

21ST CENTURY MUSIC

MAY 2004

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John Adams's Activity and Zeal through "Zeal and Activity"

MARK ALBURGER

A minimalist bored with minimalism [Adams in Kamien].

My music is not as formally pure as some of the minimalists. Musical form, the shape of the music -- the highs and lows -- the topography of it is its most expressive potential. I go for changes in speed and tempo [John Adams in Lazar].

A lot of Glass fans thought I was an opportunist who'd plundered his great discoveries. But you can't work in a simple language like minimalism or any other strong artistic style without those similarities. I think I can say without any qualification that despite whatever affinities conscious or subliminal, may exist, my music is radically different. If anything it suggests a very strong evolution away from what Glass has done, and that's the way things ought to be. I'd be delighted to see younger composers developing upon what I've done myself [John Adams in Strickland, 180].

Second-generation minimalist John Coolidge Adams (b. Worcester, Massachusetts, February 1947) notes classical, jazz, and rock'n'roll in his background.

My primary influence [in jazz] was Duke Ellington. My grandfather owned a dance hall in central New Hampshire called Irwin's Winnepesaukee Gardens, which played host for I think thirty years to all the big bands. When I was a kid my father took me up to hear the Ellington band. They were on the road God knows how many consecutive evenings and probably felt totally burned out, but it didn't matter. The experience of standing in front of that band and hearing them was just one of those indubitably primal experiences which I never got over.

. . . It was his concept of sound, and also the power of his sound -- phenomenally powerful without amplification. I'd also mention among the white bandleaders Benny Goodman when he wasn't compromising -- my father was a clarinet player, and that was my first instrument. As I grew up I got very interested in bop and would take Charlie Parker solos down by dictation, then Coltrane and Miles Davis.

. . . [There is a] very strong but very subliminal [rock influence], for instance in my pulsation and slow harmonic rhythm. I loved rock but never played it. I didn't play an appropriate instrument, not being comfortable enough on keyboards to attempt it.

. . . A very important element in my music is my relationship to popular culture. . . . What's happened in twentieth-century art in general, but particularly classical music, is that it's gone in a very wrongheaded direction and become very self-referential. . . . I see in the serial composers, Babbitt, the European avant-garde, that their music is inaccessible and tends to be music about itself or similar music.

I've taken a huge amount of stimulus from popular culture and music, whether it's jazz, rock'n'roll, or gospel, and I do it in a way many purists find promiscuous. You know -- "It's okay to take these influences and smooth and shape them into a sublime experience, whereas Adams just throws 'em in the soup pot." But I think that's what gives my work its vitality and impact, and I think it's what drives my critics crazy -- they feel a kind of alarming energy in it that's somehow not quite decent [John Adams in Strickland, 182-183].

Adams taught and directed the New Music Ensemble at San Francisco Conservatory of Music from 1972 to 1982. The 1973 triptych *American Standard* was written under the influence of Cornelius Cardew and his Scratch Orchestra, and showed Adams's interests in American hymnody and Cage.

His first successful minimal work was the piano solo *Phrygian Gates* (1977), which modulates through fourteen modal areas. The septet *Shaker Loops* (1978), for strings, fancifully refers to the tape music techniques of earlier minimalism, and combines modular and additive processes of the early minimalists with common-practice 20th-century dynamics and dissonance, plus a little down-home hoe-down country fiddling. The first and last movements of this four-movement opus are particularly indebted to Riley, not only in the simultaneous cycling of disparate metrics, but in the actual modal motives. *Gates* and *Loops* were both premiered in 1978, and recorded the next year by 1750 Arch Records. *Long Tones in Simple Time* (1979) is true to its billing.

Adams was Composer in Residence with the San Francisco Symphony from 1982-1985. He has become in some circles more respected and widely performed than any of the original minimalists, including Glass and Reich.

