

21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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Frederick Fennell

MARTIN ANDERSON

Decades before his death on December 7 at the age of 90, Frederick Fennell had become an iconic figure in the symphonic wind-ensemble movement, a genial figure of near-Biblical authority respected and loved not only in his native U.S. but the world around. The international wind-band community owes a good deal of its youthful vigor to his example, and his involvement with youth orchestras saw several generations of musicians benefit from his experience and guidance. For his fellow-conductor Jonathan Sternberg, Fennell was

an extraordinary individual and conductor whose enthusiasm for music, and particularly the wind ensemble, was overwhelming. His transcriptions of many masterworks of the symphonic repertoire made available to millions of amateur wind players musical experiences they would otherwise be deprived of. His activity and influence will remain a lasting memory.

Fennell was conducting before he was out of his teens, spending the summer of 1931-33 at the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan. He then went on to study at the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in up-state New York, taking his Bachelor of Music degree in 1937 and his Master's in 1939.

He was to be associated with Eastman for most of his career. He joined the conducting faculty there in 1939 and regularly conducted a number of ensembles until 1965. But it was his foundation of the Eastman Wind Ensemble in 1952 that brought him international acclaim: his recordings with the Ensemble first astonished their listeners - wind-playing of this standard was something new - and then became classics. Their recording of Percy Grainger's *Lincolnshire Posy*, for example, was selected by Stereo Review as one of the "Fifty Best Recordings in the Centenary of the Phonograph, 1877-1977." Eastman paid homage with an honorary degree in 1988.

After his lengthy spell at Eastman, in 1965 Fennell took up a position as conductor-in-residence at the School of Music of the University of Miami at Coral Gables, remaining there until 1980. Four years later, at the age of 70, he was named conductor of the Kosei Wind Orchestra in Tokyo, becoming their conductor emeritus in 1989.

Fennell's recording career proceeded apace. With the Eastman Wind Ensemble he made 22 recordings for Mercury Classics, among them two albums of British Band Classics which included music by Grainger, Holst, Jacob, Vaughan Williams and Walton. He was a pioneer of new technologies, being among the first to make stereo and high-fidelity recordings. In 1978, with the Cleveland Symphonic Winds, for Telarc, he made the first American symphonic digital recording; and with the Dallas Wind Symphony, whose principal guest conductor he remained even as a nonagenarian, he recorded using high-definition compatible digital (HDCD) technology.

But Fennell's conducting appearances were not limited to wind groups. He conducted symphonic concerts, light music and opera, with orchestras as prestigious as the London Symphony, St. Louis Symphony and the Boston Pops. And for over half a century he was a prominent feature of younger American musical life, conducting at summer festivals across the continent, and sometimes touring Europe at the head of the School Orchestra of America.

A grateful music community responded with a slew of honors, their sheer variety itself a tribute to the number of lives he touched, which included an honorary doctorate of music from Oklahoma City University, membership in the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, honorary chief status in the Kiowa tribe, fellowship in the Company of Military Historians, a citation and a medal from the Congressional Committee for the Centennial of the Civil War, the Columbia University Ditson Conductor's Award, the Interlochen Medal of Honor, the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic Medal of Honor, the Star of the Order from the John Philip Sousa Memorial Foundation, the Symphonic Wind Ensemble Citation of the New England Conservatory, the Medal of the International Percy Grainger Society, the Mercury Record Corporation Gold Record, and the National Academy of Wind and Percussion Arts Oscar for outstanding service as a conductor. In 1994 he received the Theodore Thomas Award from the Conductors' Guild in recognition of "unparalleled leadership and service to windband performance throughout the world" - the previous two recipients of the award having been Sir Georg Solti and Leonard Bernstein. And the town of Kofu, Japan, boasts a Frederick Fennell Hall, inaugurated in 1992.

Fennell was active also as a writer, producing *Time and the Winds* in 1954 and *The Drummer's Heritage* in 1956. He penned the ongoing series *The Basic Band Repertory Study/Performance Essays*, and he edited contemporary editions of classic military, circus and concert marches for a number of prominent publishers.

Although his diary was full right to the end of his life, when the end approached he was determined to return to his home in Siesta Key, Florida, to watch the sun set over the sea one last time. Having been granted a spectacular display of color, shortly before midnight he complained to his daughter that he was "frustrated and disappointed."

When I asked him, "Why?" he replied, "There's no drummer here yet. I can't die without a drummer!" I told him that I loved him, and that "Heaven's best drummer was on the way." Moments later he said, "I hear him! I hear him! I'm OK now."

Frederick Fennell, conductor and teacher; born Cleveland, Ohio, 2 July 1914, three times married, one daughter; died Siesta Key, Florida, December 7, 2004.

Concert Reviews

Firebird Suite

DAVID CLEARY

Firebird Ensemble, September 27, 2002, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Brookline, MA.

The Firebird Ensemble is one of the newest contemporary music groups to start up in town, just beginning their second season of existence. Their 2002-03 kickoff concert showed this fledgling entity to be already mature and highly professional, a most welcome addition to the local scene. Their enjoyable program sandwiched an extemporized selection and a brief piece by a local youngster between three ageless East Coast gems

Julia Werntz's "*unto thee i*" (2002) is a single movement from a larger work-in-progress, scored for dancer and violist, that serves as a musical reaction to poetry of e.e. cummings. Oddly enough, in the full collection this particular entry is not to contain terpsichorean elaboration—though the composer decided to include it in the stand-alone version encountered this evening. Confused? Your reviewer admittedly was, but decided to critique it as is. The viola line, laden with special effects and cast in a microtonal language, proves attractive and intriguing—and the accompanying choreography, far from seeming dispensable, integrates nicely with the sounds heard. One in fact couldn't imagine it any other way. The structured improvisation, entitled *The Four Suits* (2002), added a percussionist to the aforementioned pairing. Filled as it was with spoken text, extended techniques, ambulatory performers, idiosyncratic dancing (including imitations of cows and owls), and atmospheric bell sounds, the whole thing came across as a very West Coast 1960's happening. All that was missing were candles, incense, and a beaded curtain. But it was diverting fun.

