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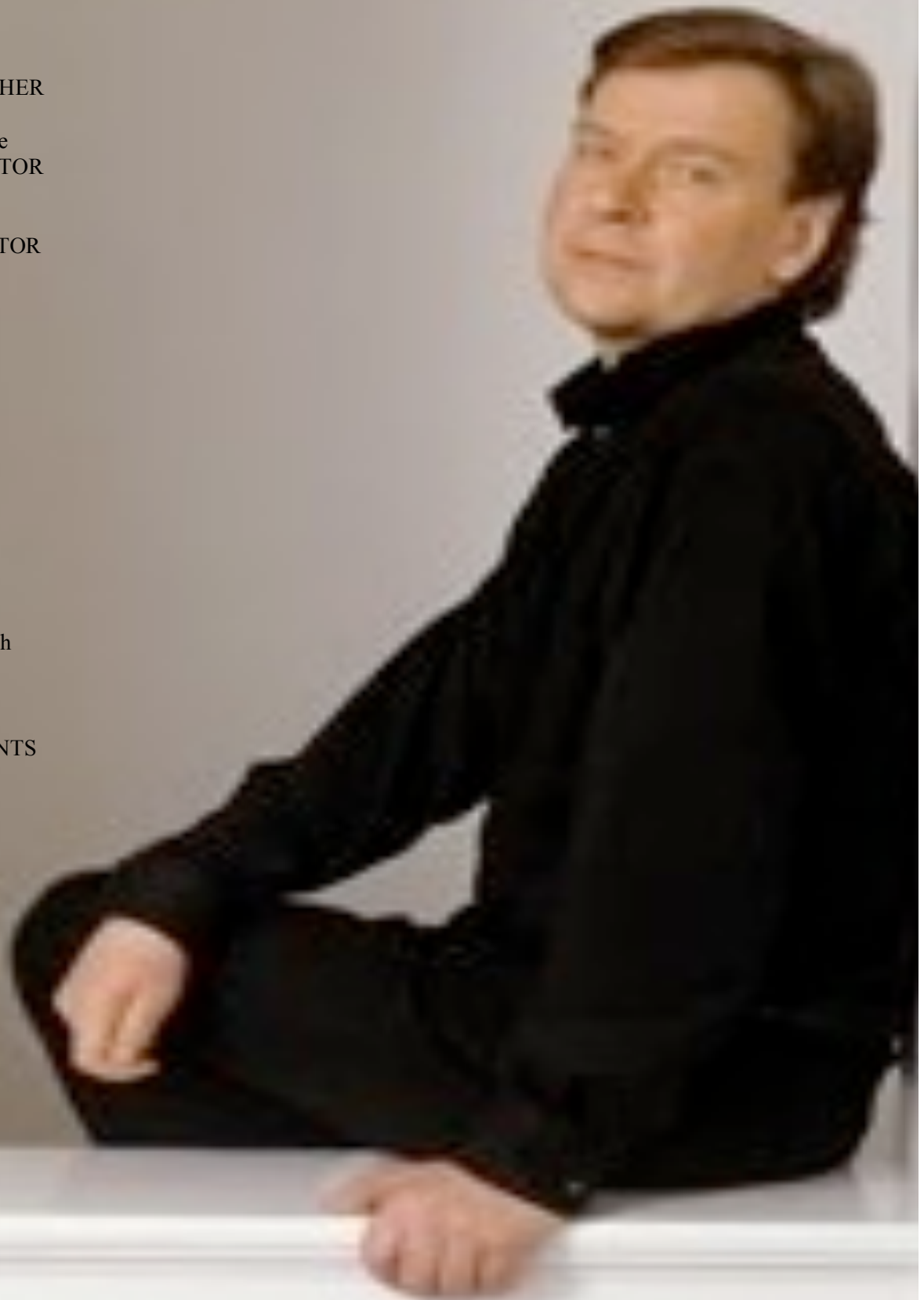
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Magnus Lindberg

PHILLIP GEORGE

Magnus Lindberg's (b. June 27, 1958, Helsinki, Finland) early compositions include the large orchestral work *Donor*, composed at 16. Following piano studies, he entered the Sibelius Academy under Einojuhani Rautavaara and Paavo Heininen, producing his first mature work with *Quintetto dell'Estate* (1979).

Heininen encouraged his pupils to look beyond the prevailing Finnish conservative and nationalist aesthetics, to explore the works of the European avant-garde. This led around 1980 to the founding of the informal group known as the Ears Open Society including Lindberg and his contemporaries Eero Hämeeniemi, Jouni Kaipainen, Kaija Saariaho, and Esa-Pekka Salonen, which aimed to encourage a greater awareness of traditional modernism. After graduating in 1981, he travelled widely in Europe, first to Paris for studies with Vinko Globokar and Gerard Grisey.

During this time he also attended Franco Donatoni's classes in Siena, and made contact at Darmstadt with Ferneyhough, Helmut Lachenmann, and York Höller. He also took in Japanese drumming and punk rock in Berlin.

Lindberg's first piece performed by a professional orchestra was *Sculpture II* in 1982, the second part of a trilogy whose first and third sections were long unwritten.

His compositional breakthrough came with two large-scale works, *Action-Situation-Signification* (1982, his first piece exploring classic *musique concrète*) and *Kraft* (1985), which were inextricably linked with his founding with Salonen of the Toimii ("It Works") Ensemble. This group, in which Lindberg plays piano and percussion, has provided the composer with a laboratory for his sonic development. His works at this time combined experimentalism, complexity, and primitivism, dealing with extremes of musical material.

Kraft is Lindberg's largest work to date, with harmonies of over 70 notes and a yard-high score. Its composition not only utilizes traditional instruments, but also scrap-metal percussion and a spoken text. But it also made use of a chaconne structure which was to prove a bridge for his continuing evolution. Initially, however, Lindberg found this large work difficult to follow, and with the exception of 1986's *Ur*, which he called "*Kraft* in chamber form," he entered a creative hiatus which lasted over two years. During this time he was not only rethinking his style, but also recovering from a tropical disease contracted during travels in Indonesia.

After this, his music transformed itself towards a new modernist classicism, in which harmony, rhythm, counterpoint, melody were re-interpreted afresh in a post-serial era. He returned with the orchestral/ensemble trilogy *Kinetics* (1988), *Marea* (1990) and *Joy* (1990). Though Lindberg became less interested in electronic manipulation of sound, he still explored the possibilities of compositional

software, with music displaying complex counterpoint generated by computer. Since *Joy*, Lindberg has shown a gradual refining of his style, orchestrations and harmonies. This showed itself first in the work for chamber ensemble, *Corrente* (1992) (and its subsequent orchestral version, *Corrente II* from the same year), and *Duo Concertante* (1992). In these works, Lindberg showed influences ranging from Pierre Boulez and Tristan Murail to Igor Stravinsky and minimalism. His symphonic *Aura* (1994) and *Arena* (1995) reflect a newer, more eclectic style.

Lindberg's output in the late 90's included the concert-opener *Feria* (1997), and large-scale statements such as *Fresco* (1997), *Cantigas* (1999), and *Cello Concerto* (1999).