John Adams, who owes a great debt to both Terry Riley and Stravinsky, gets much better in his later work, but one piece...*Grand Pianola Music* was it...very derivative, becomes bombastic [La Monte Young in Strickland, 70].

I think John Adams's sense of orchestration is brilliant. . . . John Adams can deal in the traditional world and create a new sound. [John Zorn in Strickland, 139].

Of those composers Reich means the most to me because I think he's the most sophisticated. His pieces are more painstakingly put together and there's more going on in them. I think Glass often presents a fresh and even shockingly new idea, but my basic problem with Philip's music is that there's never more than one thing going on at a time. He never seems to challenge himself with creating more than one layer of music, hence the music gets very tiresome very quickly. At a key point in my development Reich's music had a great deal of meaning for me, and I've always been very open about acknowledging that, unlike a lot of composers who reach a certain level of notoriety and don't want to admit influence. They want to rewrite history or something. I don't. I think that certain pieces of Steve's, particularly *Music for 18* and *Tehillim* and *Music for Mallet Instruments* and *Drumming* were very critical in helping me develop my own style [John Adams in Strickland, 179].

Harmonium (1981), for chorus and orchestra, is indebted to Reich, yet certainly seems to presage the latter composer's own *The Desert Music* (1984).

I was just concerned with harmony -- you know, it's a phony word, created by forcing a Latin ending on a Greek root. and it's also the name of a little field organ. It's a coined word for which I coined an additional meaning. [John Adams in Strickland, 191].

Grand Pianola Music (1981) is scored for what amounts to a concert band, in addition to pianos and "minimalist-common-practice" wordless voices, in a setting which holds forth a good deal more bombast and humor than found in earlier works of minimalists -- a sort of updated Ivesian potpourri of marching bands, sentimental tunes, Eastasian modes, wild flourishes and fanfares, and wild energy

Light Over Water, a symphony for brass and synthesizers (1983) is a total contrast to this in its moody blend of muted drones and repetitive motives, while *Harmonielehre* (1985), for orchestra, with its Mahler and early Schoenberg atmosphere, also seemed to point in a darkly post-minimal direction, utilizing repetitive techniques as merely part of a larger scheme that brings minimalism up to speed as one of many styles at the composers disposal. Soon after this, the composer moved on in 1987 to serve as Creative Chair for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Adams's compositions since 1985 have developed along two divergent lines: lighter works with a buoyant minimalist overlay such as *Nixon in China*, the composer's first opera, and *Fearful Symmetries*, where Ellington, Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, *Gershwin*, *Bernstein*, and punk-rock collide; and more serious efforts such as *The Wound Dresser* and a second opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991), which show more generalized neo-romantic eclecticism with a wealth of recitative and a dearth of melody. The latter opened in Brussels in March of 1991 to tight security and qualified acclaim.

John Adams, it goes without saying, I respect greatly. What I've heard of *Nixon in China* is unfortunate, but I look forward to being at the premiere [Steve Reich in Strickland, 46].

I've always admired John's work, though I've had trouble getting into his magnum opus, *Nixon in China*. I just don't like opera that much [Ingram Marshall in Strickland, 207].

John Adams can write a successful opera like *Nixon in China* now [Philip Glass in Strickland, 149].

Adams's first opera, *Nixon in China*, wittily combines European operatic scale with Glassian common-practice minimalism and a gloss of chinoiserie. It was jointly conceived with director Peter Sellars, librettist Alice Goodman, and choreographer Mark Morris, and was premiered in October 1987 at the Houston Grand Opera. An episodic, impersonal monumentality remains in the work which seems to buy into the developing Glassian tradition.

...one of the things that struck me in *Nixon* was that through the first two acts the orchestra tends to act like a ukulele: the singers sing along and the orchestra strums away. Only in the third act does the orchestra really achieve a contrapuntal complexity with the voices. I was in danger of becoming a composer who functions on one level. So recently I've been working on adding levels of complexity to my music. I'm not talking about making it inaccessible or becoming Elliott Carter but making the experience deeper.

