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Food for Thought with Steven Gerber

MICHAEL DELLAIRA

STEVEN R. GERBER was born in 1948 in Washington, D.C., received degrees from Haverford College and from Princeton University. Two CDs of Gerber's orchestral works were released on major labels in 2000. Chandos issued his Symphony #1, Dirge and Awakening, Viola Concerto, and Triple Overture, played by the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra under Thomas Sanderling, with Lars Anders Tomter, viola, and the Bekova Sisters Trio. Koch International Classics, under a grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, released his Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto, and Serenade for String Orchestra, played by the National Chamber Orchestra under Piotr Gajewski, with soloists Kurt Nikkanen and Carter Brey. In addition to his success in the United States, Mr. Gerber has become perhaps the most often-played living American composer in the former Soviet Union, which he has toured 10 times since 1990, and where he has received literally dozens of orchestral performances and numerous concerts of his solo and chamber music.

DELLAIRA: Is it true that you may well be the most performed American composer in Russia?

GERBER: Well, I may have been, but I haven't been going that much recently.

DELLAIRA: How did that all come about? It's a rather strange distinction for an American composer.

GERBER: Right. My career there started completely by accident and the really odd thing is that my symphony, which a lot of people think sounds very Russian, was written before I had the slightest inkling I would ever go. I suppose it was influenced by the fact that I'd been listening to and studying a lot of Shostakovich. I certainly had no idea I would ever go to Russia. My father was born in Russia -- in what is now the Ukraine -- and just by chance in 1990 I met a second cousin of mine who's a Russian émigré and had been the executive director of the opera and ballet house in Kishinev, the capitol of Moldova. He'd been in this country for many years but we'd never met and he was very excited to find out that he had a cousin who was a composer. When that happened he arranged a tour for me in the Soviet Union in October of 1990. The music was a success and he already had a lot of contacts from his days there, and he made a lot more.

DELLAIRA: How many performances were there on that trip?

GERBER: There must have been about half a dozen concerts in different places, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kishinev, Yaroslavl, Rybinsk, and Talinn, which is the capital of Estonia. I performed in all those concerts too. In fact one of them was almost a piano recital, although I ended up having a violinist play with me. That would've been the second piano recital I'd played in my life - the other was when I was sixteen. The concert in Talinn was the only one in which I played some music not by myself: I did the Copland *Piano Variations* and some little Prokofiev pieces, but otherwise these were all concerts just of my music. A few of them with orchestras, some with string quartets, some with violinists, some with a singer. Very much like 19th century concerts where you have both orchestra music and chamber music and vocal music all thrown in together. There was one performance of my *Serenade for Strings* and three of my symphony, which were all premieres.

DELLAIRA: So I guess the reception was positive enough for you to make return trips.

GERBER: Right.

DELLAIRA: How many trips in all have you made?

GERBER: It would take me a while to count them. I've been to Moscow probably ten times and then there were a couple times when I went just to Kiev or just to Talinn to Bulgaria for a festival once, and once to some performances in Romania, all of which came out of the Russian traveling.

DELLAIRA: So did those experiences in any way help shape the kind of music you were going to write? In other words, if you were getting lots of performances there and you get very positive feedback, does that in any way determine your next piece?

GERBER: Well, it certainly affected what instruments I wrote for-I mean I wrote a piano concerto thinking I could probably get it played there. I wrote a violin concerto for Kurt Nikkanen, an American violinist, but I knew I could arrange performances for him over there. And actually when I wrote my cello concerto for Carter Brey, it was with the idea that I could probably get him performances there, but it ended up we did it in America and we never did it in Russia. But only to that extent. I don't think it affected my style at all. As I say, oddly enough, maybe it worked the other way around, that the reason some of the music was successful there was that it sounded Russian, rather my writing music that sounded Russian because I'd been there. I don't think it affected me as a composer.

DELLAIRA: It's also interesting that the music would be popular because it sounded Russian, rather than because it sounded American.

GERBER: Yes!. And pieces of mine that I think sound very American to them would sound Russian and I wouldn't know what they were talking about. But it's true their idea of American music is things like Bernstein and Gershwin. Jazz influenced, pop influenced. There is one guy in St. Petersburg who runs a very well known dance company who really liked my symphony a lot and has been talking about making a ballet to it or to some other music of mine. And he said once, you know I didn't know an American could write a symphony. Rather offensive, frankly!

DELLAIRA: So would you consider this period a kind of a phase? The Gerber Russian period?

GERBER: As far as going there, yes. From what I hear, things have changed there a lot and very few people want to do anything now without getting paid for it. So a composer comes or a conductor comes, they're expected to pay for the privilege, so I'm told. I'm sure that's not completely true. Mostly I sort of got tired of going there, and I didn't feel I needed it that much for my career and also I like to go to interesting places when I get my pieces performed. Russia is a fascinating place, but at least the major cities where all the good performers are I've seen so many times that I don't have a great desire to go back again.

DELLAIRA: Many of the works from this period have been released recently on CD. Actually two CDs and on two good labels, Chandos and Koch International.

GERBER: Yes. That was a stroke of luck..

DELLAIRA: Is the music on each of those CD's entirely different or, could it have been a two CD set say from either one of those labels?

GERBER: Actually, they are different. It wasn't planned that way but I realized afterwards that all the pieces on the Chandos CD do have a very dark, somewhat ominous, and I suppose to some people, Russian sounding quality, though I don't think that applies to all the pieces. Whereas the ones on Koch, I wouldn't call them light by any means, are not quite so heavy. I guess that's how I would put it, maybe more lyrical.

DELLAIRA: But they're all large-scale pieces?

GERBER: For the most part. The Chandos recording has a symphony and a viola concerto, and two shorter works, one just for orchestra called *Dirge and Awakening* and the other a *Triple Overture* for violin, cello, piano and orchestra, which is not a big piece. The Koch recording has three fairly large-scale works.

DELLAIRA: Are they all recent pieces?

GERBER: The earliest piece is the symphony, which goes back to '88, '89. The most recent, '98, is a *Triple Overture*. So it covers about ten years. In fact, oddly enough the triple overture was written for the CD. It still hasn't been played live. It was written for the Bekova Sisters, the piano trio that recorded it, and they've done a lot of recording on Chandos and they're the ones who introduced my music to Brian Couzens who is the managing director of Chandos. And the CD came about when they asked me to write a piece for them, for trio and orchestra - a triple concerto actually -- and they said they could do that as part of a CD on Chandos. It turned out it wasn't really a triple concerto, it was more of a triple concertino, which I decided to call *Triple Overture* because I thought concertino sounded a little bit too light.

DELLAIRA: Where were they recorded?

GERBER: The Chandos CD was recorded in Moscow with the Russian Philharmonic and the Koch CD was recorded in Maryland with the National Chamber Orchestra.

DELLAIRA: They're very different just from that standpoint.

GERBER: Yeah. And the venues were very different. The Koch CD was done in a studio with very dead sound so there had to be reverb added, which I think worked out quite well. I like the sound. Whereas the one on Chandos was done at a hall in Moscow, a recording studio really but it's like a small concert hall. The conductor, Thomas Sanderling, told me that it's better than any hall he knows of in London. Wonderful acoustics. I was very happy.

DELLAIRA: So having two CD's out, almost at the same time, I guess you got a fair number of reviews and were the reviewers kind of overwhelmed by the fact that there were two to review?

GERBER: Well, there have been a lot of reviews, both in magazines and on the internet. Many more for the Chandos CD than for the Koch for some reason. And, except for that one reviewer I mentioned, no one has commented on the fact that there have been two. Some of the comments have been interesting. Most of the reviews have been very good. There has been one that is bad out of all of them. I find it sometimes a little strange to see which

composers reviewers think I've been influenced by. I think some of them have greatly exaggerated the minimalist influence, I think two have suggested Roy Harris as an influence, which I can't see at all. The *Third Symphony* is the only piece I know that I like a lot. Not one that I was ever conscious of, nor did I ever think of him as a particularly important composer to me.

DELLAIRA: Was there anything that was particularly satisfying that was said? You know, insightful or that made you think "yes, I did that right."

GERBER: I only remember one such comment -- a critic who said that his observation that the music was easy to follow was not meant as condescension but as a tribute to the music's boldness, confidence and transparency. I liked that a lot. But usually I try not to be terribly hurt by a bad review and I try not to take overly seriously a rave review. I think, I don't know if I should say this or not, but I think all my life I've sort of had a mixed attitude. I've had a certain arrogance about myself and about my music, especially compared with most music that's around. But I've also felt very humble compared to the music of the past. I've never put myself in the category of the really great composers of the past and even if someone tries to compare me, I don't take it very seriously. I had a big fight with a friend about Dvorak recently and he told me some piece of mine was much better than any Dvorak and I thought he was full of nonsense!

DELLAIRA: So what are you working on now?

GERBER: I've just received a commission from Voice of America for its 60th anniversary. I'm writing a fanfare, I guess you could call it my 9/11 piece. I'm also working on a clarinet concerto for John Manasee, who is a terrific clarinetist, and our managers are trying to work together on a consortium commission. The reason I'm writing this piece for him is that he premiered my last piece, a work called *Spirituals*. And I'll say something about that because that was completely new for me. Actually that and the piece before it. I'd never, until about two years ago, written any music based on other music. And I'd certainly never written any music based on any kind of folk music or popular music. I got some ideas for some pieces based on Gershwin. I wrote a series of pieces for three violins called *Gershwiniana* in which I took just little fragments from some of my favorite Gershwin songs and preludes and completely changed and reworked them.

DELLAIRA: Do you want to name a few of those favorite Gershwin songs?

GERBER: Well I used two of the *Preludes*, "Nice Work If You Can Get It" and "Love is Here to Stay." I don't know how recognizable they are unless you know from the titles what I'm using as the material. Basically they're independent pieces. I mean they exist independent of the Gershwin; even if you don't realize the relation to him, they are a work by themselves. Then a Russian violinist I've worked with a lot, Tatyana Grindenko, who played my violin concerto several times and for whom I wrote some pieces for two violins and then a work called *Serenade Concertante* for two violins, string orchestra and harp, asked me to write a new work for her, I guess this is in 1999. She, in case Americans don't know her too well, is the ex-wife of Gidon Kremer and performs with him a lot. She's a very well known violinist in Russia and Europe, not so well known here. She for many years was not allowed to leave the Soviet Union, and during that time she founded the first original instrument group in Russia called the Moscow Academy for Ancient Music, and they now do contemporary music as well. Actually she and Kremer commissioned Arvo Pärt's *Tabula Rasa* and Schnittke's *Concerto Grosso No. 1*. For the millennium, she asked composers to write pieces for this string orchestra and she asked me to write something.

She wanted something that was in some way based on some kind of old music or folk material, or some kind of music in which the composer was anonymous. So I got the idea of using spirituals to write a bunch of pieces. So I did basically the same kind of thing as in *Gershwiniana* for string orchestra. I wrote a bunch of pieces which took fragments from spirituals and completely transformed them. And then when I got a commission from Concertante Chamber Players to write a work for clarinet and string quartet for them and John Manasse I arranged some of those pieces and wrote a bunch of new pieces for clarinet and string quartet. So for me that's been a completely new direction and something I'd like to continue if I can.

DELLAIRA: The newness isn't taking some pre-existing music, but really taking music that's popular music?

GERBER: Yeah, something that's very tonal and diatonic and try to find some way of dealing with it where I still feel like I put my own personality into it.

DELLAIRA: Now when you work with a soloist, do they see the piece as you're working on it?

GERBER: Yes, I usually try to consult them while I'm working on the piece. I think in both my violin and cello concertos I've just revised mostly details in the string writing. Things that didn't work out too well. Actually when I wrote *Spirituals* I thought I was writing for clarinet in A and John convinced me that it was impossible for a clarinet in A and the whole thing had to be written for clarinet in Bb so I had to have the whole thing transposed and get rid of one low C#. But other than that, there wasn't anything much that was unplayable. I remember asking about the break and he told me not to worry about it.

DELLAIRA: So you'll send passages that you have questions about?

GERBER: Yes, or I'll meet with performers and sometimes it will have to be rewritten.

DELLAIRA: But it's really for playability, it's not how do you like this?

GERBER: Right. Exactly. They'd better like it.

DELLAIRA: That must put the performer in a semi-awkward position because it's kind of hard to only comment on playability.

GERBER: Yes, but they don't really know whether they really like it until they've heard the whole piece with the orchestra and seen how it all works together. I don't think they're in the position to really judge it.

DELLAIRA: Because you're not showing them everything?

GERBER: Well I mean, if I play it on the piano, they get a better idea that way, but even so it's not quite the same as playing it with the orchestra. Although, when I was working on my violin concerto, at one point, out of laziness, I thought I'd just arrange another piece and use that as a slow movement and I played it for the violinist and we both sort of agreed together that it really didn't work. Luckily, I came up with a whole different idea for the slow movement, but that was a case where I was consulting about something important musically. And I think there was a case in the first movement also where I played him a long section and I said, maybe this ought to be cut here, and he agreed with me.

DELLAIRA: Do you hear instrumentation or do you orchestrate later? I mean, do you concern yourself with instrumentation first?

GERBER: Yeah I do. But I don't do the final orchestration until the end. But I have a general idea.

DELLAIRA: I noticed at the Tower Records web site you were described as being of the "new tonal school." Certainly there was a time in your career when that label would not have been appropriate. When did the changeover, so to speak, occur?

GERBER: I think the first piece of mine that represented a change was my piano sonata. That was '81-'82. That has a mixture of styles. The last movement is by far the most tonal and that piece came after a period of writing twelve-tone music. Somehow or other, in the course of largely, but not completely abandoning 12-tone music, the piece just came out more tonal than what I'd been doing before it. And then, right around the same time, I started writing a lot of songs which were much more tonal than almost anything I'd written before. I also wrote a lot of atonal music at the same time. I would go back and forth between pieces that were very diatonic and pieces that were extremely chromatic and basically atonal. I haven't written too many of those recently, though I have nothing against doing it in principle. So I guess it's true that recently a larger proportion of my pieces have been tonal, if that's the right word. But it wasn't really what I think of as a gradual change. It happened pretty quickly in the early '80's.

DELLAIRA: So for you that's a significant piece. You knew that you were doing something entirely different.

GERBER: Right and it really is a mixture of styles. I mean the middle movement sounds 12-tone, though it's not, but it's certainly atonal. And the first movement is a kind of Copland homage, somewhere in between.

DELLAIRA: But you continued to go back and forth for quite a few years --

GERBER: Yes.

DELLAIRA: Do you actually think in these terms when you're sitting down to write a new piece? I mean, is tonality a question for you, or is it already a question that's answered?

GERBER: I use the word in a very loose way, like I think a lot of people use it, meaning just the presence of some kind of pitch center. Certainly I'm not thinking in terms of tonic, dominant and subdominant and all that. When I say tonal, I mean tonal in the same sense in which I think of Bartók, most of Stravinsky, Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich as tonal. I don't really mean anything more specific than that.

DELLAIRA: When you're working, do you in any sense lay out a plan of pitch centers?

GERBER: Not usually. I don't do a lot of theorizing about my music.

DELLAIRA: So you're saying that the piece evolves as you're working on it?

GERBER: Yes.

DELLAIRA: Yes, you compose by ear?

GERBER: Well, no, I use my mind, I don't know the difference between the mind and the ear...

DELLAIRA: But is it trial and error -- this sounds good, this doesn't?

GERBER: I'm sure that's part of it, but I think at this point I've been composing so long that I can think about what I'm doing without necessarily having to put it into words, but it's not just trial and error, it's not just intuition, although that's part of it. I'm certainly conscious of composing with intervals, in the way that Stravinsky used the term.

DELLAIRA: If someone were to ransack your apartment, they wouldn't find sketches?

GERBER: They might. It would depend on the piece. I think I did more of that when I was writing serial music than I do now, but I do occasionally do that. More and more, though, compared with the past, I don't really put things down on paper until I'm pretty sure of them. Until then, they're just in my head and I keep thinking about them and don't write them down until I'm satisfied with them.

DELLAIRA: Do you have a sense of how big a piece will be when you start?

