

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark sleeveless top, is seated and playing a dark-colored grand piano. The background is a large, vibrant abstract painting in shades of orange, red, and yellow, featuring stylized musical notes and flowing lines. The overall lighting is warm and dramatic.

21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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Volume 15, Number 1

INTERVIEW	An Interview with Marisa Rezende TOM MOORE	1
CONCERT REVIEWS	Scoring with Shostakovich MARK ALBURGER	4
CALENDAR	Of January 2008	5
CHRONICLE	Of November 2007	6
COMMENT	Modern Music to Go PHILLIP GEORGE	8
	By the Numbers Item	9 9
PUBLICATIONS		11
RECORDINGS		12

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An Interview with Marisa Rezende

TOM MOORE

Composer Marisa Rezende, born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is a fundamental presence in the musical life of the city, not only for her compositions, but as perhaps the most important teacher of the next generation. We spoke in Portuguese during the 17th *Bienal of Contemporary Music*, on October 23, 2007, at Sala Cecilia Meireles.

MOORE: What was the musical environment in your family when you were young?

REZENDE: There was a piano at home. My mother studied a little, and my father played quite a bit by ear, without ever having studied. My mother says that quite early, when I was not even four years old, she noticed me playing a *música de roda*. She thought that perhaps it was by chance, and she asked me to repeat it, and I did. After that I was always playing, so that my start in music was spontaneous, and quite early. My aunts and grandmother were always singing, but it was very informal -- there was no one who was involved in music in a professional way. At five, I began to study with a teacher who taught me to read before I had begun school, so that I could take piano. I remember my father, when I was very young and playing samba, insisting that I play correctly. "It's stiff! It's stiff! Make it swing!" He was joking, but he was right. Some things from this period were fundamental in relation to being relaxed, treating music as a game, and to not be afraid of performance.

MOORE: Your family is from Rio. What is their background?

REZENDE: My mother used to say that her family had been carioca for 400 years, since she did not know of a single relative that was not from Rio. My father, and my paternal grandparents, were also from the city. The previous generation was from the state of Rio, from Campos, close to the state of Espírito Santo. So we're all local.

MOORE: Was the family Portuguese originally?

REZENDE: Very probably. My mother's surname was Costa Pereira, and my father's was Nunes de Barcellos -- everything pointing to Portugal.

MOORE: You mentioned samba, playing music by ear. What was the musical scene like in the city when you were a child?

REZENDE: My mother always used to take me to the Theatro Municipal to hear all the pianists who came through. I heard Guiomar Novaes many times, [Alexander] Brailowsky as well. When the first international piano competition took place here, I must have been 12 or 13, and I went to all the performances. My mother was very focused on giving me experience with the instrument.

As far as the rest -- nightlife, bars -- we had no connection. My father was a doctor. He liked to play, and I am sure that he went out on the town when he was younger, but not when I was a child. I have memories of blocos on the street during Carnival. My experience with popular music comes from listening to him play by ear, and so I also began to play that way. I listened to radio a lot, and my experience of classical music came from study. I started at five and stayed with the same teacher until I finished my education.

MOORE: Where did you do your undergraduate studies?

REZENDE: That is a very complicated story. I began to do my bachelor's in composition in Rio, at the Escola de Musica. But I married early, and, a year and a half after starting school, we went to live in Boston, MA, where we spent four years. I had two daughters there. I came back with my children, and started the course in composition where I had left off. And three years later we moved to Recife for many years. So I got there in the middle of the course in composition. I had done three-and-a-half years in Rio, but as soon as I got back from Boston I became pregnant with my third daughter (all very close in age). I finished my undergraduate work 11 years after I began, in Recife.

MOORE: Were you active musically in Boston?

REZENDE: Almost nothing.

MOORE: When was this?

REZENDE: We went in '64, and returned at the end of '67.

MOORE: A very interesting period in the U.S. Did you feel a culture shock when you got to Boston?

REZENDE: Yes. It was all very different, the way people functioned; winter was something completely new. It was difficult: we had little money, no relatives there, and two children to look after -- a complicated period! I took some night courses at Harvard. It was glorious, to be able to get out of the house and go somewhere. My husband had gone to do his master's at MIT. He was supposed to have returned after a one-year fellowship, but it became obvious that it made no sense to return to Brazil, and it was better to continue. It was something completely unplanned.

MOORE: Much of your training was in Recife?

REZENDE: When I left Rio to go to Boston, I was already a finished pianist. I had completed the technical course in piano, and was playing a lot, with recitals and so on. So my training in piano was all in Rio.

The beginning of the course in composition was in Rio also. I learned fugue and counterpoint with Morelenbaum and Virginia Fiuza. When I got to Recife, it was very odd, because the course in composition didn't exist anymore. There were a couple of students who had to complete some course or other. So I had class with a musicologist, Padre Jaime Diniz. He was very interesting, but was not a composer.

MOORE: Someone with a considerable interest in contemporary music?