. . . The ballet was, at least musically, conceived as a piece that might have been written by a committee -- that's how they composed often during the Cultural Revolution. That was my starting point.

One does not make much money from recording of contemporary serious music. My records sell well -- 30,000 for the last few, which must make *Nixon* one of the best-selling operas of all time . . . I will say another thing about Nonesuch. It's a wonderful relationship, analogous to the relationship Beethoven and Brahms had to their publishers. Music publishing is no longer the great career promoter that it used to be, while record publishing is. My music is known throughout the world now because of my records, not my publications. [John Adams in Strickland, 189].

The debt to Glass, in addition to Reich, seems clear right from the start, where an ascending A aeolian scale right out of Einstein's TRIAL bears the main compositional weight, and later in the snap rhythms of "I Am the Wife of Mao Tse-Tung" and the weirdly careening, drunkenly ecstatic modulations of "Cheers!" Adams's orchestration throughout, however, remains more traditionally brilliant than his minimalist models, and the syncretism of his Eastasian and foxtrot takes has no precedent. The Chairman Dances section was extracted as a concert piece.

My phrase was "the homophonies had been liberated" -- high-blown language! In any hymn the voices tend to move in blocks, so I went in and unhinged the hasps and let the four voices float in a dreamlike space so that they only rarely come together, and the effect was very beautiful. At moments it almost sounded like some unwritten Mahler Adagio. I didn't mean it to, but it just ended up sounding that way.

. . . I chose [the text] because it was outrageous and also very musical -- as Southern Evangelists often are. And I thought his story of Jesus healing the withered arm had a real poignancy to it. Without attempting to amplify that poignancy I did -- simply by randomly chopping up the tape without any premeditation -- following Burroughs's technique of cut-up.

. . . It can move or it can irritate you [John Adams in Strickland, 189].

Christian Zeal and Activity shows a zest for the dichotomy of the reverent and irreverent. The cut-up technique has roots in Riley as well as Burroughs, but the slow "unhinged" hymn's lineage goes way back to Ives's *Unanswered Question*. In this inimitable bit of American, Adams finds one of many post-minimal solutions to the continuing challenges of tonality and accessibility in a refined music both jokey and sublimely serious. Vernacular cornpone meets the academy.

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Concert Reviews

Z'Gaijin

MARK ALBURGER

Pamela Z's *Gaijin*. May 18, 2001, Theatre Artaud, San Francisco, CA.

The old Weill song, *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, could be the theme song for Pamela Z's *Gaijin*, but stranger things than the mere fact of being a "foreigner" (a rough translation of the title) are afoot.

Dance, music, and set design conspire to achieve a distinct and otherworldly kaleidoscope of place and time. The Z blend of digital loops and stunning vocals is as successful as ever here. Add to this the butoh dancers Leigh Evans, Kinji Hayashi, and Shinichi Momo Koga and this made for one wonderful night at Theatre Artaud in San Francisco on May 18, 2001.

Home Grown

FLANNERY STERNS

Contemporary Opera Marin presents John MacKay's *Damascus Road*, Mark Alburger's *Diocletian: A Pagan Opera*, Ron McFarland's *The Audition of Molly Bloom* and Marcia Burchard's *The Descent of Inanna*. January 23, 2004, College of Marin, Kentfield, CA. Through February 1.

The postcard had an R. Crumb / Grateful Deadesque hippie in horns -- Viking, that is. The conceit was that "Home Grown" can be creative as well as vegetative. And certainly there were musical highs all night when Contemporary Opera Marin presented four works by local composers.

John MacKay's *Damascus Road* was staged more like Highway 101 on a Golden Gate Transit bus before a set graced by Frank Lloyd Wright's Marin Civic Center and rolling mountains. The score crossed over into musical and blues territory with a rollicking catchy finale. Louis Weiner and Nina Josephs turned in fine performances as cliched characters old and young.