The meat of this concert made for its best listening, though. *Valentine* (1969) by Jacob Druckman asks its contrabass soloist to sing, whisper, and attack his instrument with a padded percussion mallet as well as with the bow and fingers. Combining all this with a manner of musical speech that consists of nervously pointillist shards results in a unique listening experience; this is one delightfully warped, almost perverse little bouquet to its instrument's literature. It's truly wonderful to hear. Joan Tower's *Petroushskates* (1980), scored for Pierrot ensemble, is brief but makes a lasting impression. Shimmering and gorgeous, it's a cleverly constructed fantasia (inspired in part by visions of paired ice skaters) that is built upon snatches from the second of Stravinsky's three famous early ballets. *From the Other Side* (1988) for mixed quartet splendidly demonstrates the puckish side of Donald Martino's oeuvre.

Rather than being a humorous occasional work (such as *B,A,B,B,I,T,T*), *Other Side* is a complex, sustained entry that runs the gamut from subtle satire to raucous belly laughs, with sufficient seriousness added in to provide effective contrast. Those who think East Coast composers cannot laugh at themselves or the world around them should hasten to hear this fine work.

Performances were flat-out terrific. Bassist Chris Johnson gave *Valentine* with all stops out, yet reining in his bravura presentation with just the right dollop of knowing control—the ideal mix of head and heart. The Werntz benefited mightily from Christine Coppola-Maneri's polished, sensitive dancing and Kate Vincent's accomplished, gutsy viola playing. Alicia di Donato (flute), Michelle Shoemaker (clarinet), Harumi Rhodes (violin), Kate Kayaian (cello), and Sarah Bob (piano) played *Petroushskates* with a seemingly effortless sparkle that proved irresistible. And Bob, di Donato, and Kayaian, joined by percussionist Aaron Trant, returned to give a strikingly memorable performance of the Martino that mastered its formidable technical challenges while conveying its special lightness of being.

Suffice it to say that the Firebird flies proudly alongside the best new music groups in Boston. Bravos go out all around for a first-class event.

Rorem Good Time

DAVID CLEARY

Ned Rorem Birthday Concert, to Celebrate the Begining of his 80th Year. October 10, 2002, Community Music Center, Boston, MA.

While Ned Rorem is a Massachusetts resident, his music doesn't seem to appear on Boston new music ensemble concerts very often. Perhaps those who make such decisions feel he is sufficiently well represented in more mainstream Boston music events. Whatever the reason, it was good to see a Boston-based tribute concert offered up in celebration of the start of this accomplished tonemeister's 80th year.

Book of Hours (1975), for flute and harp, and *Romeo and Juliet* (1977), a flute/guitar duet, demonstrate as many differences as similarities. True enough, both are multi-movement character piece entries that find ways to assimilate plucked string and woodwind tone, while making sure each instrument gets to play a cadenza. And both are intimate, reserved selections that take the term "chamber music" quite literally -- both would seem to be especially apt for presentation in a small performance space, such as the venue encountered this evening. But they are in no way clones of each other.

The flautist is the star of *Book of Hours*, while *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates a more equal sharing of the melodic load. Both pieces, while essentially tonal in nature, show contrasting levels of dissonance (the later work generally sounding spikier). And while both employ expanded arch-type formats with extended solos near the center, the flanking material is handled quite differently, the most notable example being the near repeat of the opening and closing movements of *Book of Hours*. Both are delicate and highly attractive listens, cleverly constructed.

The *Trio* (1960) for flute, cello, and piano shows that Rorem doesn't just write fragile eggshell works for small ensemble. This piece is for the most part an energetic one, loaded with outgoing, gruff figures in its first movement, and mysterious, yet playful gestures in its finale. Uniquely, these sandwich two slow movements, the first being a specimen of two-part counterpoint in the non-keyboard instruments embellished with forceful piano chords. The other, with its slowly unfolding melodic lines supported by repeated chromatic keyboard verticals, shows an unmistakable Messiaen influence. By and large, it's a sturdy pleasure.

When one thinks of the sort of music Rorem writes for solo singer and piano-idiomatic, triad-based vocal lines over straightforward, rhythmically regular accompaniments—chances are one can cite *Five Songs to Poems of Walt Whitman* (1946-57) as a textbook example. One can also say that this is a dramatically effective and temporally well-balanced cycle, artless in the good sense of the term. It's no wonder singers love to give works like this.

Sorry to say, the performances were not the best, for the most part lacking in style and execution, though there were two notable exceptions. Matthew Doherty, estimable flautist of the Arcadian Winds, gave a solid accounting of the harp part in *Book of Hours*. The other strong effort was turned in by baritone Michael Lofton, who (despite exhibiting an extremely florid sense of stage presence) gave the Whitman songs a big booming voice that featured a rich low range, vibrant upper tones, good control of dynamics, and solid diction. CMCB faculty members John Ranck (flute), Aaron Caplan (guitar), and Stephen Yenger (piano), as well as guest cellist Jan Pfeiffer, rounded out the roster of players.

Short New England Strings

DAVID CLEARY.