REZENDE: He liked contemporary music, but he worked with baroque music from Pernambuco. He had books on organists in Brazil, and a chorus; I sang in his chorus for a long time. When I got to Recife in 1972, he was close to 60. It was Diniz who introduced me to the *Ludus Tonalis* of Hindemith, Bartok, and lots of other music.

MOORE: How did you start your career as a composer?

REZENDE: After 11 years of undergraduate work, I went immediately back to the U.S., to Santa Barbara, where I did a master's in piano, but I wanted to do composition as well, and the first two works that remain in my catalogue are from this period: a trio for oboe, horn and piano, and a trio for strings.

MOORE: Who was teaching composition?

REZENDE: Peter Fricker. There were other people as well -- [Edward] Applebaum, Emma Lou Diemer -- but I studied with Peter and did some other courses with David Gordon. This trip to the United States was very important. It was a good school, with a good library, good recordings, scores -- I loved that! A wonderful time! The building worked, and I took advantage of everything. I only staying a short time (middle of '75 until end of '76) because the children were getting bigger and going to school themselves. But then, years later in 1983, I went back there for my doctorate in composition.

MOORE: During your first stay at Santa Barbara, did you still considered yourself to be a pianist, as opposed to the second time, by which you had come to think of yourself as a composer?

REZENDE: For many years I thought of myself as both. I played as soloist many times in Recife: Tchaikovsky, Ravel, Brahms. I played a lot of piano, not just a little. When I went to do the master's, I knew I was a pianist, so I got by very well. But I was petrified by the idea of studying music in the U.S. I spoke and understood English, but had never studied there, didn't know the literature, and so I thought it was better to study piano, since I knew I would only have a short time. I went back to Brazil for quite a stretch between the master's and the doctorate, and it was like this: part of the year there were concerts, and I didn't compose; and the other part was the reverse. Even today I play in Musica Nova, but I play less, and play fewer things that take work. I don't play Tchaikovsky with orchestras anymore. And as time has gone by, I am working more and more on composition. But I miss the piano. I love to play!

MOORE: Your compositional esthetic is something that comes from Brazil. What were the influences of your study in Santa Barbara, your compositional models?

REZENDE: I can't really say, other than everything that I heard and that I liked made an impression on me. The fact that of my having gone to Recife, where I studied composition with someone who was not a composer, but a musicologist, left me more open, freer. If I had studied in Rio, with a professor who was more rigid, my studies might have gotten in my way. I was able to choose. I was working with consonance in a period where people did not accept this easily. Why? It was in my head, in my ear, I liked it...why not? So my path was a little alternative. There in the U.S. I heard everything that was available, but I never wanted to compose like a serialist. I went to hear Boulez and Stockhausen in Los Angeles -- there was a very nice festival of contemporary music at the California Institute for the Arts. I loved all that, and learned from it. I made a mixture, but I can't say "Oh yes, I see that I have influence from this one or that one." I don't know what sort of influence Fricker had, because, in my writing, there is nothing similar to his. He taught me a great deal; taught me to carefully look over my scores. He did a very good job!

MOORE: California has the reputation of being a place with a tradition of independent composers, freer than other places like New York, Boston, Princeton, Philadelphia. Could you speak about your activities at the Escola de Musica, and with the group Musica Nova?

REZENDE: When I came back from doing the doctorate at the end of 1984, my daughters were already undergraduates and moving to Rio. I had been wanting to move back here for some time; a competition opened; and I came to teach composition. I was very happy to come back, because I had missed the place and the people, my parents... It was a great experience, because I have had many fine students. I won't mention names, because if one does, one is bound to forget someone. We began Musica Nova in 1989. It was an important experience, because the group rehearsed twice a week, and the function of the musicians was to play the students' compositions. They would play the pieces before they were completed, so people could hear works-in-progress, and change things, discuss them with the musicians, and this gave a lot of energy to my teaching. Later, I managed to bring Rodolfo Caesar into the mix, and we began to work with electroacoustic music, which was a struggle, but we managed. After this Rodrigo Cicchelli was brought on board, and we had the beginning of a nucleus bringing together people with different backgrounds. It was good situation. I didn't like the physical environment -- the classroom building is very disagreeable, very noisy, with people giving classes nearby and 300 different things sounding around you. It was very wearing. The bureaucratic and administrative part was certainly not something that appealed to me.

I retired, a little early, in 2002, when I was 58. I thought "just because I have retired doesn't mean that I can't go back to give classes, teach students at home," but I haven't, since every other year I have had commissions for pieces for orchestra. I am writing a third commission now. It's odd, in a country where the orchestras almost don't play contemporary scores. So I have a big score to complete. I keep very busy, and I have not taught very much.

MOORE: The piece from this year's *Bienal*, *Vereda*, was from 2003. After this piece --

REZENDE: -- there is one that went to the OSB in commemoration of 40 years of the Sala Cecilia Meireles, called *Avessia*, which for me was a backwards fanfare. The one which I am working on now is for the arrival of the royal family, to be played next year. The piece evokes the Botanical Garden, since it was D. Joao VI who founded it.