Diocletian: A Pagan Opera from the hand of Mark Alburger featured the expressive hands of visual artist / violinist Tara Flandreau, who brought the story to life in a series of sardonic overhead projections. Weiner delivered the strident and matter-of-fact narrative to glorious vocal work from Angela Eden Winckler as Drusilla and Ralph Avalon in the title role. The composition took its cue from Henry Purcell's like-named work but ran through minimalist and pop gambits, with strong contributions from the capable chorus, led by Director Paul Smith.

Weiner continued his busy evening as "the composer" in Ron McFarland's *Audition of Molly Bloom*, with Suzanna Mizell as the first-rate "singer" trying out bits of Mozart and more contemporary fare to fine effect.

The corker for the evening was *The Descent of Inanna*, from Marcia Burchard. This ambitious work for a cast of 19 was winningly headed by Amalia Martin in the title role. Josephs returned triumphantly as Ninshubar and was nicely supported by basso Richard Mix as Neti. Not to be outdone, Winckler and Avalon were also featured in the key roles of Ereshkigal and Enki. Lots of funny names (the story follows a Mesopotamian myth -- solemn and static), sure, but gorgeous music.

Rite of Spring Break

LAUREL JOSEPHINE

Rite of Spring Break. Diablo Valley College Orchestra, conducted by Mark Alburger, in Ric Louchard's *North Beach*, Jan Pusina's *Pink Wind*, Béla Bartók's *Giuoco Delle Coppie* from *Concerto for Orchestra*, Alburger's "Mama, what's happened?" and "How about lifting your veil?" from *Camino Real*, and excerpts from Darius Milhaud's *La Creation du Monde*, Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, and Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. February 29, Performing Arts Center, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA.

"Rite of Spring Break." Ha, ha. But it was a kind of fertile festival of post-Valentines dementia on Leap Day in Pleasant Hill, CA. The Diablo Valley College Orchestra started off chamber-musicky in the introduction and jazz fugue from Darius Mihaud's *Creation of the World*, with stunning performances from guest alto saxophonist Rory Snyder and trombonist Kevin Porter.

Stunning as well were lovely and stirring works of pianist Ric Louchard and hornist Jan Pusina. The former's *North Beach* reassembles the ensemble into choirs of soloists and sustainers. Against the steady yet shifting Eb majorish washes, trumpeter Rachel Steele, bassoonist Mike Garvey, and clarinetist Peter Brown, among others, wended wondrous paths.

Pusina's essay, by contrast, was a boffo exercise in coloristic bravura -- a little Claude Debussy and more than a little Edgar Varèse stirred to a boil. It did not please everyone, but please it did by showing off the orchestra at its best in wildly fluctuating dynamics and textures.

Conductor Mark Alburger's selections from his opera *Camino Real*, after Tennessee Williams, found four young singers reaching for the stars. Soprano Julie Tesar and tenor Zu Hoh were the wide-eyed lovers in "How about lifting your veil." They were nicely joined in quartet by alto Traci Alvarez and tenor Kevin Schuepp for "Mama, what's happened." Strings shimmered and low brass pulsed, and they all lived happily ever after. Sort of.

The rest of the program was devoted to 20th-century classics: excerpts from Béla Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and Aaron Copland's *Appalachian Spring* came off more or less as intended, with fine solo work from the winds, and two sections of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* made for a strong finale.

Mahler Meaning

MARK ALBURGER

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*. March 3, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

No surprise really, but Michael Tilson Thomas can really do Mahler. And he proved it again in a stirring performance of the *Symphony No. 5*, a nuanced reading that took nothing for granted, from the tremulous opening, hanging on to every note of the solo trumpeter, through the impassioned pleadings of the second movement, the joyous strains of the scherzo, and the mystical and matter-of-fact of the concluding sections.

The March 3 concert at Davies was to have featured not only Gustav Mahler, but Alban Berg. But the younger composer's well-known *Lyric Suite*, was bumped in favor of several classical oddities: two marches by Ludwig van Beethoven and Luigi Cherubini's Overture to *Anacreon*.