GERBER: I have a sense of how big I want it to be, but sometimes I'm disappointed. I've often started out wanting to write a big piece and been disappointed that it came out rather small. I was planning on writing a triple concerto and it didn't work out that way, so that's how the triple overture came about.

DELLAIRA: Has the reverse ever happened? Began with a study and ended up with a concerto?

GERBER: I don't think so. I can't think of any!

DELLAIRA: I find it interesting that you seem to actively seek out the music of composers who write music very different from yours. Arvo Pärt and John Corigliano, to take perhaps two extremes. It's not like if someone listened to your new CDs, for example, they could say, oh, I know who he's been listening to. I guess they could say that but they'd be wrong.

GERBER: I've always had a passion for listening to all music. Especially 20th-century music and I guess especially my contemporaries, whether or not I like them. That's something I've just done I think more than most composers ever since I was quite young. I was fascinated by digging up music, particularly of obscure composers. I'm sure there's some weird psychological component to it. I've always been fascinated by picking up composers who were once well known and are now obscure.

DELLAIRA: What's the psychological component?

GERBER: Oh, I don't know, I don't want to get into that, but it's there somewhere! I'm not sure when I first realized it but when I was quite young my parents had a book of Sigmund Spaeth which had themes from all the famous pieces. And there was one almost totally forgotten composer, Joachim Raff. A basically poor composer, but he was very famous in the 19th century and I became fascinated with digging up his music and I used to go to a little music shop which no longer exists behind Carnegie Recital Hall. And I would buy these long out of print scores of his. I probably still have them, well I know I still have his third symphony, fifth symphony, I may have the piano concerto. Now a lot of stuff is being recorded on Naxos and on other labels because all that stuff is being dug up. But at that time it was totally forgotten and I was absolutely fascinated to find it and fascinated to find that it was justly forgotten with maybe one exception. There's one sort of cute movement in his fifth symphony, a cute little march movement, but it's basically banal music and I was fascinated with the idea that, at least when it came to the 19th century, it seemed that all the good music had been discovered. Almost everything that was obscure was obscure for a good reason.

Which is not true in the 20th century. And then I was fascinated by digging up music by Krenek and Dohnanyi and you name it. And I still do that. I'll go to the library and get a huge stack of stuff, which is what I've done since I was a teen. One of the nice things about being a graduate student at Princeton is that the music department essentially let you alone for the whole time, so I would spend tons of time in the library there just going through basically the whole literature, including obscure as well as well known composers. One of the interesting things about doing this is that I have in recent years come to admire very much music that I would never have expected to like and that I almost feel guilty for liking it at first since it was so different from the kind of music that I thought that I admired. Like for example, *Tabula Rasa* and *Fratres* by Arvo Pärt.

DELLAIRA: You're saying you felt guilty about it?

GERBER: Guilty is the wrong word, but I would often go back to the music thinking this time I'm going to see how hokey the piece is and I would still like it. So obviously there was something wrong with the premises I was starting with.

DELLAIRA: Has Arvo Pärt had an influence on you?

GERBER: A little bit. I can think of one movement of mine that I won't name, or maybe two that have been influenced by him. Well, this leads into something that I wanted to get into. You haven't asked the question yet, but when I was in my teens, I guess I had two basic attitudes toward contemporary music. One, was that the only music that seemed to me of real significance -- this was in the late 60's, early 70's -- was non-serial atonal, perhaps somewhat expressionistic music. I basically didn't think the 12-tone theory made much sense. At that time I guess I thought that tonal music was basically a thing of the past. I felt completely alien from Cage and the whole downtown school and the stuff I really admired was, just to name a few things, the Yehudi Wyner *Concert Duo*, some early Kirchner, some works by my teacher Robert Parris, the string quartet of Billy Jim Layton, a few things like that and that's where I really thought contemporary music should be. I hated most, but not all of the Darmstadt School and I thought the European idea of total serialism made absolutely no sense. And where Pärt comes into all this, and the reason I'm mentioning this is that it was a big surprise to me to discover how much I liked that piece-those two pieces actually, *Tabula Rasa* and *Fratres*, and then later the same thing happened with the Gorecki string quartets and with one piece by Schnittke, whom I had always thought of as very gimmicky. I really fell in love with his first *Concerto Grosso* a few years ago. And the other thing about my attitude back then was I had a very chauvinistic point of view. I thought America was the only place where anything of significance was happening in music after World War II. That also changed.

DELLAIRA: What about minimalism?

GERBER: Well, what's odd is that I never liked minimalism, and yet at some point it started to influence me a little bit. I think some of the reviewers of my CD's have exaggerated tremendously the influence of that on me, but it definitely is there at least in some of the accompaniment figuration. And maybe in some other ways like the amount of repetition I'm willing to tolerate in my music compared to when I was younger. I think for a lot of composers, those who are not minimalist really in their aesthetic at all, it has been somewhat liberating and has really lead them to new things that they wouldn't have done otherwise.

DELLAIRA: What do you see as the components of the new music landscape these days? I mean if I were 16 years old and wanted to be a composer, does it look different today than it did 30 years ago?

GERBER: Yes. I try not to have too many opinions about that or about where music is going. I don't really think it's particularly helpful to you as a composer to be full of opinions about such things. I think there's no question that for composers now there's just a larger number of possibilities there that you can consider using. I think it's very hard within that to forge your own style. It's hard to be around now and not to be aware of all kinds of music that probably one wouldn't have been aware of 30 years ago. Especially the kind of composer who has been trained in classical music and came up through college and the university, and just the classical music world.

DELLAIRA: Weren't you trained in colleges and universities?

GERBER: It's funny but I wouldn't exactly put it that way. My most important studies were probably the piano lessons all through my life and then the private composition lessons I had with Robert Parris. I certainly got something out of graduate school in Princeton, but I don't think of myself as exactly university trained.

DELLAIRA: Robert Parris clearly had a big influence on you.

GERBER: Yes, he had a big influence on me. He was probably the only mentor I had as a musician. He influenced my music a lot when I was young. I think some of the pieces I wrote when I was in my late teens clearly show his influence. But we went through a couple of periods where we argued all the time and he didn't like the direction my music was going. That was probably valuable.

DELLAIRA: When was that?

GERBER: The first time was when I was a graduate student at Princeton. He thought my music was getting too cerebral. And the second period was in the late 80's when my orchestral music was much more tonal than what I'd done before.

DELLAIRA: You've never spent any time teaching.

GERBER: No. I used the word guilt in a sort of flippant way before, but that is something I do feel guilty about because I think there isn't going to be an audience in the future unless classical music is taught and tradition is kept up. I guess the main reason I've never taught is because I've never felt a calling to teach and when I was young I was incredibly lucky with some of the teachers I had. I didn't want to be a mediocre teacher and didn't want to teach unless I felt teaching as a calling.

DELLAIRA: Do you want to tell us about them, about your musical education?

GERBER: I began taking piano lessons when I was eight. I never seriously considered being a concert pianist because I wasn't quite good enough. I went to a music camp called Indian Hill when I was, I think not quite fourteen. That was the first time I ever saw composers.

DELLAIRA: Who were they?

GERBER: No one that you ever would have heard of, but there was one teenage guy who had perfect pitch and would sit in front of a tree and write atonal music that I liked very much and I really admired the fact that he could do that. I thought that was a great thing to do.

DELLAIRA: Where was Indian Hill?

GERBER: In Stockbridge, Massachusetts. One of my roommates was Arlo Guthrie. We exchanged ten whole words the entire summer I think. He just was off by himself playing guitar. And I had a very good piano teacher there, Daniel Abrams, who was also a composer.

So anyway, when I got back home from there, that was the first time I started writing music. Not very seriously, but that was the first time it occurred to me to write music. But I never really took the idea of writing music seriously until I was in college. And there, just by chance, what happened was there was a student composers concert at the end of my freshman year. At that time I decided to show a few people something I'd written, a little atonal fugue for piano about one minute long, which I'd never had the nerve to show to anyone. And everyone liked it there and praised it and just getting that praise at that particular time was enough to make me realize that that was what I'd be doing for the rest of my life.

DELLAIRA: You finished Haverford as a music major, and then?

GERBER: Actually, I spent my junior year at Columbia, but I was not really happy living in New York at that time so I went back to Haverford. I studied composition at Columbia with Harvey Sollberger and I studied music history and theory. And then I went directly to Princeton, which I went to mostly because I wanted to study theory and analysis. I was quite arrogant at the time and thought I was already a composer and didn't need to study composition with anyone. I did think I hadn't had enough theory and analysis and hoped to get a lot of that there. And being in Princeton had its advantages; as I say, they let you alone. I had lots of free time just to write music and to spend as much time as I wanted in the music library listening to music and playing scores on the piano, so that's basically what I did.

DELLAIRA: And you were finished there by 1973.

GERBER: Yeah, I was there from '69 to '73.

DELLAIRA: And you sort of just started composing.

GERBER: Well, continued composing, yeah!

DELLAIRA: I didn't mean that! I meant you started to make a life as a composer rather than as a student composer.

GERBER: Yeah, that's one thing I was totally unprepared for by Princeton. Not only did no one give you the slightest idea as to how you could make a career as a composer, but at least for me, they always made me feel somehow there was something demeaning about trying to get your music played or wanting to have a reputation. And it took me many years to get over that, which is probably my fault more than theirs, but nevertheless, that was a problem for me.

DELLAIRA: So are you saying then that, you kept a low profile, or maybe another way to put it is that you didn't push yourself for some period of time because of the residue left from Princeton?

GERBER: Yeah, and also my own shyness and just my incompetence at being political in the way that you have to in order to get your music played.

DELLAIRA: So what changed it?

GERBER: I guess what changed it was, first I moved to New York, which already meant I had a lot more contact with composers and performers and started getting my music played there. Before that I lived in Connecticut a couple years and spent one year abroad. Once I moved to New York it was easier to make contacts. And then for many years in New York I was really looking for a manager and had several who weren't able to help me very much and then finally this Russian cousin of mine came along and made himself my manager without asking because he fell in love with my music and became very close to me personally. So that's really what helped my career a lot. It's certainly nothing I could have done myself.

DELLAIRA: This may be an unfair question, but do you think you would have written in the same quantity and the same kind of music had, that not occurred? You know, if your cousin had not been there to kick start a career.

GERBER: I'm sure I would not have written the same pieces. I don't think I would have written a series of concertos if I had not had people to write them for. I don't know what I would've written instead. I suppose I would've written more chamber music rather than orchestral music. Very hard to say. I certainly don't feel that what I've written is so inevitable that I wouldn't be influenced by something like that.

DELLAIRA: I do know that though you aren't officially a teacher, you do enjoy talking to young composers. Is there anything that you tell them, or wish to tell them?

GERBER: I don't think most composers realize how difficult it is to write music. I've felt for a long time that most music being written is too glib, full of too many notes, in many cases too dense, not thought through enough -- it's very facile. It's very easy to put notes down on paper and make them look impressive and get somebody willing to put in all the time and effort to perform it. I think it's too easy. I guess that's one of the reasons that I feel when I'm writing a piece that it's important to know what I'm doing from memory. That might be partly because my music is not as dense and complex as most people, but I generally find that when I'm writing and I can't memorize it or have a lot of difficulty there is probably some lack of profile in it. One of the things that really struck me when I was in my late teens was how much 20th-century music didn't seem to make sense to me. I focused on the pitches and a lot of it seemed to have very little character, very little sense, at most there might be a certain consistency, but nothing more beyond that. It seemed very puzzling to me. I couldn't really understand why people would put things down on paper that didn't seem to make much sense. Later I realized from studying with Jim Randall at Princeton, it wasn't just a question of the harmony. I thought of it in terms of harmonic coherence and I remember discussing this with him and he said that harmonic coherence isn't something a piece of music either possesses or doesn't possess. First of all there are all kinds of gradations, degrees of coherence, and second of all it wasn't just a question of harmony, but everything that goes into the making of the music, whether it has to do with rhythm and phrasing and everything else. So that sort of refined for me the conception of what it was that I was missing. Even now it often seems puzzling. I'll pick up a bunch of scores from the library for example, or tapes, whatever, and I just don't get it. Maybe this explains why some of the music I wrote when I was young is a lot denser and more complex than what I'm writing now. I wrote a big piano trio when I was 19, a very romantic, kind of an expressionist piece, which I still feel very close to, but I remember I thought there were parts of it that weren't sufficiently controlled for my taste. I felt a need to pare down what I was doing and just have a sense of being more in control of all the material. As a result, ever since then, my music has tended to be a lot sparer. A lot more restrained. A friend of mine, Joel Suben, was looking at a score of mine recently said every page of it exuded restraint. And I guess that's almost become an aesthetic with me even though I like music that is very expressive, very out front emotionally, and I hope that mine is, and yet technically I think it is extremely restrained.

DELLAIRA: I once heard a composer make disparaging remarks about another composer. A third composer came to her defense, and said this composer has spent the better part of her life composing music and just for that fact alone, she should be given a lot of credit.

And I often think that there are really a lot of composers, a lot of music being written, and I can say, almost the opposite -- that it's not easy to write music. It's certainly not easy to have a career as a composer. That someone has to be already fairly talented to even consider that as a thing to do in life. So do you think --

GERBER: Well, you certainly have to know a lot about music to write music at all. I can't really answer the question whether you deserve credit simply for writing music. You certainly deserve sympathy and it is hard to make a career and my heart goes out to anyone who wants to be a composer. I find in general, most composers I know are really nice people, really bright, really articulate. And often more of their intelligence, more of the things that are interesting about them, come through when you're talking to them than come through in their music.

DELLAIRA: Would you not say that that is probably true of any century or decade?

GERBER: Oh, absolutely. And it's true of some great composers that had minor pieces that sort of sound like generic examples of the style without much individuality.

DELLAIRA: So do you think then, do you think it's too easy to be a composer? That the societal mechanism that one has to go through allows one to be a composer before, let's say in a different time and place they'd be weeded out? Or encouraged to do something else with their life?

GERBER: I don't think we get as good training as composers did in the past for sure. I'm not sure about the 21st century because there is such a lack of a common language, there is even a lack of just an ability to make judgments on the most basic things that people can agree on. I think there is a lot of good music that could easily go completely forgotten. I could name lots of recent pieces that I think are among the best that hardly anyone knows or cares about. I've mentioned a few earlier. For example Earl Kim was a very good composer. Some of his works I admire very much. I don't know if that means it will survive.

DELLAIRA: Why do you think Kim, and other music you like doesn't get noticed, especially if it has quality?

GERBER: If you write music that doesn't use weird sounds or is not drastically new in one way or another, people are apt not to notice it as much. One thing that I've been curious to notice, and that I have mixed feeling about, is that at least with my recent music, the people who seem to respond to it the most seem to be people who are not big fans of contemporary music. And they tend to be people like me who are skeptical of most contemporary music, not anti-20th century music, certainly not anti-contemporary music, but people who don't have the attitude that a lot of composers and critics do that there are a huge number of composers around who are just writing fantastic music, one piece after another. I think that some critics are more advocates for contemporary music than real critics of it. There are certain composers they love and will praise every piece by, will never write anything critical of that composer and to me that is a sign that they just don't have a very discriminating ear. I think the hardest thing about writing music, is, assuming you have a certain amount of craft, the hardest thing is to be objective about your own work. I think that's incredibly difficult. And I agree with T.S. Eliot, that nobody can really know whether their work has any ultimate value. It's just impossible to be that objective about your own work.

Concert Reviews

A La Kazan (II)

ANTON ROVNER

Europe-Asia Contemporary Music Festival. April 14, 2000, Kazan, Russia. A report on the April 16 afternoon concert.

The April 16 concert at the Menzhinsky Culture House started with Renat Enikeyev's *Elegy* for cello and piano, which was performed by Larisa Maslova and Ekaterina Balandina. This was a traditional, neoromantic piece, resembling Shostakovich, slow and elegiac in mood with thick, tonal harmonies and a moderately dramatic, lyrical mood.

Doppelbelichtung Seelensturze ("Double storms of the soul"), by Karl Wieland Kurtz, was performed by trumpeter Lutz Mandler. The work was a tragicomical portrayal of a suffering clown, who continuously comes up with disaster and failure. It was an athematic, avant-garde piece, with an overall emotionally dramatic mood and a big variety of contrasting textures and extended techniques, including playing in the mouthpiece separately, creating a whistling sound, stamping feet, breathing and singing into the trumpet (in one place even coughing into the trumpet). In one place the player bent down and played noises sounding like gargling, or worse.

