



# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

MAY 2002

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# Tech Lab Riot

PHILLIP GEORGE

*KDVC Radio Riot* (Volume1). Randit - *Kicking and Screaming*; pHence - *Bells and Whistles*; Pee Dot Scott - *Computer Love Robotic*; Patricia Bahia - *Long Distance Lullaby*; Chanell J. Wilson - *Mountains Away*; Christine Urban - *Unwind*; Fall City Phantom - *Asphyxia*; The Delirium Ride - *Daylight's Flight*; Stoneman - *Supersize Me*; Bones / Flow - *Money Motivated*; L. Nealli - *Blue Sea*; James Piscitelli / Kristina Kilborne / Deandre Reynolds - *No Guarantees*; Queen Blankety Blank - *Do You Know*; Audiodidactis - *In Due Time*; TYE - *Out of the Cave*; Erin Brooks - *Shake It*; Kid Moe - *Goodbye California*; The Seth Chaplas - *Outta My League*. Duck Pond Records.

Electronic music was born in the recording and radio studios of the 1940's and 50's, particularly in the musique concrete movement exemplified by Pierres Schaeffer and Henry, and Edgar Varèse. The invention of synthesizers from such luminaries as Robert Moog and Don Buchla in the 60's brought new sounds to a wider public, and the personal computer revolution has further enlarged the arena.

Nevertheless it is still remarkable that Diablo Valley College -- in Pleasant Hill, CA -- has one of the most ethnically diverse and impressive academic music studios that this writer has had the pleasure to experience.

Far from the era of white-smocked technicians and ivory-tower exoticism, this is a lab peopled by folks on the artistic growth edge, many of whom, in the tradition of Peter Maxwell Davies, are seeking to raise their economic as well as aesthetic fortunes.

Besides offering a "Music Industries" certificate, the DVC Music Technology Center has begun an internet radio station -- KDVC.org -- and produced their first album, on the newly-established Duck Pond Records (referencing the music building's location), entitled *Radio Riot*.

This is a compilation that rivals anything heard in the commercial music market, with many of the typical provisos: insistent ostinati, direct chord cycles, steady harmonic rhythm, vernacular vocal styles, rhymed poetry, sexual overtones, and received forms.

The riot and the revolution, however, are in the open-sourcing, the anybody-can-do-it-but-we're-doing-it-pretty-damn-good aspect. Ten years ago, it was not usual for composers and performers to pay big bucks to local studios with on site experts in such recording programs as ProTools, at that time almost prohibitively expensive to the average up-and-coming musician. Now, recording programs are as available and affordable as a basic laptop (still an economic leap for some, admittedly). In DVC's case, this is acknowledged even in a course title: Do-It-Yourself Production.

The lab in question has more than 20 desktops (skewed significantly but quixotically in the direction of PC's vs. Macs), two sound booths, and a mix room. Can great music be made therein? Definitely.

Randit (Randy Yee) begins in an alternative rock mode with *Kicking and Screaming*, which would do Nirvana proud in its anguished nasal vocals and moody acoustic-electric string and organ world. In *Bells and Whistles*, pHence has the requisite sound effects in a folkish Pink Floyd homage, whereas Pee Dot (Percy) Scott takes off from the future into a comic rap mode.

Hip hop is the informing style for many of the practitioners -- including Stonewall (Stoneman) Towery (*Supersize Me* refers very positively to BBW's rather than Big Macs), Bones / Flow's *Money Motivated*, L-Nealli's *Blue Sea*, James Piscitelli's *No Guarantees*, and Queen Blankety Blank's *Do You Know* -- where an apparent autobiographic street experience is often to the fore. This no doubt resonates particularly well in certain times and places; for someone not sharing the experience or the commonality of English (e.g. Spanish or Lithuanian-only speakers), the rhythmically-sprung nuanced song-speech can perhaps only generally be heard in the context of recitation traditions stretching back to Polynesian, Roman, and Zuni chant, through Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg's expressionism

Patricia Bahia has the vocal heft of a pop diva in *Long Distance Lullaby*, as does Chanell J. Wilson in her impressive *Mountains Away*. Sweet harmonies and elaborate vocal ornamentation and counterpoint are hallmarks of many of these endeavors.