Since then, Lindberg has built upon these developments, further refining his style, which by now was leaning towards a type of new tonality hinted at in works such as *Joy* and *Aura*. This development has culminated in one of his most popular scores to date, his *Clarinet Concerto* (2002), where his use of a folk-like melody and rich orchestration has led to an increased interest in his work.

Recent works include *Concerto for Orchestra* (2003) and *Sculpture* (2005), *Violin Concerto* (2006), *Seht die Sonne* (2007, commissioned by the Berliner Philharmoniker under Simon Rattle and the San Francisco Symphony), and his first choral-orchestral work *Grafitti*, premiered in Helsinki in May 2009.

Lindberg became the new composer-in-residence at the New York Philharmonic with the 2009-2010 season, at the invitation of the incoming music director Alan Gilbert. The September 2009 opening night gala of the Philharmonic, which was Gilbert's debut as music director, featured a well-received new work, *EXPO*.

Lindberg's music has been recorded on the Deutsche Grammophon, Sony, Ondine, and Finlandia labels.



Magnus Lindberg - Works List

Musik för två pianon (Music for Two Pianos) (1976)
 Arabesques for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and horn (1978)
 Quintetto dell' estate for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano (1979)
 Linea d'ombra (1981)
 "...de Tartuffe, je crois..." for piano quintet (1981)
 Action-Situation-Signification (1982)
 Tendenza for 21 players (1982)
 Ablauf (1983)
 Ground for harpsichord (1983)
 Kraft (1985)
 Metal Work (1984)
 Stroke for cello (1984)
 UR (1986)
 Twine for solo piano (1988)
 Kinetics (1989)
 Marea (19890)
 Joy (19890)
 Moto (1990)
 Steamboat Bill Jr. (1990)
 Jeux d'anches for solo accordion (1990)
 Clarinet Quintet (1992)
 Duo Concertante for solo clarinet and cello (1992)
 Corrente for chamber orchestra (1992)
 Corrente II for symphony orchestra (1992)
 Decorrente (1992)
 Kiri (1993)
 Songs from North and South" for chorus a cappella (1993)
 Coyote Blues for large chamber ensemble (1993)
 Away for solo clarinet (1994)
 Aura (in memoriam Witold Lutosławski) for orchestra (1994)
 Concerto for piano and orchestra (1994)
 Zungenstimmen (1994)
 Arena for orchestra (1995)

Arena II for orchestra (1996)
 Engine (1996)
 Related Rocks (1997)
 FERIA (1997)
 Cantigas (1999)
 Campana In Aria for horn and orchestra (1998)
 Concerto for cello and orchestra (1999)
 Parada
 Fresco
 Corrente - China Version (2000)
 Jubilees for piano (2000)
 Partia for cello solo (2001)
 Etude I for piano (2001)
 Dos Coyotes (2002)
 Bubo bubo (2002)
 Bright Cecilia: Variations on a Theme by Purcell for orchestra (2002)
 Chorale for orchestra (2002)
 Clarinet Concerto for clarinet and orchestra (2002)
 Jubilees for chamber ensemble (2002)
 Counter Phrases for chamber ensemble (2003)
 Concerto for orchestra (2003)
 Mano a mano for guitar (2004)
 Tribute for orchestra (2004)
 Etude II for piano (2004)
 Ottoni for brass ensemble (2005)
 Sculpture for orchestra (2005)
 Concerto for violin and orchestra (2006)
 Konzertstück for cello and piano (2006)
 Seht die Sonne for orchestra (2007)
 Trio for clarinet, cello and piano (2008)
 Graffiti for chorus and orchestra (2009)
 EXPO for orchestra (2009)

The screenshot displays a music software interface for a piece titled "Octo-A1". The main window shows a score with multiple staves. A MIDI piano roll is visible, showing notes and their durations. A software patch window is open, showing a complex arrangement of modules including "rnl", "RTH39", "m/c-11", "ranges", "rules", "beards", "force", "t", and "score_pmc". A console window at the bottom left shows a list of commands and their results, such as "Killed region saved".