MOORE: In *Vereda*, the clarity of writing is impressive. Your voice is completely individual, original, and communicative. Where did this come from? It doesn't seem to belong to any school, and doesn't sound "Brazilian," but it is an open voice, which communicates emotional states. A woman in the audience, after hearing it, asked me, "What does this piece mean?" -- but she also was speaking of classical music more generally. What does classical music mean for you?

REZENDE: A *métier*, a style of writing, in search of details, which would not happen if I were writing music that was lighter, more popular.

I have written music for theater, music for installations in the visual arts, in a language which is less elaborate. I think that classical music presupposes a certain level of elaboration in any parameter, whether it be timbre, harmony, whatever -- a more intense level! So what happened? In 2000 or so, I wrote a piece for piano, *Constrastes*, in which I froze some sonorities. I had not moved toward set theory; I knew that it existed, of course, but had not done anything with it. Then I worked with Orlando Alves, who did a master's with me, and who is a maniac about such things. I don't like all that mathematics, and it was not a situation where I said "I am going to do this," but I did anyway. This question of exploring a particular sonority is an interesting one. *Vereda*, in the first 20 seconds, presents all the material, in terms of pitches, for the entire piece. So there is something very closed there. Now, the fun is to give that material many different aspects, since, because I am on the same ground, I can change clothes as many times as I like, and I will still have the same identity! I like consonance; I don't close off when I sense that I have a passage with a more emotional charge, and one which also recalls something from the past. I let whatever needs to be in the music come out, I acknowledge values old and new. That is how I am as a person -- a mixture of many elements. I still am emotionally moved by things which were important for my parents, for my grandparents. My experiences of breaking with the past, in my personal life, in my emotional life, were all very difficult. What I see in tradition is a sort of solidity, which anchors me, which is good, which I cultivate. I am not a person of the last century. I am a person who experiences all the anxieties of people who live in Rio today, and in a certain way this also comes out in my music, but what I value emotionally are things that have to do with things which are very old.



Concert Reviews

Scoring with Shostakovich

MARK ALBURGER

Michael Tilson Thomas leads the San Francisco Symphony in Dmitri Shostakovich's *From Jewish Folk Poetry, Symphony No. 5*, and three excerpts from *The Age of Gold*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 1, without *The Age of Gold*. Reviewed November 30.

Usually the pre-concert talk at a concert is limited to, well... pre-concert.... On November 30, Michael Tilson Thomas talked the talk and walked the walk right into the middle of the show, recorded and filmed as part of his *Keeping Score* series for PBS.

Here the subject was Dmitri Shostakovich's great *Symphony No. 5*, a work well-known and well-parsed, so it was a pleasure to hear Thomas share a fresh perspective which, if not necessarily true, was thoroughly engaging.

Engagement and truth are, admittedly, uneasy bed-partners in the Shostakovichian household, held hostage, if you will, by the iron will of the Stalinist times through which the composer somehow endured. In truth, Shostakovich was an enigma to his death, each pained portrait of him seemingly more angst-ridden than the last, with a somehow admirable reluctance to put many verbal expression marks on the pages of his music beyond "espressivo" ("expressive"). Expressive of what? This was Thomas's task at hand.

Taking the "everything you hear in this work is generated from the first few measures" approach, Thomas demonstrated how the first four motives of the first theme group not only set stage for the entire first movement, but also what these thematic fragments may mean.

With its opening short-long, dark, ascending minor sixth, Thomas drew a parallel with Ludwig van Beethoven's similarly rhythmmed *Symphony No. 9* opener (all excerpts discussed were immediately played by the orchestra), identifying such ideas with the heroic strivings of individuals. The ensuing, descending flourishes of three pairs of dotted-eighth / thirty-second notes were then a sigh of resignation, after which, three static violin notes of short-short-long (two eighths and a quarter) were, therefore, a "dead end."

Well, yes and no. While there certainly is heroism in the Shostakovich opener (the dotted eighth / sixteenth and doubly dotted eighth / thirty-second are both clichés or "topics" that have been associated with nobility since at least the early baroque), there is at least as much anguish, not a particular sentiment associated with that particular Beethoven beginning.

The descending sigh could have as much beauty as futility, and as for the final three notes? With the ascending bass line below it, these notes can also be less dramatically interpreted as a point of rest, a repose.... a cadence. Indeed, the resting note is A -- forming the interval of a fifth with respect to the keynote of the work D. Further, the two-eighths-quarter figure is found in many Shostakovich works (the *Cello Concerto No. 1*, *Symphony No. 9*, and *Piano Concerto No. 2* leap to mind for starts), and has been ambiguously associated with dirge when slow (think the second movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*) and gallop when fast (as in Gioacchino Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, which Shostakovich was certainly thinking of in his own 9). As in the music of Guillaume de Machaut, Gustav Mahler, George Crumb, and many others -- when is a motive significant, and when is it simply one of the ways that a composer goes about the process of making music?

The fourth motive (arguably the main melodic figure of the first thematic group) has a prominent lowered second degree of its scale, a descending fragment of a Phrygian mode. Thomas rightly noted that that one flatted scale degree (b2) changes everything, and he showed such convincing alterations and juxtapositions throughout this stimulating musical discussion.