Arne Nordheim's *Flashes* for bayan (Russian accordion), played by Ivan Ergiev, started with one solitary note, which gradually increased and decreased in volume. This was followed by an unaccompanied melody, ultimately joined by sporadic accompaniment. An atonal, avant-garde piece, it was very abstract and athematic with many disjunct sounds but with an overall concise, dramatic mood, written very tastefully and with great mastery.

In *Sea Scenery* (1996), by Sergei Berinsky, Ergiev was joined by violinist Elena Ergiev. The work was a moderately tonal, lyrically exquisite, and descriptively colorful, with very elaborate textures, featuring a great amount of repeated sequences.

Alexander Vustin's *Piano Trio* (performed by violinist Rustem Abiazov, cellist Irina Lapteva, and pianist Julia Blinova) was a very serious-sounding piece with a moderate avant-garde slant combined with more pronouncedly neoclassical techniques. The work demonstrated an overall philosophical mood with somber textures and a combination of busy, sporadic movement with reserved, withdrawn moods. It included some typical Romantic piano trio gestures - long, broad lines for the two string instruments over busy, arpeggiated textures in the piano. Towards the end the music became very slow with sparse, somber textures and featured the musicians doing some whispering, intermingled with a few sporadic loud and sharp sounds. The music ended with a loud octave, resembling a "tonic," which was dissonant in the context of the atonal music, preceding it.

Hyperion's Tumble, by David Clark Little, was an extravagant electronic piece with effects including a combination of random and arranged musical arpeggiations, meant to depict the rotation and revolution of the Uranian moon Hyperion. It was a very abstract and cerebral work, featuring a lot of sporadic computer sounds, juxtaposing long and short durations. The music was accompanied by interesting slides, showing very colorful abstract paintings, shapes, and designs.

Another electronic work, Radik Salimov's three-movement *Electronic Frescos* (for bassoon, percussion, and tape) was very theatrical, combining Middle Eastern-sounding folk music and avant-garde technique with rock effects, especially in the loud percussion part. The theatrical elements of the piece included video and smoke.

The Allen Cohen *To the New Life*, performed by the Lumina String Quartet, proved a large-scale dramatic work, which successfully melded a subtle neoromanticism, atonal textures, and a blithe neoclassical rhythmic agility.

Silent Odalisque, by Lepo Sumera, was performed by flutist Vladislav Zakharov. This was very effective, colorful, and expressive music, combining tonal harmonies with an abundance of extended techniques

Ilgam Baitiryak's *Cycle Races*, performed by the piano duo of Julia Blinova and Violina Blinova, was a rather traditional, academic type of neoromantic piece with a boisterous, dramatic character.

Another interesting work, *Mutako (Cranes)* by Samei Sapo, was given by Kakujo Nakegawa on the biwa and Akikazu Nakamura on the sukukhati. This was very quiet and delicate, pointillist music, which was barely audible. It started with the biwa playing what sounded like extremely Western avant-garde type of music. After a while, the sukukhati entered with its froggy sound, playing extremely slow and soft material. One could sense that time itself had become extended. Towards the second half of the piece the music switched from avant-garde techniques to more mainstream traditional music.

The last piece was *Bosch Triptych* (for four trombones, prepared piano, and percussion), by Leonid Lubovsky, dedicated to the 550th anniversary of the great painter. The work, essentially tonal in harmonic language, started with a trombone solo, after which the other trombones and the percussion joined in, playing fanfare flourishes in Lydian mode, remotely resembling renaissance music. Later the piano and triangle joined, altogether producing a very colorful, descriptive, pictorial music. There was plenty of contrapuntal and timbral interplay between the instrumental textures. The composition freely oscillated between loud, military sounds and soft, delicate ones.

Cogan and Escot Tie in Excellence

DAVID CLEARY

Compositions by Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot. October 30, 2001, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Husband and wife composers Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot are unusual in Boston new music circles, having for many decades now been the standard bearers for the highly experimentalist aesthetic described in music history books like David Cope's *New Directions in Music*. Even within this ethos, however, Cogan and Escot put a personal imprint on the music they produce; being the authors of the book *Sonic Design*, it's no surprise that attention to timbre is paramount.

Cogan's two selections this evening clearly demonstrate these concerns. Neither *Utterances* (2001 version) for solo voice nor *Contexts/Memories, Version C* (2000) for two pianos are finite, finished beings but rather open-ended, malleable concepts that appear in many versions for varied scorings—all equally viable—and are subject to infinite modification over the years as the composer sees fit. In this sense, they are utterly opposed to the Western concept of the set-in-stone masterpiece. Color is carefully considered in both works. *Contexts* exhibits a liking for pedaling effects, sympathetically vibrating pitches, and attention to having the two pianos support each other sonically (sometimes in echo-like fashion, sometimes not), while *Utterances* employs a varied grab bag of extended voice techniques; the latter entry in fact displays notable similarity in sound to Berio's 1960's compositions for Cathy Berberian. The vocal piece further shows a fascination with structure as a fluid, Calder-mobile entity, being a series of events that can be arranged in any order. Both selections boast a well-honed ear for melodic gesture expressed in a dissonantly dramatic way. Their only weakness, a lack of larger architectural sense, is to be expected given Cogan's philosophy of composition; one either likes the looseness or doesn't (your reviewer remains skeptical).

The two Escot pieces heard show a gap of nearly twenty years in composition date. The older of these, a *Piano Concerto* (1982), is a classic example of what Cope calls a "sound mass" entry, its three movements consisting of different takes on dense sonic thickets that occasionally suggest Penderecki. Here, no member of the accompanying chamber orchestra (scored for flutes, clarinets, and trumpets in pairs as well as strings sans basses) plays with any other member—and nearly all play throughout. While the work is able to adeptly delineate basic contrasting moods (resigned, forceful, and in between) within the sound mass idea, one misses a sense of linear distinction in the music. And the piano sometimes gets lost in the ensemble textures. *Sonata for Solo Cello* (2000) proves more successful. Escot's melodic material here, while granitic, speaks compellingly, exhibiting able colorist writing. The music gives careful thought to employment of intervals over the course of its duration. And structure is not neglected, either: for example, the opening movement alternates sections of octave-derived material with more involved linear figures, suggesting a small rondo format.

Two selections by other composers were encountered as well. With its second and third movements made up of overlays on the music of the preceding movement, Ralph Shapey's *Lul-la-by II* (2001) -- for soprano, flautist (doubling alto and bass flute), and playback -- has its formal integrity built right in. And despite its dissonant East Coast approach (featuring some high vocal notes on ungrateful vowels) and gradually thickening textures, the music unambiguously projects a warm, friendly feel. Roger Sessions's solo piano piece *From My Diary* (1939) puts forth its composer's unique take on Schoenbergian expressionist disquietude, the heavy presence of thirds and perfect fourths in the discordant textures imparting a sonic slant that is more American than Viennese. These nicely turned character miniatures wear well on repeated hearings.

Performances were top-shelf fine. Soprano Joan Heller's voice exhibited a stunningly wide pitch range, extraordinary agility, and solid diction; her sound quality was a model of multihued excellence. Randall Hodgkinson's playing of the Sessions and Escot's *Concerto* was first-rate, featuring clean finger work and a tone that showed much subtlety of shading. Duo pianists Jung-Mi Lee and Jon Sakata matched Hodgkinson's splendid technique and brought a nice sense of ensemble playing to the table, but put forth a rather consistently clangorous tone quality. Matthias Truninger's presentation (from memory) of the cello sonata, with its sensitive melodic sculpting, focused intonation, and splendid sound, was highly praiseworthy. And Orlando Cela did able double duty as flute player and conductor of the Soria Chamber Players.

Alea IV

DAVID CLEARY

Alea III. November 5, Tsai Performance Center, Boston University, Boston, MA.

Webster's Dictionary defines "quartet" in part as "a composition for four voices or four instruments." The entities that can comprise such a foursome, however, can be widely varied, as the most recent Alea III concert demonstrated. No composer settled for standard configurations such as string quartet or piano quartet.

Perhaps the most unusual scoring was encountered in Manolis Kalomiris's *Quartetto quasi una Fantasia* (1921, rev. 1954). Here Debussy's flute-violin-harp trio takes on an English horn partner. Debussy-oriented, too, is the work's modal-based tonality, nebulous sense of harmonic progression, and traditional forms casually articulated. But style-study land is avoided through use of sinuous melodic figurations redolent of Rimsky-Korsakov that coexist surprisingly well within the piece's energetic, at times mildly Bartókian folksy framework. Those who play the aforementioned Debussy selection will find this intriguing quartet worth exploring.

Flute (doubling alto flute), bass clarinet, percussion, and piano comprise the orchestration of Alexandros Kalogeras's *Quartet (Proimion)* from *Anax Apollon*. Its dramatic, sometimes angry manner of speech and well-etched sense of melodic line make for compelling listening, as does the work's ably balanced small-rondo-derived architecture. In short, fine stuff.

The title *Catch* (1991) by Thomas Adès refers not to the bawdy baroque vocal genre, but rather to the theatrical conceit of the piece's onstage piano trio first enticing and then ensnaring an elusive ambulatory clarinetist. According to the program notes, critic Andrew Porter characterizes the work as "a good introduction to [Adès's] deftness, his fancy, his ear." Sadly, your reviewer cannot muster like enthusiasm. Linear material here lacks personality and consistency, while the composition's harmonic language, veering periodically into triadic idioms from a prevalently dissonant baseline, seems arbitrarily handled. And no sense of structure, other than that imposed from without by extramusical considerations, is apparent. Conductor Theodore Antoniou drew sympathetic, committed performances of the above three from his charges. Special citation goes to Kathleen Boyd (flautist in the Kalogeras) and Gary Gorchyca (clarinetist in the Adès, bass clarinetist in the Kalogeras) for their accomplished playing.

The extraordinary concentration-camp circumstances behind Olivier Messiaen's creation of *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* as well as its wide adoption by performers and audience members alike have well-nigh rendered the work above criticism by now. This reviewer admits to possessing significant reservations about the piece (its rather non-heavenly length conjuring up a disparaging *Quartet 'Til the End of Time*), but cannot deny this selection's sincerity and evocative power -- particularly in the splendid finale -- as well as deft cyclic usage of phrases and motives. At its best, as in the bubbly "Intermède" or the soulful fifth movement warmly given by cellist Carol Ou and pianist Konstantinos Papadakis, the performance heard here pleased greatly. But other parts went less well, such as the treacherous, octaves-only "Danse de la fureur" (which exhibited periodic ragged ensemble attacks and doubtful intonation) and the last movement (which suffered at times from poorly balanced piano chords and needlessly forceful violin playing). David Martins (clarinet) and Krista Buckland Reisner (violin) rounded out the roster of Messiaen performers.

Regardless of the circumstances, it proved enjoyable to see just how widely varied a quartet's makeup can be. And the best aspects of performance and piece encountered made the trip worthwhile. Received with thanks.

Lyric and Resurrection

DAVID CLEARY

Boston Lyric Opera presents Tod Machover's *Resurrection*. November 7, Shubert Theatre, Boston, MA. Through November 20. Reviewed November 16.

Resurrection by Tod Machover, commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera and premiered by that group in 1999, received its East Coast debut recently. Judging from the November 16 performance, this adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's novel is an effective piece of stage entertainment.

Machover's baseline manner of text setting derives ultimately from models such as Richard Wagner, the prevailing approach being what Rey M. Longyear calls a "quasi-melodious recitative akin to *arioso*." In other words, one hears neither an overall effusive hyper-melodic approach nor the sharply defined recitative-aria differentiation of number opera. Nevertheless, set pieces of a sort do emerge from the prevailing fabric at times, resulting in some of the work's most memorable moments. These include Katusha's extended solo in lullaby mode from Act Two as well as a pair of Act I ensemble pieces, a duet between Nekhlyudov and Missy and a later occurring sextet. These last two, as do most of the ensembles here, show an effective simultaneous delineation of contrasting characters. In fact, vocal writing in general is very effective (there's no high howling on bad vowels, for example); the only quibble is the composer's curious insistence on setting obsessive, if often asymmetric repetition of text fragments during aria-like entities that comes off to this reviewer as seeming a bit forced. The orchestra utilized is just below standard size, augmented with three electric keyboard players; while not wildly colorful as a rule, the accompaniments are both supportive and effective. Mention has been made in the local press about this being a triadic work, but in fact the harmonic language shows a good bit of variety, ranging from lightly clouded functional tonality to grittier verticals, albeit still grounded in a tonal ethos.

Machover often saves his clearest triadic passages for the expression of noble sentiments, as at the opera's close. The structure of scenes and quasi-set-pieces, while not derived from standard models, possesses a solid sense of intuitive balance. Dramatically, the work is clear and unfolds cogently, with the flashback scenes in Act One logically integrated into the narrative flow.

Much about the production merits high praise. The singing for the most part was of extremely high caliber. Both primary leads, baritone Carleton Chambers and mezzo-soprano Christine Abraham, filled the hall with luscious, substantial sound (rock solid from bottom to top of the range) and first-rate diction. And they could act, too; their feel for stage deportment was strong indeed. Of the supporting cast, one should positively cite Harold Gray Meers's keenly projecting tenor voice and bass Derrick Parker's able singing and range of characterization in his three roles. Kerri Marchinko's vocals unfortunately contained periodic pitch insecurity and a wobbly vibrato, but her sense of comic characterization as Missy was spot-on. David Feltner's chorus sang with a well-blended tone and solid enunciation. Conductor Christopher Larkin, while doing a good job steering the ensemble through the score's sometimes tricky rhythmic complexities, regrettably allowed the orchestra to overwhelm the singers on several occasions. Simon Higlett's costumes were splendid, capturing the period well and containing an excellent eye for detail, whether dressing the characters in polished finery or shabby squalor. Set designer Erhard Rom's surrounding of *fin de siècle* furnishings within angular modernist framing grids seemed odd at first but made sense in retrospect, mirroring the off-kilter injustices delineated in the plot; his evocation of Siberian wastes was economic and telling. Leon Major's staging deserves kudos for its confident handling of complex crowds and smooth scene changes.

Local premieres of big pieces like this one should be major events, and both Machover and the Lyric Opera should be congratulated for coming up strong this evening.

Just Do It Again

DAVID CLEARY

Just in Time Composers and Players. November 9, Follen Church, Lexington, MA.

Those hearty eaters among us are intimately familiar with the concept of "seconds"—treating oneself to an encore helping of each dish on the table. The newest installment from the Just in Time Composers and Players showed three of its four participants indulging in the concert parallel to this phenomenon, presenting two sets each of music on the program. It ultimately resulted in one of this collective's most enjoyable evenings in recent memory.

Eclipse was the first of Hayg Boyadjian's entries to be heard, a fine single-movement piece for cello/contrabass duet. While one might expect to encounter lugubrious, mournful writing in such a combination (and one does, especially at the outset), the composer carefully coaxes a broad range of effective colors from what some might consider a palette with limitations. Architecturally, the work is both unusual and convincing, utilizing a construct built upon a pair of contrasting themes that avoids reference to sonata context. The Axiom Duo (Emmanuel Feldman, cello, and Pascale Delache-Feldman, bass) performed with an ideal mix of ensemble sensitivity and soloist flair.

Boyadjian, like all grandparents, is proud of his children's children -- but unlike most, derives effective musical inspiration from them. Two sets of piano compositions, *Nicks 1-6* and a series of *Odessas*, are the result. The former are tiny gems, concentrated yet not Webern-like, that speak fluidly. Eight *Odessas* exist as of this writing, and the newest two followed; these are meaty, substantial character pieces, more involved than the *Nicks*. All make for first-rate listening. Karine Bagdasarian played them well.