Her Royal Highness and Lowness

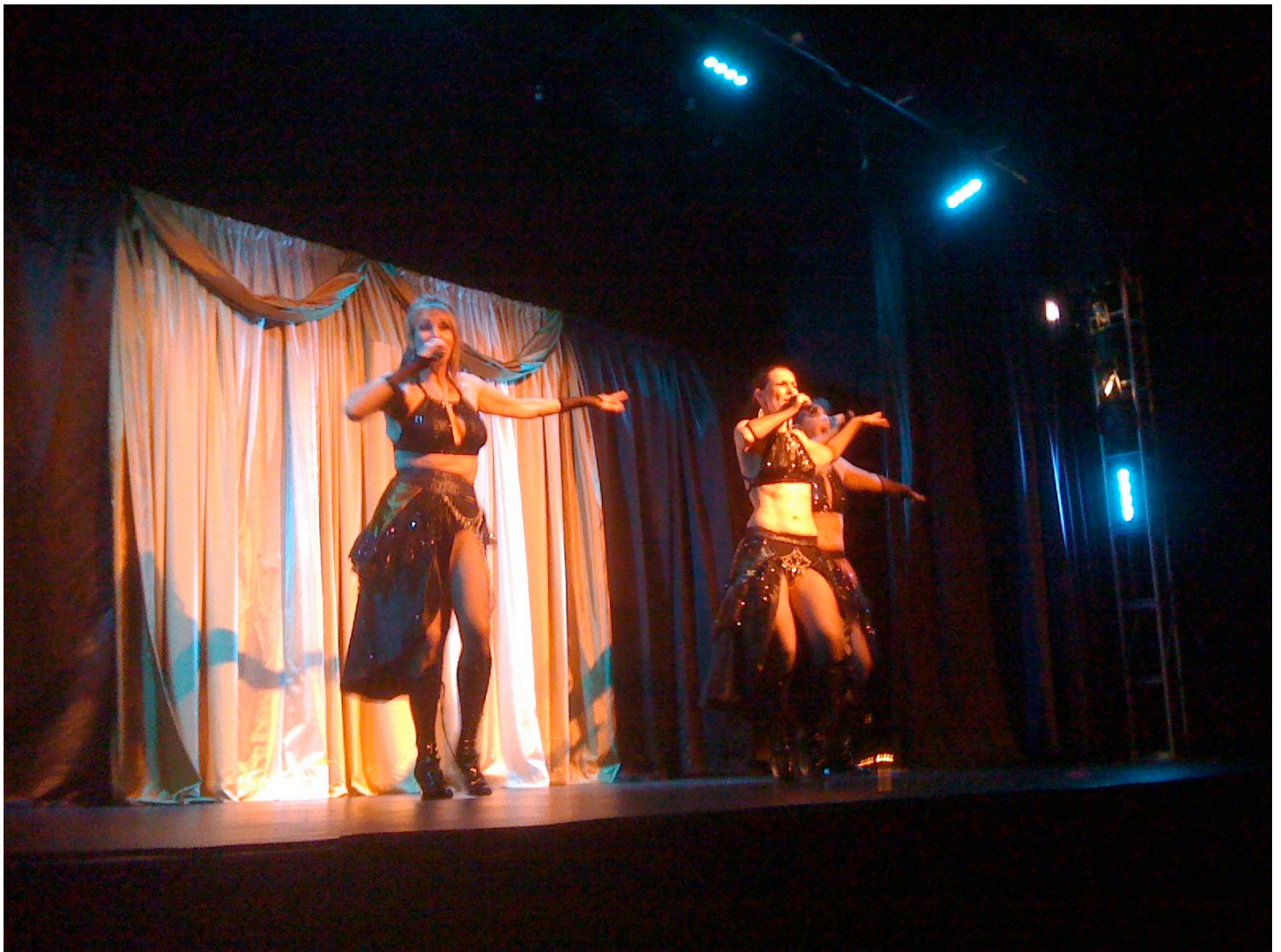
MARK ALBURGER

Probably not many pre-20th-century noblewomen kicked up their heels and belted and rang out pop tunes and operatic passages to rock-and-roll beats, but who knows? Maybe they should have. And such thoughts crossed the mind (when the rhythms weren't colliding too strongly) when taking in the effervescent and sexy premiere of *Her Rebel Highness* on November 13 at Pier 39 in San Francisco.

Operatic soprano Valentina Osinski and her popular-music cohorts Joni Maxx and Velia Amarasingham gave their all in an utterly entertaining and ear-and-eye popping display of vocal prowess and visual splendor. Billed as an interweaving of Baroque opera with pop dance forms, the latter was by far the stronger element, with relentless fore-and-back beats played to the hilt.

Assisted by the elegance of dancers Danica Sena and Norberto Martinez, and directed by Jessica Heidt, this was a show that never let up, and kept one at the edge of the seat. If the story was a bit anachronistic, simple, and unbelievable -- well, that's show biz, and in line with some of the greatest opera libretti in history.

The music, the majority of which was composed by Simon and Velia Amarasingham (with additional material by S. Heins and Osinski), provided enough excitement and variety to offset its pre-recorded accompaniment, and the guest warm-up performers of Kitty Kitty Bang Bang and enigmatic magician Heather Rogers were archly intriguing.



Chronicle

December 8

Sting. Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, New York, NY. "Sting looked like quite the 19th-century Victorian gentleman when he performed a concert of winter songs He wore a long frock coat, a white shirt and an antique-style tie. Much of the music originated from even earlier times: 15th-century carols, songs from Purcell operas, traditional English ballads. Sometimes Sting played a lute. But the concert, presenting music from Sting's latest album, *If on a Winter's Night ...* (Deutsche Grammophon), was no period piece, unless the period is the 21st century. It was a Sting hybrid with Celtic, pop, medieval, international and jazz touches, carefully thought out with no fear of pretension, yet full of small surprises. When Sting set out to make a holiday album, he couldn't just, say, apply some semi-reggae Police beat to *Winter Wonderland*. He got serious. As he explained onstage, in a very PBS introduction, he contemplated winter as 'the ambiguous season' of bitter cold and cozy homes, of Christmas and solstice tales, of reverence and loneliness, of death and regeneration, of 'magic.' He delved into European early music, old carols and lullabies, odd crannies of church music, Schubert's *Winterreise* and his own songs (to remake the melancholy *The Hounds of Winter*). He added lyrics to a Bach cello sarabande. And he ended up with a collection of songs that was somber verging on bleak: winter with the King of Pain. The faith in the carols was humble and awestruck, not celebratory. From the 16th-century poet Robert Southwell, Sting chose the grim imagery of *The Burning Babe*; from Henry Purcell, whom Sting called 'England's first pop star,' he chose *The Cold Song*, about an unwilling resurrection: "Let me freeze again to death!" He pointed out the dire lyrics of lullabies, and he found a 20th-century composer, Peter Warlock, who brought chromatic anxieties into worshipful songs. Sting also thought about Newcastle, on the Scottish border, where he was born and raised, and he put traditionalist Newcastle musicians -- the siblings Kathryn and Peter Tickell, on Northumbrian pipes and fiddles -- at the core of his group. (They got to rev things up now and then, with dance-tune counter melodies and codas that accelerated into jigs.) And the stark minor modes of Celtic traditional songs ran through much of the music. Even the Schubert song, translated as *Hurdy Gurdy Man*, grew folksy, though no less burdened by mortality. Yet Sting's musicians, including the *Musica Aeterna* chamber orchestra, hailed from at least five continents, and in arrangements by Sting and Robert Sadin, they blurred genres: the trumpeter Chris Botti invoked Miles Davis in *Gabriel's Message*, and the percussionists Cyro Baptista, Bijan Chemirani and Bashiri Johnson added atmospheric sounds and syncopations in many songs. Sting was testing himself musically: pushing his voice down into a sometimes uncomfortable lower register and, often, eliminating the rhythmic attack he brings to rock songs for something more liquid. It still wasn't a standard classical or early-music vocal style, though. It was Sting's smoky croon. The cathedral was the right place for this concert, imposing a hushed attention.

Somehow the sound system conquered the room's notorious reverberation, perhaps by keeping the volume low; instrumental nuances came through. So did a decidedly eccentric Christmas spirit: well traveled, erudite, confident and, in the end, deeply haunted" [John Pareles, *The New York Times*, 12/9/09].

December 9

Lincoln Center's New Visions presents *One Evening*, a work of music theater directed by Katie Mitchell, exploring the impact of Franz Schubert's *Winterreise* on the writings of Samuel Beckett. Gerald W. Lynch Theater, John Jay College, New York, NY. "[The piece] combines a performance of most of the songs from Schubert's . . . *Winterreise*, sung by the tenor Mark Padmore, with readings from Beckett performed by the actor Stephen Dillane. The pianist Andrew West is not just an accompanist but a full participant, with Mr. Padmore and Mr. Dillane, in Ms. Mitchell's three-person drama. At its core *One Evening* is . . . ominous and imaginative . . . Symmons Roberts's translations deserve to be heard outside this production. Here is his rendering of the first verse of *Der Greise Kopf* (*The Hoary Head*), in which the traveler describes how the frost turned his hair white: 'My hair became a shock of salt / The frost had left me older / At last I looked the way I felt / Kind death was at my shoulder.' You could sense a jolt of recognition throughout the theater as this New York audience heard the familiar Schubert songs sung in English. I was certainly jolted. . . . Dillane . . . was . . . excellent here in excerpts from Beckett, who was fascinated with Schubert. Especially haunting was his reading of *One Evening*, the text that gave this production its title. It was read as the droning open fifths in the piano of the final song, *The Organ-Grinder*, lingered on and on, even after Mr. Padmore had finished singing. The Beckett text begins: 'He was found lying on the ground. No one had missed him. No one was looking for him. An old woman found him. To put it vaguely'" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/10/09].