By the time the little talk came to its conclusion, we had heard a significant part of the *Symphony*, enough to know that the complete performance after intermission would be similarly edifying.

The opener was the less familiar *On Jewish Folk Poetry*, with three fabulous Russians -- soprano Oksana Dyka, mezzo-soprano Elena Manistina, and tenor Vsevolod Grivnov holding forth in various combinations through its 11 songs. In Shostakovich, here as elsewhere, the sympathy and suffering are at once personal and universal.



Calendar

January 1

Mark Alburger's *History Phases*. Seattle, WA

January 5

Music of Mario Lavista: Marsias and Cinco Danzas Breves.
Trinity Chapel, Berkeley, CA.

January 7

Xtet in Donald Crockett's *Whistling in the Dark*, Oliver Knussen's *Cantata*, Carlo Boccadoro's *Bad Blood*, and Earl Kim's *Exercises en Route*. Zipper Hall, Los Angeles, CA.

January 23

Gil Shaham and Akira Eguchi in William Walton's *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and Joachim Rodrigo's *Sonata Pimpante*. Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

January 27

Christopher Taylor in Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jesus*. Hertz Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA.

Philadelphia Youth Orchestra in Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 2*. Upper Darby Performing Arts Center, Upper Darby, PA.



Chronicle

November 1

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in George Perle's *Bassoon Music for Bassoon Solo* and *Lyrical Piece*, Thomas Ades's *Arcadiana*, and Jennifer Higdon's *Dark Wood*. Rose Studio, New York, NY.

November 2

John Cage: 18 Microtonal Ragas. St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley, CA.

Ravi and Anoushka Shankar. Masonic Center, San Francisco, CA.

Gamelan Cudamani. Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

Gerald Barry's *Los Angeles, Piano Quartet No. 1 and No. 2, Bob, Au Millieu, "___", and Octet*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

November 3

Mendelssohn Club in John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater*, and James Primosch's *Fire-Memory / River-Memory*. Girard College Chapel, Philadelphia, PA.

Cantori in *The Judith Project*. Judiths Bingham (*The Secret Garden*), Shatin (*Songs of War and Peace*), Weir (*Ascending Into Heaven*), and Lang Zaimont (*Sunny Airs and Sober*). Church of the Holy Trinity, New York, NY.

November 4

Imani Winds and Orchestra 2001 in Valerie Coleman's *Afro-Cuban Concerto* and Darius Milhaud's *La Creation du Monde*. Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA.

Samuel Barber's *Vanessa*. New York City Opera, New York, NY. "*Vanessa* emerges as an authentic American masterpiece" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 11/6/07].

Leonard Bernstein's "Glitter and Be Gay" from *Candide*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

November 6

Duran Duran. Ethel Barrymore Theater, New York, NY.

Bergen Symphony in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

November 7

American premiere of Alfred Schnittke's *Symphony No. 9* given by the Juilliard Orchestra and Dennis Russell Davies. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "Notes are only approximately positioned on the staves, and their stems are shaky squiggles. Bar lines veer off at a slant. The handwriting, at times nearly illegible, is clearly pained. 'It's a testament by someone who knows he's dying,' . . . Davies said" [*The New York Times*, 11/7/07].

November 8

Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein*. Hilton Theater, New York, NY.

November 9

Okkyung Lee. The Kitchen, New York, NY.

Composers Concordance presents Darby John Mizelle's *Through a Glass*, Ed Rosenberg's *Wizard*, Otto Luening's *3 Duets for 2 Flutes*, Ron Mazurek's *Shadows*, Joseph Pehrson's *Windjammer*, Joelle Wallach's *Five Songs*, and Frederic Rzewski's *To the Earth*. Greenwich House Music School, New York, NY.

November 10

Damien Hirst's art installation *School: The Archaeology of Lost Desires, Comprehending Infinity, and the Search for Knowledge*. Lever House Art Collection, New York, NY.

November 15

Korean Classical Music Institute of America. Bing Theater, Los Angeles, CA.

Philippe Hurel. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

November 17

Aida Ruilova's *The Silver Globe*. The Kitchen, New York, NY.

November 18

Musicas Latinas: Music of Latin-American Women Composers, performed by CUBE. Gottlieb Hall, Merit School of Music, Chicago, IL.

November 19

Yan Maresz's *Entrelacs*, Henrik Strindberg's *Cheap Thrills*, Anders Hillborg's *Tryffelhymn*, Jesper Nordin's *Calm like a bomb*, Tommy Zwedberg's *Enso*, and Liza Lim's *Shimmer Songs*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum, San Francisco, CA.

November 23

San Francisco Opera presents Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco, CA.

November 28

Michael Tilson Thomas leads the San Francisco Symphony in Dmitri Shostakovich's *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, *Symphony No. 5*, and three excerpts from *The Age of Gold*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through December 1, without *The Age of Gold*.