Often engaging sonic atmospheres are set up before the return of the inevitable pulse, as in Christine Urban's paradoxically tight *Unwind*, Audiodidactis's *In Due Time*, and TYE's *Banshee*-mysterious overtonic *Out of the Cave*, with its Steely-Dan-like timbral harmonies. From here, Fall City Phantom's *Asphyxia* is wound to breaking in its urgent heavy metal urgings harkening back to the days of Robert Plant and Jimmy Page's seminal screechings. *Daylight's Flight* is its antidote in Sarah Rubin's (a.k.a. The Delirium Ride's) distinctively haunting, tremulous vocals, with magic touches from engineer Scott Zhang.

Three varied, solid, guitar-based pieces conclude in Erin Brooks's *Shake It*, Kid Moe's *Goodbye California*, and The Seth Chaplas's *Outta My League*. Emotions, wit, and atmosphere are well established, even in the latter's instrumental neo-Grateful Dead / Robert Fripp adventures.

What, do contemporary classical music? Oh, well, maybe next time...

# Concert Reviews

## Four Trees in Two Acts

MARK ALBURGER

John Adams's *A Flowering Tree* performed by the San Francisco Symphony. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

John Adams's *A Flowering Tree*, which received its American premiere from March 1-3 at Davies Hall with the San Francisco Symphony under the composer's baton, is the Daphne myth times four. Based on texts by A.K. Ramanujan, this Indian tale far out-arbors the Greek story in multiple transformations of the young maiden Kumudha ("Koo-moon-ya") across the vegetative divide. And "four" is the informing number in this fecund and fragrant work that proves a garden of vocal delights for soprano Jessica Rivera, tenor Russell Thomas, bass Eric Owens, and the San Francisco Symphony Chorus.

With intriguing direction by long-time Adams collaborator Peter Sellars, *A Flowering Tree* took root on a split Davies stage with orchestra and balcony playing area to the audience left, against three circular-elevated platforms to the right, somewhat reminiscent of the SFS staging of Richard Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* in recent memory. But unlike *Fliegende Hollander*, the Adams was, rather than a semi-staged opera, more of an opera-oratorio along the lines of Igor Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, complete with a narrator (Owen's sung role) and a Greek chorus which does not participate in the action, but rather comments and dramatizes, even to the point of taking up what in other contexts would be lines of the principal players (again the I.S. connection).

This abstract approach was reinforced by the use of delightful doppelgänger Indonesian dancers (Rusini Sidi, Eko Supriyanto, and Astri Kussuma Wardani), setting up one of several cultural dichotomies in the work (English solo libretto, Tamil folk tale, Javanese movement), to which was added a further multiculturalism in the use of Spanish throughout for the choral component. While Adams explains the latter usage due to the presence of the vocal group Schola Cantorum de Caracas at the Vienna premiere (November 14, 2006), this could also be on account of the composer's success in setting Spanish in *El Nino*.

And the music? Superb. Adams's command of the contemporary orchestra is second to none (including the demonstrative horn homage to the Wagner *Rhinegold* that opens Act II of *Tree*), and he writes some of the most engaging choral music this side of G.F. Handel. In the spirit of Claudio Monteverdi, Adams has his recitatives well in hand, but also as in the first great opera composer's work, arias and the like are relatively scarce. Orchestra, chorus, recitative, aria -- three out of four at the top of his game.

As in Camille Saint-Saens's *Symphony No. 3*, where two movements proved to each subdivide, resulting in a more characteristic four-section symphonic structure, so Adams's acts each divide into flowerings on behalf of the mother, the prince, the evil sister-in-law, and the happy reunion. The music is comparatively light on direct Indian references, save for the sinuous wind lines heard in the transformations and a boffo chorus that utilizes tabla-drum speech rhythms. Often the engaging orchestral components seem sprung from another world free of direct connections to vocal melodies or old-style functional bass lines.

The "Flores" chorus of Act I and the lovely aria-becoming-duet in Act II are among other highlights, which also include the final crescendi that end each act. The audience was captivated, and -- if the work falls somewhere between *Nixon in China* and *Ceiling/Sky* on the one hand, and *The Death of Klinghoffer* and *Dr. Atomic* on the other, with respect to tunefulness (at least in the solo voice capacity) -- *A Flowering Tree* is yet another strong branch in Adams's impressive operatic Eden.