Gabriel Fauré's *Pénélope*. Manhattan School of Music Opera Theater, New York, NY. [*Pénélope*] is a critics' favorite of longstanding. It was completed in 1912 and is hardly ever staged but is known through a handful of recordings, including a ravishing Erato set with Jessye Norman in the title role. You may know the story from Homer's *Odyssey*, or perhaps from Monteverdi's *Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*. . . . Fauré's score swims in the same melodic richness you hear in his songs, with a supple, through-composed orchestration that occasionally reaches for a Wagnerian sense of catharsis, modified by Gallic sensuality" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 12/10/09].

The Juilliard School's Axiom presents music of John Adams. Alice Tully Hall, New York, NY. Mr. Milarsky framed the Thursday program with two of Mr. Adams's most frenetic works. *Scratchband* (1996), the expansive curtain-raiser, begins with a mechanistically insistent, syncopated beat and expands into a wild, exuberant party piece, a sort of post-Minimalist bacchanalia. Mr. Adams's scoring includes electric guitar, synthesizer and drums, but mostly, these instruments provide patches of unusual color within a traditional, if rugged and raucous, orchestral fabric. And as in many of Mr. Adams's works of the last 20 years, that fabric morphs surprisingly: at one point, the principal action is a duet between a piccolo and a trombone. The *Chamber Symphony* (1992) does plenty of whimsical morphing as well. On the surface, it is a homage to Schoenberg's similarly named work. But that surface is thin. Mr. Adams adds synthesizer, a trap set and a couple of brass instruments to Schoenberg's scoring, and to the extent that he alludes to contemporary classical styles, he seems to have drawn more from Stravinsky than from Schoenberg (Parts of the violin writing in the first movement and the rhythmic underpinning of the second evoke *L'Histoire du Soldat*). The work also has plenty of the jokey iconoclasm that you hear in Ives And it seems to owe something to Spike Jones as well, though Mr. Adams's program note suggests that the Jonesian touches -- some zany reed passages in the opening movement -- may actually have been inspired by the soundtracks of cartoons that his son was watching while Mr. Adams composed. Between those works, the *Attacca Quartet* gave a hard-driven (if occasionally harsh) performance of Mr. Adams's *String Quartet* (2008). Here, Mr. Adams's morphing reflex leads him through diverse styles rather than textures, with stretches of repeating, rhythmically interlocking Minimalist figures giving way to Debussian lushness, modernist angularity and even, briefly, Dvorakian warmth. Mr. Adams's gentler side was heard in a set of light-textured orchestrations of five Ives songs, sung with an appealingly burnished tone by Carla Jablonski, a mezzo-soprano. The student players in Axiom gave Mr. Milarsky (and Mr. Adams, who listened from the balcony) vigorous performances that caught the energy and humor of *Scratchband* and the *Chamber Symphony*, and the suppleness of the Ives arrangements" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 12/11/09].

Peter Serkin in music of Gyorgy Kurtag, Charles Wuorinen, Arnold Schoenberg, Claude Debussy, and Johann Sebastian Bach. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "Serkin framed his program with two seminal Schoenberg works. He began with the *Three Piano Pieces* (Op. 11) from 1909, rhapsodic, moody experiments in Expressionism; he concluded with Schoenberg's 12-tone homage to Bach, the *Suite* (Op. 25), composed from 1921 to 1923. The musical pathway that Mr. Serkin chose to take his audience from the first Schoenberg piece to the second was unexpected yet somehow right. He segued from the *Three Pieces* to a seldom heard Debussy work, *Six Épigraphe Antiques*. The origin of this unusual suite was Debussy's *Chansons de Bilitis* (1901), incidental music written to accompany a dramatic recitation of erotic French poems by Pierre Louÿs.

In 1914 Debussy took fragments of that score and expanded them into this elusive set of short pieces, originally written for four hands. Mr. Serkin played the Carnegie Hall premiere of the solo piano version. Mr. Serkin tends to follow his keen musical instincts when he assembles a program. My guess is that something about the nature of the Debussy pieces, which, as the title suggests, spin out in epigrammatic gestures, seemed to him to complement Schoenberg's *Three Pieces*. For all the heaving, atonal density of Schoenberg's music, it too evolves in spurts and fractured phrases. After the Debussy, Mr. Serkin played four brief selections from *Jatekok* (Games), by the Romanian-born Hungarian composer Gyorgy Kurtag. These works are quirky little studies for piano, written in 1979, when Mr. Kurtag's son was taking lessons. These performances somehow prepared the audience ideally for the final work in the first half, Charles Wuorinen's formidable 15-minute *Scherzo* (given its premiere by Mr. Serkin in 2008). Mr. Wuorinen yields to no composer in the complexity and modernism of his music. Yet in this context, his frenetic, fantastical, perpetual-motion *Scherzo* sounded refreshingly extroverted, breathlessly exuberant and shamelessly virtuosic. Mr. Serkin played with dazzling colors, leaping chords and explosions of keyboard-spanning runs. . . . After this, Schoenberg's suite came across not as some thorny 12-tone ordeal but as an ingenious, joyous neo-Baroque dazzler" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/11/09].

Richard Strauss's *Elektra*. Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY. "Years after writing . . . *Elektra*, Strauss admitted that the singing was often 'handicapped by instrumental polyphony.' He jokingly suggested that the orchestral part be conducted like Mendelssohn's 'fairy music' to allow the soloists to be better heard. . . . [T]he conductor Fabio Luisi highlighted startling subtleties in his exciting reading of the complex score, which still sounds as astonishing as it must have at its premiere in 1909. . . . Moments of jagged dissonance convey the insanity of the title character, given a theatrically committed performance by Susan Bullock . . . The orchestra represents Chrysothemis -- *Elektra*'s tamer sister, who lacks her sibling's bitterness and yearns to marry and have children -- with swells of voluptuous, seductive sound. The gleaming soprano of Deborah Voigt, who reprised the role she sang in the production's premiere in 1992, had no trouble cutting through the opulent orchestral textures. Felicity Palmer offered a vivid interpretation of the cranky, drug-addled and sleep-deprived Klytämnestra, who represses memory of her crime and is plagued by nightmares ([Librettist Hugo von] Hofmannsthal was familiar with Freud's psychological theories). Mr. Luisi illuminated the eerie details of the score that accompany Klytämnestra's desperate accounts of her nightly torments and her appeal to *Elektra* for help" [Vivien Schweitzer, *The New York Times*, 12/14/09].

December 12

Glass Chamber Orchestra in Philip Glass's Sextet for Strings, Arnold Schoenberg's Transfigured Night, and the prelude from Bernard Herrmann's Psycho. Baryshnikov Arts Center, New York, NY. Despite the advent of modernism, Minimalism and all the other isms that arose during the 20th century, writing symphonies never went out of style. . . . Written for the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra and introduced in 1995, [Glass's Symphony No. 3] is among Mr. Glass's strongest, most appealing works of the mid-'90s. . . . [H]is new Sextet for Strings [is] a trim arrangement of the symphony . . . [T]he Sextet preserved what was best about Mr. Glass's symphony - vivacious folk-dance rhythms in the second and fourth movements, a melancholy gravity in the third -- while adding a new transparency that served the music well. They opened the concert with a ravishing account of Schoenberg's Verklärte Nacht, and offered a bristling arrangement by Trevor Gureckis of the Prelude from Bernard Herrmann's score for "Psycho" as their encore" [Steve Smith, The New York Times, 12/14/09].