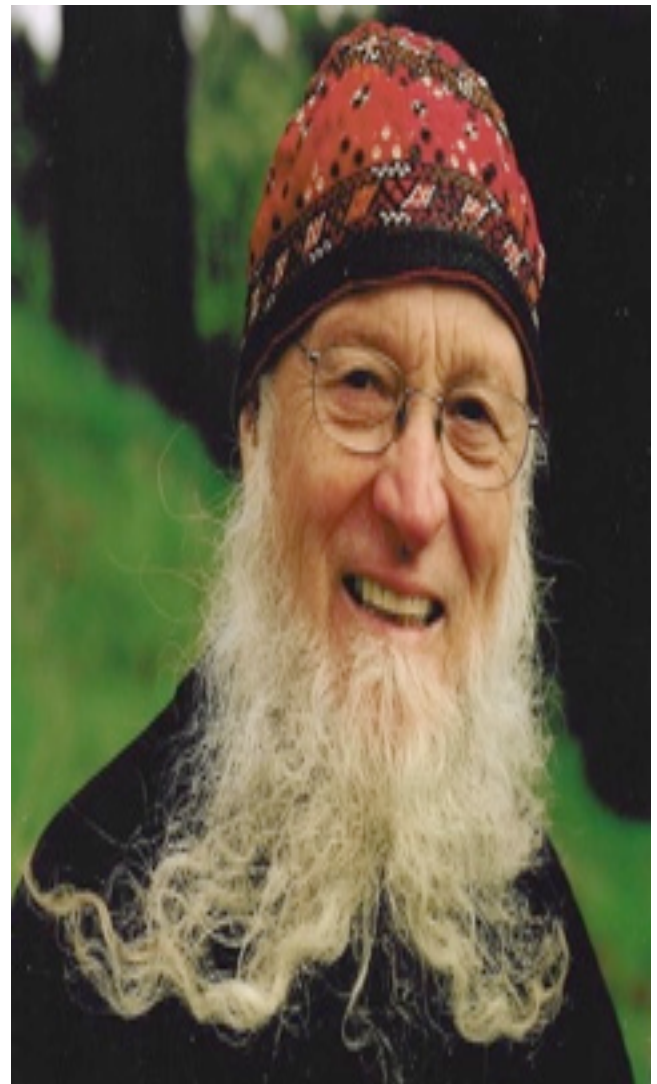
Paramore. Roseland Ballroom, New York, NY. "Paramore is a fizzy emo band led by a tireless, clean-scrubbed singer named Hayley Williams, who is still a few weeks away from her 19th birthday. . . . The band, from Franklin, TN, was nurtured by the record label Fueled by Ramen (which also nurtured Fall Out Boy and Panic! at the Disco), and the members customarily spend their summers on the *Warped Tour*. But Ms. Williams knows that the least essential thing about emo is its emoness, so she plays down the emotional turmoil to focus on energy and kicks instead. *Misery Business*, the band's breakthrough single, must be one of the peppiest revenge songs ever written. . . . [S]he is, among other things, a Christian rock star. . . . And while Ms. Williams avoids overtly evangelical lyrics, many of the band's love songs . . . also sound like conversion narratives" [Kelefa Sanneh, *The New York Times*, 11/30/97].

November 29

New York Philharmonic in Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5* and Carlos Chavez's *Sinfonia India*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "[Prokofiev's] startling shifts between Neo-Classical formalism, ironic humor and barbaric power. . . . Chavez [was] a Mexican Copland" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/1/07].

Terry Riley's *In C* in the *Darmstadt: Classics of the Avant-Garde's* third annual reading. . Galapagos, New York, NY. "[The series] redefined the work as a cross between a late-1960's psychedelic freakout and a more up-to-date extended dance track, complete with an insistently pounding beat. It was the most vital, audacious and energizing performance of the score I've ever heard. . . .

The Darmstadt ensemble, heavily amplified, brought together traditional instruments (two cellos, trombone, saxophone, clarinet, toy piano, and xylophone) with rock band's backbone (electric guitar, bass, and drum kit). Also included were the oldest instrument, the voice, and the newest, the laptop computer. The group's four laptops were set up so their keyboards' letters were assigned notes and MIDI timbres, allowing the players -- laptopists? -- to work through Mr. Riley's set of figures like everyone else. Usually the pulse is established by a piano, which holds down the beat with a bell-like tone. Here it was the province of an electronic harpsichord-like timbre (presumably from a laptop) and an electric bass, played assertively by Zach Layton and supported by the drummer, David Justh. Mr. Justh added considerable filigree in the course of the 66-minute performance, none sanctioned by the score, but captivating enough to justify its berth. . . . Supporting the performance, Joshua Goldberg projected computer graphics, based on Mr. Riley's 53 figures (and others) on a screen behind the ensemble" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 12/1/07].



Comment

Modern Music to Go

PHILLIP GEORGE

In concert halls, there is an old unspoken 20th-century tradition of the "modern music sandwich" -- i.e. play some nice, safe standards as the daily bread at the beginning and end of a program, then slip in some suspicious, meaty new work in the middle -- the programmer's thought somehow being that traditional audiences will be captive, trapped in the musical deli of familiar wrappings.

The Marin Symphony took this convention out on November 4 by making the contemporary music "to go," presented on an entirely different date (November 1) and honing to the merely tried-and-true on the concert evening.

