

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top, is seated and playing a guqin. She is looking upwards and to the left. Several bright red laser lines crisscross the scene, creating a dynamic, geometric pattern. One line passes through her raised right hand. To her left, a silver tripod stands. The background is dark, and the lighting is dramatic, highlighting the woman and the instrument.

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Look! Up in the Sky! It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's Miya Masaoka!

MARK ALBURGER

Miya Masaoka. *For Birds, Planes & Cello*. San Diego Canyon field recording and cellist Joan Jeanrenaud. Solitary B. miyamasaka.com.

Miya Masaoka. *While I Was Walking, I Heard a Sound...* Volti, San Francisco Choral Society, Ensemble of Piedmont Choirs, Sound Color Ensemble, conducted by Robert Geary. Solitary B. solitaryb.com.

Miya Masaoka (b. 1958, Washington, D.C.) is an Bay Area composer and instrumentalist who performs on the 17-string Japanese koto, often augmenting it with preparations and electronic triggers (as in *Koto Monster*, where additional laser beams hover over the instrument).

Masaoka's compositions have included unusual sound sources such as hives of bees, or the amplified sounds of human bodies (brain waves, heartbeats. *What's the Difference Between Stripping and Playing the Violin?* was performed on a down-and-out plaza on San Francisco's Market Street, utilizing an ensemble of dozens of musicians, a pair of male and female exotic dancers, and taped interviews with sex workers.

She has also done performance art utilizing Madagascar hissing cockroaches and bees crawling across her body, in reference to Yoko Ono's *Fly*.

Masaoka is a founding member of the electro-acoustic improvisation and experimental trio Maybe Monday with saxophonist Larry Ochs (Rova Saxophone Quartet) and guitarist Fred Frith, and married to composer-trombonist George Lewis, with whom she has had a child.

Two recent recordings on Solitary B continue to demonstrate the breadth and diversity of her work.

For Birds, Planes & Cello is characterized as "a continuous field recording with cello." Masaoka notes:

"I am taken with the sounds of the San Diego canyon. Airplanes flying overhead form an elongated rhythm with the quality of ocean waves washing over me. At 5:30 AM, the calls of more than 150 varieties of migratory and native birds are so resounding that one could think of each bird as a little jet plane.

I recorded these field sounds with the invaluable help of Marcos Fernandes in a canyon a few blocks from his home in San Diego. I then recorded Joan Jeanrenaud playing examples of extended techniques that resembled certain frequencies and timbres that I wanted to emphasize in the recording. While she listened to excerpts of the field recording, I asked her to match certain sounds. In the studio, I mixed the acoustic cello

material with the intact field recording to create the finished work. This piece was premiered at the Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California, March 26, 2004."

For a site-specific piece, she is rather coy as to the exact location, which is obviously a fecund one from the avian point of hearing and view. One assumes that the location must be close to the airport, which suggests no particularly near canyon according to maps at hand. The best guess would be the environs of Balboa Park's Palm Canyon, which would have sufficient (much of it being non-native) vegetation to support an aviary, be in the flight-path of mechanical air-traffic, yet somewhat isolated from other noises of the big city. And if this is indeed the location, Masaoka's coyness may be justified, in that a city park may not be legally open at such an early hour...

This is a beautiful piece -- evocative, steady-state dronal minimalism / "environmentalism" which sustains interest over its 54:25 duration, with Joan Jeanrenaud's celloistic sustains blending, intermingling, and reacting to the mechanical waves of sound. The birds chirp and float above, and there is no instrumental attempt to analogize their sounds in a George Crumbian "seagull" or any other manner. Not that this would be a bad thing, either....

After this, *While I Was Walking, I Heard a Sound...* comes off as almost traditional, in the spirit of drones and extended vocal techniques reaching back at least to Gyorgy Ligeti, via Meredith Monk, Kui Dong, and many others. It is an impressive tour-de-force of co-ordinated vocal masses, and both a light-hearted and yet very serious time is had by all.



Chronicle

June 1

Los Angeles Philharmonic in Esa-Pekka Salonen's new Piano Concerto. Disney Hall, Los Angeles, CA.

Death of Bo Diddley (b. Otha Ellas Bates, c. 1929, McComb, MS) of heart failure, at 79. Archer, FL.

Blanca Uribe performs Isaac Albeniz's Iberia (1908). New York, NY. "The French composer Paul Dukas accused the Spanish composer and virtuoso pianist Isaac Albéniz of handling his colors as lavishly as his money. Albéniz indeed illustrates the scorching colors of Andalucía with Technicolor brilliance in Iberia, described by Messiaen as "the masterpiece of Spanish music." The work's many shades emerge from a tangle of notes so fiendishly difficult that few pianists tackle them in public. Once the province of a handful of artists, in particular the brilliant Spanish pianist Alicia de Larrocha. . . . The work has also had a strong advocate in the Colombian pianist Blanca Uribe The 12 movements of Iberia, a remarkable aural snapshot of southern Spain, incorporate melodies and rhythms derived from flamenco and take their titles from Spanish towns (Málaga, Almería), dances (El Polo) and a religious procession (Corpus Christi en Sevilla). In Triana (named after the Gypsy quarter in Seville), Albéniz conjures guitars and castanets and the dance forms pasodoble and Sevillana with music so evocative that you feel as if you'd just wandered into a fragrant Andalusian courtyard. Albéniz, a Catalan, finished the work in Paris in 1908, shortly before his death. He meshes nostalgia and nationalism with Lisztian virtuosity and Debussian impressionism, at times softening the rawness of southern Spain with a languid French elegance. Ms. Uribe . . . produced a powerful sound and captured the spirit of this athletic piece. . . . Corpus Christi en Sevilla[s] . . . layers of sound and color make it sound like a piano duet. Ms. Uribe conveyed the dark-hued nostalgia of the opening Evocación and played the jagged rhythms of El Puerto, which portrays the bustle of a fishing village near Cádiz, with sharp definition. Throughout the work she highlighted the complex inner voices with clarity [T]he melancholy Jeréz . . . [is] named after that sherry producing city . . . and Eritaña, the festive concluding movement . . . refers to a popular inn on the outskirts of Seville where flamenco was played. . . . In El Albaicín, named after the Gypsy quarter of Granada, Ms. Uribe vividly illuminated the sounds of flamenco guitars and dancers in the broiling Andalusian heat" [Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times, 6/4/08].



Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "Takemitsu's Cassiopeia (1971) [is] a percussion concerto that takes both its name and its unusual seating pattern from this W-shaped constellation. Winds were placed within the string groups, and a huge percussion array occupied center stage. But the ensemble layout barely mattered, because the orchestral writing is so thoroughly subsidiary to the percussion. Jonathan Haas, the soloist, gave a virtuosic performance on all manner of bells, blocks, canisters (metal and wood), gongs, drums and cymbals (some suspended directly over his head) as well as a kettledrum said to be the largest in the world, with a diameter of 74 inches. . . . Botstein offered two large rarities. Andrzej Panufnik's Sinfonia di Sfere (1975) may seem to have a spacey title, but the 'spheres' are actually geometric shapes that were part of Mr. Panufnik's conception of his score. Instrumental placement, however, is central: four brass soloists (on trumpet, horn, trombone and tuba) are seated at the front of the stage, with a pianist at the center of the orchestra and three percussionists at the sides and back. The percussion counterpoint was often arresting, and the last of the score's three large sections presented the piano and brass players vigorously. . . . Sfaerernes Musik (1918) [is] an idiosyncratic work by the Danish composer Rued Langgaard. This 'Music of the Spheres' was spacey in every way: eerie, pianissimo string clusters open the work, and expand to include thundering timpani figures, rippling woodwind lines reminiscent of Debussy, and dense choral writing (sung by the Dessoff Choirs). An ample contingent from the orchestra, along with Carolyn Betty, a powerful soprano soloist, performed from the back of the hall, in the first-tier balcony, so that during parts of the work the audience was in the middle of Mr. Langgaard's quirky textures. Mr. Botstein ended with two classic works by Ligeti, Apparitions (1958-59) and Atmosphères (1961), the second famous for its appearance in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. These explorations of tightly compressed tone clusters . . . were given the most polished performances" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 6/3/08].



June 2

Peter Westergaard's *Alice in Wonderland*. Symphony Space, New York, NY. "a straightforward if mildly quirky setting of the Lewis Carroll fantasy. . . . The work is scored for seven singers, and along with a conductor, that's the entire performing force. Except for the soprano responsible for Alice, each cast member sings multiple roles and contributes to a choral backing that takes the place of an orchestral accompaniment. The singers also play light percussion instruments (most notably handbells). . . . [O]peratic devices like repeating fragments of the text and suspending time are dispensed with and for the most part so are arias and set pieces. Ensembles are scarce as well, though when Mr. Westergaard provides them -- in the Mad Hatter's tea party and the trial scene -- they give the score its few truly tuneful moments. Otherwise the vocal writing is angular and declamatory; often it is just idiosyncratically inflected speech" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/5/08].



June 4

Festival of American Music. Symphony Space, New York, NY. Programs through June 7. "In its heyday the American Composers Alliance fostered several important institutions, most notably CRI (Composers Recordings Inc.), a label that specialized in new American music, and the American Composers Orchestra. But that was midway through the last century. These days the alliance works mostly behind the scenes, publishing, archiving and advocating for American music. In a way it has been hobbled by its success: American music just isn't as hard to sell now as it was in 1937, when Aaron Copland helped found the organization. Some of it is downright popular. The alliance's public face since 2000 has been its annual Festival of American Music. This year's edition, five concerts in four days, opened on [June 4] Mostly the concerts offer chamber music, but opening night was devoted to choral works, performed by the New York Virtuoso Singers. . . . Ten composers were represented, but the range of musical accents was fairly slender: most leaned on the mildly dissonant, slightly jazzy shimmer that has been typical in American choral writing since the 1950's. Mark Zuckerman, in *Two Browning Settings* (1998-99); Brian Fennelly, in *Soon Shall the Winter's Foil* (1994); and Robert Ceely, in *Five Contemplative Pieces* (2000), used that style eloquently [T]he writing was more solidly chordal . . . in Gregory Hall's *April* (2005), Louis Karchin's *To the Stars* (2003) and Edward Jacobs's intriguingly morphing *When Time* (2007) A few works stood slightly apart from the shared harmonic style. One was Jody Rockmaker's warmly harmonized *Yiddish Choruses* (2006). The only work here overtly to accommodate folk influences, it included a lovely lullaby, *Shlof Meyn Kind*, and a zesty setting of a classic Passover song, *Ma Noymar Uma Nedaber*. Another departure, heading in a different, more abstruse direction, was John Eaton's foray into microtonality in *Duo* (1977), which treated contrasting biblical texts (God as both the refuge of the faithful and a source of retribution) with solo and choral sections pulling in opposite directions. Cynthia Richards Wallace gave a fearless, polished account of the microtonal solo soprano line. [Director Harold] Rosenbaum closed his program with Elliott Schwartz's vibrant and at times appealingly cacophonous *Two Watterson Poems* (2004), with light percussion accompaniment, and Steven R. Gerber's *Sessions of Sweet Silent Thought* (2003-4), a set of five richly harmonized settings of Shakespeare sonnets about love and death (mostly death). In these the choir's performance was beyond reproach" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/6/08].



Lorin Maazel conducts Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 9. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "[I]n his Apollonian way, Mr. Maazel conveyed the bitterness and melancholy of this farewell work. Mahler composed the symphony mostly during the summer of 1909, holed up in a studio near a forest in South Tyrol. Two years earlier he had suffered the loss of a daughter to a fatal illness and received a diagnosis of the heart disease that would cause his death in 1911. Mahler intended this 80-minute work, with its unconventional four-movement structure (it begins and ends with slow movements of nearly 30 minutes each), as an expression of anger, sarcasm, and, especially, resignation in the face of death. The haunting first movement is the most elusive, and it was here that Mr. Maazel was particularly insightful. Analysts have described the movement as an unorthodox sonata form, a kind of rondo or some strange hybrid of the two. The composer Alban Berg simply saw it as a pattern of tender ruminations repeatedly interrupted by fitful premonitions of death. As the performance began, Mr. Maazel eerily captured the sensation of a piece beginning in fragments, like random thoughts in Mahler's distracted mind: a sputtered motif in the cellos and horns, a syncopated rhythm lurching in the background, an insistent four-note snippet in the harps. But, as played here, these halting fragments subtly coalesced into an undulant accompaniment that cushioned the main theme, a longing melody in the violins, played with beautiful calm and warmth. But that tender music is regularly shunted aside as visions of the abyss intrude in the form of fearsome outbursts and brassy chaos. Instead of milking these passages, Mr. Maazel made the terror more visceral by emphasizing how radically the music fractures apart and pushes at the boundaries of tonal harmony. It was fascinating to hear the insolent Rondo: Burleske movement, a riot of counterpoint, played with such precision. Here Mahler seemed to be saying to the specter of death: "You think my mind is slipping? Well, just listen to this nifty fugato." And in the sublimely lyrical final movement, Mr. Maazel, who can sometimes be exasperating with his mannered phrasing, shaped the melodic lines with grace, restraint and sensitivity" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/6/08].