The Beethovens are scored for winds -- piccolo, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, two horns, two trumpets, snare and bass drum in both (the F Major has two flutes and an extra clarinet, the C has two oboes and triangle). These are delightful, tinny little exercises, but neither would get a hearing these days if they weren't from a famous pen.

Cherubini, famous in his day and well-regarded by his contemporary above, is more remembered now for the company he kept rather than the music he made, and no wonder. The *Anacreon* overture is a serviceable little piece, but little more. The San Francisco Symphony gave it the attention it deserved.

The Mahler, on the other hand, found Thomas and the ensemble back with fully engaged. This was simply an important performance of an important piece, and there was nothing that was allowed to get in the way of full concentration. Mahler was a weird guy living in weird times, and Thomas understands that and draws parallels to our own weird world. Berg lived in an intensified version of Mahler's reality, and his presence was missed on this bill. It may be that the two Viennese composers make for an overly-impassioned wallop, but instead the contrast with the classical Bonn(and Paris)-bons was less than totally engaging. Perhaps we understand the angst of Mahler in a way that the aristocratic surety of a Cherubini will never understand.

In an early Beethoven march, all's right with the world, and we know that simply isn't true anymore. Give us Mahler's tragedies, and paradoxically it's a believably happy day again.

Friendly Composers Make Mostly Nice

PHILLIP GEORGE

NACUSA Composers and Friends. Brian Holmes's *Two Hunting Songs*, Owen Lee's *Nocturne*, Dale Victorine's *I Thank You, God* from *Two Songs on Poems by E.E. Cummings*, Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Rhapsody for Two Pianos*, Nurit Barlev's *Mirage*, Hubert Ho's *Tremble*, Carolyn Hawley's *Question, Answer*, and Mark Alburger's *Out on the Porch* (Harriet March Page)! March 13, Art Center, Palo Alto, CA.

The San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the National Association of Composers (whew!, no wonder they acronymize it as NACUSAsf) presents an annual "do it yourself" fund raising concert, which used to be whimsically dubbed *Composers Can Play, Too*. Over the years, others have joined the merriment, so it really became a *Composers Can Arrange to Have Their Own Pieces Performed by Hook or by Crook without Spending the Chapter's Money so This Can Be A True Fundraiser*, and that is truly too long of a moniker.

So this year, on March 13 in Palo Alto, it became *Composers and Friends*.

And friendly it was, as this mostly-tonally oriented bunch (not by any design, but like seems to attract like) delivered the goods.

If anything, sometimes this clan is "too good." The music seems to default as nice and unthreatening. Not that there is anything wrong with this. No, truly. But occasionally one wishes for more edge.

Then again, occasionally one gets it.

The show opened resoundingly in *Two Hunting Songs*, where composer-hornist Brian Holmes brought in the best friends he could think of: more horns, plus his wife as soprano. This is truly an unlikely assemblage -- try even speaking, let alone singing over a horn quartet. But as singing is heightened speech, so Joylynda Tresner made the grade, in lovely/stirring settings of Walter Scott and e.e. cummings.

The latter was definitely the poet du soir, set again by Dale E. Victorine in his *I Thank You, God* from a small collection (two -- as small a group as they come). This was a gem, and it followed another treasure that was Owen J. Lee's (lot's of middle initials and names in this cadre) *Nocturne* -- somnambulant, subtle, and superb.

Related accolades have been bestowed on Nancy Bloomer Deussen on a regular basis, and she checked in here with a fine *Rhapsody for Two Pianos*. She definitely has magic, and she has passed it on to her student Nurit Barlev, who turned in an exceedingly impressive *Mirage*, full of passion and wonder, with may exotic turns of phrase.