## Spring Forward San Francisco

MICHAEL MCDONAGH

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra in Katie Wreede's *Children's Garden*, Lisa Scola Prosek's *Belfagor*, Loren Jones's *Dancing at the Brink of the World*, Alexis Alrich's *Marimba Concerto*, Erling Wold's *Baron Ochs*, and Chris Carrasco's *The Mind Suite*. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

Everybody likes to grouse about the weather, and East Coasters, who've moved to California, may expect sun 24/7. And though that's never the case here in San Francisco, the climate, and especially the cultural climate on both coasts, does have one very definite thing in common -- the dearth of welcome homes for new music, plus a congenial band to spread the word. New York has the long-running American Composers Orchestra, the S.E.M. Ensemble, and Bang On A Can, and the Bay Area, the San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra, which has been in operation for six years. Its March 10th concert at San Francisco's Old First Church showed it going from strength to strength. A Springtime Romance fairly blossomed under music director and co-founder Mark Alburger's careful, and for him, very relaxed guidance.

Katie Wreede's four-poem suite, from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Childrens' Garden*, began its life as a viola / soprano duo for the composer, and Lisa Scola Prosek, and joining them here was pianist Alexis Alrich as the third member of their Serafina Trio. Wreede's settings suggested a kind of childrens' candor, which Scola Prosek made irresistibly charming with her superlative diction and strong projection; Wreede and Alrich added their simple, flowing parts to the whole.

Scola Prosek was represented with another section, *Wedding Scene*, from her to be performed at San Francisco's Thick House opera, *Belfagor*, based on Machiavelli's comic novella of the same name. SFCCO presented its overture, which features a big bass clarinet solo for Rachel Condry, last December; Condry beguiled with her tone as well as her mastery of her part's manifold challenges. The challenge for any theatre or film composer is to make whatever world they enter come alive convincingly as sound, and Scola Prosek's instincts seem right on the money, whether that world is Periclean Athens, Imperial Rome, or Renaissance Italy, which she conjured simply yet effectively with rich sustained harmonies for her vocal quintet -- sopranos Maria Mikheyenko and Eliza O'Malley; alto Gar Wai Lee; tenor Aurelio Viscarra; and bass baritone Micah Epps -- and her orchestra, which launched the scene with a bright snappy fanfare.

Loren Jones's *Dancing On The Brink of the World, San Francisco -- 1600 to The Present* -- was effective -- he obviously knows how deliver standard styles -- but much less imaginative, while the middle, slow movement, of Alexis Alrich's *Marimba Concerto*, which soloist Matthew Cannon played with polish and point, though not baldly eclectic, lacked an overriding sense of personal style. Chris Carrasco's *The Mind Suite* fortunately had one, though its Glassian homages, especially in the inner part writing for strings, were easy to spot and not that interesting, though he may develop -- he's very young -- in surprising ways.

The big surprise in fact was Erling Wold's way tongue-in-cheek *Baron Ochs*, which despite a veritable mélange of styles, still seemed to hang together, unlike his opera *Sub Pontio Pilato*, which stylewise seemed like a mad dash out the door in mismatched socks. He also seems to have gotten the knack of how to orchestrate effectively for every choir. The two seats I sat in -- "stage left" aisle 6 -- and the first row of the Old First's balcony -- seemed to offer the same sonic picture: warm music/ audience friendly balances when the scoring was chamber refined, and harsh congealed climaxes when it wasn't.

## Sound Waves

### PHILLIP GEORGE

Marin Symphony performs Maurice Durufle's *Requiem*, Mark Volkert's *Songs from the Sea*, and Claude Debussy's *La Mer*. March 25, Veteran's Auditorium, San Rafael, CA. Repeated March 27.

From whence inspiration? Without or within? The three composers featured on a recent subscription performance by the Marin Symphony (March 25) at San Rafael's Veterans Auditorium were all inspired by sources outside of themselves.

In the case of Claude Debussy and local composer Mark Volkert, the source was the sea. For Maurice Durufle, it was waves of sound stemming from that old fountain of inspiration, Gregorian chant. All right, maybe that's a bit of a fishy connection. But program annotator Jon Kochavi made the metaphoric plunge, so I'll swim with it, too.

While the grand Durufle *Requiem* sounds like a work from distant chronological shores, it was written in 1947. The actual melodic content is by-and-large derived/inspired from the traditional plainsong melodies of the Gregorian rite, which makes for fascinating, intriguing, at times almost surreal, cross-stylistic references, particularly for those familiar with the source material.