June 5

Da Capo Players. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY. "[T]he Da Capo Chamber Players resisted the lure of the new and revisited seven substantial works by five composers. A few, in truth, had already found an afterlife. Luciano Berio's *Sequenza I*, for example, is a staple of the solo flute repertory. But this is the work's 50th anniversary; surely it deserved the passionate, warm-blooded performance that Patricia Spencer gave it. And *Sequenza VIII* (1976), for violin, is not played as much as it should be. Curtis Macomber negotiated its intricate textures — juxtapositions of the jagged and the silken, and pianissimo double-stopped trilling punctuated by sharp-edged fortissimo chords -- with a thrilling virtuosity. Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms* for instruments and electronic sound are famous but rarely heard. In *Synchronisms No. 2* (1964), the taped and live string and woodwind lines begin in parallel universes but eventually move toward common ground. *Synchronisms No. 12* (2006) works similarly, setting a solo clarinet against an electronic texture built of sampled (and heavily processed) clarinet tones. Meighan Stoops, in her vibrant, richly shaded performance, began by weaving her line through the recorded sounds as if through an obstacle course, and eventually used overblowing and other extended techniques to match the electronic timbres. The main attraction of Chinari Ung's *Spiral I* (1987), scored for cello, piano and percussion, is the seamlessness with which it blends contemporary Western harmonic conventions and Asian melodic influences. Asian timbres are approximated as well, with the cello line, played by André Emelianoff, sometimes sliding between pitches. Elsewhere, Blair McMillen, the pianist, and Matthew Gold, the percussionist, played tandem lines with an otherworldly shimmer. Sebastian Currier's substantial *Static* (2003) toyed with the dual meaning of its title, with sustained, hazy chords that represented both stasis and white noise (as in radio static) as a starting point. But mostly the work escaped both definitions: its woodwind, string and piano writing was fleet, imaginative and at times arrestingly beautiful. *Rotae Passionis* (1983), an early Christopher Rouse score, closed the program on an electrifying if devotionally somber note. A 25-minute textless passion play, the piece uses violent wallops of percussion, wailing string and woodwind lines and dissonant piano writing to describe the final days of Jesus, from Gethsemane to the tomb, ending in a meditative pianissimo movement" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/7/08].



Alondra de la Parra conducts the Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas in Jan Jarvlepp's *Garbage Concerto*, with Tambuco. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

June 7

Variations on the Ghost of Sousa Dancing. San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra in Allan Crossman's *Coastal Ghost*, Gary Friedman's *Concerto for Erhu and Orchestra*, Loren Jones's *Haight-Ashberry* and *The Castro* from *Dancing on the Brink of the World*, Mark Alburger's *Block 4* from *Camino Real*, and *The Sousa Variations*, a joint collaboration by Alexis Alrich (*MinSu*), David Graves (*Sousa Variant*), Alburger (*Variations on Americana*), Erling Wold (*On the Death of David Blakely*), Michael Cooke (*Stripes and Stars*), and Jones (*Stars and Stripes for Desert*). Old First Church, San Francisco, CA.

Antheil's *Legacy*, conceived by the composer and producer Charles Amirkhanian, featuring a performance of George Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique* arranged by Paul D. Lehrman for eight Yamaha Disklavier pianos and a robotic orchestra of electronic percussion instruments equipped with mechanical mallets and programmed to play themselves. 3LD Art & Technology Center, New York, NY. "In the concert, *Ballet Mécanique* was preceded by performances of recent works by Luke Thomas Taylor, Harris Wulfson, and Lukas Ligeti that explore various uses of digital music-making. For the "*Ballet Mécanique*" performance, modern technology has made possible the precise coordination of player pianos that Antheil conceived, but never realized. Antheil's hard-driving and obsessive music picks up the barbaric rhythms and crunching dissonance of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* and carries things to extremes. Still, the mood is lightened with jazzy riffs, echoes of ragtime and evocations of the industrial age, complete with a siren. To hear all this realized with such breezy accuracy by the self-playing pianos (four on each side of the stage, some of them suspended from above) and the other robotic instruments was a musical and visual treat" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/9/08].

June 11

Colorado Symphony in Giya Kancheli's *Styx*. Boettcher Concert Hall, Denver, CO. "Kancheli's gripping 35-minute *Styx* (1999), for viola, chorus and orchestra . . . weaves a tribute to dead colleagues from the former Soviet Union into a multifarious text that begins in Georgian and ends in English" [James R. Oestreich, *The New York Times*, 6/17/08].



Zeena Parkins's *Quartet With Three Gay Men* and *Really Queer Dance With Harps*, to choreography by Neil Greenberg, with the composer and two others on harps. Dance Theater Workshop, New York, NY. Through June 21. "It's a mystery why sometimes a few people moving on a stage in apparently random patterns can look so right. In the first 10 seconds -- maybe 5 -- of *Dance* by Neil Greenberg's *Quartet With Three Gay Men*, the oddly graceful, undulating movements of the four dancers, the jangly sounds of Zeena Parkins's score, and Michael Stiller's clear, bright light have the immediate effect of a poem. Meaning is compressed and harbored, to be released in thrilling fragments, inconclusive and richly layered. . . . Mr. Greenberg danced with Merce Cunningham's company for seven years, and watching his dancers in their strange mix of the balletic and the graceless as they collect and disperse on the stage is like watching Mr. Cunningham's work refracted through a prism. Like Mr. Cunningham's artistry, Mr. Greenberg's resonates through its confluence of the random and the necessary; the continuous stream of motion in which no one moment is particularly important and each is beautiful; the almost magical quality of occasional formal symmetries" [Roslyn Sulcas, *The New York Times*, 6/14/08].