By no means was the entire program so congenial and easy-going. The second half offered challenging and well-crafted music of Hubert Ho, his *Tremble* for flute and piano, that did just that. Carolyn Hawley, on the other hand doesn't tremble -- she's more afflicted with St. Vitus's Dance as she animatedly holds forth with her very original piano works, such as *Question, Answer*, which provoked smiles and thoughtfulness.

The smiles became even more sardonic in Harriet March Page's texts for *Out on the Porch*, set by Mark Alburger. This "Genealogical Opera" found librettist and composer as vocalist and pianist for six cyclic essays of moral and musical depravities. Claude Debussy, Giuseppe Verdi, Muddy Waters, and Lord knows what else are distorted into whimsical facsimiles of profundity. March's phrasing and tone were ever flexible and plangent, and somehow all the textual controversies of incest and race relations were made uneasily nice.

April Ghouls at Davies

MARK ALBURGER

Esa-Pekka Salonen conducts the San Francisco Symphony in his *Insomnia*, plus Béla Bartók's *Miraculous Mandarin Suite*, Modest Mussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*, and Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 1*. April 1, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Los Angeles Philharmonic Music Director Esa-Pekka Salonen offered a Halloween card out of season in wonderfully macabre program that included works of Bartók, Mussorgsky, and Prokofiev. But it was his own music, heard on what

might be considered an "April Ghouls Day" concert at Davies with the San Francisco Symphony, that spooked the most.

Insomnia was commissioned for the Suntory Hall International Program for Music Composition, and one can only assume that it caused sleepless nights. And what dreams! You do not want to be caught up in Salonen's nightmares, but they certainly make for engaging listening. The composer, in the spirit of Alan Hovhaness, notes the disparate resources as "the chorale and the machine," and we hear both almost from the start here, with a shining, skeletal, Stravinskian woodwind hymn followed by maniacal poundings of brass, strings, and timpani. This is like minimalism gone mad, and Salonen seems to be finding his way toward a place in the new-music pantheon. A chamber work, heard back a few years ago from the San Francisco Contemporary Players suggested his promise -- "Insomnia" is no doubt part of the fulfillment. The concluding "sunrise" section of this music is blinding, searing, like the harsh light that wakes you when you don't want it -- definitely not your grandfather's Grieg's *Morning*. And definitely not shy and retiring in its orchestral resources, which included racks of gongs and a quartet of Wagner tubas (good to keep those players occupied in off-*Ring* years).

The rest of the program similarly eerily entertained in music that spoke common languages across chronological and cultural divides. The oldest was the opening, *Night on Bald Mountain*, which, in its original Modest Mussorgsky manifestation, is distinctly other when compared to the gussied up and simplified versions which most of us know from Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Leopold Stokowski (the latter heard in Disney's *Fantasia*). Aside from the characteristic hit-single opening (and even here the orchestration is different, featuring very tough licks for brass), Mussorgsky's genuine article is pretty much another work, and a fascinating one at that; the comic conclusion is wholly its own. Amazingly enough, this original was not presented until the 1920s (Rimsky conducted the "revised" as the premiere in 1886), and not heard in San Francisco until this present performance.

There were other delights as well: a boffo reading of Sergei Prokofiev's maiden mature effort -- the *Piano Concerto No. 1* in a demonstrative reading from the great Yefim Bronfman (who also kept his encore in the same vein with the Bartokian finale to the Russian composer's *Piano Sonata No. 7*), and Béla Bartók's own *Miraculous Mandarin Suite*. *Mandarin* is truly a miraculous piece in any outing, and if occasionally the balances were off and the tempos unsteady, the thrust of this thrusting music really came off, right down to its orgasmic climax.

Text and Recording

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Charles Dutoit, in Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 6* and Maurice Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite*. April 17, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Let's talk about text. In recent popular music the "text," the artifact that indicates "how the piece goes," tends to be a recording. In classical music, the text really is a text -- a written score that can, at best, only approximate how a work will be realized. And this is a joy: you really won't totally know how a piece will sound from one live performance to the next.