Bagdasarian returned to give solid renditions of three modest-duration piano numbers by Pamela J. Marshall -- evocative selections that are among the best her oeuvre has to offer. *Stomp* is a bouncy, irresistible study in jagged dance rhythms that catches its sometimes-reticent composer gleefully kicking out the windowpanes. Despite its title, *Imagine That Time Stops* seems acutely cognizant of unfolding temporal matters. But this is not to denigrate a piece that finds interesting ways to flesh out its pointillist generative material. The best of the triumvirate, *Wordless Prayer*, is dead-on triadic and artless in the best sense of the word, a simple, low-key, and touching lament for the victims of September 11th's terrorist tragedy. Excerpts from Marshall's opera in progress, *Melete's Quest*, proved somewhat less successful. The vocal writing, whether in solo or duet mode, is idiomatic—but this critic finds the music heard here lacking in drama and contour. Singers Valerie Anastasio and Winfield Ford put forth a sturdy, listenable tone quality and careful diction, while Karen Sauer's keyboard accompaniment provided support without swamping.

Mark W. Rossi's two program entries, *New Beginnings in the Late 20th Century* and the unfortunately titled *Fatwa in Carbondale*, effectively tread the line between jazz and classical idioms. Solo break sections occur in the middles of both pieces, Latin rhythms are heard with frequency (especially in *Fatwa*), and the harmonic language is modally based, thickly stacked upper tertian. But legit leanings are encountered in the larger than usual amount of written out passages and thoughtful consideration of form (*New Beginnings*, for example, sports a five part construct that straddles arch, rondo, and sonata without obviously articulating any of these possibilities, thanks in part to its asymmetric though not lopsided sectional durations). And rhythmic complications, such as the stumbling vamp that opens *New Beginnings*, provide significant interest. Lance Van Lenten (saxophone and flute) and Rossi (piano) played with panache whether extemporizing or reading the score, while bassist Bill Urmson and drummer Kevin Newton laid down a reliable rhythm section platform.

Uniquely, John Sarkissian bellied up to the proverbial bar only once tonight. His *Toccata*, originally cast for the unwieldy grouping of two-pianos-four-left-hands (just how many budding Leon Fleischers are there, anyway?) was heard in a more practical single-piano-four-hands (two each of left and right) version. This tricky little *tour de force* is a palindrome and canonic to boot. Its strange mix of static process passages and gritty dissonant segments, while off-putting at first, ultimately makes some sense through sheer persistence of juxtaposition. Sarkissian and Stephen James were the able presenters.

All in all, this successful event left your reviewer doing his best Oliver Twist impersonation—asking please, sir, if he might have some more.

The Aesthetics of Ursula

DAVID CLEARY

Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity: Ursula Oppens, Piano. November 10, Paine Concert Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

This recital proved to be a major focal point at Harvard University's weekend-long conference on modernity in music. For her program, virtuoso pianist Ursula Oppens juxtaposed classics by Beethoven with recent music by two of the most important icons of this 20th-century aesthetic.

The three pieces heard here by Elliott Carter, *Retrouvailles*, 90+, and *Two Diversions*, share certain characteristics. All are of modest duration (90+ being the lengthiest and most involved) and concern themselves with juxtaposition of two basic ideas—one being nervously pointillist, the other slower moving and more grounded. Carter's stroke of genius here is to create a trio of works that demonstrate significant variety while still delineating the same basic general concept. In *Two Diversions*, for example, one encounters a first movement in which the pointillist material traces jittery circles around an anchoring basis of slowly unfolding dyads, followed by a finale where fragmented shards are at first alternated with stuttering two-part counterpoint and then gradually transform themselves into one of the strings of this paired-voice texture. The selections are all wonderful listens: tight, clean, bracing, and eloquent.

Along with Carter, Ligeti, Martino, and Reich, Luciano Berio falls within the tiny circle that currently comprises this critic's favorite elder living composers of the last half-century; pieces like the *Sinfonia*, *Points on the Curve to Find*, and the *Sequenzas* are masterworks that will be treasured by many following generations of composers, performers, and listeners. His single-movement *Sonata per pianoforte solo*, written in 2001 and receiving its U.S. debut this evening, possesses qualities both successful and not. One can positively cite its tautness of material; an incessantly repeated B-flat pedal, surrounded first by swarms of thirty-second notes and then by a climbing six-note figure, provide the basis for much that follows. And tracing what happens to that pedal pitch proves intriguing—eventually, the B-flat is repeated mandolin fashion and then alternates with various subsidiary pitches (disappearing at various points altogether) before returning clearly towards the end. But other characteristics need to be mentioned too, such as a lack of readily perceivable large architecture and a colossal time span that stretches the work's three concise building blocks to the breaking point and beyond.

Oppens's performances were simply sensational, things of beauty to experience. A huge and outgoing tone, flashy and lucid technique, tasteful pedaling, meticulous delineation of idea and voice, and a keen sensitivity to phrase and line were hallmarks of her memorable playing. And in the Carter works and certain aspects of the Berio, one finds the modernist ethos still to be a vital and viable means of expression.

Conservatively Contemporary

DAVID CLEARY

New England Conservatory Contemporary Ensemble. November 13, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

Those who don't think too carefully about the music written during the 20th century may come to a knee-jerk conclusion that the overwhelming ethos of the period was one of experimentalism, dissonance, and abstruseness. While it's true that idioms such as process music, indeterminacy, and serialism grabbed headlines, the fact remains that tonal music was written throughout the course of this hundred-year span. With one exception, tonight's concert put the spotlight on contemporary literature of a triadic bent.

The title *Lullabies* (1979), by Mark Saja, proves to be chillingly ironic. While its two songs are low-key entities about very young children, the youngsters depicted do not awaken from the slumber engulfing them. But surprisingly, this soprano and string quartet piece is not grim and morbid -- rather, there's a certain tellingly Mahlerian resigned quality afoot here. And the first of these two selections is especially touching and beautiful, guaranteed to raise goose flesh on the back of the neck. In sum, a highly effective listen.

Also metaphysical in its subject matter is Olivier Messiaen's small choral entry *Motet: O sacrum convivium* (1937). Here, one encounters tangible proof that this often prolix and quixotic composer is eminently capable of writing a tight, succinct, well formed piece low on sentiment and eccentricity. This lovely, perfectly formed dewdrop of a work is very strongly recommended.

Michael Gandolfi's tonal language speaks with a thick French accent (think Debussy, Ravel, or Poulenc) in the flute and piano duo *Gepetto's Workshop* (1997). Inspired by the Carlo Collodi children's classic *Pinocchio*, the work manages to be fiendishly virtuosic while oozing enough easy charm and engaging personality for three pieces - no mean trick. The predominant feel is one of percolating energy (transformed into a more shimmering variant in the slower third movement).

John Adams's *Gnarly Buttons* (1996), for clarinet solo and small orchestra, is also chock-full of panache. While at times exhibiting its composer's affinity with folks like Philip Glass and Steve Reich (as in the repeated piano chord figure of the finale), the work can best be described as a neoprocess selection, one that relies on more complex and involved use of patterned material and a wider gamut of textures than, say, *Phrygian Gates* does. The Achilles heel in this by-and-large-enjoyable selection lies in its endings -- or lack thereof -- for the first two movements.

Lee Hyla was the odd man out this evening. His wind quintet *Amnesia Breaks* (1990) is curmudgeonly dissonant, full of variants on gritty pop-like figures and material that sounds like playground taunting. Tonight was your reviewer's second encounter with the piece, and this time around its special structural accomplishment was perceived, namely a quick series of interchanges between fast and slow music that effectively flesh out an overarching narrative curve framework. It's yet another fine entry from this composer's pen.

Performances were excellent across the board. Conducting duties were handled by an expert tag team of John Heiss (in the Saja), Martin Near (in the Messiaen), and Eric Hewitt (in the Hyla and Adams). Special citations should be made of Michael Norsworthy's splendid clarinet playing in *Gnarly Buttons*, Anne Carolyn Byrd's haunting vocals in *Lullabies*, and Alicia DiDonato's and Alison d'Amato's respective virtuoso flute and piano pyrotechnics in *Gepetto's Workshop*. Thanks also go out to ensemble coordinator Heiss's programming choices this evening, which reminded us that much fine tonal music has been written over the past one hundred years or so.

Boykan Dinosaur Celebration

DAVID CLEARY

Martin Boykan at 70: A Celebration, with Dinosaur Annex. November 18, First and Second Church, Boston, MA.

Few musical characterizations are more untrue and unfair than the one stating that East Coast serial composers uniformly produce a dry, dull, square output. Composers ranging from Babbitt to Berger, Martino to Mamlok, attest to the wonderful variety and expressive quality of the genre's best exponents. After hearing last night's Dinosaur Annex presentation, one must add the name of Martin Boykan to the roll call of such worthies.

Flume: Fantasy for Clarinet and Piano (1998) is in many ways typical of this composer's fine recent output. Here, the listener encounters a wonderfully felicitous and eloquent melodic style couched within a highly dissonant harmonic language. Despite the periodic presence of pointillist textures and aggressive moods, a warmly rhapsodic feel prevails. Structure is carefully delineated, inspired by a traditional model but not slavishly outlined; here, a ternary format containing many alluring twists is imaginatively suggested, prefaced by a substantial introduction for clarinet solo. The duo members are treated very much as equals; the piano part contains nearly as much spotlighted material as his woodwind partner's does. And the piece is succinct, spinning out its basis figures to a satisfying duration—and not a jot more. Clarinetist Ian Greitzer and pianist Donald Berman played it excellently, displaying acute ensemble interaction.

The extremely brief flute solo *City of Gold* (1996), originally meant to be repeated in circular fashion on tape, seamlessly folds a few special effects (fluttersong and key clicks specifically) into its fetching linear fabric. The form employed is an intuitive one that lends itself well to looped reiteration, returning clearly to the opening measures' material. Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin's presentation was limpid perfection.

While lengthier than the two selections above, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1994) never outstays its welcome. Trills and analogous gestures are liberally scattered throughout the initial movement and make conspicuous cameo appearances in the remaining two. This latter pair, respectively based on march-like motifs and variation procedures, presents imaginative wrinkles on these hoary concepts. Berman was teamed with violinist Cyrus Stevens to splendid effect; the performance was both warm and well considered.

Eclogue (1991), the oldest piece appearing on the program, is scored for the novel quintet of flute, horn, viola, cello, and piano. It proves to be more Popeye than Pan, containing surprisingly muscular music for a work with movement titles such as "Pastorale" and "Nocturne"--in this sense a puzzling listen. But the unusual instrumentation is ably handled and the piece's overall sense of balance is sound. Conductor Scott Wheeler coaxed forth a sure-footed and urgently committed rendition from his charges.

In brief, this 70th-birthday celebration concert confirmed Boykan's status as a most worthy exponent of Atlantic shore dodecaphonic writing. Well done indeed.

Merrill Schulte

DAVID CLEARY

The Merrill Recital: Rolf Schulte, Violin. November 29, John Knowles Paine Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Most in the contemporary music world are familiar with the concept of the performer who is a "new music specialist." He's the fellow who can accurately spit forth a spattering of disjunct notes but somehow can't string together a Romantic period four-bar phrase so it makes any cogent sense. He's the player who really knows how to put forth a zinger of a sforzando in Xenakis but plays accents in a Haydn string quartet with the same crunching attack. Any listener who may have thought to tag violinist Rolf Schulte with this label (and any implications thereof) would have found no basis in fact to do so after hearing his most recent Merrill Recital at Harvard University. Schulte this evening split his presentation evenly between recent East Coast entries and early 20th-century classics to excellent effect

As one might guess, the violin/piano duo *Little Goes a Long Way* (2001), by Milton Babbitt, is a stalwart example of American serialism. No stopping the presses with that observation, of course -- but one does find a unique personal stamp affixed to this moderate length work's sound world. Babbitt takes the title literally here; rather than putting forth a rapidly spinning constellation of pitches, he imbues the textures with a generous sprinkling of repeated notes (both immediately one after the other and in slightly larger structural ways), imparting within his style a certain feel for leisurely discourse. And while your reviewer was not able to apprehend the piece's six large blocks described in the program notes, he did hear a mid-level sense of small section interaction, enjoyably transparent textures, and felicitous manner of local speech. It's a selection well worth experiencing several times over.

Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms* series remains an aesthetic gold standard for live instrument compositions backed by electronic sound. His *Synchronisms No. 9* (1988) for violin and tape is an excellent listen that expertly paces slower moving material (often exploring high register sonics) with jumpy flourishes of notes that tend to gain the upper hand as the work unfolds. These juxtaposed items nicely coexist within a larger framework that loosely possesses narrative curve properties.

Judging from the two solo violin selections heard here, Elliott Carter has no intention of slowing down his composition rate since turning ninety. Both *Statement -- Remembering Aaron* (1999) and *Rhapsodic Musings* (2000), pieces written respectively in honor of Aaron Copland and Robert Mann, are brief, tidy delights arresting in gesture. While both exhibit a tendency to alternate outgoing bravura music with contrasting material of either a filigree or smoothly linear nature, the pacing and arrangement of said building blocks is different in each work. And while a craggy sound world predominates, Carter leavens his Copland homage with open fifths and triadic snatches while filling the Mann tribute with a *soggeto cavatto* derived D-E major second. Briefly put, there's no way the pieces can be mistaken for each other despite their similarities. Schulte (excellently supported by James Winn in the Babbitt) performed them all with a wonderful mix of accuracy and abandon.

The more traditional end of the recital went equally well. Like many of his works, Leos Janacek's splendid *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1913-21) follows a craggy muse that sometimes prizes delineation of idea over idiomatic instrumental writing. Schulte and Winn never let the awkwardness of Janacek's gestures show unduly, making sure the inspired musical statement embedded within comes to the fore.

And their presentation of Claude Debussy's fine *Sonata for Violin and Piano* (1916-17) was solidly correct yet contained all the Impressionist attention to color and gesture one could ask for, an observation that applied equally to their encore entry, Maurice Ravel's *Berceuse sur le nom de Gabriel Fauré* (1922).

With his full tone, focused finger technique, sturdy bow arm, well-delineated sense of line, and larger feel for sectional pacing, one simply cannot pigeonhole Schulte into the "new music specialist" cubbyhole. Rather, he's a splendid all around performer who plays the most current pieces out there with the same flair and sensitivity he applies to the older giants of the literature. Bravos go to him and Winn for a wonderful evening of music making.

Schwartz Tribute

DAVID CLEARY

The Harvard University Wind Ensemble presents *A Tribute to Elliott Schwartz*. December 1, Lowell Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Harvard University is arguably the premiere institution of higher learning in the United States. It's a safe bet that most folks consider the college a major producer of world class attorneys, physicians, scientists, and captains of commerce -- and rightly so. But despite the fact that there are no undergraduate music majors per se, one also finds a host of capable student ensembles on campus. Three such groups joined forces this evening to present a concert in honor of Maine-based composer Elliott Schwartz. All but one of his pieces on the concert had been written this year, in a few cases being given barely after the ink had dried on the page.

The oldest selection, *Aerie* (1983) for flute ensemble, is a low-key and luscious delight. It takes full advantage of this instrument's tendency to sound warm and sinuous in a group setting while imparting a good sense of drama and shape to the music--this is a piece with personality as well as sensual appeal. Timothy Ledlie directed the Harvard Flute Ensemble in a thoughtful presentation.

Schwartz took to the piano in tandem with the Harvard Saxophone Quartet to present *Hall of Mirrors*. This diffuse yet charming piece consists of a group of character movements culminating in a substantial variation set closer. Whether in fast or slow tempo, the music invariably possesses an ingratiating rhythmic vigor. And the fifth movement, "Chorale with Interruptions," exhibits a delightfully goofy sense of humor, finding progressively more outlandish ways to foil its rather overripe chorale (finally resorting to playing boom box radios a la Cage and having two of the sax players honk notes into the open piano lid). The performance was a solid one.

The Harvard Wind Ensemble in various configurations (augmented in one work by students from Schwartz's home base of Bowdoin College) took center stage for everything else. Its three herald trumpet players (Nikhil Kacker, Ben Mathis-Lilley, Karl Procaccini) gave *Downeast Fanfare* a highly accomplished, neatly polished rendition -- the best heard in the concert. This brief but telling selection capably juggles commanding gestures, march like snatches, snarling fluttersong material, and noodling chromatic "traveling music" (given while the players move about the stage) into a witty whole. Its composer's solution to putting in and removing mutes from these beyond-arm's-length trumpets -- each player mutes his neighbor and later relies on audience helpers -- is clever and adds to the fun.