The surface textures and psychology, however, are as much directly inspired by Gabriel Faure's beautiful 1920 setting -- for this is a comfort-and-peace requiem, rather than a fire-and-brimstone one (the latter type being exemplified by the blood-stirring and fearful renditions of Hector Berlioz, Giuseppe Verdi, and Igor Stravinsky). As such, the composition in question, while gorgeously reverent, is somewhat soporific, with nonetheless radiant contributions, in this case, by mezzo-soprano Katherine Tier, bass Matthew Trevino, and the Marin Symphony Chorus. By jettisoning, as Faure did, the dangerous "Dies Irae" ("Day of Wrath") text, the weight of the work falls later, in the "Libera me" ("Deliver me"), where the full component of singers and players were able to achieve a heavenly sheen.

The rest of the program was on this side of the cosmos, in the watery depths of Volkert's *Songs from the Sea* and Debussy's impressionist-classic *La Mer (The Sea)*. Volkert was indeed up to the task of oceanic orchestration, providing color at every keel and haul of the two-movements-that-are-really-four entitled *Storm at Night*. *Aurora* and *The World Below the Brine*. *Epilogue*.

If it was difficult to grasp the why -- hey, so likewise is the aquatic realm in general -- and the Debussy bobs in related impressionistic waves, leaving some listeners structurally at sea. But this voyage, navigated by Music Admiral Alasdair Neale, found lucid passage, and left auditors keenly expecting further delightful musical ports of call.



# Calendar

May 2

*Grab It!: The Music of JacobTV (Jacob ter Veldhuis).* Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Through May 4.

May 4

Galt McDermott's *Hair*. Berkeley High School, Berkeley, CA.

*Something New* release party, with cellist Annie Yeh. San Francisco Musicians' Union, San Francisco, CA.

May 11

A Celebration of the Americas, presented by Avenue Winds. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

May 20

Galt McDermott's *Hair*. Mountain Theatre, Marin County, CA.

*Bestiary: Works by Elinor Armer*, conducted by Conrad Susa. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

May 25

*Young Composers Series: Melody of China*. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

May 27

San Francisco Guitar Quartet. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.





# Chronicle

March 2

John Adams's *A Flowering Tree* performed by the San Francisco Symphony. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

March 4

Death of John Thow (b. Los Angeles, 1944), after a chronic illness [although he looked fine at Herb Bielawa's February 16 concert], at 57. "Thow's music [includes] . . . *Trilce* (1992) and *Breath of Sun* (1993). . . . *Lene Tawi* (1996) is a chamber orchestra setting of a Hopi rain song. His *Chumash Songs* (2000) used rhythmic figures from the Chumash Indians of Southern California, and his *Three Echoes* (2001) is scored for a flute played by the Lakota tribe. Thow . . . also wrote an opera, *Serpentina* (1999), based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann; music for a production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1989), a; and a dance work, *Rim of Heaven* (1984). . . . Thow . . . began his musical studies as a flutist and pianist. His composition teachers included Adolph Weiss, Frank Salazar and Ingolf Dahl. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California in 1971, and a Ph.D. in composition from Harvard, where he studied with Earl Kim and Leon Kirchner. He also won a Fulbright fellowship for study in Italy, where he worked with Luciano Berio, Luigi Dallapiccola and Franco Donatoni. He joined the Berkeley faculty in 1981, and was chairman of the music department from 1991 to 1992" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 3/14/07].

March 7

A "reperformance" of Glenn Gould's 1955 mono rendition of J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* by Zenph Studios on a Yamaha Disklavier. Yamaha Studio, New York, NY. "Zenph . . . would, using its proprietary software, learn from recorded sound precisely how an instrument -- a piano, for starters -- was played, with what force a key was struck, how far down the sustain pedal was pressed, when each finger moved, how each note was weighted in a complex chord and what sort of timbre was actually produced" [Edward Rothstein, *The New York Times*, 3/12/07].

March 9

Cecil Taylor Trio and John Zorn's *Masada*. Rose Theater, New York, NY.

March 10

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra in Katie Wreede's *Children's Garden*, Lisa Scola Prosek's *Belfagor*, Loren Jones's *Dancing at the Brink of the World*, Alexis Alrich's *Marimba Concerto*, Erling Wold's *Baron Ochs*, and Chris Carrasco's *The Mind Suite*. Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

Brooklyn Philharmonic in Osvaldo Golijov's *Last Round* and *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*. Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY.