And of course, this is what keeps critics in pocket money.

Such thoughts came to mind from the very downbeat of Charles Dutoit's reading of Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 6* with the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Hall on April 17. Dutoit took the opening faster, funnier, and more mechanically than ever heretofore heard. And throughout it was a fresh experience. The music is animated, tragic, and full of color. Aching, languid violas are juxtaposed against bilious, raspy brass and thudding percussion to stunning effects. The first movement was totally engaging, with its surreal lines arching upward into a climax of phase-shifting horns. Every important line was in place in the strange, wandering second section and sardonic finale as well. Was this guy Prokofiev serious? You bet. It's a perfect music laboring under the oppressions of the mid-20th-century Soviet citizen, and a worthy companion of Dmitri Shostakovich's related output at the time. Are there veiled messages here, as is thought in Shostakovich? No doubt. This is ambiguous obscurity at its finest.

Dutoit was also dead on in his handsome presentation of the Maurice Ravel *Mother Goose Suite*. This French-on-French meeting was impressive in its gentility and subtlety -- a warm yet icy music where every melodic, harmonic, and orchestrational gesture is in its place. That mixture of arrogance, dignity, gravity, refinement, sensuality, wit, and a certain *je ne sais crois* that can come off as quintessentially French was very much in evidence here. The restraint almost borders on the ridiculous. Almost.

Restraint was in overabundance in the case of scheduled pianist Martha Argerich, who didn't show up (she is not infrequently ill). Louis Lortie went to bat and to key for her in Robert Schuman's *Piano Concerto*, and made a fair case for this oft-heard opus -- even a few new interpretations of text here as well.

Calendar

May 1

Louis Andriessen's *De Materie*. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

Juilliard Pre-College Chamber Orchestra. Juilliard Theater, New York, NY.

May 2

Old World / New Language: Arnold Schoenberg. Six Little Pieces for Piano, Book of the Hanging Gardens, and String Trio. Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art, New York, NY.

May 3

Louis Andriessen's *Rosa, a Horse Opera*. Walter Reade Theater, New York, NY.

Juilliard School Faculty Recital. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY

New York Library for the Performing Arts program. Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York, NY.

May 5

Mosaic. LA County Art Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

New York Philharmonic in Bernstein's *Candide*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

May 7

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in works by Harry Partch, Chen Yi, Toru Takemitsu, Maurice Ravel, and Lee Hyla. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

May 8

Bang on a Can All-Stars in works by Louis Andriessen and Terry Riley, wit a pre-concert interview with Riley. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY.

May 9

San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra in Alexis Alrich's *Marimba Concerto*, Lisa Prosek's *Pericles*, Michael Cooke's *Concerto for Musician*, Mark Alburger's *Flute Concerto*, two songs by *Erling Wold*, and music by John Beeman. SF Community Music Center, San Francisco, CA.

May 11

New York Philharmonic in *Ives: An American Original in Context*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

May 16

Wet Ink Concert. Campbell Recital Hall, Stanford University, CA.

May 17

California EAR Unit. LA County Art Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

DVC Philharmonic Orchestra in Mark Alburger's *Symphony No. 6 ("Apathetique")*. Performing Arts Center, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA.

May 22

Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra. Juilliard Theater, New York, NY.

May 23

Orchestra 2001 in Olivier Messiaen's *Poems pour mi*, Claude Debussy's *Fetes Galantes I*, and premieres by Genevieve Black, Leo Dugan, Lona Kozik, Jordan Nelson, and Sheridan Seyfried. Field Concert Hall, The Curtis Institute, Philadelphia, PA.

May 26

Composer Spotlight: Robert HP Platz. Jack Straw Productions, Seattle, WA.

May 27

Compcord. Tom Beyer's *Efferent and Afferent*, Patrick Hardish's *Sonorities VII*, Leonard Lehrman's *Five Duets*, Theodore Chanler's *Five Songs*, John Eaton's *Fantasy Romance*, Otto Luening's *Gargoyles*, Art Kreiger's *Rainsticks*, and William Anderson's *Sometimes*. NYU Frederick Loewe Theater, New York, NY.

