clarinettiste Christopher Hall. www.osl.ca

22 Sunday

23 Monday
► 12h. Montreal Chamber Music Festival: New series of weekly video, “A day in the life”. festivalmontreal.org
► 19h30. 95. The Orchestre de l’Agora performs Corelli, Bach and Telemann. quebecbaroque.com

24 Tuesday
► 19h30. 95. Pianist Anna Saradian performs Bach. quebecbaroque.com

25 Wednesday
► 19h30. 95. Violinist Kerson Leong performs Bach’s Partitas and Sonatas. quebecbaroque.com

26 Thursday
► 19h30. 95. The SMAA performs Bach’s six Motets BWV 225-230. quebecbaroque.com

29 Sunday
► 24h. Donovan Locke sings jazz standards. www.markhamjazzfestival.com

DECEMBER

02 Wednesday
► 19h30. 95. Pianist Serhiy Salov performs Bach, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. quebecbaroque.com

03 Thursday
► 17h. $5. Andrew Wan and Luc Beausejour in concert. www.quebecbaroque.com
► 20h. $55. Soprano Adrienne Pieczonka with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra. www.rcmusic.com

04 Friday
► 17h. $5. Axel Strauss and Luc Beausejour in concert. www.quebecbaroque.com
► 20h. KWSymphony: Works by Haydn and Schumann. www.kwsymphony.ca

06 Sunday
► 15h. $50. Soprano Adrienne Pieczonka with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra. www.rcmusic.com

10 Thursday
► 12h. Festival Classica Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com
► 20h. $17. Works for Christmas time, premiere by composer Aïrat Ichnourativ and songs by pop singer Mario Pelchat. www.osl.ca
► 14h. $20. I Musici and Members Ensemble perform Christmas music. imusici.com

PRELUDES AND FUGUES AT THE CHAPELLE

The Chapelle historique du Bon-Pasteur is also offering online concerts. The month of November is marked by three dedicated to the complete Preludes and Fugues from the first book of the Well-Tempered Clavier by J. S. Bach. The series will close with 18 of the 24 preludes performed by Geneviève Soly on organ and harpsichord. Note that these are concerts with commentary. Nov. 8 and 15 at 3 p.m. and Nov. 12 at 7:30 p.m. www.facebook.com/Concertsbonpasteur

BACH FESTIVAL

This season, the Festival Bach Montréal will be digital. The opening concert, on Nov. 19 at St. Joseph’s Oratory, will be an organ gala with a concerto for solo organ, variations, a fantasy, the Passacaglia and Fugue and transcriptions of cantatas of the Kantor of Leipzig. Four organists will take turns: Luc Beauséjour, Vincent Boucher, Hans-Ola Ericsson and Jonathan Oldengram. On Nov. 20, at the Notre-Dame-de-Secours chapel, an Autour de la flûte concert will feature two musicians recognized for their interpretation on period instruments, Mika Puterman on the flute and Gili Lefòtus on the fortepiano.
On the program: sonatas by J.S. and C.P.E. Bach as well as by Mendelssohn. The festival will also offer several concerts at the Bourgie Hall, with violinist Marina Thibeault and the Orchestre de l’Agora (Nov. 23), pianist Anna Saradjian (Nov. 24), violinist Kerson Leong (Nov. 25), pianist Serhiy Salov (Dec. 2) and the viola da gamba ensemble Les Voix Humaines (Dec. 3). From Nov. 19 to Dec. 6. www.festivalbachmontreal.com JB

OSL: HUMOUR AND ORCHESTRAL MUSIC
Let yourself be led by comedian Christopher Hall, who is also a classically trained clarinetist, and the Orchestre symphonique de Laval as you have rarely heard them before. On the program: Variations for Stand-Up Comic and Orchestra by Montreal composer Anthony Rozankovic, a friend of Hall’s. This work opens majestically before segueing to a suite or mosaic of short variations and melodic paraphrases, with commentary showcasing the soloist’s very personal humour. Concert online from Nov. 21 to Dec. 31, in English and French. www.osl.ca JB

I MUSICI BEGINS ITS SEASON
The first concert of the 2020-2021 season of I Musici de Montréal will be webcast on Nov. 12, from St. Jax Church (formerly St. James the Apostle), under the direction of Jean-Marie Zeitouni who is returning for a 10th and final year as artistic director. Online audiences will be treated to Pergolesi’s famous Stabat Mater, with the luminous voices of Myriam Leblanc, soprano, and Maude Brunet, mezzo-soprano, a double bass concerto titled Sombre clarity by composer Missey Mazzoli, as well as a premiere by composer Kelly-Marie Murphy, commissioned by I Musici.

In view of recent government measures, this concert and others will be webcast live. I Musici hopes eventually to be able to welcome 60 people per concert while continuing its webcasts in order to reach as many listeners as possible. “The program showcases works spanning over 400 years of history,” says Jean-Marie Zeitouni. “This is the perfect opportunity for all music lovers to come and reconenect with masterpieces from the past as well as to make some interesting new discoveries.”