March 11

Death of Edgar Baitzel (b. Koblenz, Germany), of cancer, at 51. Los Angeles, CA. "Baitzel presided over the creation of four or five new productions in each [Los Angeles Opera] season [from 2001], including the world premieres of [Giacomo] Puccini's *Turandot* with a new ending by Luciano Berio in 2002, Deborah Drattell's *Nicholas and Alexandra* in 2003 and Elliot Goldenthal's *Grendel* in 2006. . . . He . . . worked as an assistant under the director Gotz Friedrich and Jean-Pierre Ponnelle" [The New York Times, 3/14/07].

March 13

Roger Daltrey walks off stage during the Who's first song, whereafter Pete Townsend announces that the show will be rescheduled for March 25. Tampa, FL "[Daltry] Experienced vocal challenges as a result of a medical condition" [the whotour.com].

Oratorio Society of New York in Igor Stravinsky's *Mass* (1948) and Arthur Honegger's *Le Roi David* (1921). Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Russian National Orchestra in Igor Stravinsky's *Scherzo Fantastique* (1908) and Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

Death of Betty Hutton (b. Elizabeth June Thornburg, 2/25/21, Battle Creek, MI), of complications of colon cancer, at 86. Palm Springs, CA. "Hutton, a brassy, energetic performer with a voice that could sound like a fire alarm, had the lead role in the 1950 film version of Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* . . . Hutton's electric presence . . . masked emotional problems rooted in a poverty-stricken childhood. As a young girl, she sang for coins on street corners and in speakeasies to help support her alcoholic mother, who had been abandoned by Ms. Hutton's father. Years after Ms. Hutton's film career ended, those emotional problems still plagued her. 'I tried to kill myself,' she said in 1983, recalling her decline after fading from public notice. Ms. Hutton re-emerged in the 1970s, when reporters learned she was working as a cook and housekeeper in the rectory of a Roman Catholic church in Portsmouth, RI. Before being rescued and rehabilitated by a priest, she said, she had become addicted to sleeping pills and alcohol and had lost what she estimated to be a \$10 million fortune. . . . When she was 15 and singing in a Detroit nightclub, the bandleader Vincent Lopez hired her and gave her the name Hutton. . . . In 1950, when Judy Garland was ill and unable to meet her commitments to star in the film version of *Annie Get Your Gun*, Ms. Hutton got the part, winning praise in a role that had been created on Broadway by Ethel Merman. . . . In 1965 she appeared on Broadway in the musical *Fade Out, Fade In*, replacing Carol Burnett, but pills and alcohol were taking over her life. At her lowest ebb, in 1974, Earl Wilson, the columnist, organized a benefit for her in New York. 'I haven't got a cent,' said Ms. Hutton, who had earned \$150,000 a week in her good years. She found a way to cope with her problems in religion. She renewed her interest in Lutheranism, her original faith, then converted to Roman Catholicism. She regarded the Rev. Peter Maguire of St. Anthony's Church in Portsmouth as primarily responsible for saving her life. During one of her many hospital stays, he talked her into working for St. Anthony's. 'No one had ever talked to me before,' she said. She later resumed work as an actress, appearing in nightclubs and, briefly in 1980, in the Broadway musical *Annie*. 'It's groovy being a star again,' she said. 'But I know how fast it can be over.' In the early 1980s, Ms. Hutton, who had never gone beyond the ninth grade, enrolled at Salve Regina, a Catholic college for women in Newport, R.I. She earned a master's degree in psychology; the college had decided that her life experience entitled her to a bachelor's degree. By the late 1980s, she was teaching comedy and oral interpretation at Emerson College in Boston. She made occasional broadcast appearances in her later years. . . . She married four times . . . 'My husbands all fell in love with Betty Hutton,' Ms. Hutton once said. 'None of them fell in love with me'" [Richard Severo, *The New York Times*, 3/14/07]

March 14

Paul Dresher's *Slow Fire*. Project Artaud Theater, San Francisco, CA. Through March 17. "Intense *Slow Fire* burns bright" [Robert Hurwitt, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/16/07].