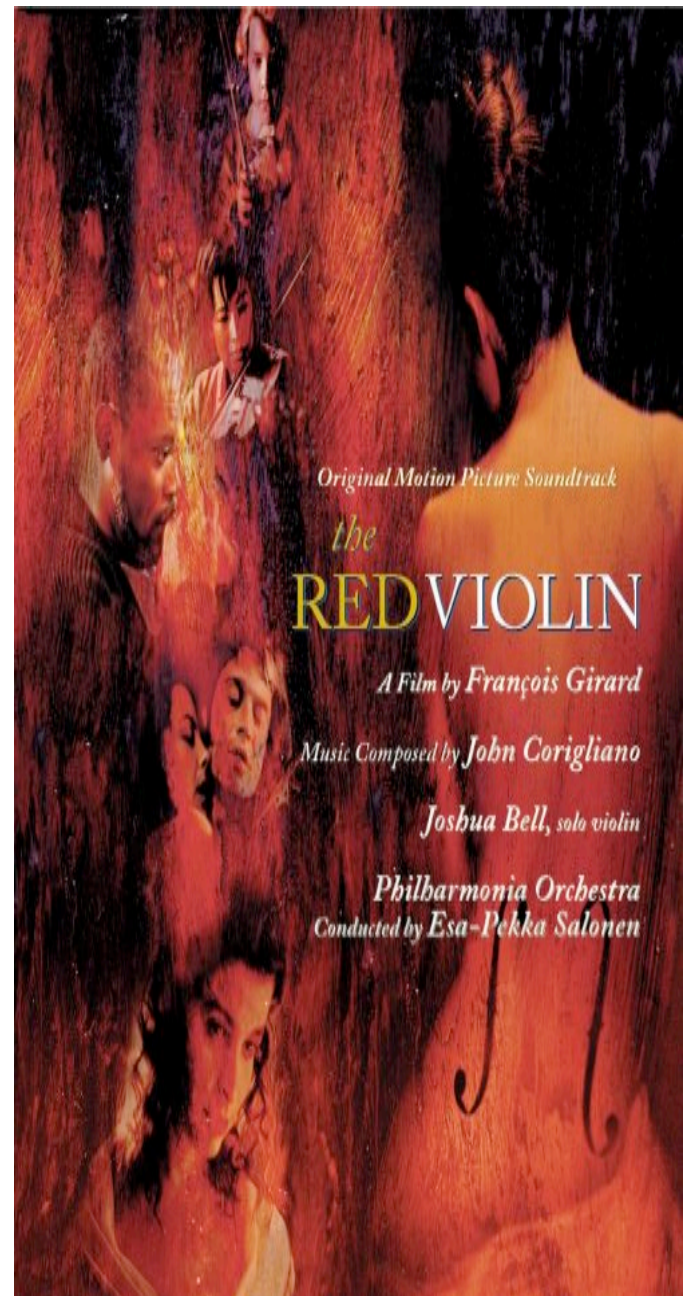
The interesting night was the former, a screening of Francois Girard's *The Red Violin*, the film inspired by Elizabeth Pitcairn's storied 1720 *Red Mendelssohn* Stradivarius. As noted in the program, "Shortly after it was made, the instrument mysteriously vanished. Its disappearance for more than 200 years spurred historians, writers and journalists to speculate on the violin's enigmatic history."

How even more interesting would it have been to have had the Marin Symphony perform John Corigliano's score for the film live, in the tradition of other movie-music evenings, including this organization's own take on the Dmitri Shostakovich / Sergei Eisenstein *Battleship Potemkin* in October 2007.

Instead, we had a post-Halloween *Night of the Dead* performance of Ludwig van Beethoven, Felix Mendelssohn, and Johannes Brahms -- a concert which could have taken place a hundred years ago, and would have been even old-fashioned then. Imagine a performance in 1805 (the year of Beethoven's energetic *Leonore Overture No. 3*) which included no music less than 130 years old (say, Thomas Morley madrigals, Claudio Monteverdi opera excerpts, and Heinrich Schutz's *Saul, Saul*). You can't. While Palestrina was still performed in churches, even Henry Purcell and G.F. Handel would have been too contemporary, and J.S. Bach hadn't been whole-heartedly rediscovered.

No. Music for Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Brahms meant new works. What you hear in popular music all the time. What classical music has abandoned -- to seemingly no objection by some audiences whatsoever -- the standing ovation for Pitcairn's wonderful performance of the Mendelssohn *Violin Concerto* was admittedly well deserved in this instance. But some of us had to remain seated on the weakness of the overall programming conception.

A recent road trip included Arnold Schoenberg's *Book of the Hanging Gardens*, and, yes, some 20th and 21st-century music remains daunting. But other selections by Ralph Vaughan Williams, Igor Stravinsky, Philip Glass, et al were sheer delights. Joys rarely heard in some circles, to a great pity. If only old music was heard in Beethoven's day, we'd have no Beethoven. If programming such as heard at the Marin Symphony continues, what will we be missing?