New England String Ensemble Autumn Concert. October 25, 2002, First Parish Church, Wakefield, MA. Repeated Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Under the baton of Susan Davenny Wyner, the New England String Ensemble has developed into one of the Boston area's most respected performing organizations. Their most recent pair of concerts saw the world premiere of Yehudi Wyner's excellent *Tuscan Triptych: Echoes of Hannibal* (1985/2002), a string orchestra version of this composer's *String Quartet*. It's a surprisingly dissonant work in Wyner's oeuvre -- sizable, intense, dramatic, and substantial, very much Expressionist in sound and gesture. The harmonic language is not unfocused or muddled, however; vertical progressions are handled well, possessing a clear, convincing sense of direction. Formally, the piece delineates an effective and unusual outline. Its initial two movements are relatively brief, the first tracing an arc from gripping energy to uneasy expressiveness, while the second continues this slow-tempo expansiveness before plunging into a speedy scherzando coda. The finale is a binary construct of significant length that extensively develops the materials from preceding movements. Davenny Wyner's conducting at Sunday afternoon's performance was utterly inspired, demanding -- and obtaining -- every last ounce of passion and drive from this enthusiastic group while making sure the work's formidable technical details were spot on.

Public Display

DAVID CLEARY

Public Works New Music Concert, October 26, 2002, Paine Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Public Works has periodically given concerts in the Boston area since the late 1990's, but their roots go back a decade earlier. Formed in 1986 at the University of Hartford's Hartt College of Music, this consortium-type group was originally a student-led series created by faculty member David Macbride and pupils in the department. Its current membership consists of emerging composers who graduated from the school, many of whom have put down roots in Connecticut and western Massachusetts.

The group's mentor composed the best work heard at their most recent concert. While the *Two Sonatas (after Scarlatti)* by Macbride clearly owe something to the music of the rococo harpsichord master -- one hears, for example, passages in parallel thirds and energetically aristocratic gestures in measured eighth notes -- there's more afoot here than mere toadying. These works demonstrate a sensitive ear for contrasting keyboard textures and bubble with barely suppressed fire, adroitly harnessing all this to satisfyingly balanced structures. They are the first entries in what Macbride projects to be a sizable collection of single-movement sonatas. If the rest are as good as these, it will be a set well worth experiencing.

Series regulars Brian Fitzpatrick, John Surovy, and Thomas Schuttenhelm filled out the rest of the program, respectively contributing two, three, and four selections—and surprisingly, all produce music with similar stylistic fingerprints. Predilections for tonally focused harmonic languages (often leavened with polytonal elements), modest durations, infusions of elements from popular idioms, and phrases constructed from altered ostinati and other patterned material are encountered with regularity. If this concert is any indication, Surovy demonstrates a particular fondness for vocal idioms. *Four Songs on Texts by Mark Strand, A Winter's Tale* (both for soprano and piano), and *Three Rilke Songs* (for soprano, violin, and guitar) exhibit kinship to the Barber-Rorem songwriting school, though the texts set gravitate more toward the morbid or disagreeable sort preferred by turn-of-the-century Viennese Expressionists. Their evocative accompaniments are their best feature. By contrast, Schuttenhelm seems to especially enjoy penning music for the guitar, an instrument he plays with much ability. His writing in “*an essential reflection*” (a duet for two guitars, of which only the second movement was heard), “*A Repeal of Reticence*” (a viola/guitar duo), and the *Sonata for Classical Guitar* takes full advantage of this idiosyncratic instrument’s strong points, replete with intricate passages in harmonics and graceful patterned textures. *Whirl* was this composer’s odd man out this evening, a single movement entry for Pierrot ensemble. Rather than delving into the Broadway stylings of Surovy or the blues influences of Schuttenhelm, *Hesitations No. 1 and No. 2* for marimba solo and *Elegy to Rope* for piano alone show Fitzpatrick possessing a sympathetic ear for jazz. The latter selection contains a thoughtful balance of improvised and written out sections. But despite some positive points, one also encounters less attractive features in the music by this threesome, including a tendency towards square rhythms and phrase structures as well as an at-times parlor piece feel high on sentiment and low on vigor.

Performances ranged from good to poor, with strong contributions put forth by guitarists Schuttenhelm and Scott Hill, violinist David Santucci, percussionist Ray Dandurand, pianists Macbride and Miles Goldberg, clarinetist Juliet Lai, and soprano Heather Petruzzelli (whose voice generally projected quite well and featured respectable diction).

Collage Graduates

DAVID CLEARY

Collage New Music, October 27, 2002, C. Walsh Theatre, Suffolk University, Boston, MA.

Collage New Music’s season opener trained its spotlight on three of America’s most successful mid-career composers, Sebastian Currier, Tod Machover, and Augusta Read Thomas. It proved to be a highly enjoyable event filled with compelling music and fine performances.

Poet Wallace Stevens is arguably best known for his *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. Currier’s *Vocalissimus* (1991), scored for soprano, Pierrot ensemble, and percussion, presents even more ways of looking at another of this writer’s classic works, *To the Roaring Wind*. Here, the composer casts this short poem in a remarkably varied number of settings ranging from consonant to clangorous, boisterous to bashful, goofy to grave, and everything in between. The styles encountered show as much contrast as those found in John Zorn’s jump-cut assemblage essays such as *For Your Eyes Only* -- but Currier gives his kaleidoscope of moods and techniques sufficient time to establish themselves and furthermore presents them in a long range construct that satisfies. And there’s loads of personality and polish to the writing. Eclectic? No doubt. But it works splendidly.

Passion Prayers (1999) by Thomas, while employing the aforementioned Pierrot quintet with added harp and percussion, uniquely allows the cellist to step very much to the fore. This is in fact a miniature cello concerto with small ensemble accompaniment. The orchestration and instrumental writing here is wonderfully effective—everything sounds like the proverbial million bucks. And Thomas is mindful of structure as well, casting this work as a set of variations which exhibits the ideal pairing of maximal contrast and minimal motivic content. Expressive and passionate, it’s a fine listen. Surprisingly, Machover’s *Towards the Center* (1989) sounds as fresh as the day it was written despite relying on computer technology that’s over a decade old. It too presents a personal wrinkle on the classic Schoenberg grouping, replacing the piano and percussion with computerized counterparts. The music, while often densely textured, never sounds turgid—this is spry stuff with more energy than a hummingbird on caffeine. And its frequent use of pop music elements sounds integral, never forced, coexisting nicely with the post-Copland sound world that prevails here. It’s a pleasure to hear.