*Island Journeys*. Kurt Weill's *Youkali*, Ricky Ian Gordon's *Lake Isle of Innisfree*, John Corigliano's *She Moved Through the Fair* and *The Foggy Dew*, Jerome Kern's *Bungalow in Quogue*, and Irving Berlin's *Manhattan Madness*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

*A Journey of Dmitry Shostakovich*. Two Boots Pioneer Theater, New York, NY. A documentary grab bag of film clips, diary readings and desultory narration, *Journey* . . . peeks into the politics of this controversial composer . . . And if the composer's motivations remain murky, the triumphalism of his music so perfectly matches the aesthetics of Soviet agitprop that his beliefs seem almost beside the point. This is music for the masses" [Jeannette Catsoulis, *The New York Times*, 3/14/07].

March 15

Gerald Finley sings Charles Ives's *From "The Swimmers; 1,2,3; Memories; The Housatonic at Stockbridge; The Side Show; and Tom Sails Away; Ned Rorem's War Scenes; and six songs of Samuel Barber*. Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA.

Gyorgy Ligeti's *Violin Concerto* performed by the New York Philharmonic conducted by Alan Gilbert. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

March 16

Nico Muhly. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "For me European tradition begins with 12th-century polyphony and follows a slow, gradual assault on Pythagorean symmetries, the end result being the nervous breakdown called atonality, a condition from which we are recovering. Ground zero for Mr. Muhly is somewhere between Edgard Varèse and Jimi Hendrix. His musical fathers and grandfathers might have engaged in revolution, but what I heard . . . wasn't in revolt against anything. Brahms? Twelve-tone music? It's as if they never existed. A trio like *Clear Music* and quartet like *Pillaging Music* seem to use tonality not to proselytize, but just because it's lying around in the bits of poplar culture from which Mr. Muhly's music often draws" [Bernard Holland, *The New York Times*, 3/19/07].

March 17

David Del Tredici's 70th-Birthday Concert [his actual birthday being March 16], including *Three Gymnopedies*, *Chana's Story*, and *Dracula*. Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, New York, NY.

March 19

Death of Amelia S. Haygood, founder of Delos Records, of cancer, at 87. Santa Monica, CA.

March 21

Paul Jacobs gives the first of three presentations (part of his being awarded Juilliard's William Schuman Scholars Chair) describing and demonstrating the mechanics of the organ. Juilliard School, New York, NY. "He will also share anecdotes, such as how Nero was an avid player of the hydraulis, an ancestor of the modern organ that was used in gladiatorial combat. 'The organ wasn't staid then, and it need not be now,' Mr. Jacobs said. 'It should be played in a manner that stirs the soul'" [Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times, 3/20/07].

March 22

Diana Damrau in Alban Berg's *Seven Early Songs*, Samuel Barber's *Melodies* *Passageres*, and Alexander Zemlinsky's *Waltz Songs*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

Nash Ensemble in Marc-Anthony Turnage's *Three Farewells*, Maurice Ravel's *Introductions and Adagio*, and Claude Debussy's *Syrinx*. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY.

Clarinetist Martin Frost and pianist Roland Pontinen perform Fredrik Hogberg's *Invisible Duet*; and music from Anders Hillborg's *Clarinet Concerto*, Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* and *Three Bird Sketches*, and of Maurice Ravel. New York, NY.

March 23

Diablo Ballet in a version of *Hamlet*, to music of Nicholas Van Krijdt and Dmitri Shostakovich. Dean Lesher Center, Walnut Creek, CA.

March 24

New Century Chamber Orchestra in music of Paul Hindemith and Jorge Liderman. Florence Gould Theater, San Francisco, CA.

Louis Lortie performs music of Thomas Ades. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Gerald Finley sings Ned Rorem's *War Songs*, Charles Ives's *Housatonic at Stockbridge*, and Samuel Barber's *Three Songs*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

*Composer Portraits: Steve Reich. Music for Pieces of Wood, Music for 18 Musicians*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

March 25

Laquita Mitchell sings music of Ned Rorem, Carlisle Floyd, Joseph Marx, Claude Debussy, and John Carter. Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, CA.

Marin Symphony performs Maurice Durufle's *Requiem*, Mark Volkert's *Songs from the Sea*, and Claude Debussy's *La Mer*. Veteran's Auditorium, San Rafael, CA. Repeated March 27.

Cincinnati Ballet dances to music of Toshio Hozakawa. New York, New York.

Elton John's 60th-birthday concert. Madison Square Gardens, New York, NY.