June 12

Benjamin Britten's chamber opera *The Rape of Lucretia*. Central City Opera, CO. Through June 20. "The cast is small and symmetrical: male and female 'choruses' of one, to contextualize and moralize; the title character, a rare female central figure in Britten, and her two attendants; the princely villain Tarquinius and his two comrades. Set in Rome in about 500 B.C. and based on an incident thought to have helped pave the way for the republic, the tale, in the libretto by Ronald Duncan, is strongly in keeping with current sensibilities that see rape as being more about power than about sex. Tarquinius can see the recently proven chastity of Lucretia, the wife of his comrade Collatinus, only as a challenge. He conquers her body, but she retains her will and kills herself in shame. The director here, Paul Curran, advances the action to the mid-20th century, seeing the story as allegory. The transplantation is unproblematic apart from the text's many references to Etruscans and the like, and it makes slightly less anomalous the opera's grafting of a message of Christian salvation onto the plot. Britten's music, spare at the start and then quirky and claustrophobic, gradually flows into pools of radiant lyricism. David Martin Jacques's lighting follows suit, keeping Kevin Knight's rudimentary scenery pretty much in the dark through the midnight of the soul, then turning both congruently and incongruently sunny as morning arrives, with a horrible realization and tragedy in tow. In the mezzo-soprano role of Lucretia, which has attracted stellar proponents like Kathleen Ferrier (who created it) and Janet Baker, Phyllis Pancella was more than respectable, singing with warm tone and finding both a vulnerability and a backbone in the character that would make the denouement credible. At the other extreme, in the thankless baritone role of Tarquinius, Brian Mulligan's ringing, clear tone and bluff manner well merited both the affection and the scorn in the boos that greeted his curtain call. Vale Rideout and Melina Pyron, as the Male and Female Chorus, were invariably communicative and flexible in their rich mix of song, speech and everything between. Arthur Woodley proved a sturdy Collatinus, until sturdiness was no longer possible, and Joshua Hopkins was a strong partner as Junius. Sarah Jane McMahon warbled sweetly as the volatile Lucia, and Maria Zifchak was pleasant as the slightly officious Bianca. In the end, what impressed most was the fine balance of the cast, essential to sustaining the work's intricate symmetry, as well as of the 13 instrumentalists, conducted by Damian Iorio" [James R. Oestreich, *The New York Times*, 6/14/08].

June 13

Opera Colorado stages John Adams's *Nixon in China*. Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Denver, CO. "The pit orchestra was the Colorado Symphony, and its sonorous projection and fine internal balances made especially clear how much Mr. Adams's harmonies and orchestration owe to the neo-Classical Stravinsky" [James R. Oestreich, *The New York Times*, 6/17/08].

Ensemble ACJW. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "[T]he Academy [is] a select training program run by Carnegie Hall, the Juilliard School and the Weill Music Institute (hence the elusive ACJW). But for their final concert of the season . . . the musicians chose the pieces and, always a delicate matter, decided who should play what part in each work. Every piece chosen explored the concept of concertato, the musical equivalent of a conversation in a lively, eclectic social setting: a boisterous pub, perhaps, as the program note suggested. A performance of [Thomas] Adès's *Chamber Symphony* (Op. 2) was followed by Mr. Carter's *Asko Concerto*, two formidably complex, viscerally exciting works of roughly 16 minutes each, scored for large, diverse ensembles. . . . Jacob Druckman's *Delizie Contente che l'Alme Beate* (1973), elaborates on an aria in Francesco Cavalli's opera *Giasone*. Scored for wind quintet and prepared tape, it evokes what it is like to have a nagging memory of a haunting piece. As the instruments play skittish riffs, fractured rhythms, wailing runs and frenzied outbursts, strands of the aria flit by, as if it were rattling around in Druckman's mind. Eventually the tape component brings the aria to the forefront, prodding the restless woodwinds to settle down and grapple with the old music. It helped immensely that the quintet first played Druckman's arrangement of the Cavalli aria itself. There was also a fetching performance of a short work, *East*, from *The Compass Pieces* by . . . Mauricio Kagel, a mischievous evocation of the East alive with two-step dance rhythms, slinky tunes and tart harmonies. . . . [Pablo] Heras-Casado began the program with a highly charged account of Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 4*. The playing had a jaunty swing and plenty of character, though the execution was occasionally shaky. It said something encouraging about the future of classical music that Mr. Adès's and Mr. Carter's music came more easily to these young musicians than Bach's. Isn't that how it should be?" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/16/08].

Steely Dan. Beacon Theater, New York, NY. Donald Fagen and Walter Becker . . . made disco-jazz-rock records, and they weren't bitter spoofs. Their intentions and lyrics were opaque and somewhat intellectual. And some of their songs were extremely good, the radio hits being among the best. For pop stars in decent health, a little opacity is a pension plan. At 60 and 58, Mr. Fagen and Mr. Becker, leading a new version of Steely Dan, are playing a five-night run Their opacity might be why so many people seemed to feel happily nostalgic for music that makes fun of nostalgia and why so many middle-aged women were at the Beacon on Friday night, enjoying songs that can get kind of creepy toward their female characters. Well, that and craft, both in composition and in performance" [Ben Ratliff, *The New York Times*, 6/16/08].



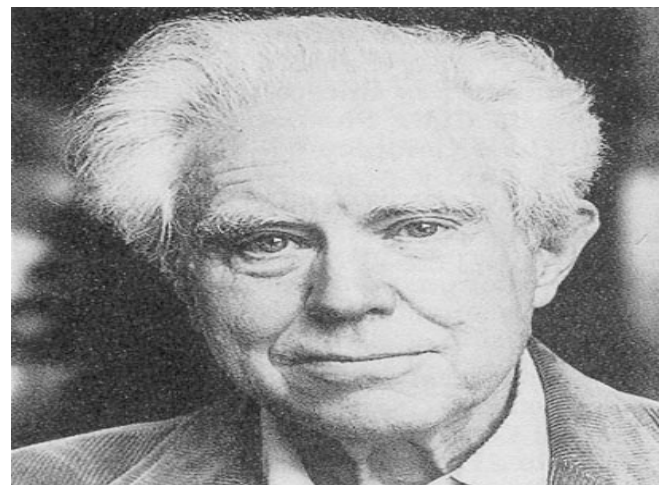
June 15

Members of the New York Philharmonic in Paul Hindemith's *Musikalische Blumengärtlein und Leyptziger Allerley* (1927, but published in 1995) and Maurice Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* (1907). "Ravel's supple balancing of a string quartet, woodwinds and harp creates an atmosphere nearly as lush as his orchestral music, but the real charm here is in the harp writing, which Nancy Allen played with a superb Gallic flair. The harp gets lost in an orchestra, surfacing to contribute occasional patches to texture and then disappearing for long stretches. The Ravel was a welcome reminder of how fine a player Ms. Allen is. The Hindemith is an odd work. Its unwieldy title, which translates as *Little Musical Flower Garden and Leipzigish Assortment*, suggests its light spirit, as does its peculiar scoring for clarinet and double bass. Its nine movements are each little more than a minute long, but they cover ample ground, with singing lines for both instruments, plenty of engaging counterpoint and a touch of Stravinskian acidity in its central *March of the Lions' Defense Brigade*. Mark Nuccio, the clarinetist, and Satoshi Okamoto, the bassist, gave it an alert, vital performance that brought out its sly humor" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/17/08].