Conductor David Hoose led his highly accomplished players with rock-solid assurance, expertly laying bare the essential core of all three pieces. Cellist Joel Moerschel gave a fine accounting of the solo line in *Passion Prayers* that ideally mixed heartiness and accuracy. And soprano Susan Narucki sang the Currier excellently, sporting a voice that sounded full and controlled no matter the register or vowel involved; her enunciation was fine.

Even composers the caliber of Currier, Machover, and Thomas need fine players to realize their inspired creations. Bravos to Hoose and Collage for being every composer’s dream come true.

The Fiery Concert

DAVID CLEARY

Aflame in Flight. October 30, 2002, Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, Boston, MA.

New England Conservatory faculty Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escot annually present an evening of works by themselves and distinguished composers whose music they enjoy—and as in years past, the pleasure quotient was high on tonight's installment

The first half contained an especially inspired programming sequence, beginning with *The Widow's Lament in Springtime* (1950), a soprano-piano duo by Milton Babbitt. Demonstrating mild influence of Webern, it's a relatively early piece from this composer's portfolio that expertly subsumes disjunct linear writing and fragmented piano textures into a warm, soft-spoken overall context. While brief, it's substantial and very enjoyable. John Cage's *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942), scored for the same pairing, could not be more different. Here, the keyboardist spends the entire composition rapping on different parts of a closed-up piano while the vocalist sings a simple, almost folk-like melody that restricts itself to a greatly limited number of diatonic pitches. It's every bit as brief as the Babbitt and a sweet charmer. What followed, Escot's *Aria II* (2001), could simultaneously be heard as both homage and self-assured entity. This work deftly combines live and pre-recorded soprano lines, sometimes in canon, to well-thought-out purpose. It initially pushes material every bit as tonal as Cage's against passages as angular as Babbitt's, smooths things out in the center of the piece to restricted-range consonance, then gradually returns to the dissonant/consonant dichotomy at work's end. It's wonderfully clever and effective. The other Escot selection, the first movement of a *Violin Concerto* (2002, a work in progress) is curious yet intriguing, consisting of dense, long-held chamber orchestra chords over which one hears rhapsodic solo violin writing. The stronger of Cogan's two compositions was *Aflame in Flight* (1999-), an entry for solo violin. Like much of his music, it consists of an open-ended collection of fragments that can be played in myriad combinations. But the three movements project strong and appealing basic personalities regardless of how the snippets are presented -- respectively special-effects fragmented, dramatically assertive, and passionately expressive. Briefly put, it's a worthy showpiece any fiddler can enjoy playing. His seven-song soprano/piano cycle *Portrait of Celan* (2001) sets highly charged poetry by mid-20th-century writer Paul Celan. High expressionist and deeply felt, it demands significant agility from its chanteuse, who not only sings text but also interpolates vocalise-style passages and occasional special effects throughout. The persistent feel of anguish becomes too much of a good thing after a while, though -- more contrast or fewer songs would have kept the impact hard-hitting.

Performances were generally good. Singer Jennifer Ashe showed a startling variety of abilities in the Babbitt, Cage, and Escot, sporting a voice that could sing with exquisite subtlety or full sound equally well, and in particular possessed a sturdy chest range. While Joan Heller's soprano instrument does not contain the power it once did, it is still a marvel of flexibility, varied colors, and meticulous diction; Cogan's cycle benefited much from her talents. Pianists Alison D'Amato and Jon Sakata provided excellent support for this vocal pair. Special bravos are reserved for violinist David Fulmer, who played

like a man possessed -- stage presence, tone, bow control, and finger technique were simply stunning. Sad to say, the Soria Chamber Players, led by Orlando Cela, struggled a good bit with chord voicing and balance in Escot's concerto.

Vox Populi

DAVID CLEARY

Bruce Tinkley's *York: The Voice of Freedom* libretto by J. Jason Charnesky). November 13, 2002, The Playhouse, Penn State University, State College, PA. Through Nov. 17.

York: The Voice of Freedom, with music by Bruce Tinkley and libretto by J. Jason Charnesky, is terrifically effective, a tightly paced, carefully gauged piece of stage entertainment. An opera that stylistically shows closest kinship to the oeuvre of Carlisle Floyd, it demonstrates splendidly idiomatic vocal writing as well as instrumental backing that is sonorous without overshadowing what happens on stage. It tells the story of the title character, a black slave who accompanies his master, William Clark, on the great exploratory adventure that was the Lewis and Clark expedition. Treated for all practical purposes as an equal during this epic journey, he gains no reward of any kind -- including the gift he desires most, his freedom -- upon arrival back to civilization, even though his white colleagues are showered with honors and material goods. The work ably portrays York's heart-wrenching plight without ever seeming sentimental or preachy.