March 26

American Composers Orchestra performs works by Tania Leon, Kurt Rohde, Steve Mackey, Vijay Iyer, and Harold Meltzer. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

March 28

Juilliard Dance Division dances to music of David Lang. Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, New York, NY.



# Comment

## Items

“I am proud to be a serious musician, a classical musician,” said [Paul Jacobs, chairman of the organ department at the Juilliard School], describing how he was “sickened” by his recent first encounter with American Idol. “Ours is a culture that wants everything to be easily digestible, but to fully appreciate a Bach fugue, you have to be able to hear contrapuntally, and this takes work. I’m tired of a culture that devalues music and has no desire to understand it more intimately. And the void has been filled by parasites in the entertainment industry.”

Vivien Schweitzer  
The New York Times, 3/20/07

As a musician, composer, arranger and music instructor, Jacqueline Hairston is known in some quarters as the keeper of spirituals.

Born and raised in Charlotte, N.C., Hairston, who lives in Hayward [CA], studied at Juilliard school of Music and Howard University and earned a master's degree in music and music education from Columbia University. . . .

Hairston comes from a musical family. Her cousin Jester Hairston, who died in 2000 at 98, was a composer, songwriter, arranger, choral conductor, actor and author of popular spirituals such as Amen and Mary's Boy Child. She has recently been commissioned to write Jester Hairston's story and will begin work this summer. Hairston's brother, George Butler, is a former Columbia Records executive who mentored and produced recordings for Wynton and Branford Marsalis and Harry Connick Jr.

Shelah Moody  
San Francisco Chronicle, 4/1/07

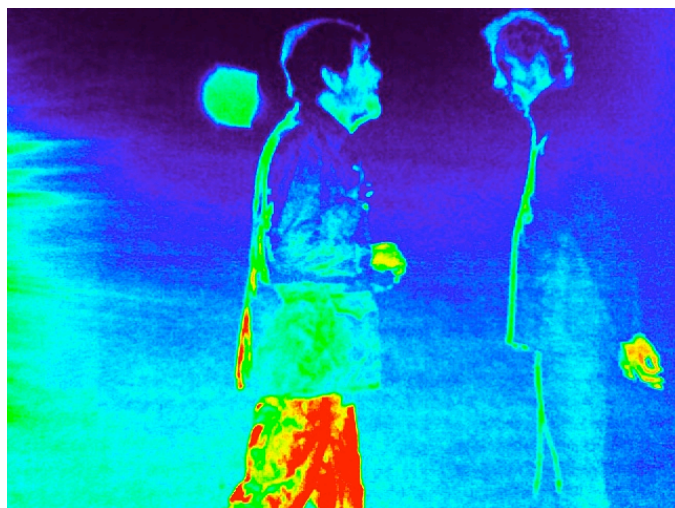




## Publications

Carolyn Brown. *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham*. Alfred A. Knopf. "Merce Cunningham had an appetite for dancing that seemed to me then, as it does today, to be his sole reason for living. . . . He was a strange, disturbing mixture of Greek god, panther and madman. . . . [George Balanchine resorted to] daisy-chain contortionist acrobatics [and] girly-show kitsch [choreographing Schoenberg and Ives in a] Mickey Mouse *Fantasia* aesthetic [Brown]. John Cage's taste for the unconventional was in his genes. The year Cage was born 192, his father invented a submarine run by a gasoline engine (worthless to the government, since enemy ships could detect its location from the bubbles produced). . . . However creative Cage Sr was, though, when his son's *Suite by Chance* was first performed in the 1950s, he and Carolyn Brown's father said 'they both made better music in the 'water closet.'" . . . Brown's parents wept after seeing the large Robert Rauschenberg painting for which her husband had paid \$26, believing their son-in-law might be mentally ill" [Nicholas Fox Weber, *The New York Times*, 4/1/07].

Mary Douglas. *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition*. Yale University Press. "The feeling is familiar. You are listening to a piece of music, and nothing links one moment with the next. Sounds seem to emerge without purpose from some unmapped realm, neither connecting to what came before nor anticipating anything after. . . . In a strange way, though, the very same sensations might also be marks of our own perceptual failures. . . . It is almost a faith in science, psychology, religion and art: an unshakable conviction that some pattern will be found. And often it is. Now, a brief book by the British anthropologist Mary Douglas . . . provides another glimpse, cursory but suggestive, of this quest for pattern" [Edward Rothstein, *The New York Times*, 3/26/07].