ACJW Gets Extreme: The Mix Tape. Le Poisson Rouge, New York, NY. The evening, the first in a series of three ACJW concerts at the club, began with an exhilarating account of Tierkreis (Zodiac), 12 short pieces in which the players freely expand upon themes derived by Stockhausen from astrological signs. The program ended 90 minutes later with the New York premiere of Bow to String, an elusive work by a young Icelandic composer, Daniel Bjarnason. The music blithely draws from diverse styles, with hard-driving rock riffs; neo-Romantic melodic lines breaking out from nebulous instrumental bustling; and a cosmic final movement with hints of sturdy chorales filtering through pungently dissonant harmonies. In between, individual players offered favorite solo works with scant attempt at programmatic coherence. Playing Semi-Simple Variations by Milton Babbitt, a crystalline 12-tone piece, the gifted pianist Gregory DeTurck brought out both the compositional rigor and jazzy charm of the music. James Austin Smith offered Berio's Sequenza VII for solo oboe. He explained that the skittish oboe lines in the piece were heard against a backdrop of a soft, high, sustained B, which he had prerecorded (and digitally processed). 'I wish you as much confusion and amazement as I have had with this piece,' he told the audience, before giving a brilliant performance. The violinist Yonah Zur was riveting in Mario Davidovsky's Synchronisms No. 9 for solo violin and electronics. Rewinding the Ensemble ACJW clock by 340 years, as he put it, the violinist Owen Dalby played Biber's Sonata Representativa for Violin and Continuo, assisted here by the string bassist Evan Premo and Mr. DeTurck on digital keyboard in its harpsichord mode. The music evokes animal sounds, from tweeting birds to mewing cats amid onrushing virtuosic displays for violin. Mr. Premo also had an animal in mind during Jon Deak's B. B. Wolf. Running through this fitful fantasy for solo bass is an impish monologue by a misunderstood wolf (Mr. Premo sporting wolf's ears and tail), who complains of the injustice of being hunted down for chasing little piggies and such. The notably young audience, which might never have turned out for a contemporary-music concert at Juilliard, shifted easily from Biber to Babbitt,

enjoying each piece on its own terms, or so it seemed from the whoops of approval. Le Poisson Rouge encourages open-mindedness" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 12/14/09].

December 13

John Adams conducts his El Niño with the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. In a way El Niño (2000) is [better] suited [than standard seasonal masterpieces by G.F. Handel and J.S. Bach] to the business of telling the Nativity story; certainly it is more purely a Christmas work than the ubiquitous Messiah, of which only the first third leads to the birth of Jesus (and is mostly prophecy), with the rest better suited to Easter. In El Niño Mr. Adams offers a panoramic recounting of the story, starting with Mary's pregnancy, her response (a graceful Magnificat), Joseph's anger and the dream in which an angel appeared to him, the birth, the star of Bethlehem, the Three Kings, Herod's slaughter of the innocents and the flight to Egypt. His text sources have a diversity that says as much about our time as Bach's [in the Christmas Oratorio] and Handel's biblical sources say about theirs. Mr. Adams draws on the Bible as well, but uses extra details from the New Testament Apocrypha (the Gospels of James and Pseudo-Matthew), an English medieval carol and a mystery play, as well as a significant helping of Latin American poetry, some of it secular (but about birth). The biblical and medieval sources are sung in English; the poetry in Spanish. Mr. Adams's musical response to this polyglot assembly is unusually varied, even by his eclectic standards. Minimalist thumbprints -- repeated, rhythmically mechanistic chords -- are scattered through the piece, but rarely linger, and often merely punctuate the colorful accompaniments (lots of percussion, some relatively subtle synthesizer) that mirror or support the vocal writing. The soloists, though not tied exclusively to specific roles, are given distinctive music: the soprano, who usually sings Mary's text, has a lilting, lyrical line most of the time, yet also moves high and low in the range, often in precarious leaps. Dawn Upshaw has performed this work since it was new and sings her music with an easygoing, almost jazzlike suppleness. The mezzo-soprano music is more fiery and dramatic and had a powerful advocate in Michelle DeYoung. And Eric Owens brought an appealing depth to the straightforward, mostly declamatory bass-baritone writing. Mr. Adams wrote no tenor part, but his score calls for three countertenors, who mostly sing in tandem in a neo-medieval style (parallel harmonies, but not always those a medieval composer would countenance). Daniel Bubeck, Brian Cummings and Steven Rickards sang their music affectingly. The choral writing has a particular character as well: mostly it provides ebullient, high-energy commentary on the events described in the solo passages, yet the finale, augmented by a children's choir, affords the score's most serene moments. The Westminster Symphonic Choir and Brooklyn Youth Chorus made estimable contributions, and Mr. Adams drew a solid, passionate performance from the orchestra" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 12/14/09].

Augustin Hadelich and Rohan De Silva in music of Alfred Schnittke and Sergei Prokofiev. Frick Collection, New York, NY. "Mr. De Silva and Mr. Hadelich offered . . . [an] impressive . . . collaboration in Schnittke's Sonata No. 1, reminiscent of Shostakovich. Mr. Hadelich aptly illuminated the haunting quality of the opening soliloquy, the wit of the second movement and the solemnity of the third section, a tribute to Bach. The concert also included a colorful rendition of Prokofiev's Sonata No. 2 in D" [Vivien Schweitzer, The New York Times, 12/15/09].

December 14

Ran Dank plays music of Charles Ives, Bela Bartok, Alexander Scriabin, and Enrique Granados. Merkin Recital Hall, New York, NY. "Ives[s] Five Take-Offs [is] a rarely heard collection of short character pieces published in 1985, three decades after Ives died. These pieces may not be for the ages: they seem to be crystallized improvisations that capture Ives experimenting with his language, particularly the relationship between consonance and dissonance, and between different kinds of dissonances (the descriptive and, it often seems, the merely provocative). A Granados piece, *La Maja y el Ruiseñor*, from *Goyescas*, gave Mr. Dank an opportunity to show that he was as comfortable with gentle, hazy textures as with powerhouse pianism. But he is clearly more captivated by the possibilities of bigger, more aggressive music, and his muscular but finely sculptured reading of the Bartok Sonata was the highlight of his program, with his dark-hued performance of Scriabin's "Black Mass" Sonata No. 9 (Op. 68) coming close" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 12/16/09].