The best aspects of the November 15 performance merited the highest praise. York's wife Mary was voiced wonderfully well by soprano Tamara Haskin, who sported a warm yet powerful tone quality, excellent stage instincts, and first-class diction. Brett Hyberger's conception of Clark put forth a malevolence that was richly textured, not cardboard simple; his full, accomplished baritone voice projected both notes and words with consummate strength and assurance. The title role proved well-placed on the sturdy shoulders of baritone Leonard Rowe. Possessor of a rich-sounding instrument that gained confidence as the piece went on, he demonstrated a fine flair for acting and exhibited a well-developed attention to crisp word enunciation. Baritone Norman Spivey gave agreeably light voice to the role of Meriwether Lewis. The most notable of the singers in numerous minor roles, mostly handled by Penn State voice pupils, were Korey Jackson (Brady) and James Chamberlain (Toussaint Charbonneau). One should also positively cite Laura Lee Hanchar's delightfully detailed costumes (ideally catching the look of the early 1800's in slave, Native American, and white settler alike) and director Scott Baron's excellent eye for staging (especially his deft handling of crowd scenes). Choral singing, provided by local college students, was exemplary. Gerardo Edelstein coaxed as much as one could have asked from his pit orchestra of eager (if moderately talented) youngsters. The raw wood sets of Warren Wake and Anne Thompson were basic but serviceable. In short, Tinkley's opera is a fine work that deserves the widest possible dissemination. Very much enjoyed.

Chronicle

December 3

Nancarrow at the Piano. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

December 6

Max Lifchitz performs music of Nurtir Barlev and Ilana Cotton. Chirst and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY.

December 7

Death of Frederick Fennell, at 90. Siesta Key, FL. "[He was] the master band conductor who founded the famed Eastman Wind Ensemble. . . . Through the pioneering Eastman ensemble, started in 1952, and a slew of recordings in the 1950's and 1960's. . . . 'He was arguably the most famous band conductor since John Philip Sousa,' said Jerry F. Junkin, . . . artistic director of the Dallas Wind Symphony, where Mr. Fennell was principal guest conductor. . . . Fennell also taught for more than 50 years at the music camp at Interlochen, MI. He took his meals with the students in the cafeteria and was often seen in a sweater from his colorful collection. Although he was just over five feet tall, his conducting style was equally flamboyant, and his almost shoulder-length white hair attracted attention. He expressed a wish to have his ashes scattered in the woods at Interlochen . . . Fennell studied conducting at Tanglewood with Serge Koussevitzky at the same time as Leonard Bernstein and conducted many full orchestras, including the Cleveland Orchestra and the London and St. Louis Symphonies. He also founded the Kosei Wind Orchestra of Tokyo. A concert hall in Kofu, Japan, was named after him, among countless academic and civic honors he received. . . . [H]e attended the Eastman School of Music . . . where he studied percussion . . . [O]n his deathbed Mr. Fennell said, 'I cannot die without a drummer.' [Cathy Fennell Martienssen] added that his last words were: 'I hear him. I'm O.K. now' [Daniel J. Wakin, The New York Times, 12/9/04].

December 8

Death of Cleve [Ginsberg] Gray (b. 9/22/18, of a massive subdural hematoma suffered after he fell on the ice and hit his head on December 7, at 86. Hartford, CT. "[He was] a painter admired for his large-scale, vividly colorful and lyrically gestural abstract compositions. . . . Gray achieved his greatest critical recognition in the late 1960's and 70's after working for many years in a comparatively conservative late-Cubist style. Inspired in the 60's by artists like Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Helen Frankenthaler, Mr. Gray began to produce large paintings using a variety of application methods -- pouring, staining, sponging, and other non-traditional techniques -- to create compositions combining expanses of pure color and spontaneous calligraphic gestures .

. . . [His] family changed its name [from Ginsberg] to Gray in 1936. He attended the Ethical Culture School in New York, and completed his college preparatory studies at Phillips Academy in Andover, MA . . . In 1940 he graduated summa cum laude from Princeton with a degree in art and archaeology" [Ken Johnson, The New York Times, 12/10/04].

Death of Jackson Mac Low (b. 9/12/22, Chicago, IL, of complications of a stroke that he had in November, at 82. Cabrini Medical College, New York, NY. "[He was] a poet, composer and performance artist whose work reveled in what happens when the process of composition is left to carefully calibrated chance. . . . The author of more than two dozen books of poetry, as well as musical compositions, plays and multimedia performance works, Mr. Mac Low was a seminal figure in the American experimentalist movement of the 1950's and after. A founding member of the avant-garde group Fluxus, he collaborated frequently with the composer John Cage" [Margalit Fox, The New York Times, 12/10/04].

Death of "Dimebag" Darrell Abbott, by a rampaging gunman (Nathan M. Gale), at 38. Alrosa Villa Club, Columbus, OH. "[He was] the beefy guitarist . . . whose screaming solos for the band Pantera made him a heavy-metal hero . . . [He] was performing with his new band Damageplan [and] was killed with three others [before a] police officer killed the gunman" [Ben Ratliff, The New York Times, 12/10/04].

December 11

Premiere of William Bolcom's *A Wedding*. Lyric Opera, Chicago, IL. "[M]usic should come first in opera and Mr. Bolcom takes a frustratingly deferential role, as if he were afraid to impede the stage show or undermine a sight gag. The score is filled with snappy songs and dance numbers, extractable arias, clever ensembles and pleasing bits. But after a while the music seems slight" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 12/13/04].

December 13

Xtet. Toru Takemitsu's *Between Tides*, Donald Crockett's *The Ceiling of Heaven*, and Peteris Plakidis's *Half Forgotten Sentimental Tune* and *From a Crime Story*. Leo S. Bing Theater, Los Angeles, CA.

December 15

Michael Nyman's *Man and Boy: Dada*. Alexander Kasser Theater, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ. "Nyman refuses to let the music do anything as conventional as underline an exit line, leaving many of the 19 scenes to end in a state of suspended animation. He is, however, unable to resist setting the mood with bits of nostalgic dance tunes and other musical evocations of the period, which give the piece texture and enhance its accessibility" [Anne Midgette, *The New York Times*, 12/18/04].

December 19

Death of soprano Renata Tebaldi, at 82. San Marino.