To celebrate the magic of Christmas, the chamber orchestra will welcome the vocal ensemble Meslanges to perform Christmas classics ranging from Bach to Poulenc, including Rameau and Berlioz. Dec. 10, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., at St. Jax Church. www.imusici.com JB

Jan 11

12 Saturday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com


20. $30. Beethoven 250 Festival: www.rcmusic.com


13 Sunday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com

15. $40. Royal Conservatory: violinist James Ehnes at the Beethoven 250 festival. www.rcmusic.com

15 Tuesday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com

16 Wednesday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com

17 Thursday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com


20h. KWSymphony: Yuletide Spectacular. www.kwsymphony.ca

19 Saturday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com

20 Sunday

12. Festival Classicca Concerts. www.leconcertbleu.com
ARTE MUSICA: A MYRIAD OF ONLINE CONCERT

Despite the closure of theatres, which will last until at least Nov. 23, Bourgie Hall does not intend to remain silent. Thanks to the large number of works recorded within its walls, audiences will be able to attend several concerts online. Some will cover the Baroque period, with works by Couperin, Corelli and Handel (concerts by the Arion Baroque Orchestra on Nov. 13). Others will feature several musical eras, from J. S. Bach to Satie, by way of Mozart and Brahms (Ensemble Caprice, Nov. 22, with soprano Karina Gauvin and baritone Marc Boucher). Contemporary repertoire will also be in the spotlight, on Nov. 18, courtesy of the Quatuor Molinari. On the program are works by Górecki, Penderecki and Lutosławski. All webcasts will be live from Bourgie Hall and remain available on the web for two weeks.

www.sallebourgie.com JB

BEETHOVEN 250

The Royal Conservatory of Music, like many other institutions, has organized a festival in honour of Ludwig van Beethoven, who was born 250 years ago this December. Special in many ways, the Beethoven 250 Festival has been co-programmed by Canadian violinist James Ehnes, who will be playing all 10 of the composer’s violin sonatas with pianist Stewart Goodyear. While many events have been canceled or postponed because of the pandemic, some will take place before a reduced audience and others will be livestreamed. All performances are being filmed for online presentation. The festival will open on Nov. 22 with pianist Charles Richard-Hamelin and the Rolston String Quartet in a program including a rarely performed chamber version of the “Emperor” Concerto. On Dec. 3, Johannes Debus will conduct the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra in the Symphony No. 2 and excerpts from Fidelio featuring soprano Adrianne Pieczonka. Closing the festival will be an online concert featuring the Royal Conservatory Orchestra playing the Symphony No. 3 (“Eroica”).

www.rcmusic.com JB

MSO: A NEW SERIES

The Montreal Symphony Orchestra announced at the end of October a series of six new concerts, all designed expressly for webcast, from October through January. Until the MSO can once again welcome its audience to the Maison symphonique, this new series will offer exclusive content. On Nov. 24, NAC Orchestra music director Alexander Shelley will conduct a concert featuring soprano Adrienne Pieczonka in Richard Strauss’s Four Last Songs. Also on the program: Death and Transfiguration by the same composer and the Valse triste by Sibelius.

The holiday season will see the return to the podium of conductor Bernard Labadie who, on Dec. 10, will conduct the MSO in Vivaldi and Handel, with the Gloria and several excerpts from Messiah. After the holidays, on Jan. 12, the two MSO artists in residence will be back on the Maison symphonique: Quebec mezzo-soprano Marie-Nicole Lemieux will sing Chausson while the Canadian-born composer Serbian Ana Sokolović will see her Concerto for Orchestra performed. This concert, conducted by Jean-Marie Zeitouni, will end with Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony.

www.violonsduroy.com JB

TAFELMUSIK PRESENTS THREE CONCERTS

The Toronto baroque orchestra under the direction of Elisa Citterio is very active at the end of the year. On Nov. 26, they present Passions of the Soul, featuring the 18th-century composer Michel-Richard Delalande, composer at the court of Versailles, as well as Locatelli and Telemann. Again led by Citterio, the Tafelmusik musicians will celebrate Christmas with a concert on Dec. 10. On the program are Christmas symphonies by Delalande and Corette and choral selections from Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and Handel’s Messiah as well as Vivaldi’s La Pastorella, with the participation of the Tafelmusik Chamber Choir. On Jan. 28, there is a concert composed exclusively of divertimentos by Mozart, Michael Haydn Vanhal and Hoffmeister, all composers who lived in Vienna in the 18th century. These concerts will take place online and are available on the orchestra’s website: www.tafelmusik.org.

THE RETURN OF THE VIOLONS DU ROY

Les Violons de Roy will venture into unusual repertoire for their 2020 end-of-year concerts. On Dec. 10, at the Palais Montcalm in Quebec City, the conductor Jean-Michel Malouf will lead them in modern and contemporary works, including a premiere by Yannick Plamondon on texts by Serge Bouchard highlighting the fauna of our land. Sibelius, Nielsen, Prokofiev and Grieg complete the program of this Nordic-inspired concert. The next day, another concert, again at the Palais Montcalm, will have an almost identical program. Notably, the public will be able to hear the Indigenous-inspired musical tale La légende du feu by Jean Cousineau. With the participation of actress Marianne Marceau. www.violonsduroy.com JB
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