June 16

Mannes College's Institute and Festival for Contemporary Performance: All-Carter program, with *Speculum Musicae*. Frederick Loewe Theater, New York University, New York, NY. "Perhaps when you approach 100, as Mr. Carter has, concerts of your music rate not one but two preperformance discussions. The first, on video, was an interview with Pierre Boulez by Marc Ponthus, the festival's director. The news here was that even for Mr. Boulez -- a master of dense modernism, as both a composer and an interpreter -- Mr. Carter's earlier works required several hearings before their structures began to seem clear. Later he acknowledged that Mr. Carter's recent scores are "more linear," which in Mr. Boulez's parlance means more immediately accessible. The video was followed by a brief panel discussion moderated by Mr. Ponthus, with Mr. Carter and members of *Speculum Musicae*, which has championed Mr. Carter's music since being formed in the early 1970's. Here, too, the difficulty (or not) of the music was a central issue. Several players, and Mr. Carter as well, spoke about how difficult the music seemed when it was new -- and how easy students (who grew up with these works) find it today. *Speculum* itself offered a demonstration of that. Few of its original members remain, and some on the current roster look as if they have been out of the conservatory for a matter of moments. But a performance of the *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello, and Harpsichord* (1952) by four of the group's younger players . . . was assured, polished and beautifully nuanced. Nothing about it seemed daunting to these musicians, so the salient feature of the reading was not the work's difficulty but the contrast between its neo-Classical surface and its prickly harmonic underpinning. Mr. Carter's *Figment III* (2007), for solo contrabass, packs a lot into a few minutes. Composed for (and performed by) Donald Palma, a member of *Speculum* since its early days, the score quickly takes in the full range of the bass, with isolated pizzicatos leaping out of a bowed line and aggressive double-stops punctuating a lyrical single line, almost as if they were an orchestral tutti. Mr. Smith and Mr. Nicolas returned, along with Curtis Macomber, the violinist, and Danielle Farina, the violist, to give a sharp-edged but shapely account of the *Oboe Quartet* (2001). And the concert ended with *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* (1975)" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/18/08].



Holland Festival: Louis Andriessen's *La Commedia* (after Dante's *Divine Comedy*), directed by Hal Hartley. Amsterdam, The Netherlands. "For the fourth time, Louis Andriessen, the prominent Dutch composer who still likes to think of himself as anti-establishment, has tried to write an anti-opera, and for the fourth time, he has failed. 'I'm not sure I'd call *La Commedia* an opera," filmmaker Hal Hartley wrote in the program book for the new work, produced by Netherlands Opera and given the last of six performances here Wednesday night as part of this year's Holland Festival. Maybe Hartley, who directed *Commedia* and created a cinematic component for the staging, wouldn't, but I would. In fact, I'd call this profoundly moving, if slyly unsentimental, meditation on life, love and death a great opera. Loosely based on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, it is Andriessen's 'Italian' opera and has the depth, musical richness and (I predict) lasting power of late Verdi. The shorthand for Andriessen is that he's an urban, confrontational Minimalist who has been mentor to the post-Minimalist generation, including the Bang on a Can crew. *Commedia* certainly includes grim, grimy urban elements. Moreover, the composer did his best to overthrow operatic trappings. As with his terrific earlier operas -- *De Materie*, *Rosa*, and *Writing to Vermeer* -- *Commedia* was written for Netherlands Opera, but this time Andriessen chose not to work in the company's opera house, Het Muziektheater. Instead he envisioned a 'film opera' for the unconventional Koninklijk Theater Carré, a former circus venue a few blocks up the Amstel River that has been converted into a striking performance space. In the pit, strident winds, brass and pounding percussion dominated a handful of strings to form what Hartley dubbed 'The Terrifying Orchestra of the 21st Century.' Expert amplification of solo singers and small chorus, along with superb electronic effects by Anke Brouwer, contributed a high-tech aura to the sound. The libretto is an assemblage of texts from *Divine Comedy* along with bits of the Old Testament, old Dutch folk songs and the 17th century Dutch writer Joost van den Vondel's *Lucifer* thrown in for good and/or diabolical measure. Paul Clay's set was hell as a construction site, with a lot of clear plastic beach balls (again, don't ask) and a hydraulic crane on which Beatrice could sing as if from on high and on which Lucifer could freak out. The orchestra was dressed as workers in overalls. . . . But most important, there was a lot to listen to. Andriessen's music is often forceful and driving, which is his characteristic style, especially in the first two scenes, both of which have been done in concert in Los Angeles. The second, a tour de force for Zavalloni, was a hit at the L.A. Philharmonic's Minimalist Jukebox festival in 2006. The *City of Dis* (short for Disney?) scene was a commission by the Master Chorale, which premiered it this past season. But these just hinted at the humor, the ingratiating jazziness, the terrible fury and, in the end, the ravishing grace of the later scenes. Andriessen finished the opera earlier this year as his wife, Jeannette, lay dying from a debilitating illness. The opera, which is dedicated to her memory, is what happened when the hippest, sassiest, most savvy major composer we have dealt with the most meaningful moment of his life and left nothing out. The orchestra included members of Amsterdam's two best new music groups, Asko and the Schönberg Ensemble. The choir,

which remained in the pit, was the vocal ensemble Synergy. Reinbert de Leeuw conducted. The performance was breathtaking, down to the kids with dirty faces who sang like angels (De Kickers Children's Chorus). *La Commedia* is an opera that should be seen again, and it will be. Netherlands Opera has filmed the performances and has asked Hartley to create a video version for DVD" [Mark Swed, *Los Angeles Times*, 6/20/08].

Riverside Symphony. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY. "The program's main draw was the New York premiere of George Tsontakis's *Violin Concerto No. 2* (2003), for which Mr. Tsontakis won the \$200,000 Grawemeyer Award in 2005. A compact, eventful score, it makes good use of the orchestra's resources -- particularly woodwind and percussion timbres that create an otherworldly shimmer and sparkle -- and treats the violin as both a distinctive solo voice and an essential strand within the ensemble texture. In its solo passages the violin often projects an old-fashioned rhapsodic style, which was magnified by Yevgeny Kutik's rich, sweet tone. The orchestral writing often had a sharper harmonic edge and used the solo violin more assertively and with an earthier sound. George Rothman led a thoroughly prepared, energetic performance. But there was something wrong with this picture. With no disrespect toward Mr. Rothman and the Riverside Symphony -- just the opposite, in fact -- wouldn't you think that a work awarded a prestigious prize would find a berth on a New York Philharmonic program? Apparently not. The Philharmonic, after all, hired the composer Steven Stucky to explain new music to its audiences but hasn't yet gotten around to playing Mr. Stucky's remarkable *Second Concerto* for Orchestra, which won the Pulitzer Prize the same year Mr. Tsontakis won the Grawemeyer. It's no wonder people think of the classical music world as sleepy. But they should look more closely at what independent ensembles are up to" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/20/08].