Met Chamber Ensemble in Charles Wuorinen's *New York Notes*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY. "Wuorinen's New York City, like ours, is not a peaceful place. His *New York Notes* . . . may date from the early 1980's, but nothing much has changed" [Bernard Holland, *The New York Times*, 12/21/04].

December 20

Jane Marsh and Linda Hall in Paul Hindemith's *Das Marienleben*. Austrian Cultural Forum, New York, NY. "I remember [Hindemith] personally as a conductor of small madrigal choirs. The still young 21st century has trouble placing Hindemith among the composing icons of the 20th, but that has something to do with his own attitude. German himself, Hindemith turned his back on the ancestral trappings of artist-as-hero and intimations of immortality that went with them. . . . Just singing the notes of *Das Marienleben* is no easy matter, and Ms. Marsh did at least that much with care and concern. Hers, on the other hand, is the kind of big, classical-music soprano that does not engage easily in musical conversation. Her big sound simply detonated off these walls" [The New York Times].

December 21

Neil Rothenberg and Double Band. Tonic, New York, NY.

December 23

George Jellinek's final broadcast of *The Vocal Scene*. WQXR-FM, New York, NY.

December 29

Peter Schickele / P.D.Q. Bach. Symphony Space, New York, NY. "[O]f late, the audience for Mr. Schickele's big annual P.D.Q. Bach concert in New York at Carnegie Hall and, more recently, Avery Fisher Hall has been falling off, and he has had more difficulty attracting co-sponsors for these events. For a while it looked as if there might be no New York concert this year. Instead, Mr. Schickele decided to present a greatly scaled-down program at a much smaller concert hall, Symphony Space . . . The professor must have been heartened by the full house . . . There was no orchestra or chorus . . . jut the professor, Michele Eaton (the 'off-coloratura soprano'), David Dusing (the 'tenor profundo') and, as special guests, the Lark String Quartet. And of course there was William Walters, the grim-faced, bearded veteran stage manager whose every appearance, following P.D.Q. Bach tradition, was greeted by hisses from the audience. Mr. Walters announced that, as always, the professor had not yet arrived at the hall, having been taken to the hospital for treatment after sustaining an injury during dress rehearsal. And, as always, Mr. Schickele made a madcap last-minute entrance: this time pushed onstage in a wheelchair by Ms. Eaton, portraying an efficient and humorless nurse, who stopped short, causing the professor, still in his hospital gown, to tumble onto the floor. . . . Schickele showed that he had lost none of his gift for deadpan comic delivery and for taking the audience down meandering verbal setups for excruciatingly bad puns. In one discourse on the German playwright and poet Schiller and his girlfriend, Freude (Joy, in English), Mr. Schickele explained that Freude gave Schiller large sums of money when times were hard. So Schiller wrote a poetic tribute to her to show just how much he "owed to Joy." . . . *A Minuet in 3D Major* for piano mixed bits of boogie woogie in this 18th-century courtly dance -- a clever sendup of that plunk-plunk-plunk rococo style. A takeoff on Schubert's haunting song *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, here called *Gretchen am Spincycle*, . . . into a song for Mr. Dusing (singing pidgin German) and piano depicting a lonely young modern woman aching for heavenly guidance as she watches clothes spinning in the dryer, captured vividly in the cyclic patterns of the piano accompaniment. The Lark Quartet offered a straight-faced rendition of Mr. Schickele's *Passacaglia in C Minus*, in which J.S. Bach's most famous ground bass theme is repeated endlessly, as all manner of unlikely melodies and tunes pass by in the upper voices from Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* to *The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze* . . . One way or another, Mr. Schickele's fans will probably get their 40th-anniversary P.D.Q. Bach concert in New York next year" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/31/04].

Death of Artie Shaw (b. Arthur Arshawsky, 5/23/10), at 94. Newbury Park, CA. "[He was] the jazz clarinetist and big-band leader who successfully challenged Benny Goodman's reign as the King of Swing with his recordings of *Begin the Beguine*, *Lady Be Good* and *Star Dust* in the late 1930's He quit performing in 1954, but the many releases of his discs, a ghost band, and his informed but often sardonic comments on music and many other subjects kept him in the public ear. Although his musical career closely paralleled that of Benny Goodman, his archrival, who died in 1986, the two men had little in common in their approaches to music. 'The distance between me and Benny,' Mr. Shaw said several years ago, 'was that I was trying to play a musical thing and Benny was trying to swing. Benny had great fingers; I'd never deny that. But listen to our two versions of *Star Dust*. I was playing; he was swinging.' Mr. Shaw impressed and amazed clarinetists of all schools. Barney Bigard, the New Orleans clarinetist who was Duke Ellington's soloist for 14 years, said he considered Mr. Shaw the greatest clarinetist ever. Phil Woods, a saxophonist of the bebop era, took Charlie Parker as his inspiration on saxophone, but he modeled his clarinet playing on Mr. Shaw's. John Carter, a leading post-bop clarinetist, said he took up the instrument because of Mr. Shaw. And in 1983, when Franklin Cohen, the principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra, was to be featured playing Mr. Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet*, he listened to Mr. Shaw's recording of the work and said he found his playing unbelievable. "Shaw is the greatest player I ever heard," he said. . . . Mr. Shaw and Mr. Goodman were born a year apart (Goodman in 1909 . . .); both had Jewish immigrant parents and grew up in the ghettos of major American cities. Mr. Shaw grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Goodman on the west side of Chicago. They began playing professionally as teenagers, and by 1926 they were both far from home performing with major bands of the day: Goodman in Venice, CA, with Ben Pollack In the Depression era, they settled in New York City and were the top two choices for the woodwind sections of radio-network and recording studio orchestras. Frequently, they sat side by side in these ensembles. By then, however, Mr. Shaw had decided music was a dead end. He intended to be a writer, and he had become a voracious reader. At band rehearsal, his music rack often held a book he was reading along with the compositions he was playing. But his interests reverted to music after he was asked to play at a concert at the Imperial Theater in New York in May 1935. It was called a swing concert, and it included well-known swing bands like the Casa Loma Orchestra and the bands of Tommy Dorsey and Bob Crosby. Although Mr. Shaw was not yet known to much of the public, he was asked to put together a small group to play while the band downstage was changed. "Just for kicks, I thought I'd write a piece for clarinet and string quartet, plus a small rhythm section," Mr. Shaw recalled. "Nobody had ever done that, sort of a jazz chamber-music thing. His *Interlude in B Flat* brought down the house. The audience refused to stop applauding, but Mr. Shaw had nothing else to play because this was the only thing he had written for the group. Finally, they played it again. On the basis of this success, he was urged to form a band.