Martina Filjak plays Bela Bartok, Maurice Ravel, and Luciano Berio. Zankel Hall, New York, NY. "[F]rom the first work she played, *Une barque sur l'océan* from Ravel's *Miroirs*, she demonstrated striking individuality. . . . For the first part of the program she chose works that explore elements of nature in different ways. From Ravel's ocean she segued to three of Luciano Berio's *Six Encores*, published in 1990. These ingenious pieces evoke, in turn, water (*Wasserklavier*), fire (*Feuerklavier*) and air (*Luftklavier*). The water piece is not what one might expect, but a short (two-minute) and elusive work, like some modern version of an Italian Renaissance ode to water. In the fire piece, on the other hand, you can hear the crackling flames in the piano's spiraling, hyperfast figures and ominous dissonant tremolos. The air piece, again a curiosity, is obsessed with cyclic riffs and bursts of skittish, gritty runs. Ms. Filjak played throughout with vibrant colors and utter command. Bartok's *Out of Doors*, a 15-minute suite in five movements, explores the elemental side of nature, complete with pungently modern evocations of Hungarian peasant drums and pipes, and modal folk tunes played in eerie octaves. During the daunting final piece, *The Chase*, Ms. Filjak boldly dispatched the leaping chords and relentless volleys, playing with chiseled but never percussive sound" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 12/16/09].

December 15

Jean-Yves Thibaudet plays music of Maurice Ravel. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "Much of Mr. Thibaudet's Ravel seemed more assertive than it had been on past hearings. He began with the *Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte*, in a reading that opened in the rhythmically square style you hear on Ravel's own recording of the piece, and slowly melted into a supple essay with a bittersweet, singing line. The five movements of *Miroirs* were each beautifully characterized, with *Noctuelles* couched in fluid, sparkling textures, and *Oiseaux Tristes* in contrastingly dark-hued, gauzy timbres. Mr. Thibaudet had *Une Barque sur l'Océan* navigate faster-moving waters than usual, but he was at his most vivid in the rhythmically vital, Spanish-accented *Alborada del Gracioso*" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 12/16/09].

Maurice Bourgue & Friends, including music of Francis Poulenc and Maurice Ravel. 92nd Street Y, New York, NY. "Bourgue, a veteran French oboist, is among the world's most admired instrumentalists. Poulenc's Sonata for Oboe and Piano brought out the best in Mr. Bourgue and Ms. Uchida. The work, one of Poulenc's last, is a paradoxical mix of the elegiac, the suave and the clever, with an athletic middle movement inspired by the music of Prokofiev, to whom the sonata is dedicated. Mr. Bourgue's playing was bold, elegant and incisive; [Reiko] Uchida's, poised and peppery. In a bracing rendition of Ravel's Sonata for Violin and Cello, [Jamie] Laredo and [Sharon] Robinson embraced the work's oddness, expressing in full its grating disharmonies, mechanical cog-works and dreamy melodies. The concert closed with a heady account of Ravel's Introduction and Allegro. Mr. Laredo and Ms. Robinson formed a genteel string section with the violinist Josef Spacek and [Daniel] Phillips. [Flutist Helen] O'Connor and the clarinetist Alexander Fiterstein flitted, chirped and warbled in concerted merriment" [Steve Smith, The New York Times, 12/17/09].

December 16

Lincoln Center New Visions presents Heiner Goebbels's *Stifters Dinge*. Park Avenue Armory, New York, NY. "It is not that the experience of *Stifters Dinge* will be spoiled for audiences by hearing it described in advance, as I am about to do. But Heiner Goebbels, the German composer and creator of unconventional music-theater pieces, who conceived, composed and directed the work, does not want people to arrive with some fixed idea of what they are going to experience. . . . [T]he house doors were closed until right before the performance started, lest the audience become acclimated to the eerie environmental space that Mr. Goebbels has devised within the cavernous armory, or overexamine the elaborate set by Klaus Grünberg, dominated by a series of movable walls on which five pianos are affixed in space. *Stifters Dinge* (*Stifter's Things*), first presented in 2007 at the Théâtre Vidy-Lausanne in Switzerland, is teasingly described in the program as a composition for five pianos with no pianists, a play with no actors, a performance without performers, 'one might say a no-man show.'

Although all of this is true, the 80-minute piece does have specific sources and recorded texts, and even a sort of story. The work was inspired by Adalbert Stifter, an early-19th-century writer, poet and painter, best known for his intricately detailed and mystical descriptions of nature. A recording of a long excerpt from a Stifter piece, *The Ice Tale* provides a central episode of *Stifters Dinge*. . . . [The work] begins with delicate sounds from the five pianos, operated through computerized player-piano mechanisms, producing gentle patterns of steady beats, scraping noises, melodic bits and hints of cosmic harmonies. Mixed in we hear the sounds, recorded in 1905, of songs and spoken stories of natives from New Guinea. . . . At times the walls slide on automatic rails and move closer to the seating area (for only 165), as if the piano were in attack mode. The most astonishing musical episode comes when the looming pianos play a dizzying barrage of chromatic scales up and down the lengths of the keyboards, creating a dense din of steely glissandos. From my perspective “*Stifters Dinge*” comes across mostly as a musical piece in a theatrical framework. All of the musical elements are produced live, though the sounds are amplified and electronically processed. The only recorded elements are the spoken texts. During one episode, after the long extract from the Stifter story, one of the pianos plays the pensive slow movement from Bach’s ‘Italian’ Concerto. Halfway through the Bach, in a burst of French that rattles the mood, we hear the voice of the philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss in a radio interview from 1988. . . . Reading the list of recorded voices that Mr. Goebbels incorporates into this work, including William S. Burroughs and Malcolm X, may make *Stifters Dinge* sound like some heavy-handed rant. But the texts are used as much for their expressive and musical elements as for their content. And Mr. Goebbels has a keen feeling for how to structure and layer an 80-minute piece of music drama. You do not have to know that the final section includes the recorded sounds of a traditional Greek song, a lament sung by a woman offering good luck to fishermen, to be affected by the earthy beauty of the music and its rightness for the moment. As we hear the singing, pellets of dry ice are dropped into the three pools, creating gurgling ripples and clouds of steam. The pianos glide back into place, playing bare intervals, some of which behave and resolve into tonal harmonies, others of which hover, unmoored and inconclusive. Afterward the audience is invited to wander through the complex installation, which only makes its intricacy seem more magical” [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/17/09].

December 17

The New York Philharmonic must be gratified that a sizable and enthusiastic audience showed up at Symphony Space on Thursday night for the inaugural concert of *Contact!*, a contemporary-music series. This venture is the brainchild of Alan Gilbert, the orchestra’s new music director. . . . [T]his program, which presented premieres of four works for chamber orchestra, conducted by Magnus Lindberg, the Philharmonic’s composer in residence. Listeners of all ages, including lots of eager-looking young people, filled the hall.