By the Numbers

Total number of reviews of contemporary classical music found online at major American newspapers (Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Denver Post, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Boston Globe, New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Seattle Post-Intelligencer), October 4, 2007

0

Items

"How much are you going to pay?"

For three day that has been the question on the lips -- and at the fingertips -- of Radiohead fans. . . . [S]ome . . . yesterday were finally able to name their price to pre-order the band's new album, *In Rainbows*. . . . [O]ne employee decided to pay 14 cents, and another gave \$5 . . . And [Sarah] Fields, who works in digital marketing at the label, decided to charge herself \$9.

Melena Ryzik
The New York Times, 10/4/07

When his serious artistic side is finally heard late in the movie, the original piano piece he plays is the kind of characterless shlock that movies often try to pass off as modern classical music.

Stephen Holdin
In a review of the film *The Good Night*
The New York Times, 10/5/07



Robotics technology developed by German company Tronical GmbH in partnership with Gibson Guitar Corp. enables Gibson's newest Les Paul model to tune itself in about two seconds.

Yuri Kageyama
Associated Press, 12/4/07

I knew several composers, and afterward we all went out to the Carnegie Tavern, now long gone but then on the corner of Seventh Avenue and 56th Street. Aaron Copland, Milton Babbitt, Arthur Berger, and others were there, and I found myself sitting next to Elliott [Carter], whom I had never met but whose *Piano Sonata* I was then working on. I needed a grand and substantial American piece for a tour of Germany sponsored by the United States Information Service, which was trying to prove to Europeans how cultured Americans were. Elliott's sonata was the only avant-garde American work for piano after Ives that exploited the sound of the full-sized concert piano with panache and even Romantic brilliance, and I was delighted with it, so I was please to meet the composer.

Copland, in an ebullient mood as he grandly paid for everybody's sandwich and beer, was due to appear on a late-night television talk show. Elliott said he had never been to a live television show, nor had I, so we both went to be in the audience and watch Copland discuss baseball, to show he was a regular guy and not just an intellectual classical musician. A few days later I was invited to dinner by Elliott's wife, Helen Carter. Elliott must have told her that I was presentable.

Charles Rosen
The New York Times, 12/9/07

[T]he Seattle Symphony Orchestra has carried disharmony to new heights, lurching from crisis to crisis. There have been allegations of vandalism aimed at players, including a dented French horn and a razor blade planted in a mailbox; a players' survey that condemned the conductor only to be deep-sixed by management; and lawsuits filed by players accusing the conductor of mental if not physical abuse.

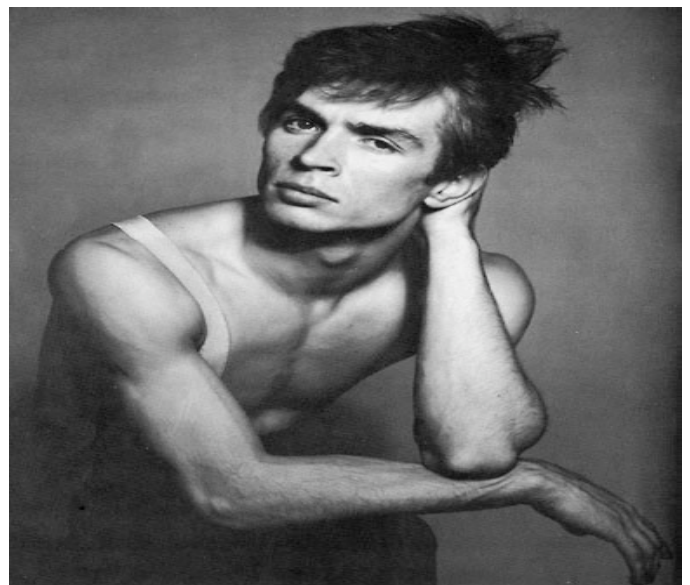
Daniel J. Wakin and James R. Oestreich
The New York Times