He was not interested until he learned that with a successful band he could earn as much as \$25,000, which was the amount he needed to complete his education. The band he formed was an enlargement of the group he had used at the concert: a string quartet and his clarinet, with one trumpet, one saxophone and a rhythm section. But when he arrived in the real world of dance halls and nightclubs, he found himself bucking a tide that clamored for what he later described as 'chewing drummers and loud swing fanaticism.' So he formed a new band with the same instrumentation as Goodman's, promising it would be 'the loudest band in the whole damn world.' . . . [H]e had already shortened [his name] to Art Shaw. But when he became a bandleader on radio, there were complaints that an announcement of his name sounded like a sneeze. So he made one more change, to Artie Shaw. As this band developed during a long run at the Roseland-State Ballroom in Boston, the original concept changed to a concentration on smoothly swinging treatments of the music of Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Vincent Youmans and others. This new concept was epitomized in an arrangement by Jerry Gray, a violinist in Mr. Shaw's original string-quartet band, of *Begin the Beguine*. Released in the fall of 1938, Mr. Shaw's recording of the Porter song became a classic of swing era jazz and allowed him to take over the swing band pre-eminence that Mr. Goodman had held for three years. Mr. Shaw, however, was not prepared to put up with the demands of his fans, the bobby-soxers who mobbed him and tore his clothes, and whom he called morons. In December 1939, the tension finally made him walk off the bandstand at the Cafe Rouge of the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City and disappear. 'I wanted to resign from the planet, not just music,' he said later. . . . He disappeared to what was then a little-known village in Mexico -- Acapulco -- where he was ignored for three months until he rescued a woman from drowning and reporters found out who he was. Then he returned home to Hollywood. He owed RCA Victor six more recordings on his contract, so he formed a 31-piece studio band with 13 strings and recorded, among other things, a tune he had heard a group playing on a wharf in Acapulco. It was called *Frenesi* and, like *Begin the Beguine*, it set off a new career for him just when he was trying to get out of an old one. The success of *Frenesi* meant he had to form a traveling band once again. This one included a small group, the Gramercy Five, a variation of Goodman's small groups except that it added a jazz harpsichord, played by John Guarneri. In December 1941, Mr. Shaw flew to California and married Elizabeth Kern, the daughter of Jerome Kern, before enlisting in the Navy. After an initial period of anonymity in the service, he became a chief petty officer and was ordered to form a band. When he heard the band members he had been given, he went AWOL ('tacitly,' as he said) in order to see the Secretary of the Navy, James V. Forrestal. 'I want to get into the war!' Mr. Shaw told him. 'And if I have to run a band, I want it to be good.' . . . In the next 10 years he formed several short-lived bands, including one that played modern classical music in a New York jazz club called Bop City, and one that was in tune with the bebop era but that was scorned by audiences who had come to hear *Begin the Beguine* and *Frenesi*. In March 1954, after a playing with a small group at the Embers in New York, he announced his retirement at age 43.

He never performed again, although in 1983 he formed an Artie Shaw Orchestra to play his old arrangements and some newer music. It was directed by Dick Johnson, a saxophonist and clarinetist, and Mr. Shaw appeared with it occasionally as a nonplaying conductor. 'I did all you can do with a clarinet,' he said in a 1994 interview, 'Any more would have been less.' Two years before his retirement, he wrote a well-received autobiography, *The Trouble with Cinderella*. He continued to write, and published two books of short stories, *I Love You, I Hate You, Drop Dead!* and *The Best of Intentions*, and had begun a three-volume novel about a troubled young musician. He became a cattle farmer, a producer and distributor of films, a successful competitor in shooting high-powered target rifles, and a lecturer on the college circuit offering a choice of four subjects: *The Artist in a Material Society*, *The Swingers of the Big Band Era*, *Psychotherapy and the Creative Artist* and *Consecutive Monogamy and Ideal Divorce*, in which he presented himself as 'the ex-husband of love goddesses and an authority on divorce.' His source material for this last lecture came from his experience with eight wives, who included, in addition to Miss Kern, three movie stars (Lana Turner, Ava Garner and Evelyn Keyes) and an author (Kathleen Windsor, who wrote the 1940's best-seller *Forever Amber*). 'People ask what those women saw in me,' Mr. Shaw said in an interview with *The New York Times*. 'Lets face it, I wasn't a bad-looking dude. But that's not it. It's the music; it's standing up there under the lights. A lot of women just flip; looks have nothing to do with it. You call Mick Jagger good-looking?' All his marriages ended in divorce" [John S. Wilson, *The New York Times*, 12/31/04].

Comment

By the Numbers

Number of living composers on *The New York Times*'s 25 Best Classical CD's of 2004

5

[William Bolcom - *Songs of Innocence and Experience*
 Peter Maxwell Davies - "*Naxos*" *Quartets Nos. 1 and 2*
 Michael Daugherty - *Bells for Stokowski*
 Michael Gordon - *Light Is Calling*
 Phil Kline - *Zippo Songs*]

Items

Artwork in an exhibition that drew thousands to the Chelsea Market for its opening last week was abruptly taken down over the weekend after the market's managers complained about a portrait [by Christopher Savido] of President Bush fashioned from tiny images of chimpanzees, according to the show's curator.