Audience members chatted animatedly during intermission, swapping reactions to the first two pieces. . . . In his first season, Mr. Gilbert is imaginatively integrating new and recent works into the orchestra’s subscription-season programs. So the *Contact!* series has the potential to be a dynamic addition to the Philharmonic’s offerings beyond the confines of Avery Fisher Hall, which was the whole idea. (Mr. Gilbert will conduct the second *Contact!* program in April.) Thursday’s program began with *Game of Attrition* for chamber orchestra by Arlene Sierra, an American now living in London. Before the performance she spoke about the piece with Mr. Lindberg. (Conversations with composers are to be a regular part of *Contact!*) Ms. Sierra has long been fascinated by game theory and Darwinian evolution, and this piece is an attempt to evoke the process of attrition, as in natural selection. Throughout the bustling 14-minute work, instruments engage and tussle with one another as if struggling to prevail and move up the musical/evolutionary ladder. Yet, as the title suggests, Ms. Sierra makes a game of it. Little cells of tightly confined pitches knock about with others, grow into larger gestures and then cut loose into skittish flights. Next came *Verge* for 18 strings by the Chinese-born Lei Liang, who has lived in the United States for 20 years. Mr. Liang began composing the piece a month before his first child was born and completed it the month after. The work uses pitch equivalents for the letters of his son’s name (Albert Shin Liang) as the basis for themes and chords. The opening, an atmospheric haze of sounds laced with soft bow scrapes and cosmic high harmonics, seems not very pitch-oriented. Soon, however, melodic fragments and thick, piercing chords emerge, along with a plaintive theme meant to evoke Mongolian chant. At one point the music breaks into a grimly urgent episode, as the instruments dispatch perpetual-motion riffs. *Verge* ends in spiritual calm, though the sustained chords are still pierced with ethereal scratching sounds. During his conversation with the noted French composer Marc-André Dalbavie, [H]e asked if Mr. Dalbavie was still as fanatical about spectral music as when they first met in 1985. . . . Dalbavie said he employed an actual Gregorian chant as a thematic thread in his piece, titled *Melodia*. . . . [T]he music was mesmerizing. Mr. Dalbavie has an acute ear for lush colorings and pungent, post-tonal harmonies. This pensive work evolves in fragments and gestures, with strands of chantlike melody interspersed with sustained sonorities and tremulous colorings. In one unexpected, exhilarating outburst, the instruments break into a kind of free-for-all toccata. Arthur Kampela, a Brazilian-born New Yorker and a gregarious talker, was a hit with the audience as he explained that his piece, *Macunaíma*, was inspired by a 1928 novel that follows the exploits of a fantastic young man, loosely based on Amazonian folklore. The character, born black with the capacity to turn white, winds up a mystical entity, a ‘constellation of pleasure,’ as Mr. Kampela put it. The piece came across as a restless, wildly colorful but rather messy romp. Imagine a makeshift work by a Brazilian Ives. At the start, half a dozen players with colorful hand drums walked slowly up the aisles in the hall and joined the ensemble onstage. Soon everyone broke into a rowdy din of frenetic rhythms and every-which-way riffs. At one point some players went behind a curtain, where you heard them playing bits of marching-band music and laughing. . . .

It was certainly fun for the players, who were good sports, and for the audience, which whooped during the ovation" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/18/19].

December 18

Sofia Gubaidulina's Trio for Violin, Viola, and Cello. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. "When the 78-year-old Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina applied for graduate school in Moscow early in her career, her musical aesthetic irked the Soviet establishment. But she was encouraged by Shostakovich (who had plenty of experience battling artistic ideologies) to continue to take the "wrong course" musically. A religious woman and the daughter of a Tatar-Russian couple, Ms. Gubaidulina has referred to herself as 'the place where East meets West.' The mysticism and unusual sonorities often integral to her scores can be heard in her Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello (1988), given a fine performance . . . by MMArtists, the museum's resident chamber music ensemble. The cellist Edward Arron, the group's artistic coordinator; the violinist Colin Jacobsen; and the violist Nicholas Cords eloquently revealed the work's nuances, beginning with the sparse, questioning fragments that open the first movement and show the influence of Webern, one of Ms. Gubaidulina's favorite composers. That section builds to a wailing intensity. In the second movement, the viola plays unbroken lines in a high register, contrasting with the pizzicatos from the violin and cello. The dramatic final movement features an evocative viola solo, plaintive microtonal whimperings and an ostinato pattern in the violin's upper register, underpinned with staccato fragments in the viola" [Vivien Schweitzer, *The New York Times*, 12/21/09].

December 20

James Levine leads the Met Orchestra in Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "[In considering this lucid, engrossing and impressively played performance . . . Mahler's Fifth strikes me as the hardest of his symphonies to bring off . . . It can easily sound like a 70-minute piece with four turbulent, mercurial movements dwarfing a sublime Adagietto. Mahler acknowledged as much in a letter to his wife when he wondered how the public would react to the "chaos" of the symphony. For me, a successful performance has to bring clarity to the chaos. This was the hallmark of Mr. Levine's achievement. Some Mahlerites might have felt that his approach was too restrained. He checked climaxes and held back tempos, but always to maximize clarity. It was not just textural transparency that came through but also the structural layout of the piece, as well as the ingenuity of the bustling counterpoint, especially in the finale, which had plenty of rollicking energy. Only in the first movement, the Trauermarsch, did the players, who have been very busy at the opera house, sound not as yet in sync with Mr. Levine in this daunting Mahler score. His goal, it seemed, was to reveal the music as a true funeral march, moving at an inexorable tread with weighty textures and stoic grimness. The playing lacked calm, controlled intensity.

But the crazed Scherzo, played with reined-in zest and a beguiling grace in the gentler middle section, has seldom sounded so vibrant and, in a way, sensible. And Mr. Levine drew glowing sound and plangent lyricism from the great Met Orchestra in the Adagietto" [Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times*, 12/21/09].

December 29

Patti Smith. Bowery Ballroom, New York, NY. "[Smith]seemed both uninspired and very, very happy. She was babbling, giddy, a little elsewhere. The show had moments of gravity, but never really got started. Still, she was great company. She had much to look forward to. She read a little bit from her new book, *Just Kids* (Ecco), describing her youth and her relationship with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe (It will be published on January 19 and has received some good early reviews). Her 63rd birthday hadn't quite arrived, but it would seven minutes after she got offstage. And that day also promised a certain kind of New York Xanadu: a flattering documentary about her was scheduled to be broadcast on Channel 13. Ms. Smith's late-December concerts at the club, celebrating both the New Year and her birthday, are now an 11-year tradition; this was the first of a three-night stand. She can make them as casual as she likes. Tuesday's set covered a handful of her own songs, from nearly 30 years of records -- from *Ask the Angels* (1976) to *Mother Rose* (2004) — as well as a bunch she didn't write, and a couple that she has perhaps only admired from afar. She made a lot of offerings to the deceased: to her husband, Fred Smith, once a guitarist for the MC5; to her mother, Beverly Smith; to her friend the musician and poet Jim Carroll; and to Michael Jackson. It wasn't clear whether this was a theme, something planned. But you were left with the sense that speaking to the dead isn't that unusual for her. Isn't she an artist who runs on the purest inspiration? Well, O.K. You can believe that. But you should consider that she is also a professional who can turn her game on when she likes. There was a limp version of George Harrison's *Within You Without You*, and a leaden Billie Jean, in Jackson's memory, mostly sung by her keyboardist, Tony Shanahan. (Ms. Smith sang only the part within her vocal range: the 'People always told me' bridge.) Ravens, arranged for acoustic guitar, bass and mandolin, started on the wrong foot and stayed there. There was a run at Neil Young's *Powderfinger* — sung entirely by Mr. Shanahan -- that at times rose to the level of a Bleeker Street cover band. But when Ms. Smith opened up her chest-voice vowels, or walked the line between singing and chanting — as on a highly recited version of her song *Birdland* (another tune about communicating with the dead), and a cover of the O'Jays' *Love Train* -- she was fire, and her band whacked out simple, well-practiced stomps. Nothing was lacking" [Ben Ratliff, *The New York Times*, 12/30/09].