Thornton Wilder. *Collected Writings Plays and Writings on the Theater*. Library of America. "'Our Town is one of the toughest, saddest plays ever written,' Edward Albee has said. 'Why is it always produced as hearts and flowers?'" . . . Though he had plenty of frustrations and some Broadway flops, he rewrote the highest-profile of these to create the hit farce, *The Matchmaker* and then watched someone else rewrite his rewrite to create *Hello, Dolly!* It made him a fortune without his lifting a finger. With habitual modesty, he said he differed from his contemporaries in one respect: 'I give (don't I? the impression of having enormously enjoyed.' . . . Born in 1887 in Madison, Wis., Wilder – the survivor of a pair of twin brothers – followed his consul father to China and Hong Kong before settling with his highly cultured mother in Berkeley, Calif. After Yale, he began a lifelong circuit of the hubs of the intelligentsia (MacDowell, Harvard, the home of his close friend Gertrude Stein) with a year doing archaeology at the American Academy in Rome. He read voraciously in at least four languages, becoming so erudite it sometimes seemed to work against him: the fragments of his unfinished play *The Emporium*, included in the Library of America volume, are less captivating than the journal entries in which he wrestled with how to blend Kafka, Kierkegaard and Stein in a Philadelphia department store. Yet he remains the only writer to win a Pulitzer Prize for drama (twice) and for fiction (*The Bridge at San Luis Rey*). . . . He realized that for theater to regain its old preeminence, it would need to abandon naturalism and rediscover the tools of Shakespeare and the Greeks: stage conventions that convey – a marvelous distinction – 'not verisimilitude but reality.' he Wilder's lack of scenery and other brazenly theatrical devices re all ways of escaping the literal and picayune, of stretching theater as far as an engaged audience's imagination can take it. The uncanny result is plays that pursue the emotional aims of Chekhov with the adventurous theatricality of Brecht" [Jeremy McCarter, *The New York Times*, 4/1/07].

Benjamin R. Barber. *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adult, and Swallow Citizens Whole*. Norton. "An audience that sees professional . . . critics as either entirely irrelevant or as stuffy authoritarian figures whom it is a pleasure to defy. An audience, that is to say, of adolescents and infantilized adults -- a group of people who, as Benjamin Barber makes clear in *Consumed*, have come to represent the mainstream in American entertainment, society and politics" [Troy Jollimore, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/1/07].

## Writers

MARK ALBURGER is an eclectic American composer of postminimal, postpopular, and postcomedic sensibilities. He is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, an award-winning ASCAP composer of concert music published and recorded by New Music, Music Director of San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra and San Francisco Cabaret Opera, Instructor in Music Literature and Theory at Diablo Valley College, Music Critic for Commuter Times and San Francisco Classical Voice. oboist, pianist, vocalist, recording artist, and author. Dr. Alburger began playing the oboe and composing in association with James and Dorothy Freeman, Richard Wernick, and George Crumb. He studied with Gerald Levinson and Joan Panetti at Swarthmore College (B.A.), Jules Langert at Dominican University (M.A.), Roland Jackson at Claremont Graduate University (Ph.D.), and privately with Terry Riley. His *Waiting for Bardot* will be premiered at the Fresh Voices VII Festival this June in San Francisco. Four of his compositions may be heard at [myspace.com/markalburger](http://myspace.com/markalburger).

PATTI DEUTER is Assistant Editor of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC and a Bay Area pianist.

PHILLIP GEORGE is an editor for New Music, and serves on the staff of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

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. His critical pieces have appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Review of Books, 3 Penny Review, California Printmaker, Antiques and Fine Art, The Advocate, High Performance, and In Tune. He writes for The Bay Area Reporter and heads the Bay Area chapter of The Duke Ellington Society. He co-hosted nine radio shows on KUSF with Tony Gualtieri with whom he now shares a classical-music review website -- [www.msu.edu/user/gualtie3](http://www.msu.edu/user/gualtie3) -- which has also been translated into Russian and appears in Intellectual Forum.

HARRIET MARCH PAGE is Artistic Director of Goat Hall Productions: San Francisco's Cabaret Opera Company, as well as soprano, librettist, monologist, and Associate Editor of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

Composer ERLING WOLD's choral, operatic, and orchestral music have been presented around the world. He serves as Associate Music Director of the San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra, and Webmaster for 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC.