The two movements comprising *Tribute*, for clarinet choir and percussion, show strong contrast. Its opener is quiet and uneasy, based primarily on a mournful bass clarinet line, while the finale exudes a celebratory fullness, floating in and out of tonal and atonal harmonies with ease. Your reviewer liked each movement but found it hard to tell how the pair related to each other beyond orchestration.

Rain Forest with Birds drew on the whole ensemble, augmented by four soloists, three players armed with prerecorded CD's, two directors (one to give cues, the other to delineate time increments), the composer at the piano, and a vast army of percussionists. It bristles with everything but the proverbial kitchen sink; birdcalls and famous instrumental evocations of them, snatches of music by everyone from Charlie Parker to Ralph Vaughan Williams to William Byrd, even allusions to other selections from Schwartz's oeuvre appear. But despite all this -- and its high indeterminacy quotient -- the piece hangs together well, relying on various signposts (such as the carefully placed appearance of soloists and the clock like return of chimes passages at the start of each minute) to tie together its disparate elements. Thomas G. Everett and Nathaniel H. Dickey conducted with energy and obvious sympathy for Schwartz's work.

The ensemble sounded shy in the first movement of *Tribute*, but more confident elsewhere, including presentations of two Vaughan Williams pieces, *Toccata Marziale* (1924) and *Scherzo Alla Marcia* (1956) from the *Eighth Symphony*.

Bravos go to Schwartz for producing a strong array of pieces. And kudos are due the evening's performers for demonstrating that Harvard is more than budding doctors, lawyers, and industry chiefs.

Maverick Awakenings

DAVID L. BARRY

The San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting, performs Monteverdi's *Sonata sopra "Sancta Maria,"* Berio's *Epiphanies*, Scelsi's *I presagi*, and Respighi's *Roman Festivals*. December 6, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA

The San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting, in Brant's *Ice Field*, Varèse's *Deserts*, Piazzolla's *Tangazo*, and Villa-Lobos's *Chôros No. 10*. December 8, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 12. Reviewed December 12.

Michael Tilson Thomas continued melding dissimilar works under the rubric "mavericks" lifted from his earlier festival in June. The two December programs presented works by composers labeled as Italian and "Pan-American" mavericks, respectively. Leaving the merits of this marketing strategy aside, this review will concentrate on those offerings which could broadly be considered contemporary, if not creations of the twenty-first century.

Luciano Berio's *Epiphanies*, for female voice and orchestra (1991; earlier versions 1959-65), confronts one with intense and complex statements of a musical language compounded from vintage modernist techniques but often evoking the sensuousness if not the lyricism of earlier musics. The eleven sections of the work contrast broad, cantankerous, and frequently loud orchestral material with those of the singer, on texts by Proust, Machado, Joyce, Sanguinetti, Claude Simon, and Brecht. These range from the political to the erotic in subject matter. The title apparently refers to Joyce's conception of personal epiphanies. Although no epiphanies are made explicit through the texts of this work, such moments of inward awakening might conceivably overtake the listener deeply engaged with the complexity of this music. Soprano Lauren Flanigan negotiated the octave displacements, the high sustained tones, and extended vocal techniques, with almost frightening skill. *Epiphanies* is for those who relish having their sensibilities stretched and their assumptions challenged by a work of art.

I presagi (The Omens, 1958), by Giacinto Scelsi, laments musically the passing of Mayan culture in an accessible vehicle for experimentation with long tones and microtonal progressions, the signature elements of the composer's later work. The piece is scored for brass and woodwind ensemble augmented by wind machine and percussion. Initiated by a set of fanfares, the three movement work moves from unsettling motives to more static, contemplative passages, to a climax of dissonant rambunctiousness, as the wind machine and percussion come into play. On the whole, within a language of pleasant exoticism, *I presagi* effects an energetic rhythmic drive, a quality not usually associated with Scelsi's succeeding works.

Edgard Varèse's *Déserts* (1954) contrasts an orchestra of winds, piano, and percussion, including cowbells, gongs, and maracas, with a pre-recorded tape of electronic sounds in alternating segments. The orchestral sections comprise an austere, monochromatic musical landscape, readily suggestive of the work's title with a slight scintillation produced by constantly shifting timbres reminiscent of Webern. The tape, last revised in 1961, projects vast planes of classical analog electronic studio sounds (detuned harmonics, isolated patches of "white noise," filtered effects of all types) littering Varèse's desolate places with a degree of tectonic jumble. This work aptly realizes the esthetics of its era in its forced separation of disparate materials, which when combined with the technological naivete of the electronics, bathes the work in something of an ironic aura.

Separation is also at the heart of Henry Brant's *Ice Field: Spatial Narratives for Large and Small Orchestral Groups* (2001). The separation here however, pertains to the arrangement of musical forces: woodwinds in the side terrace, brass in an upper tier, percussion in orchestra boxes, and piano, strings, and the eighty-eight year old composer at the organ, on stage. The piece does not attempt to musically depict glacial terrain but was inspired by Brant's memories of experiences during a voyage to France as a child, including the sighting of icebergs. *Ice Field* is an Other Minds commission for the San Francisco Symphony.

The structure of the work is modular. Strings predominate in chorale-like sections, brasses accentuate jazzy fanfares. The organ weaves in and out of the texture with extreme range improvisations, the low notes perceived as percussive meter more than tone. Sections in which the component instrumental groups collaborate or play independent material simultaneously impart an attractive Ives-in-surrounds flavor to the proceedings. Michael Tilson Thomas, as conductor, performed a slow motion dance as he directed, turning and cueing sections around the hall, then synchronizing with Brad Lubman conducting the brass in first tier, then back again to the stage. It could be argued that the extraverted banality of Brant's thematic material actually highlights the spatial and visual elements of the performance; ideally, there is no privileged parameter of the musical structure on which to fixate. The work asks one to apprehend it not solely as a circumscribed aural unit, but in its overall physicality.

Astor Piazzolla's *Tangazo* (1969) builds a symphonic structure from the elements of the tango. The work develops a resonant double bass theme as a fugato, eventually spreading to the winds. More animated, dance-like themes spread throughout the orchestra impelling the work to a frenetic finale, ceasing on a sudden pianissimo chord. *Tangazo* ably demonstrates Piazzolla's engagement with the problems involved in fusing musics from different traditions and his interesting and accomplished solutions to those problems.

Pan-American Pleasures

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

The San Francisco Symphony, Michael Tilson Thomas conducting, in Brant's *Ice Field*, Varèse's *Déserts*, Piazzolla's *Tangazo*, and Villa-Lobos's *Choros No. 10*. December 8, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 12.

There were so few musicians onstage when we went into Davies that I swore the orchestra was on strike. But no, it was a program change by Michael Tilson Thomas, and the reduced number of players were getting ready to perform Varèse's *Déserts* (1950-54) as the opener of its second *Mavericks* concert in its current subscription series. This one, which focussed on the Pan-American variety, was a sort of follow-up or extension of the conductor's ambitious summer 2000 *American Mavericks Festival*, and it made a strong case for its composers as avant-gardists.

No one has ever accused Varèse of being anything but, and the "Italo-Burgundian cyclone," in Virgil Thomson's description, doesn't make it easy on performers or listeners. The composer's non-melodic music also often seems more the product of science than of art, and the 25-minute *Déserts* happily combines both disciplines -- science in the use of Varèse's musique-concrète tape part, and art in its carefully planned sounds. And though all of a piece with his other works, it focuses more on a procession of sonic events than on collisions per se, and in form resembles a chopped-up march. Varèse's wind/percussion mixtures are always powerful, though Davies's unyielding acoustic made *Déserts* sound more metallic than it really is. Still one couldn't help feeling that positioning the players at some distance from each other on the stage might have given the sounds more clarity and punch, and added to its internal drama. Though not a spatial piece, space was obviously part of Varèse's composing plan.

Henry Brant uses it as an integral ingredient of his music. His 21-minute *Ice Field: Spatial Narratives for Large and Small Orchestral Groups* (2001), co-commissioned by Other Minds and the Symphony, contrasts different musical families through spatial means. This results in often strikingly opposed sonorities because blending isn't part of the game. To this end Brant has deployed strings, 2 pianos, 2 harps, and timpanist on stage, oboes and bassoons in the organ loft or terrace, brass and jazz drummers in the first tier, piccolos and clarinets in 3s in the second, with low percussion in the orchestra level side boxes of the second tier, and Brant himself playing the Ruffati organ onstage, with Tilson Thomas and Bradley Lubman handling the conducting duties. Raucous, severe, and lyric, *Ice Field* had many provocative effects -- vaguely Asian chords, steel drums vs. string figures, serious episodes for cellos and double basses, and strident overblowing passages for massed winds. The high color contrasts produced by the 93-piece orchestra were dramatic and full of bite. Though the complex set-ups Brant favors mitigate against frequent performances, this one sounded accurate, communicative, and highly entertaining. And the composer, who's orchestrated for everyone from Benny Goodman to Alex North, obviously knows his way around an amazing variety of instruments, and must have had a ball writing the piece.

The now widely performed but still underrated Astor Piazzolla was represented by the 14 minute *Tangazo: Variaciones sobre Buenos Aires* (1969). It had lots of *duende*, the Arabo-Hispano word for *passio*, and Piazzolla gets that in different ways. One was to layer a tango lament over his initial idea, which appears in the lower strings, with winds entering seven minutes later to somber yet brilliant effect. *Tangazo* also got some of its most visceral colors from the sounds of bows being slapped and violins being hit by hands.

Villa-Lobos's 12-minute *Choros No. 10 (Rasga o Coracao)* (1926) was the most compact, and expansive piece on the program and made the biggest splash, though Thomas, ever the smart guy, dissed it by comparing it to the music for an Esther Williams movie. Theatrical and dramatic it certainly was, but cheap and tawdry no. Scored for huge orchestra including Brazilian percussion instruments like the caxambu (a hollowed-out tree trunk with leather or parchment membrane), and reco-reco (notched wooden scraper), and performed here by a chorus of 140 which included a smaller one chanting a heavily accented rhythm, and driven by the relentless dance beat of the macumba, *Chôros* had color and power to burn. Thomas's familiarity with the score -- he's recorded it -- certainly showed, and the orchestra's exuberant performance brought down the house.

Ridin' the Range

DAVID MECKLER

NOW Music Festival. Mark Alburger's "The Fire" from *The Bald Soprano* (with Tisha Page), Alexis Alrich's "Pine" from *California Trees*, Anne Baldwin's *911* (with Patti Deuter), David Bamberger's *Talking Bird*, Aaron Bennett's *C*, the Bottomfeeders' *Subway*, Beau Casey's *Azimuth*, George Cremaschi's *Omaggio a Lohman*, the Decoursey-Harkins-Sammon *Trouble in Paradise*, Rocco Di Pietro's *Tears of Eros*, Mark Francis's *Four Pieces*, the Goodheart-Allen-Powell Trio's *Hand Count* and *Fragment*, Thomas Goss's "Strange Imagination" from *The Other Angel*, Robert Hall's "Lullaby" from *Sacagewea*, John Hersch's "Unit 7, No. 6" from *Proliferations*, JJ Hollingsworth's *Penny Candy*, Brent Larner's *Music for Gu Zheng*, James Livingston's *Brief Notes on Borges*, Charles Nichols's *Strata 2*, Lisa Scola Prosek's *Ballate Non Pagate (Dances not paid for)*, Ches Smith's *Working Class Fashions (for the Unemployed)*, and Erling Wold's *Devotion* and *Truth*. December 14, Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Composition is obsolete. Fortunately for me, a composer, the concept of obsolescence is itself obsolete. I base my initial claim about the obsolescence of composition entirely on speculation. When I look about society and see a social context full of computers, mass-produced consumer goods, and regimentation, I feel it would be natural that people would gravitate to the immediately human, spontaneous, and unpredictable. To witness free improvisation at its best is to experience the supremely human sense of watching humans make decisions in the most real of real-time. Anyway, and given today's social conditions, it would make sense to me that everyone would be hurrying down to the corner performance space to hear creative music. Since this is thoroughly not the case, my career as a composer looks more promising than a career as a social prognosticator. And, judging by the recent discussions on a Bay Area e-mail discussion group, some creative music people are not satisfied with the state of that scene, either.

I have long been interested in the relative pleasures and perils of improvisation and composition. Some moments of improvisation, particularly group improvisation, seem to me to offer the pinnacle of what all music can offer. The only way to fully take advantage of reacting to timbre, playing with rhythmic feel, and simply escaping to that place in the mind and spirit where word-language doesn't go. On the other hand, I've experienced playing chamber music that felt very spontaneous; when a group of performers absorb the score and become music. If one was to artificially compare composition and improvisation not at their peaks but rather down in the foothills of average performances, it seems that the edge actually goes to composition. If you take a pianist of average competence banging through a Beethoven sonata, one still has Beethoven in the experience, whereas listening to an average jazz musician banging through chord changes is just as mechanical and there is no Beethoven to provide a residue of interest. Even free improvisation can become mechanical when certain performers habitually pull out well-used items from their bag o' tricks. The finest compositions offer a sense of that-which-has-been-contemplated or designed. This may be a pre-meditative meditation or the microscopically gentle but inevitable pressure of the solar wind carrying us to distant emotional realms. Preexisting planning of course allows for the creation of narrative theatrical works such as opera.

All the above thoughts got a thorough churning at the 8th Annual *NOW Music Festival* offered in Goat Hall in San Francisco. The Festival proved to be a nice three hours in which to think about the relative merits and place in society of the continuum of composition and improvisation.

The part of the evening that was the most intense and most enjoyable was the closing performance by the Josh Allen, Matthew Goodheart, and Garth Powell Trio. Not only did ideas flow between the three musicians, interest flowed between timbre, melodic expression, particularly on the saxophone, and pitch choices that sparkled with intelligence, particularly from the piano. At the beginning of the set, Powell began with cymbals or Chinese gongs inverted and placed on top of the drums in a drum set. This was no "look Ma, I'm doing something strange" sort of gimmick, but rather created a field of evolving sounds that the musicians explored in and around. It is exactly this sort of intelligent play that I feel lies a bit beyond composition. One could conceivably notate all the complex activity, but you would wind up with musicians with a great deal a sweat on their brow and that would take it into a different sort of theatrical performance.

A less satisfying improvisation revealed the problem of not having a tightly considered compositional idea. *Music for Gu Zheng* was presented by Brett Larner. He played this traditional Chinese zither in a very unusual way, producing sound by rubbing the strings with a small cloth that I assume had rosin on it. This was a fascinating sound and I enjoyed listening to it. However, the piece was simply a progression from one very high register to another in a sort of diagonal movement; I feel I was presented with a sound, not an idea. For some, that is enough; I am greedy.

A more worked out balance between idea and performance was heard in *Trouble in Paradise*, performed by Peggy DeCoursey, Andrew Harkins, and Katt Sammon. This delightful vocal trio had clearly defined ideas that, when put into play against each other, created lively and humorous sparks. The piece was a collection of brief movements that each featured some sort of vocal sound such as the imitation of a door buzzer or a telephone ring, which would trigger the range of expressive gestures. At first this might seem like it is only a collection of warm-up exercises for actors, but they had a composed quality to them that made me say, yes this is music, this is theater, not just a warm-up. I could imagine these pieces starting out as exercises in 21st-century counterpoint. One line would be the idea of a performer laughing while another performer is on a crying jag. The laughing and the crying ranged from genuine to forced, creating a dramatic arc within each part. Additional depth came from adding a third voice to the mix suddenly creating the drama -- who will this third voice join, the crying party or the laughing party? Each bit of material seemed to get exactly enough time to reveal its potential without overstaying its welcome. There was an engaging balance between the clarity of the structuring ideas with a looseness and invention in the performance.