Howard O. Stier
The New York Times, 12/13/04

On a recent afternoon, Kurt Masur stood backstage at Avery Fisher Hall studying an excerpt from the score of *La Mer*. The great Toscanini had marked it up, presumably to achieve a more striking effect, but Mr. Masur disagreed. "It's nonsense," he said. "Debussy was a wonderful orchestrator -- he didn't need any of this."

Jeremy Eichler
The New York Times, 12/31/04

Publications

Richard Taruskin. *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. "The objective was not to write another Paul Henry Lang [*Music in Western Civilization*] but another Donald Grout, *The History of Western Music*, which came out in 1960 and is still the textbook used in most music history classes. There have been many attempts to unseat it, all unsuccessful. So I thought, why not try? [I]f you look at the earlier books, they are usually more detailed up to the 18th century and become less detailed through the 19th and 20th. I don't know why that is. Maybe because musicology was originally an antiquarian kind of pursuit. But my book is the opposite. The five volumes of actual text are distributed so that the first one goes through the 16th century, the second takes in the 17th and 18th, the third is given over entirely to the 19th, and the fourth and fifth divide the 20th" [Richard Taruskin, *The New York Times*, 12/19/04].

Barry Miles. *Frank Zappa: A Biography*. Grove Press.

Gloria Vanderbilt. *It Seemed Important at the Time*. "I find sex endlessly interesting,' heiress Gloria Vanderbilt writes in the beginning of her slim new memoir. . . . Vanderbilt recalls [Frank] Sinatra 'circling around my secret heart' and revealing his inner soul at midnight suppers, but that much-headlined fling finally ended. So did three of her marriages: to Hollywood agent Pat De Cicco; to the imperious symphony conductor Leopold Stokowski . . . , father of two sons; and to film director Sidney Lumet" [Bob Thomas, *Associated Press* 11/27/04].

Recordings

Mastodon. *Leviathan*. Relapse. "Metal has more than a little in common with jazz, which may be one of the reasons I like it. . . [B]oth kinds of music have a few big, durable, long-haul names -- Metallica, Ozzy Osbourne, Wynton Marsalis, Keith Jarrett (I have never typed those proper nouns in a row before) -- and, miles beneath them, hundreds of good-to-great bands . . . Both kinds of musicians . . . are deeply concerned with technique, and deal with essential aesthetic issues of style and progress. There is a dominant sound (or several) in jazz, as there is in metal, and for the last 20 years adjustments to those dominant sounds have been made at a much slower rate. . . . To an outsider, great swaths of metal sound just about the same. Ditto jazz. Generally speaking, both kinds of music rest on an underground, highly coded premise in the if-you-have-to-ask-you'll-never-know category. These circumstances make it possible for a great metal record to appear without the larger world of popular music ever knowing about it. *Leviathan* . . . has so far been that kind of record . . . *Leviathan* is a song cycle based on Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The band's drummer, Brann Dailor, was reading the novel last year and came across the early passage that calls the whale "the salt-sea Mastodon" [Ben Ratliff, *The New York Times*, 12/27/04].

Gavril Popov. *Symphony No. 1*. Dmitri Shostakovich. *Theme and Variations*. Leon Botstein, London Symphony. Telarc. "Shostakovich had a kind of protean musical genius that could take the shape of any container it was poured into. But what would have happened if his genius had been less adaptable? He might have ended up like Gavril Popov: virtually unknown . . . 32 years since his death. These two composers had remarkably similar backgrounds. Both were daring young stars ascending in the Soviet firmament until the state intervened and censured them in the 1930's. Shostakovich adapted and recovered artistically; Popov did not. With this excellent new recording of Popov's early first Symphony, Leon Botstein and the London Symphony show us just how big Popov might have been. There are echoes of Shostakovich's tart writing, but there is also much that is original. Popov comes off as a playful experimenter who seems to have thrown many of the progressive schools of his day into a blender. His canvasses are huge, and it is no surprise to learn that he later supported himself by writing film music" [Jeremy Eichler, *The New York Times*, 12/19/04].

Zhou Long. *Tales from the Cave*. Zhou Long, Music From China. Delos. "The title work, for Chinese string instruments (an erhu and a banhu) and Chinese and Western percussion, uses vibrant folk themes to evoke dances depicted in ancient cave frescoes near Dunhuang, in northeastern China. Folk music is also the basis of *Valley Stream*, for dizi (bamboo flute), guanzi (a reed instrument), zheng (zither), and percussion. In *Secluded Orchid, Eternity* and sections of *Five Elements*, Mr. Zhou uses [Chinese instruments] (with cello and, in *Five Elements*, clarinet) to create an otherworldly atmosphere that is meditative but never soporific. The other side of the coin is the frenetic style that propels "Fire," a movement of *Five Elements*" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 12/19/04].

Writers

MARTIN ANDERSON writes for *The Independent*, wherein the present article first appeared.

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DAVID CLEARY's music has been played throughout the U.S. and abroad, including performances at Tanglewood and by Alea II and Dinosaur Annex. A member of Composers in Red Sneaker, he has won many awards and grants, including the Harvey Gaul Contest, an Ella Lyman Cabot Trust Grant, and a MacDowell residence. He is a staff critic for *The New Music Connoisseur* and 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC. His article on composing careers is published by Gale Research and he has contributed CD reviews to the latest *All Music Guide to Rock*. His music appears on the Centaur and Vienna Modern Masters labels, and his bio may be found in many *Who's Who* books.

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