Publications

Julie Kavanagh. *Nureyev: The Life*. Pantheon Books. "Nureyev was never, technically, the best classical male dancer of his era -- Mikhail Baryshnikov was more agile, Peter Martins was more fluid, Fernando Bujones had better line and feet, and others were superior partners -- but he led the way for them all. . . . Taken into the home of the celebrated teacher Alexander Pushkin and his dancer wife, Xenia, he was coddled and educated in all things theatrical. He lost his virginity at 21, to the possessive Xenia -- and possibly slept with Pushkin as well. Before long, a fourth was added to the ménage, Teja Kremke, a handsome young East German student at the Vaganova Academy whom Nureyev called his 'First crush.' He later claimed that Kremke taught him 'the art of male love,' though several male lovers told Kavanagh that he usually skipped the 'art' part. . . . On June 16, 1961, Nureyev defected in Paris, and fame was thrust upon the 23-year-old dancer in a worldwide news media frenzy. Despite Kremke's encouragement, there is ample evidence that Nureyev's defection was not a premeditated act but a spontaneous one, made in impossible circumstances. . . . After receiving last-minute whispered instructions from a friend he had made in Paris, he took 'six steps exactly' the famed leap to freedom' was, in fact, a short walk) away from the K.G.B. agents guarding him and toward two undercover French policemen who were waiting. When the agents grabbed their man, one of the Parisian officials, in a wonderful moment of French diplomacy, said indignantly, 'Ne le touchez pas -- nous sommes en France.' ('Don't touch him -- we are in France.') The deed was done. . . . While none he left behind were arrested, his friends and family were persecuted for years as a result of their association with the now-criminal dancer. . . . [He] worked with practically every active choreographer, classical and modern, including Frederick Ashton, Kenneth Macmillan, Maurice Bejart, Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Jerome Robbins and, even at last, briefly, the one he wanted more than all the others: George Balanchine. . . . After hours, Nureyev was to be found in the company of Jackie Onassis, Lee Radziwill, Andy Warhol, Richard Avedon (who shot a famous nude of him), Mick Jagger, Marlene Dietrich ('that boy,' she called him) and Peter O'Toole. . . . he was totally unpleasant, yet totally charming the old contradictory makeup of many illustrious artists and hooligans. Kavanagh dutifully recounts all the outrages, like the time he arrived at the opening night party of the Spoleto Festival at the house of the festival director, Gian Carlo Menotti, as the guest of honor and, seeing that he had to wait in a buffet line, smashed a wine glass on the floor and departed in a flourish. Nureyev was the Brando of ballet, a solipsistic brute, an especially unusual character in a profession where obedience to a higher order and good manners are central to the art itself. Kavanagh also documents, in equal detail, Nureyev's very, very busy sex life. He slept with a number of women . . . and liked on occasion to claim, erroneously, to have impregnated a few. But he was, in fact, a committed homosexual and despite several long-term relationships -- with Erik Bruhn, Wallace Potts (the saint to Nureyev's sinner) -- he was always sexually agitated, and bathhouses, clubbing and anonymous pickups were a regular

part of his life. When he defected, Nureyev stated that he had two goals: to study with Bruhn, and to work with George Balanchine. Both dreams were, in their fashion, fulfilled, but be careful, as they say, what you wish for. He called Bruhn, a brooding Dane 10 years his senior, the love of his life -- 'he's so cold he's like ice; you touch it and it burns you.' Their affair was marked by intense love, relentless competition, long distances, and other lovers. . . . The relationship ended with lasting affection, and Nureyev was at Bruhn's deathbed in 1986. The Balanchine connection was also a tortured affair. Nureyev had pursued Balanchine from the beginning, even going so far as to offer him two months a year of his time while most other choreographers were allotted only days. But this wasn't Balanchine's style. He wanted all of your time; he wanted, if you were lucky, your life. 'When you are tired of playing at being a prince,' Balanchine famously told him, 'come to me.' . . . In 1979, 18 years after Nureyev's defection, Balanchine finally invited him to appear in a staging of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. Nureyev called it 'a gift from God.' . . . In 1984 Nureyev was diagnosed with H.I.V. He lived, danced and apparently continued to have unprotected sex for nine more years, never publicly acknowledging his illness, despite the rumors. . . . I was puzzled by her mere parenthetical aside, among the numerous performances she documents, of Nureyev's famous 1978 appearance on *The Muppet Show*. His pas de deux with a giant pig in *Swine Lake* is only the enticing warm-up for the piece de resistance: his scene in the steam bath in a towel, with an understandably amorous Miss Piggy. . . . In his final years, Nureyev, insisted on literally, excruciatingly, dying before our eyes, giving performances so ragged and inept that audiences whistled and demanded refunds -- which suggests something besides simple flouting of the cardinal rule that performers should know when to retire gracefully. He was ill, but the stage was his only real home, so he stayed there" [Toni Bentley, The New York Times Book Review, 12/2/07].



Recordings

Mark Alburger. *One-Hour Color Processing [At A Photo Shop. Spectral Preludes. Big Beat. Trumpet Concerto]. Complete Works, Volume 7.* New Music.

Mark Alburger. *Lost in Place [Mice Suite No. 1. Westminster Tropes. Deploration Passacaglias. Helena Suite]. Complete Works, Volume 8.* New Music.

Mark Alburger. *Mice and Men: Act I-III (after John Steinbeck). Complete Works, Volume 9.* New Music.

Mark Alburger. *Cats, Dogs, and Divas (Harriet March Page). Suzanna Mizell, Sarah Hutchison, Sandy Castleberry, Maggie Tennenbaum, Cynthia Weyuker, Janet Lohr.* New Music.

Mark Alburger. *Waiting for Godot: I, V, XIV, XV . . . XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII . . . LIX, LX (after Samuel Beckett).* Eliza O'Malley, Meghan Dibble, Mark Alburger. New Music.

Charles Ives / Henry Brant. *A Concord Symphony. Henry Brant Collection, Volume 7.* Dennis Russell Davies, Royal Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. Innova 414.

Henry Brant. *Dormant Craters. Homeless People. Ceremony.* Henry Brant Collection, Volume 9. Innova 416

Steve Reich. *Music for 18 Musicians.* Innova 678.