What then of making little black marks on paper to be converted, in a more-or-less predictable way, into sound by a performer? Composition is still the only way to get to certain places, whether it is the lapidary exactness of Webern or the grand tectonic scale of Beethoven. Spontaneously created music is stunning when it catches fire, as it did in the Goodheart-Allen-Powell Trio. Composition can be interesting when it comes close to a flame, but is instead held back, held in repose, held just far enough away to keep it from being consumed in the fire of time. Such is the paradox of "The Fire," a scene from Mark Alburger's operatic version of *The Bald Soprano*, the wonderful absurdist play by Eugene Ionesco. Soprano Tisha Page flickered up rising scales again and again, telling us of all things that were going up in flames; although she ran out of the building as she finished her aria, nothing was on fire. The flame, if any, was frozen in time. As composition allows for the contemplation of time in a way that is somewhat outside of time, one is able to engage questions of pacing. This was exemplified in two pieces, *Devotion* and *Truth*, by Erling Wold. This post-minimalist music would brood for awhile on an idea and then change or shift with a gently surprising quirkiness, Wold's strong suit as a composer. The composer struggled as a pianist to coax enough sound out of the rather dry piano in Goat Hall; I would like to hear these pieces on a more generous piano in a more reverberant space.

A happy blend between timbre and composition was offered by the Bottomfeeders, an engaging duo of cello and bass. Moving through a collection of grooves and riffs in a piece called *Subway*, the two musicians, Danielle DeGruttola and Ashley Adams, varied their bowing from sul ponticello to tasto, heavy to light, and thereby occupied a world of considerable timbral interest. It was announced from the stage that the piece was originally conceived for electronic instruments; this acoustic version certainly was definitely rich enough for me.

One extreme in the universe of spontaneity and composition is in a field of tape music, where it is once composed, always composed and without the possibility of spontaneity. To solve that problem (and the problem of having nothing to look at in the performance of a tape piece) the genre of tape plus live performer emerged. An example of that genre, *Tears of Eros*, was presented by Rocco Di Pietro, with the composer at the keyboard. The tape part featured erotic moanings and cries and the piano part replied with an array of modernist and romantic gestures. The piece raised several issues that are potentially very interesting. Since many musical pieces, forms, and rhetorical gestures are said to be metaphors for varieties of sexual experience, why not be as explicit as possible? Why reject or object to clichés, such as an arpeggiated diminished-seventh chord, in music? After all, orgasm is a cliché, but, judging from the world's population, there is no current lack of interest in it. One can even think about the relationship of spontaneity and composition: despite the great potential variety in sexual activity, there are a few narrative templates that are followed again and again; this spontaneity within a generally determined narrative perhaps can be compared to a live performance with tape. With all those potential issues on the table, I failed to discern the composer's intent or to project my own interpretation onto the piece. During the piece, I wondered, "Is this guy really composing about sex, or making bitter fun of the musical metaphors associated with the topic? I bet he likes Frank Zappa's music." Perhaps I need to hear it a second time.

It was a satisfying three hours of music, with plenty of variety. I would like to have heard more of the materials that I liked, but that is the nature of the beast in these marathon-style programs. I was impressed by the spirit of empathy, not mere tolerance, that seemed to radiate from the more adventurous in the crowd, even for the extremely conservative pieces on the program. The program included examples of musical theater and rather square opera-in-earnest; all sorts of music seemed to happily coexist in this generous evening. There were many potential threads of thought woven through the entire program; I just happened to be taken with the dialectic of composition and improvisation. I left Goat Hall and rolled down Potrero Hill imagining a music that was 62% composed, a crystalline perceivable structure, and the remaining 38% not merely improvised but rather creative spontaneous musicality! Just one of the many musics in our many futures.

Old, New, Borrowed, Red

EDMUND KIMBELL

San Francisco Community Music Center Orchestra and Chorus. December 31, Mission Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA. Repeated January 1, Mission Dolores Basilica.

The San Francisco Community Music Center Orchestra program on December 31 featured the world premiere of Michael Kimbell's *Rondino capriccioso*. Harmonically, the piece's melodic material is treated in an original neoromantic manner that Prokofiev, Stravinsky or Poulenc might have chosen. Even in scarcely four-and-a-half minutes, the work is a veritable orchestral kaleidoscope, with witty effervescences that are obviously as much fun for the players to perform as for the audience to listen to. Structurally too, this *Rondino* would not have been unfamiliar to either Beethoven or Dvorak: the work is a charming *Quodlibet*, or assembly of popular tunes that are interwoven throughout its entirety. Although less well-known today, many of the melodies would have been recognized by 19th-century audiences, some having been popularized in Carl Reinecke's *Musikalischer Kindergarten* or similar musical anthologies. The primary theme is based on a Turkish march written by the deposed Sultan Mustafa V for his younger brother, the notorious Abdul Hamid II "The Red" -- in both line and harmony, it could serve as the basis of an *à la turca* section in a classical-era work. Other tunes that flit in and out of the texture, often skillfully disguised so as to be mysterious to all but the most hardened of musical trivia cognoscenti, include Haydn's tune *Austria* (a.k.a. *Deutschland Über Alles*) and *Home, Sweet Home*. In a mischievous, if bittersweet comment on events of the early 21st century, the latter tune is superimposed on the *Dies Irae*. There are many more musical quotations and allusions, but neither the composer nor this listener is telling!

It is refreshing to hear such vibrant music that attempts neither to be a pastiche of the past, nor to explore some abstract and abstruse school -- "it is so inaccessible, therefore it must be good" -- nor even to address some "fashionable" issue, but instead stands firmly and unapologetically on its own frank enjoyability. It is further refreshing that an orchestra which by its very nature and purpose must cater to a potentially more limited conception and appreciation of classical music among both audience and players is not only willing to take on new music of this quality, but does so with gusto and to the loudly expressed delight of the public. There were some 1,100 people attending the concert on New Year's Day; the *Rondino* received a standing ovation. And the execution of the work was equally deserving of the audience's praise.

Beethoven Strikes Again

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*, Hartmann's *Miseræ* and Bernstein's *Serenade*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through January 13.

"You have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us." Thus spake Johannes Brahms about Ludwig van Beethoven. And the old guy is tramping to this day, making a couple of 20th-century masters look like hobbits in his wizardly wake.

At least that's how it felt at the San Francisco Symphony on January 9 at Davies Hall. O.K., it wasn't a fair fight. *Miseræ* and *Serenade* are not exactly top-drawer examples of the respective artistry of Carl Amadeus Hartmann and Leonard Bernstein (the former is better represented by his numbered symphonies and the opera *Simplicius Simplicissimus*; the latter by *Chichester Psalms* and *West Side Story*, among others). And *Symphony No. 7* is certainly among the finest of Beethoven's works.

The Hartmann is certainly a noble and colorful work, however. It is redolent of the New Viennese world of Alban Berg and Arnold Schoenberg, notably in the use of muted trombones (aside from the natural appeal of this color, this was perhaps also a way of more subtly blending the strident instruments into lush textures). Guest conductor Ingo Metzmacher made the most of each nuance in this rambling semi-masterpiece, and the San Francisco Symphony responded with the highest level of musical excellence.

Excellence was also the tune of the hour in violinist Joshua Bell's sensitive reading of the Bernstein, which is based on Plato's *Symposium*. Perhaps because of this literary/philosophical base, the composition seems prose rather than poetry. And the spare orchestration of strings and percussion only fires up in the last movement, where our boy Lenny starts to sound like himself again.

Mostly Milk

JEFF DUNN

Pacific Chamber Symphony, conducted by Lawrence Kohl, presents *Crème de la Bay*, "... devoted to the immense talents of our own Bay Area composers and soloists," with music by Kurt Rohde, Jake Heggie, David Conte, and Gordon Getty. January 15, Herbst Theater, San Francisco, CA.

There is nothing wrong with milk. It's got a good public image and provides fine nourishment to the hungry. Likewise with the Pacific Chamber Symphony's opening concert of the season, a magnet for new-music addicts who are starving for fresh notes warm from living-composer udders.

Milk gets things bubbly a lot quicker when heated. Kurt Rohde's *Strong Motion* (2001) provided plenty of energy, "Infernal Machine"-type whizbanging, excellent orchestration, and continuing evidence that he's the man with the most audible potential for musical fame and flame around the Bay. As Rhode put it, "A very much on-the-brink piece -- my idea of fun. ... I have no recollection of writing those notes!" ... There may have been a bit too many of them, for the work began to pale slightly toward the end. One missed the concision of his *Five Pieces for Orchestra* premiered last year.

Some Gallic chocolate sweetens the white stuff: Jake Heggie's single-movement piano concerto went down easy with its set of "free-flowing" variations on an engaging melody paced like the opening tune to the Rachmaninoff Third. Ravelian turns, suave transitions from the dancy to the dreamy, and a flamboyant performance by Stephen Prutsman made this a keeper for a candlelight dinner. Hope a CD gets issued as fast as his masterpiece *Dead Man Walking*!

Then there's the milk without the cookies to go with it. Heggie's orchestration of three earlier songs about the Biblical Eve, nice as they were, just cried for some percussive crunch. Eve's jazzy seductivity by snake was well set in the previous piano version. The orchestration took the piano away, and added no other percussion instrument. The result seemed to make the argument less substantive, however well sung by Kristan Clayton.

Finally, there's the mistake of serving milk at Communion. Certainly the hate-crime murder of Matthew Shepard deserves commemoration in David Conte's *Elegy for Matthew*. Moises Kaufman's *The Laramie Project* was an unforgettable docutheatrical effort in this direction. But imitating the lushly lactose sounds of Korngold and Schreker just doesn't associate well with the words "To hell-bent fury on a prairie cold / To hatred's dark malignant blows." Excellent orchestration in itself, but seemingly inappropriate to the context.

Orchestration was also a problem with philanthropist Gordon Getty's *Three Pieces for String Orchestra*, which sounded like a student work despite some nice melodies. The best part of this piece was Getty's introduction, where he described how he changed the locale of the first number, "The Fiddle of Ballykeel" from its true Belfast locus, Ballymoney. As he put it, "People would say Getty, money. So I moved my ancestors a couple of steps!"

Getty redeemed himself, however, with his words and composition of the second of his *Old Welsh Folk Songs*, performed by eight choristers and the Symphony: "The kindest man alive? / Then bury me in state, boys / ... / Underneath the grate boys..." all interpolated with "Fal-dee-re-dee-ree-do" and sung at breakneck speed. Unlike the earlier suite; this number was on the money.

So overall, no *crème*, but a very worthy concept leaving plenty of white mustache to lick later!

Boss Bernstein

MARK ALBURGER

Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Kapilow's *You and Hugh*, and Barber's *A Hand of Bridge*. January 18, College of Marin, Kentfield, CA.

It seems strange to start an opera review by quoting Martin Luther on the Renaissance composer Josquin Despres, but here goes. "Other composers are ruled by the notes, but Josquin makes the notes do what he wants them to do." Or something like that. And so it went on January 18 when College of Marin presented Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, which music director Paul Smith characterized as the piece that contained seeds of all the composer's later works. Already Bernstein was telling the notes what to do in his distinctive jazzy-neoclassic way; he serves his text and transcends it; the musical flow has its own integrity that is inspired by the words but not ruled by them.

Smith had the inspired and practical notion of casting eight performers ("more" tends to be perceived as "better" in college productions where enrollment and participation figures are strikingly important) in the capacity of what Bernstein conceived as a trio -- underlining the Greek chorus connections as these singers comment upon the action. But these muses are decidedly mid-century contemporary: regaling us with the banalities of New York suburban life c. 1950. Against this delightfully bouncy, faux-pop, vulgarian background we are introduced to our noble protagonists Dinah (Margo Schembre) and Sam (Paul Davis), a couple in mid-life crisis negotiating the vagaries of everyday life. But there was nothing mundane in their performances. Between Schembre's gorgeous voice and Davis's winning acting abilities, each silly/serious scene was carried off with aplomb. The "man in the gym" and "what a terrible, awful movie" (this one contains the *Trouble in Tahiti* reference) scenes were especially winning. The music shines throughout, and the soloists, chorus, and capable orchestra (flutist Bruce Salvisberg, bassoonist Jeff Hansen, percussionist Helen Konowitz, and violinist Joanna Pinckney, with the conductor at the piano) did their parts -- occasionally ragged, but always cheerful/tearful, as appropriate.

Unlike Bernstein, Robert Kapilow goes for the word-to-word and moment-to-moment in his setting of the Terrence McNalley cutesy *You and Hugh*. This topical trifle featured a noble Mother in the fine-voiced Linda Noble, with sturdy dramatic parts provided by Kyle Lemie as son Hugh, and Joe Osborn as Man, a catch-all role for all the adult male cameos that pop up during the proceedings. As Smith put it, "Kapilow shows us just how many ways a major second can be used," and indeed he does starting with chop sticks and running through a little cliched chop-suey Japanese music parody and a kamikaze assault of other allusions. Clever.

Samuel Barber's nine-minute gem *A Hand of Bridge* was the opening bid. Marcia Gronewold's Sally sallied forth silly and spicy. Her vocal expertise was complemented by contributions from Peter Sly (Bill), Kaiana McKevy (Geraldine), and Davis (David). The game is that all four players have hidden agendi, which they share out-of-time, relating directly to the audience. Director Randy Nazarian effectively staged Davis with his back to the audience until the moment of his crucial contribution.

Nazarian entertainingly directed *Hugh*, and James Dunn did likewise in a trouble-free *Trouble*. Stewart Munson's effective black-and-white set pieces for *Hand* and *Tahiti* bookended the strong colors in those of *You*.

Portrait of the Concert as a Recent Hike

MARK ALBURGER

Marin Symphony, conducted by Gunther Schuller, in Mosolov's *Iron Foundry* and music from Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges*. January 20, Veterans Auditorium, San Rafael, CA.

This past week I've been hiking in the San Francisco Bay Area's Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline Park. What, pray tell, does this have to do with reviewing the Marin Symphony's January 20 concert at Veteran's Auditorium? Plenty. Give it time.

Strangely enough, my hike led me past the C&H Sugar Factory, a mining complex, and oil refineries. But the noisiest of all was (how's this for a transition?) Alexander Mosolov's *Iron Foundry* (1923), an exciting work that almost justifies some of the aesthetic affronts of the industrial revolution. Renowned composer-conductor Gunther Schuller (who regrettably yet again did not feature any of his own works) led the Symphony in a stunning performance that chugged in the strings, bleated in the woodwinds, roared in the brass, and pounded in the percussion. Classical CD reviewer Rob Barnett has cited this work as an example of proto-minimalism, and he's right. The cyclings of repeatedly smashed-and-damped gong strokes were particularly arresting -- and let's not forget the thundersheet shimmering at the back of the stage... The French horns stood and delivered the ominous and heroic main theme on two occasions. Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony presented this wackily effective Socialist Realist work several years ago, and this Marin performance was in the same union.

The hard work of hiking uphill can lead to scenic wonders, and evidently the hard times of political oppression can result in sonic splendor. Mosolov's *Foundry* was not the only piece on the program composed in response to the iron hand of Josef Stalin. Sergei Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (1921) also dates from this period (O.K., in reality the composer was abroad, working for the Chicago Opera Company, but *Oranges* was premiered in the USSR in 1926, and Prokofiev finally returned home permanently in 1936). The well-known "Scherzo" and famous "March" from this fantasy opera were given a sparkling reading as magical as a distant view of Marin mountains.

Calendar

March 1

Gunther Schuller conducts the Manhattan School of Music Symphony in his *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee* and Lutoslawski's *Piano Concerto* (with Jessica Bruser). Manhattan School of Music, New York, NY.

March 2

Music of Shostakovich and Trimbach. Trinity Church, Berkeley, CA.

Orchestra 2001 *Celebrating 20th Century Poland*. Kimmel Center, Philadelphia, PA. Repeated March 3, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore.

March 4

Martin Rokeach and Keeril Makan. Veterans Building, San Francisco, CA.

March 5

Composers Inc presents Deniz Ince's *Piano Trio*, Freund's *Trio*, Korde's *Tenderness of Cranes*, Martin Rokeach's *Fantasy on 12 Strings*, and Sanchez-Gutierrez's *Luciernaga*. Green Room, Veterans Building, San Francisco, CA.

eighth blackbird in Kernis's *The Four Seasons of Futurist Cuisine*, Perle's *Critical Moments II*, and Kellogg's *Divinum Mysterium*. Tully Hall, NY.