Holland Festival: Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila* Symphony. Muziekgebouw, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. "Construction is everywhere, especially along the docklands development that includes the astonishing new Muziekgebouw (a concert hall complex devoted to new music!). . . . In music, meanwhile, Messiaen has been manifest. The world is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the French composer's birth this year, but nowhere as extravagantly as here. This month at the Concertgebouw, the celebrated main concert hall, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra performed his first great orchestral work (*L'Ascension*), his last (*Éclairs sur l'Au-delà*) and his most famous (the "*Turangalila*" Symphony). The Radio Philharmonic took on the evening-long *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*. Dutch pianist Ralph van Raat played *Vingt regards sur L'Enfant-Jésus*. Messiaen's organ music was heard around town. And the Netherlands Opera produced his glorious epic opera, *Saint François d'Assise* -- gloriously. Why the Dutch have taken to this eccentric composer besotted by birds and mystical Catholicism is anyone's guess. But Amsterdam's enlightened accommodation of innovation and tradition, to say nothing of its acceptance of unconventionality, may have something to do with the city's fervent embrace of Messiaen. In the early '50s, Messiaen moved music forward with his formalized explorations of pitch and rhythmic structure, something that could possibly appeal to a country of builders as well as dreamers. He was a composer who readily entered into states of ecstasy, erotic and spiritual, both of which the Dutch also appear to be very good at. As for birds, head into the countryside on a bike trail here and surprisingly loud and varied avian serenades will be your soundtrack. . . . The symphony didn't go well [on June 20]. Mariss Jansons, the revered Latvian music director of the Concertgebouw, was to have conducted. But after six rehearsals and what was reported to be a ravishing first performance of the orgiastic 75-minute symphony [on June 19], he collapsed from exhaustion and had to relinquish the remaining two performances. [June 20], when I attended, an orchestra trumpet player and assistant conductor, Theo Wolters, stepped in with no rehearsal and essentially just beat time. [Mark Swed, *Los Angeles Times*, 6/25/08].

Shaw Sings! Philip Hagemann's *The Dark Lady* and *Passion, Poison, and Petrification* (after George Bernard Shaw and William Shakespeare). Symphony Space, New York, NY. "[H]is chords often leap to unexpected harmonies, and he injects grittiness into his music through the piling up of clusters and dissonance. . . . Hagemann's orchestration [is] for an ensemble of 14" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/21/08].



The Holland Festival, featuring music of Karlheinz Stockhausen. Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. "The Holland Festival -- a complex array of music, opera and theater along with unclassifiable ultra-hip events that began May 31 and runs through June 22 -- has had several interlocking themes this year. One has been the music of the German visionary composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, who had a long association with Dutch music and this 61-year-old event. As part of celebrations planned for Stockhausen's 80th birthday in August, the festival commissioned a new work. And although the composer died unexpectedly in December, he had finished the score. It had its premiere here . . . in a memorial concert that spanned his extraordinary career. The concert was held in Amsterdam's newest venue . . . -- a striking, 700-seat, flexible hall that juts out over the River IJ and provides fabulous harbor views. . . . Punkte [was] Stockhausen's first orchestral score, written in 1952 while he was a student in Paris of the late Olivier Messiaen, whose 100th birthday the festival is also celebrating. . . . *Litanei 97* [is] a 1997 a cappella work from the composer's late weirdo period. . . . [T]he premiere of *Glanz* [revealed] one in a series of chamber pieces called *Klang* (Sound) that Stockhausen was working on at the end of his life. There was to have been one piece for every hour of the day. *Glanz* is Hour 10. Collectively, *Klang* was meant as music for 'knocking on heaven's door' as the composer prepared for the next stage of his cosmic career. If this all seems a bit much, to some extent it was. The concert was overseen by Kathinka Pasveer, one of Stockhausen's companions, so it included the hokey ritualism that the composer wanted for his later mystical pieces. The Netherlands Chamber Choir members were dressed in cultish unisex white robes and moved in concentric circles as they sang, now and then adding silly choreographed hops. The three main players onstage for *Glanz* were positioned around a cheesy 4-foot pyramid that began to glow as the piece progressed. They too were made to look preposterous. The men wore white suits. The violist had on a chiffon gown, with petticoats and big bow, perfect for a high school prom in 1960. Colored lights created the mood for each piece. And yet all the music proved amazing. *Punkte* (Points) was Stockhausen's first experiment in creating what he called 'point music,' for which he found mathematical correlations between pitch, rhythm, dynamics and timbre. He was unhappy with the stiffness of the initial results, and he reworked the score several times over the next 40 years. The final version is an extravagant orchestral score that maintains a youthful experimental exuberance but with the addition of the sheer sensuality of sound that became one of Stockhausen's hallmarks. One thing *Punkte* retains from its original concept is its uncompromising difficulty for performers, and it has been little heard. But musicians are finally meeting its demands. . . . For [this] Radio Philharmonic Orchestra performance, the German conductor Wolfgang Lischke, a Stockhausen specialist, revealed a series of intricately made, lavishly colored, unconnected gestures occurring one after another for 27 minutes. *Litanei 97* uses a text in which Stockhausen compares himself to a radio receiving vibrations from a higher plane. He offers his music as a way for the rest

of us to tune in as well. What my built-in receiver got was pretty much static, the sound of choral hissing and crackling, notes swelling and falling, similar to the effect of stations being tuned in and out on old analog sets. Again the performance -- led by James Wood, who conducted in the center of the circle, opened each section of the piece with a solo intonation and ended each section hitting Japanese bowls -- was riveting. Glanz means, in German, 'brilliance' or 'shine.' That is something that has always characterized Stockhausen's sound. Whether he asked a musician to play a single note or to master an acrobatically virtuosic phrase, whether he worked with acoustic music or electronic, he always managed to get a little more resonance than anyone else, which is, I think, the key to his mysticism. Glanz, also given a brilliant performance, this time by members of the Dutch new music group Asko, lacks some of Stockhausen's earlier flamboyance. But he never distilled out the mesmerizing sonority he could achieve from the simplest trills or held notes. Although he intended the work for a clarinet, bassoon, and viola trio, the festival persuaded the composer to make the piece a little bigger. About midway through . . . an oboe piped in unexpectedly from the top balcony, in dialogue with the trio. Next, a trumpet and trombone, on either side of the middle balcony, had a short interaction with the stage players. Finally, a tuba player walked across the stage, honking. I can't explain why this all felt as consequential as it did, other than by noting that as a student of sound, Stockhausen had mastered by the end of his life a seemingly supernatural sonic power capable of casting a spell. The Dutch are as sophisticated and skeptical an audience as you will find anywhere. A standing ovation here is rare and special. They stood Thursday. So did I" [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 6/21/08].