Chronicle

March 3

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the San Francisco Symphony in Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No. 5*. March 3, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

March 4

Other Minds Festival. Tigran Mansurian's *Haik* and selections from *Komitas*, Hanna Kulenty's *Flute Concerto No. 1*, and Jon Raskin's *The Hear and Now*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Programs through March 6.

March 5

Other Minds Festival. Amelia Cuni and Werner Durand's *Ashtayama -- Song of Hours*, Mark Grey's *Sands of Time* (with Jean Jeanrenaud), and accordionist Stefan Hussong performing traditional Gagaku, John Cage's *Dream* and *In a Landscape*, Keiko Harad's *Bone+*, and Adriana Holszky's *High Way for One for Accordion Solo*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Programs through March 6.

March 6

Other Minds Festival. Joan Jeanrenaud's *Hommage*, Francis Dhomont's *Les moirures du temps (the shimmering ripples of time)* and *Phonurgie* from *Cycle du son*, and the Alex Blake Quartet. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. Programs through March 6.

Nathaniel Stookey's *Quartet No. 1*. Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA.

March 7

Empyrean Ensemble in Krzysztof Penderecki's *Quartet for Clarinet and String Trio*, Marjorie Merryman's *Hidden Boundaries*, Yu-Hui Chang's *transpiration*, György Ligeti's *Piano Etudes*, and music of John Adams. Mondavi Center, Davis, CA.

March 11

New Century Chamber Orchestra. St. John's Presbyterian Church, Berkeley, CA. Through March 14, Osher Marin JCC, San Rafael

March 13

NACUSA Composers and Friends. Brian Holmes's *Two Hunting Songs*, Owen Lee's *Nocturne*, Dale Victorine's *I Thank You, God* from *Two Songs on Poems by E.E. Cummings*, Nancy Bloomer Deussen's *Rhapsody for Two Pianos*, Nurit Barlev's *Mirage*, Hubert Ho's *Tremble*, Carolyn Hawley's *Question, Answer*, and Mark Alburger's *Out on the Porch* (Harriet March Page), and Art Center, Palo Alto, CA.

Chiaroscuro CUBE. Howard Sandroff's *Chant de Femmes*, Jody Nagel's *Gandalf the Gray*, Anna Rubin's *Stolen*, and premieres by Lawrence Axelrod, Timothy Bowlby, Laura Schwendinger, and Philip Seward. Columbia College Concert Hall, Chicago, IL.

March 14

Contrasts Quartet in works by Penderecki, Rozycki, Lutoslawski, Kernis, and Khachaturian. Kosciuszko Foundation, New York, NY.

March 20

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in Gerard Grisey's *Vortex Temporum* and Betty Olivero's *Bashrav*. Jewish Community Center, San Francisco, CA.

Orchestra 2001 in Manuel de Falla's *Harpsichord Concerto*, Roberto Sierra's *Cancionero Sefardi*, Osvaldo Golijov's *How Slow the Wind*, Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileira No. 5*, and a new work by Luis Prado. Trinity Center, Philadelphia, PA. Repeated March 21, Lang Concert Hall, Swarthmore.

March 22

Flux String Quartet. LA County Art Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

March 24

Xtet. LA County Art Museum. Los Angeles, CA.

March 29

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and Chanticleer in Iannis Xenakis's *Medea Senecae*, Pablo Ortiz's *Oscuro*, Giacinto Scelsi's *Three Sacred Songs*, and a new work by Betty Olivero. Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco, CA.

Comment

By the Numbers

Percentage of 20th-century operas in the 2003-2004 San Francisco Season

40

Percentage of 21st-century operas in the 2003-2004 San Francisco Season

0

Percentage of 20th/21st-century operas in the 2004 Santa Fe Opera Season

0

Writers

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