March 6

San Francisco Symphony in Kernis's *Symphony No. 2* and Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

March 7

Other Minds 8, with Ellen Fullman, Takashi Harada, Lou Harrison, Tania Leon, Annea Lockwood, Thomas Buckner, Pauline Oliveros, Ricardo Tacuchian, Richard Teitelbaum, and Randy Weston. Palace of Fine Arts Theatre, San Francisco, CA. Through March 9.

March 8

91st anniversary of the birth of Alan Hovhaness.

Laurie Anderson's *Happiness*. University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Premiere of Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Et in Terra Pax* by the San Jose Choral Project. San Jose, CA.

Alarm Will Sound in *Composer Portrait: György Ligeti*. Columbia University, New York, NY.

March 9

Premiere of Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Daydreams* by the San Francisco Choral Artists. Berkeley, CA. Through March 17, Palo Alto, CA.

March 10

Petersen Quartet. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

March 11

Artimis Quartet in *Hungarian Twentieth-Century Masters*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

March 12

Vienna Philharmonic in Berg's *Three Pieces for Orchestra*. Segerstrom Hall, Orange County Performing Arts Center, CA.

North/South Consonance presents *Arthur Berger's 90th Birthday*. Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY.

March 13

Ear Unit Twentieth-Anniversary Celebration. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

Isomorphism: Composing Improvisation. Jack Straw, Seattle, WA.

March 14

Peter Maxwell Davies conducts the San Francisco Symphony in his *Symphony No. 8 ("Antarctic")*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Sound on Film, with music of Andriessen, Stockhausen, and Tavener. Columbia University, New York, NY.

Complete Piano Works of Pierre Boulez performed by Marilyn Nonken. Cooper Union, New York, NY.

March 16

Liderman's *Song of Songs*. University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Gyoto Monks. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

March 17

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Reflections on the Hudson* performed by The Community Band of Brevard. North Brevard, FL. Through March 24, Merritt Island.

March 22

Gershwin's *Strike Up the Band!* Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra performs Mark Alburger's *Symphony No. 1*, Erling Wold's *Sub Pontio Pilato*, John Beeman's *Beeline*, Marcia Burchard's *From Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth*, Alexis Alrich's *Fuse*, Stan McDaniel's *Duo: Remembrance*, and Tom Heasley's *Tuba and Electronics*. Goat Hall, San Francisco, CA.

March 24

Richard Goode performs two of Debussy's *Preludes*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Mark Alburger's *Symphony No. 6*. Santa Rosa, CA.

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *A Silver, Shining Strand* performed by The Kona Community Orchestra. Kona, HI.

March 25

ICE (Intergalactic Contemporary Ensemble) in *Nancarrow's Studies No. 3C* and *&*, Vali's *Folk Songs*, Childs's *Hands*, Newman's *American Beauty*, and Stalvey's *Requiem for a Dancer*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA.

Chronicle

January 4

Death of Peter Hemmings (b. 4/10/34, Enfield, UK), of cancer, at 67. Dorset, UK. "[He was] the first general director of Los Angeles Opera When the dapper and eloquent British impresario took charge in 1984, Los Angeles was the only major Western city that could not maintain its own opera company. With a budget of just \$6.4 million, Hemmings launched Music Center Opera (later renamed Los Angeles Opera), mounting five productions in a first season that immediately made the operatic world take notice. By the time he retired in 2000 to return to his native England, Hemmings had left behind a company with a \$22-million budget and an eight-opera season of more than 50 performances, most of them selling out. In the process, he masterminded several productions that became part of Los Angeles' cultural iconography—including a celebrated version of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* designed by a fellow Briton-turned-Angelino, artist David Hockney Hemmings was also responsible for bringing Plácido Domingo to the company at the outset as artistic advisor, realizing that the popular tenor's presence assured L.A. Opera a necessary celebrity factor. That also paved the way for Domingo to become the company's artistic director after Hemmings retired. "Since the first day Peter was here," Domingo said Thursday, "we were together. I learned a lot from him about how to make things happen. It was not easy to have an opera company in Los Angeles, but he knew that the only way to go was up," Domingo said. "And with his wit, devotion and that straightforward and serene manner he had, he seemed to know just how to approach the board, the audiences and the artists." A sensation the first season was a daring production of Richard Strauss' *Salome* that included nudity. . . . One . . . discovery, baritone Rodney Gilfry, sang a single line in the company's first production, Verdi's *Otello*. By the time of Hemmings' retirement, Gilfry had become an international star, and he performed the title role in Hemmings' final Los Angeles Opera production, Benjamin Britten's *Billy Budd*, in June 2000. . . . Among the new productions that garnered wide attention were those designed by Hockney (the *Tristan* and Strauss' *Die Frau Ohne Schatten*), Berg's *Wozzeck* (directed by the radical American David Alden and conducted by Simon Rattle), Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* (presented in America for the first time), Berlioz's *The Trojans* (in only its second complete production in America), and Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande* (updated by Peter Sellars). "Unless you do these operas with a spark of something that is contemporary, it all dies," he told Opera News in 1996. "I have always believed that opera is a vibrant, living art form with an exciting future, not simply a museum art." Hemmings commissioned several new works, often in collaboration with other companies. Joonas Kokkonen's *Kullervo* (with Finnish Opera) and Tobias Picker's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* originated in Los Angeles. Other new operas in which the company was one of a consortium of commissioners were John Adams' *Nixon in China* and Daniel Catan's *Florencia en el Amazonas*. Hemmings also joined consortiums to produce Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer* Esa-Pekka Salonen led the *Pelleas* and Kent Nagano (now the company's principal conductor) was in the pit for Kurt Weill's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and *Nixon in China*" [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 1/4/02].

January 7

Amanda Moody's *Serial Murdress*, performed by the writer, featuring music of Clark Suprynovicz accompanied by Mark Alburger, wins the 2001 Dean Goodman's Choice Award for Solo Performance.

January 9

California EAR Unit in Morton Feldman's *Crippled Symmetry*. Leo S. Bing Theatre, Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, CA. "Written in 1983, the trio reflects not only Feldman's close connection with the Abstract Expressionist visual artists of the 1950s and '60s but also his later fascination with the patterns of Turkish rugs. Looking for musical equivalents to those rungs, he devised short, elemental melodic patterns, sometimes just a broken chord or a few repeated notes, that are transformed for relatively short periods before gracefully evolving into new ones. Each instrument works in its own time frame, never simultaneous with the others but never far apart. . . . Some [listeners] sleep (Feldman himself could be caught napping during performances) . . . Everyone approaches this music on his or her own terms, but somehow this music creates a collective consciousness. That is the greatness of Feldman's art . . . the result of ever-enchanting sounds and the contagion of concentration from three persuasive performers -- flutist Dorothy Stone, percussionist Amy Knoles (Arthur Jarvinen performed on the ensemble's recording) and pianist Vicki Ray. . . . There is not a trace of drama in this trance-like music, but there is nothing but drama in the sustained effort of making it. . . . The *Crippled Symmetry* CD is a nice addition to your house; in the Bing . . . it was a memorable addition to one's life" [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 1/11/02].

Guided Improv Ensemble/Workshop, with Ernesto Diaz-Infante. Oakland, CA.

San Francisco Symphony in Hartmann's *Miserere* and Bernstein's *Serenade*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through January 13.

Elena Dubinets's *Icebreaker*. Jack Straw, Seattle, WA.

January 11

Tape Music MicroFestival. Transparent Theater, Berkeley, CA. Through January 12.

CEAIT Electronic Music Festival. Roy O. Disney Music Hall, California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA. Through January 13.

Lutoslawski's *Partita*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

January 12

CalArts Festival. Pamela Z. CalArts, Valencia, CA. "Z waved her "wired" arms to trigger sounds, created delay loops with her voice (instant background singers) and a range of vocal tones and percussion sounds, all while interacting with a video system that allowed her to appear in triplicate. In Z's case, the centrality of her own over-the-top presentation is hard to get around" [Josef Woodard, Los Angeles Times, 1/15/02].

Aaron Jay Kernis's *Lament and Prayer* performed by the New York Chamber Symphony. New York, NY.

January 13

Chris Brown and Ernesto Diaz-Infante. KPFA, Berkeley, CA.

Music of JJ Hollingsworth and Max Simoncic. Old First Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA.

CalArts Festival. Jacob & Carol's *Rain*, Bob Bellerue's *Threat Level Charlie*, Michael Gendreau's *T921 pt. 2*, Anthony De Ritis' *Plum Blossoms*, and Tae Hong Park's *T1*. CalArts, Valencia, CA.

Death of baritone Norman Atkins, of complications after heart surgery, at 82. New York, NY. "[He was] a member of the New York City Opera from 1959 to 1962 Kurt Weill chose him for the role of Frank Maurrant in *Street Scene*, which he sang in concert performances around the country" [The New York Times, 1/24/02].

New York Chamber Symphony in the New York premiere of Kernis's *Lament and Prayer*. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY. "[A] balance between introspection and anger that captured the spirit of the work" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 1/15/02].

Exploding Music, with Lukas Ligeti. Cutting Room, New York, NY.

Harvey Schmidt's *The Fantasticks* (libretto by Tom Jones) ends its record-breaking run as the world's longest-running musical. Sullivan Street Theater, Greenwich Village, New York, NY. "As of [September 2, 2001, it] had played 17,005 performances. By comparison, *Cats*, the longest-running show in Broadway history, finished in September at a measly 7,485 performances" [Associated Press, 9/7/01]. "The two [creators of the show] also maintain the longest running hairstyles in show business. 'There may be a connection there, an unwillingness to change,' Mr. Jones said . . . 'But we always kept our relationship strictly professional: no hairstyling questions. As the two men passed the phone back and forth, Mr. Jones chided Mr. Schmidt for drawing sketches of a woman with a goatee. 'You really should see a psychiatrist,' Mr. Jones told him. . . . 'Harvey was indifferent to my hair,' Mr. Jones said. 'That's the basis of a good relationship.' . . . 'If I had classic great features, I'd probably wear [a buzz] all the time,' [Schmidt] said. "But as Collette said, the human face needs leafage.' It was Mr. Jones . . . who first added a goatee. As the receipts started to come in, he said, he succumbed to the erotic temptations that attend success and in the process soured his marriage. 'That's No. 1,' he said, dividing the story of his beard into dramatic acts. The souring, in turn, led him into therapy. 'That's No. 2.' No. 3 is that his therapist, following the lead of Sigmund Freud, wore a goatee. Act 4 you can guess on your own. . . . 'I always felt unfinished in my look,' [Schmidt] said. 'If I grew a little facial hair, it helped.' Though steady hair has been a handmaiden of their 42-year success, hair almost kept the two men apart. (To think!) . . . Schmidt was impressed by . . . Liz Smith who became the syndicated gossip columnist . . . Schmidt decided to copy [her] look, only to feel he wasn't pulling it off. In desperation, he shaved his head. When Mr. Jones went to see him . . . he was shocked. Any plans for collaboration were off. 'Tom never blamed my hair, but I blame my hair,' Mr. Schmidt said. The following year, Mr. Schmidt grew his hair back and everything clicked. The two men have written 14 shows together. And the rest is 17,162 curtain calls worth of history" [John Leland, *The New York Times*, 1/13/02].

January 14

Parisii Quartet in *The Second Viennese School*. Los Angeles County Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

San Diego Symphony receives from Irwin and Joan Jacobs a \$100,000,000 endowment, the largest ever awarded to a symphony orchestra in the United States. Copley Symphony Hall, San Diego, CA. "[A] sum guaranteed to place it firmly on the national musical landscape"[Bernard Weintraub, *Los Angeles Times*, 1/11/02].

January 15

New York Composers: A Celebration, presented by North/South Consonance, with Aaron Jay Kernis. Merkin Hall, New York, NY.

Israel Philharmonic in Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No. 1*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "The 15 [players] . . . threw themselves with great musical energy into this compact turmoil of a score" [Paul Griffiths, *The New York Times*, 1/17/02].

January 16

Pacific Sticks, with Laurie Amat, in Ilana Cotton's *Women's Voices, Women's Words*. Studio 6, San Francisco, CA.

Improv Salon IV. Cafe Trieste, San Francisco, CA.

Carnegie Hall's new executive and artistic director, Robert J. Harth discontinues Jon Faddis's Carnegie Hall Jazz Band. New York, NY.

New York Guitar Festival. Sérgio and Odair Assad in music of Scarlatti, Rodrigo, Debussy, Gismonti, Brouwer, and Piazzolla. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

January 17

New York Guitar Festival. Marc Ribot, with James Chance. Makor, New York, NY. "Ribot's musicianship is broad, with plenty of room for character, both his own and that of others; the wonder is that the character doesn't swallow up the musicianship. . . . [I]f the solo portion presented further refinement of Mr. Ribot's art, the duets were memorable lunacy. Mr. Ribot detunes his guitars to get wobbly pitch so that his playing sounds like a warped record. He likes the intersection of rustic-country technique and modern sensibility, but he's also one of the most catholic-minded musicians in New York, capable of primitive single-note peckings, the passing chords and rhythmic flourishes of Django Reinhardt and the fast, swinging, gawky intervals of Eddie Durham. His short solo section, on acoustic and electric guitars, encompassed some hard-to-recognize ballad melodies and a Civil War soldiering song; it was shrewd and rather subtle. But when Mr. Chance got onstage, the mood changed. As the leader of the no-wave band the Contortions 20 years ago, Mr. Chance earned a black belt in obnoxiousness; starting out in New York's 1970's loft-jazz scene, he found the raw nerves of worshipful jazz audiences and went on to up the ante in punk clubs. At Makor, while Mr. Ribot played something sweet and agreeable about 15 minutes into the set, Mr. Chance arrived. And yes, he came to play jazz. He is fuller in the face now but still has the hostile stare. Mr. Chance, who sang and played alto saxophone, isn't an unmusical person: he locked into communicative rhythm with Mr. Ribot, paid attention to verses bridges and tags, delivered lyrics with personality and has perfected getting attention. But on alto saxophone he not only sounds self-taught, he sounds entirely self-evaluated, playing weak and out-of-key scales, salted with whinnying squeals. Still, he has brutal confidence; you can't turn away from him. Half a dozen jazz and blues standards were terrorized, including 'Don't Worry About Me,' 'All of Me' and Thelonious Monk's 'Let's Cool One.' (That took guts: ineptitude with a soigné standard is sort of welcome, but ineptitude with Monk?) He sang, too, in a cross between a lounge-entertainer croon and a bark, and during Mr. Ribot's solos he screamed and sobbed like a child with night terrors. The lowest point was 'I'm in the Mood for Love,' when his rendition came too close to Steve Martin's version on his old comedy album 'A Wild and Crazy Guy.' But the set as a whole wasn't a comedy routine: it had a determination, an unsettling humor and an eerie poignancy" [Ben Ratliff, *The New York Times*, 1/23/02].

Questlove, billed as the *First Official Hip-Hop Show at Lincoln Center*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

January 18

Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Reflections on the Hudson*. Eisenhower Hall, West Point, NY.

January 19

Kroumata in Xenakis's "Peaux" from *Pléiades* (1979), Takemitsu's *Rain Tree* (1981), Katzer's *Schlagmusik 2* (1989), Sven-David Sandstrom's *Drums* (1980), and Cage's *Third Construction* (1941). Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

Kernis's *New Era Dance* performed by the Harrisburg Symphony. Harrisburg, PA.

January 20

Robert Craft receives Lifetime Achievement Award. Palais of the Theatre Debussy, Cannes, France.

San Francisco Symphony Chamber Music. Thomas Goss's *The Seven Deadly Sins of a Dog*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA. "scored for French horn, tuba and four Wagner tubas, those contraptions that resemble horns with thyroid conditions. Goss . . . hosted a droll introduction and exhibited a blown-up photograph of 'my muse' (a Gordon setter named Fletcher). Props included a red fire hydrant and a soup can, which contributed its own tinny obbligato. Calling this piece a dog turns out, for once, to be a compliment. In his survey of canine peccadilloes, Goss has incorporated barking patterns of man's best friend, as well as a quotation from Peter and the Wolf. He also laid traps for his dauntless brass consort, whose members . . . dispatched their witty, if slightly protracted assignments, with brazen glory" [Allan Ulrich, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/22/02].