June 21

Caramoor International Music Festival: Americans in Paris, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Katonah, NY. "Almost as soon as American music was weaned of its early dependency on German models it developed an adolescent crush on France. George Gershwin, of course, celebrated the allure of Paris. The relationship was consummated by the influential pedagogue Nadia Boulanger and her distinguished line of American students, chief among them Aaron Copland. . . . Inspired by this historical connection, pieces by Gershwin, Copland, Leonard Bernstein and the French composer Gabriel Fauré -- grandfathered in for having taught Boulanger -- were strung together. . . . [After] Bernstein's Paris Waltz from *Candide* . . . [Alisa] Weilerstein was featured in Fauré's *Élégie* and Bernstein's *Three Meditations* from 'Mass.' . . . In the gentle opening section of Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* [Igor Begelman] swung his horn in curls that matched the shape of his phrases. A busy cadenza with an ascending lick . . . led to a bouncy second movement colored with slurs and growls. Boulanger declined to take Gershwin as a student, despite Ravel's advocacy. Who knows what effect her drilling might have had? . . . Gershwin's *Piano Concerto in F* . . . [has a] melodic generosity and rhythmic verve . . . [Jon Kimura] Parker was an insightful, energetic soloist" [Steve Smith, The New York Times, 6/23/08].

June 22

The Holland Festival: Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François* and Osvaldo Golijov's *La Pasión Según San Marcos*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands. "Saint François . . . was a triumph . . . The Dutch enjoy a special relationship with this opera, which is more than five hours long and has next to no action. The central scene is St. Francis preaching, for some 45 minutes, to the birds -- and that comes at the end of a two-hour second act. It takes him an additional hour to die in the last act. The opera's premiere in 1983 in Paris was viewed as an old man's self-indulgence. However, a concert performance in the Dutch city of Utrecht three years later made a strong case for the music. At the 1992 Salzburg Festival, a production by Peter Sellars -- which was conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and featured the Los Angeles Philharmonic -- finally proved the opera's stage-worthiness. Amsterdam's inspired staging was by Pierre Audi, who heads both Netherlands Opera and the Holland Festival. It starred Rod Gilfry as an intense St. Francis, in what was clearly the performance of the Southern California baritone's career. Camilla Tilling was the Angel, with a voice that sounded in direct contact with heaven. Ingo Metzmacher conducted the Hague Philharmonic, which was seated on the stage and filled the Muziektheater with brilliance. . . . As Messiaen did to Francis, Golijov turned to the Evangelist Mark as an example of transcending the fear of death, only Golijov portrayed him using the idioms of Latin music and dance. . . . Deutsche Grammophon filmed it for DVD release next Easter. Dutch television broadcast it live and also beamed it into one of Amsterdam's parks. Golijov is not as easy a sell in Holland as Messiaen. I was taken aback by such phrases as 'Golijov as sponge' and 'Long live contamination' in the program book (which was in English and Dutch), but Robert Spano led a fluid performance, the score worked its usual magic, and the audience seemed plenty happy if not, as after François, transformed" [Mark Swed, Los Angeles Times, 6/25/08].

June 25

Bramwell Tovey conducts the New York Philharmonic in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Festive Overture*, excerpts from Sergei Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Sergei Rachmaninoff's *Piano Concerto No. 2*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

June 27

NeoLit Ensemble. Bargemusic, New York, NY. Chen Yi's *Night Thoughts* [is] a spare evocation of a Tang dynasty poem. . . . The writhing aggression of [Shulamit] Ran's *East Wind*, for solo flute, similarly surrounded a poignant theme. . . . Hilary Tann, born in Wales, evoked that country's hymns in *Llef*, for flute and cello. (The flute part, originally for Japanese shakuhachi, had many of that instrument's trademark gestures.) Two sections from *Cuatro Bosquejos Pre-Incaicos* by Gabriela Lena Frank, whose roots are Lithuanian, Chinese and Peruvian, vividly imagined the throbbing flute and gusty panpipes of Peru's pre-Incan cultures. In *Cover*, by Belinda Reynolds, vaporous tendrils of melody slowly curled over

constantly shifting rhythms. . . . Katerina Kramarchuk's Epilogue paid homage to Shostakovich with melancholy cello melodies, brusque piano fanfares and a recurrent four-note theme that seemed to say, 'SHOS-ta-KO-vich.' [Alexandre] du Bois commented from the stage that The Storm, her sonata for cello and piano (originally for violin and piano), recast the turbulent emotions she felt at 18 as a roiling tempest. Romantics might have deemed this sturm und drang; nowadays, to borrow a term from rock, it was pure emo" [Steve Smith, The New York Times, 7/1/08].

Comment

Item

In the five years that the [Los Angeles] Philharmonic has been playing in Walt Disney Concert Hall, it has become a better and bolder orchestra. The building itself, according to the Convention and Visitors Bureau, has replaced the Hollywood sign as the symbol of Los Angeles.

No festivals occurred last month in Disney, just business as usual. But business as usual meant one astonishing concert by the Philharmonic, or under its auspices, after another. Salonen's programs moved from large late-Romantic works by Brahms, Wagner and Mahler through the 20th century of Hindemith, Stravinsky, Debussy, Dutilleux and Bartók to today, with his own concerto. (A new cello concerto by the British composer Oliver Knussen would have been included but was not finished.) The performances had the rich glow of golden-age music-making.

The Philharmonic commissioned a new work from Canadian composer Derek Charke for the Kronos Quartet and the startlingly sensual Inuit singer Tanya Tagaq. The orchestra updated its Baroque series with Couperin heard through the ears of the stellar young British composer Thomas Adès, and it also commissioned a major new work for the Green Umbrella series from Adès and a video artist, Tal Rosner.

The final recital in the organ series was turned over to the father of all Minimalists, Terry Riley, who bathed the organ, which he named Hurricane Mama, in psychedelic lights and communed with the cosmos, reaching a climax that may still have some molecules wiggling in the far corners of the hall. But the mystical way had been paved a few days earlier by pianist Peter Serkin, who, as a late replacement for the ailing Pierre-Laurent Aimard, began the process of bending space and time with two intense pieces by Messiaen, every note played as if it were a funnel to God.

In Frank Gehry's architectural embrace of the future and in his reverence for traditional, illuminating acoustics, Disney made all this not only possible but also popular. Throughout May, the hall was full. Some people were turned away. The Philharmonic's daring did trouble several organ subscribers, who were quick with their e-mails; maybe Riley better

belonged among the new music events. On the other hand, I heard from anti-Minimalist audience members who unwittingly found their socks knocked off. And there were at least a few spectators who subscribed to the organ series simply to get good seats for Riley and then discovered the pleasures of Bach and Messiaen.