New York Guitar Festival. 9-hour All-Star Guitar Marathon, with Bill Frisell and the Assad Brothers. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

Premiere of Judith Sainte Croix's *Vision III*. St. Luke's Lutheran Church, New York, NY.

January 21

Death of Peggy Lee (b. Norma Deloris Egstrom, 5/27/20, Jamestown, ND), of a heart attack, at 81. Los Angeles, CA. "She was billed throughout most of her career as Miss Peggy Lee (and, in fact, she insisted on it). In the golden age of big bands she was a singer of renown with Benny Goodman's orchestra and she went on to become a top nightclub singer, a prolific recording artist, a successful songwriter and an actress skillful enough to be nominated for an Oscar. She was a weaver of moods and colors, her misty voice conveying impeccable rhythmic subtlety and smoldering sexuality. In a world of belters, she was a minimalist who eliminated any hint of the extraneous in both her voice and gestures, and she could stir audiences with an understated phrase more than most singers could by shouting and stomping. Duke Ellington called her 'the Queen.' Stephen Holden, a movie and cabaret critic of *The New York Times*, described her image as 'Billie Holiday meets Mae West.' Miss Lee made more than 700 recordings and more than 60 albums. Her own favorite album, *The Man I Love*, was recorded in 1957 with arrangements by Nelson Riddle and an orchestra conducted by Frank Sinatra. Sinatra was so intimately involved with the album that he obtained some menthol to make Miss Lee's eyes look properly misty for the cover photograph. She is credited with having a hand in writing [numerous] songs, in most cases as a lyricist. . . . Her name is indelibly linked with a number of songs, including 'Golden Earrings,' 'Fever,' 'Lover,' 'Big Spender,' 'You're My Thrill,' 'I Got It Bad and that Ain't Good,' 'Them There Eyes' and the haunting Jerry Lieber and Mike Stoller tune that became her signature in later years, 'Is That All There Is?' . . . Lee was discovered in Chicago in 1941 by Benny Goodman, who was looking for a replacement for his vocalist, Helen Forrest, who was leaving to join Artie Shaw's band. He heard her sing 'These Foolish Things' at the Ambassador West Hotel and called the next day, offering her the job. She had a cold the first night she appeared, the critics were unkind, and she wanted to quit. Goodman refused to let her go and she stayed on, at \$75 a week. . . . It was Miss Lee's sulky rendition of 'Why Don't You Do Right?' with the Goodman band in 1942 that made her a star. . . . Lee's tour with the Goodman band lasted less than two years but the collaboration made her one of the most famous female vocalists of the time and put her on the road to fame. In 1943, Miss Lee left Goodman to marry Dave Barbour, the band's guitarist, with whom she collaborated on a number of hits, including 'I Don't Know Enough About You,' 'It's a Good Day,' and 'Manana,' a 1948 blockbuster that sold more than two million records and began her long association with Latin-flavored music. . . . She made her film debut in 1950, playing a minor role in *Mr. Music*, and went on, in 1953, to play a featured role opposite Danny Thomas in a remake of *The Jazz Singer*. Her performance as an alcoholic blues singer in *Pete Kelly's Blues* (1955) won her an Academy Award nomination as best supporting actress. In 1959 she wrote the lyrics for a Duke Ellington song, 'I'm Gonna Go Fishing' for the film *Anatomy of a Murder*. She also wrote theme music for the movies *Johnny Guitar* and *About Mrs. Leslie*, and supplied voices for several characters and sang three songs in the 1952 Walt Disney animated film *Lady and the Tramp*. She was paid \$3,500 by Disney and no royalties. When Disney marketed a videocassette without her consent, she sued the company. In 1992, after a four-year court battle, she was awarded \$2.3 million. Another lawsuit over royalties neared an end last week in Los Angeles, when a superior court judge gave preliminary approval for a \$4.75-million settlement between Universal Music Group and several hundred recording artists whose lead plaintiff was Miss Lee. . . . Lee was a perfectionist who planned every aspect of her performances right down to her hairdos, her costly gowns, her lighting, her entrances and exits, even the movement of her hands. . . . For decades, because of respiratory problems that began with a bout of viral pneumonia in 1958, she kept oxygen in her dressing room, and she used it between sets. Miss Lee's performances at Basin Street East in Manhattan beginning in 1959 were credited by *Newsweek* with 'single-handedly reviving the supper club business.' Count Basie, Tallulah Bankhead, Cary Grant, Lena Horne and Ella Fitzgerald were some of the notable who crowded in every night. With more than 600 people in a space meant for 450, a club representative recalled later, 'we had to hire only skinny waiters.' . . . Miss Lee was married five times, but her great love, she acknowledged, was her first husband and collaborator, Mr. Barbour. He was the father of her only child, Nicki Lee Foster, of Sun Valley, Idaho. In addition to Ms. Foster, she is survived by three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Miss Lee described Mr. Barbour in her autobiography as a self-destructive alcoholic.

They were married in 1943 and she said in a 1982 interview that he asked her for a divorce in 1951, 'because he didn't want his daughter to see him with his problem.' In 1965, after Mr. Barbour had been sober for many years, they decided to remarry, but a few days later he died. . . . Late in the 1970's, she returned to San Francisco from a European tour so ill she was immediately hospitalized. Doctors informed her she had a bad heart, diabetes and a disorder of the inner ear; she also went blind temporarily. She was told to retire but went to Australia on tour instead. She had double-bypass heart surgery in 1985. Two years later she fell onstage at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas and fractured her pelvis. When she recovered, she fell again in the marble bathroom of her home in [the] Bel Air section of Los Angeles, injuring the vertebrae in her lower spine. Still she performed. . . . She usually appeared in slinky satin or form-fitting glittering gowns, drop-dead dangling earrings and large round tinted glasses. Later, a shoulder length white-blond wig covered her champagne-blond hair. Still later, she used a jeweled cane and often performed sitting down like Mabel Mercer. . . . In 1990, she received the Pied Piper Award of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, Ascap's highest accolade, given for lifetime achievement. During her last decade, she tried to retire several times. She painted, . . . grew roses, watched nature programs on television, was active in the Science of Mind spiritual group, and listened to Ray Charles, Sinatra, Debussy and Chopin. But it wasn't enough. So she would reappear periodically in smaller settings, basking in the warmth and admiration of her audience "[Enid Nemy, *The New York Times*, 1/25/02].

Da Capo Chamber Players in Aaron Jay Kernis's *Love Scenes*, Harrison Birtwistle's *Nine Settings of Lorine Niedecker*, and André Previn's *Vocalise*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Death of Sheldon Allman (b. Chicago, IL), of heart failure, at 77. Culver City, CA. "[He was] the singing voice of Mr. Ed and composed the theme songs to *George of the Jungle* and other television shows. . . . In *Mr. Ed*, the popular sitcom about Wilbur Post's talking horse, the voice of the title character was provided by Allan Lane. But whenever Mr. Ed sang, it was with the voice of Mr. Allman, who also wrote all of his own songs, like 'The Pretty Little Filly With the Pony Tail' and 'The Empty Feed Bag Blues.' Mr. Allman also wrote the theme music for *Let's Make a Deal*. . . . The [cartoon] program [which featured *George of the Jungle*] was short lived, with only 17 episodes produced, but it found popularity largely because of the comic [lyrics] . . . which repeatedly warned . . . 'watch out for that tree.' When a live-action film of *George* was made in 1997, starring Brendan Fraser, the one-minute tune was recorded by a trendy rock band, the Presidents of the United States of America. . . . Allman wrote [*George* and two other] cartoon themes with Stan Worth in one productive afternoon in a967. 'Stan came over to my house,' Mr. Allman recalled in 1997. 'We started at 1 o'clock, and by 4 o'clock we had three songs.' . . . He appeared in the films *In Cold Blood*, *Dirty Harry*, *Hud*, and *All the Presidents Men*, and in the television shows *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Twilight Zone*, and *I Dream of Jeannie*" [*The New York Times*, 2/3/02].

January 22

Da Capo Chamber Players perform Kernis's *Love Scenes*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

January 23

EMI ends its multi-million dollar contract with Mariah Carey. "[She] has had more No. 1 hits than anyone. . . except Elvis Presley and the Beatles. EMI signed Ms. Carey only last April to one of the music industry's most lucrative contracts, guaranteeing a reported \$80 million for five albums. But after disappointing sales of the first album Ms. Carey delivered, *Glitter*, released last fall, EMI's Virgin Records division decided to cut its losses. It will pay Ms. Carey \$28 million to free itself from the high costs of producing and promoting any more albums. . . .EMI's decision to part ways with Ms. Carey reflects the troubles in the recording industry at large, which is battling dwindling compact disc sales, the digitized universe of songs available on the Internet and increasingly demanding [performers]. . . . Sales of the *Glitter* album, which was released on Sept. 11 [whoops], have reached only 500,000 copies in the United States . . . a paltry amount compared to Ms. Carey's 1993 album, *Music Box*, which sold 23 million world wide, and the average 8 million for nine previous albums by Ms. Carey. . . . *Glitter* . . . was a sound track album for a disappointing film . . . and . . . it signaled the defection of Ms. Carey's teenage fan base to bolder, brasher performers like Britney Spears and 'N Sync. . . .

During an interview on MTV's *Total Request Live* in July, she behaved erratically, asking the show's host, Carson Daly, to kidnap her and then diverging into a monologue about therapy. The unnerved Mr. Daly then announced: 'Ladies and gentlemen, Mariah Carey has lost her mind.' . . . On an episode of MTV Cribs, a program in which pop stars tour their homes for the camera, she hopped into the bathtub, and declaimed from the bubbles that it was the place she hid from her fans, using the word 'fans' in a tone some viewers regarded as hostile" [Alex Kuczynski with Larua M. Holson, *The New York Times*, 1/24/02].

San Francisco Symphony in Rousset's *Symphony No. 3* and Ravel's *La Valse*. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through January 26. "[The Rousset was] as exciting a performance as anyone will hear of a major symphonic contribution to . . . 20th-century literature" [Allan Ulrich, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1/25/02].

January 24

Double Exposure. Paul Moravec's *Mood Swings*, Scott Johnson's *Practical Music*, and music from Daniel Schnyder's *Symphony No. 4*. Rose Studio, New York, NY. "an enjoyable concert" [Ann Midgett, *The New York Times*, 1/29/02].

January 25

American Composers Forum presents Martin Rokeach's *Can't Wait* (with Tod Borden, Peter Josheff, and Karen Rosenak), Lisa Scola Prosek's *Ballate Non Pagate* (with Tisha Page), and music of New Zealand Composers, introduced by Thomas Goss (with Laurie Amat). Community Music Center, San Francisco, CA.

Steven Gerber's *Elegy on the Name 'Dmitri Shostakovich.'* Paul Hall, The Juilliard School, New York, NY.

New Juilliard Ensemble in *Twelve Tones and Beyond*. Juilliard Theatre, New York, NY. Through January 29.

January 26

Composers from the Center for Contemporary Music, with John Bischoff. Mills College, Oakland, CA.

January 28

San Francisco Contemporary Players in Schoenberg's *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Luigi Nono's *sofferte onde serene*, Boulez's *Anthèmes I*, Mumma's *Tile*, in memoriam William Banovetz, and Dugger's *A Summer's Reverie*. Yerba Buena Center, San Francisco, CA.

Michael Dellaira's *Cheri* (libretto by Susan Yankowitz) is sung twice, once by opera singers and once by musical theater performers in an unusual contrast between contemporary singing styles. Featuring Liz Crumb. Clark Theater, Rose Building, Lincoln Center, New York, NY. Repeated January 29.

January 29

Contrasts Quartet (Vadim Lando, Monica Bauchwitz, Ariane Lallemand, and Evelyne Luest) in music of Rorem, Lisa Bielawa, Aaron Jay Kernis, and Igor Stravinsky. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY. "Bielawa's *Wait* . . . developed into an emotionally insistent work, particularly when Ms. Luest was joined briefly by the three other musicians, who supplied, from offstage, what Ms. Bielawa listed as an 'optional drone.' . . . The quartet gave the [Kernis] work an impassioned reading" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 2/5/02].

Backbeat Percussion Ensemble in music of Cage and Reich. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

January 30

Music and Poetry of Spain and the Americas. The Americas Society, New York, NY.

January 31

San Francisco Symphony in Ives's *Symphony No. 4*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through February 3. "a wondrous performance" [Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/2/02].

65th birthday of Philip Glass. New York, NY

Writers

MARK ALBURGER is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. His operas *The Bald Soprano* and *The Wind God* will be given in San Francisco this summer.

D.L. BARRY studied composition with Henry Onderdonk, Wayne Peterson, and Richard Festinger. He has composed for a variety of resources besides standard instrumental combinations, including environmental installations and electronic media.

DAVID CLEARY's music has been played throughout the U.S. and abroad, including performances at Tanglewood and by Alea II and Dinosaur Annex. A member of Composers in Red Sneaker, he has won many awards and grants, including the Harvey Gaul Contest, an Ella Lyman Cabot Trust Grant, and a MacDowell residence.

MICHAEL DELLAIRA received his Ph.D. (1990) and M.F.A. (1976) from Princeton University. He holds a Certificato (1978) from L'Accademia di Santa Cecilia (Rome), an M.Mus. (1975) from The George Washington University, and a B.A. from Georgetown University. His teachers included Milton Babbitt, Goffredo Petrassi, and Robert Parris. He is currently Vice President of the American Composers Alliance.

JEFF DUNN is a freelance critic with a B.A. in music and a Ph.D. in Education. He is an avid collector of recorded performances of new music, a dedicated opera-goer, and a composer of piano and vocal music. His post-modernistic career has included stints as a ranger-naturalist, geologic explorationist, and geography professor.

EDMUND KIMBELL is a countertenor and pianist based in Chicago. He has appeared with the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, and has given recitals in the Chicago and San Francisco Bay Areas. His teachers have included Mark Crayton and Rebecca Weinstock (herself a student of Nadia Boulanger.)

MICHAEL MCDONAGH is a San Francisco-based poet and writer on the arts who has done two poem/picture books with artist Gary Bukovnik, *Before I Forget* (1991) and *Once* (1997), the former being in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, The Berkeley Art Museum, and the New York Public Library. He has also published poems in journals including *Mirage*, and written two theatre pieces -- *Touch and Go*, for three performers, which was staged at Venue 9 in 1998; and *Sight Unseen*, for solo performer.

Composer DAVID MECKLER lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. A scene from his *Apollo 14: A Space Opera*, will be presented by the New York City Opera in their Showcase program in the Spring of 2002.

ANTON ROVNER was born in Moscow, Russia, in 1970 and has lived in the United States since 1974. He studied piano at the Manhattan School of Music, Preparatory Division, then, composition at the Juilliard School, Pre-College Division, with Andrew Thomas and the Juilliard School (undergraduate and graduate programs) with Milton Babbitt, graduating in 1993 with an MM. In 1998 he received a Ph.D. degree from Rutgers University, where he studied with Charles Wuorinen. Rovner received a BMI Award in 1989 and an IREX Grant in 1989-1990. He attended the Estherwood Music Festival studying composition with Eric Ewazen. He studied music theory at Columbia University with Joseph Dubiel for two years. Since 1992 he is the artistic director of the Bridge Contemporary Music Series.

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Friday, March 22, 2002, at 8:00pm
Goat Hall, 400 Missouri Street, San Francisco, CA

Mark Alburger and John Kendall Bailey, conducting

Tom Heasley	<i>New Work for Tuba and Electronics</i>
Stan McDaniel	<i>Duet 1993 ("Remembrance")</i>
Alexis Alrich	<i>Fuse for Oboe, Piano, Percussion, and Strings</i>
Marcia Burchard	<i>Chartres Cathedral Labyrinth</i> Malkuth Yesod Tiphareth
	Intermission
John Beeman	<i>Beeline: A Festive Overture (2002)</i>
Erling Wold	<i>Martyrium Pilati from Sub Pontio Pilato</i>
Mark Alburger	<i>Symphony No. 1 in C Major ("It wasn't classical, it was symphonic... It wasn't a symphony, because it did not have a sonata -allegro"), Op. 21</i> Adagio molto, Allegro con brio Andante con moto Menuetto: Allegro molto... Adagio, Allegro molto e vivace