This is the real secret of the Disney and the Philharmonic magic. In some ways, the building may be the most modest, least innovative of all major modern concert venues. Its main job, once you're seduced inside, is to create a direct link between sound and its reception. The orchestra can hear itself. The audience has an immediate tactile connection with music that can be found only in the finest 19th century halls. The modernity of the setting, though, reminds us of the here and now, which makes new music feel right.

And it is the depth of the Philharmonic's sense of tradition that has made it the most relevant orchestra in America, and probably anywhere. . . .

Surely I don't need to tell you about Gustavo Dudamel, who will succeed Salonen next year after the conductor finishes his final, and 17th, season as music director.

The Philharmonic worthily expands, changes, evolves, its work never finished. But while the Music Center is aglow over Disney Hall, it shows no pleasure writing checks. Anything the center can do on the cheap, it does. Disney is not well cared for. Wood on the curved walls of the BP Hall, where the packed pre-concert talks are given, is warping. Walking around the exterior Sunday, I noticed pigeons nesting in the crevices. The steel looked as though it hadn't been cleaned in places for a long time. The garden, originally -- dare I say it? -- a symphony of color, with exciting, exotic blooms each season, is now bland. . . .

Right now, Disney is harshly lighted in a way that Gehry hates, and so do I. During daylight saving time, I find myself tempted to hike up the hill from The Times to concerts simply to enjoy the sight of the hall reflecting the sunset. In the winter, I prefer to drive because the lighting is so annoying.

The Music Center has gotten an enormous payback from Disney and now is coasting on the hall's fame. With the fifth anniversary coming up in September, this is the time for the center to listen to Uncle Walt and stop slouching toward utopia. Stand up straight, treat the baby right, sign the bloody checks. Disney's capacity to provide endless pleasure is well proven. But a living, breathing city needs a living, breathing symbol.

Mark Swed,
Los Angeles Times, 6/6/08



Recordings

Michael Gandolfi. Y2K Compliant. Boston Modern Orchestra Project, conducted by Gil Rose. BMOP/sound. "Gandolfi's music has some of the rigor of the mid-20th-century atonalists, but it also draws on the richness of melody and timbre prized by the neo-Romantics. You would not put his work firmly in either category, and that's probably for the best, since much of its appeal is in the ease with which it moves between those poles. One moment you're taken with its braininess, its structural logic and textural intricacy; the next you're struck by the flow of fresh ideas, vivid orchestration and rhythmic vitality, all of which give it a visceral punch. The three scores included here -- all played with warmth and precision, and beautifully recorded on the Boston Modern Orchestra Project's own label -- offer a good overview of Mr. Gandolfi's sensibility. Point of Departure (1988), an essay on the beauty of angularity, transforms themes couched in the clichés of academic serialism -- jumpy, zigzagging lines -- into likable characters within a bracing and sometimes dark-hued musical drama. Mr. Gandolfi has a great ear for effect: the glissandos and arching violin lines in the third movement of Point of Departure are hard to resist, and they turn up again at the start of Themes From a Summer Night (2001), a light-spirited 10-movement suite drawn from an incidental score Mr. Gandolfi wrote for a production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. A few movements are from earlier scores -- he was on a tight deadline -- but they work: the comic tone painting of Bottom Brays, from Pinocchio's *Adventures in Funland* (1999), suits Shakespeare's story just as well. Y2K Compliant (2000), the ephemeral title referring to fears that digital gadgets might stop working at the turn of the century, uses a bustling Neo-Classicism (tinged, as always, with sharp-edged modernism) to offer a tongue-in-cheek view of our mechanistic age" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/8/08].

Philip Glass. Songs and Poems. Tissues from "Naqoyqatsi." Wendy Sutter, cellist; David Cossin, percussionist; Philip Glass, pianist. Orange Mountain Music. 'Glass has written relatively little for solo instruments, perhaps because rhythm and texture are often crucial to the way his works unfold. But his recent *Book of Longing* (2006), a setting of Leonard Cohen poetry, included striking solo interludes, and one of the most ear-catching was a cello piece, performed in concert and on Mr. Glass's recording by Wendy Sutter, the cellist in the composer's ensemble. Mr. Glass went on to write *Songs and Poems* (2007), a set of seven movements for unaccompanied cello (outpacing Bach by one in his six suites) for Ms. Sutter. The work is already freighted with lore: Mr. Glass and Mr. Sutter fell in love during its composition, affording future music students a 21st-century Robert and Clara Schumann story, except that Mr. Glass is not barking mad. Oddly, given that undercurrent, Ms. Sutter is quoted in the notes describing the work as 'massively tragic.' Mr. Glass has never been a Schumannesque Romantic; even the most heartfelt, dramatically pointed scenes in his operas are the work of a careful rationalist. And at first the principal difference between this and earlier Glass works is that his repeated phrases are so intricately chromatic that repetition seems a

necessity rather than a technique; you need to hear the music again to mine all its implications. But the shift toward the dramatic begins by the third movement, and you finally see what Ms. Sutter means when you reach the work's centerpiece, Song V, with its intensely arching melodies, implied dialogues and passionate double-stopped passages. Ms. Sutter's rich-hued, supple playing conveys that passion and drama vividly, and she is equally compelling in a varied selection of movements from Mr. Glass's *Naqoyqatsi* film score (2002)" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 6/1/08].

20th-Century Duos for Violin and Cello. Gil Morgenstern, violinist; Darrett Adkins, cellist. Engine Company Records. "20th Century Duos for Violin and Cello . . . [features] works by Zoltan Kodaly, Roger Sessions and Maurice Ravel and performed by two brilliant and musically curious artists, the violinist Gil Morgenstern and the cellist Darrett Adkins. . . . [T]he music is terrific and the performances compelling on this surprisingly exciting and excellently engineered recording. . . . Kodaly's 1915 Sonata for Solo Cello, an audacious, moody and demanding work, is starting to become a staple of the cello repertory. This new recording should bring overdue attention to Kodaly's 1914 Duo for Violin and Cello, a formidable 25-minute piece in three movements. The duo contains alluring passages in which earthy folkloric melodies hover atop restless accompaniment riffs. But these sections are deftly folded into an organic composition with extended stretches of starkly modern, harmonically astringent and elusive music, much like Bartok's. Kodaly explores the virtuosic possibilities of the instruments, but always to greater musical ends. The Kodaly effectively sets up Sessions's 1978 Duo, a concentrated 10-minute work of extreme contrasts, shifting meters and rigorous manipulation of motifs. In this company, despite dreamy Impressionistic episodes, Ravel's inventive 20-minute Sonata, completed in 1922, comes across as a fully contemporary work, alive with angular counterpoint and insistent rhythmic drive. [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 6/1/08].