Alain Gilbert conducts the New York Philharmonic in Anton Webern's *Im Sommerwind* and *Symphony*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY. "Gilbert built this program with what appeared to have been the modest but telling goal of getting the Philharmonic audience to warm to Webern's concise, focused 12-tone music, by way of the *Symphony* (Op. 21), which he conducted (and spoke about) in the second half. And he surrounded the symphony with very different works, all meant to undercut what some listeners still regard as its abstruse harshness. His first move in this endeavor was to offer a reminder of Webern's unabashedly Romantic roots by conducting *Im Sommerwind*, a student work from 1904, the year Webern became a disciple of Schoenberg (who was also writing in a tonal, essentially Romantic style at the time). You can hear the composer's influences clearly: its lush string shimmer, its dynamic ebb and flow and its sense of the dramatic and picturesque have roots in the Strauss tone poems, and hints of Mahler (in bright-hued woodwind episodes) and Wagner (in grandly modulating chord progressions) waft through the piece. Conductors often perform *Im Sommerwind* as a way of saying, 'See, Webern isn't so bad' and most of the time they leave it at that; listeners interested in hearing more are on their own.

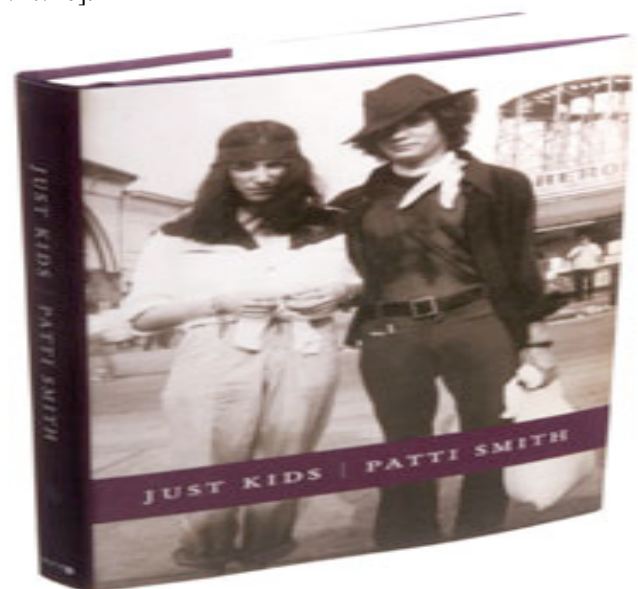
Mr. Gilbert used the Philharmonic's sweeping, colorful account to show that the Webern who wrote this spare, pointillistic *Symphony* from 1928 was schooled in the Romantic mainstream, and built on it. He tried to say so directly in his spoken comments but was momentarily derailed: when he suggested that Webern's themes are sometimes almost melodic, the audience tittered, leaving Mr. Gilbert to say he was serious. He brought reinforcements to make his case in this 7-minute introduction to the 10-minute score. John Mangum, the orchestra's artistic administrator, spoke briefly about his fascination with Webern's way of distributing thematic fragments through the orchestra, and Eric Bartlett a habitué of new music ensembles before he joined the Philharmonic's cello section, advised simply listening to the flow of sound and not worrying about the rules of 12-tone composition or other technical or philosophical underpinnings. The performance was almost anticlimactic, given the work's brevity and textural transparency. Mr. Gilbert led a gracefully paced performance that made much of the feathery textures in the opening movement and the sprightly variations that make up the finale. And the Philharmonic's playing, polished and warm, offered occasional glimpses — in the rich vibrato on a violin line, the vigorous rendering of a woodwind figure -- of the Romantic who wrote *Im Sommerwind*" [Allan Kozinn, *The New York Times*, 12/30/09].



Book

Patti Smith. *Just Kids*. "Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe were both born in 1946, at a time when 'the iceman' and 'the last of the horse-drawn wagons could still be seen on city streets. Ms. Smith points this out at the start of her tenderly evocative memoir, *Just Kids*, but there is even stronger evidence that this book dates back a long time. *Just Kids* captures a moment when Ms. Smith and Mapplethorpe were young, inseparable, perfectly bohemian and completely unknown, to the point in which a touristy couple in Washington Square Park spied them in the early autumn of 1967 and argued about whether they were worth a snapshot. The woman thought they looked like artists. The man disagreed, saying dismissively, 'They're just kids.' How hard is it for Ms. Smith to turn back the clock to this innocent time? Hard. Exactly as hard as it was for Bob Dylan to describe himself as a wide-eyed young newcomer to Greenwich Village in *Chronicles*, Volume I, a memoir that *Just Kids* deliberately resembles. In describing the day that Mapplethorpe created his exquisitely androgynous image of her in white shirt, black pants and black jacket for the cover of her *Horses* album, she describes deliberately giving the jacket a rakish 'Frank Sinatra style' fling over her shoulder. 'I was full of references,' she says, invoking them explicitly throughout the book. A Patti Smith calendar would include Joan of Arc's birthday, the day of the Guernica bombing and the day she, as a young bookstore clerk, sat among Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Grace Slick in a bar feeling 'an inexplicable sense of kinship with these people.' Of all the artists who shaped Ms. Smith's persona, Mr. Dylan is arguably the one she worshiped most. She describes the 19th-century poet Arthur Rimbaud, another of her heroes, as looking like the 20th-century Mr. Dylan, rather than seeing things the other way around. So it makes perfect sense for her to use a memoirist's sleight of hand, as Mr. Dylan did, to recapture an eager, fervent and wondrously malleable young spirit. It also makes sense for her to cast off all verbal affectation and write in a strong, true voice unencumbered by the polarizing mannerisms of her poetry. This Patti Smith, like the one in Steven Sebring's haunting 2008 documentary *Patti Smith: Dream of Life*, is a newly mesmerizing figure, not quite the one her die-hard fans used to know. In *Just Kids* Ms. Smith writes of becoming pregnant at 19 ('I was humbled by nature') in New Jersey, giving up her baby and heading to New York for a fresh start. Describing herself as 'I, the country mouse,' she writes of heading to Brooklyn to visit friends and discovering that those friends had moved away. In a back bedroom of their former apartment she encountered Mapplethorpe for the first time: 'a sleeping youth cloaked in light,' a beautiful young man who resembled a hippie shepherd at a time when Ms. Smith had been contemptuously described as looking like 'Dracula's daughter.' Thus fate introduced Ms. Smith and Mapplethorpe, who would become roommates, soul mates, friends, lovers and muses. Strictly speaking they were never starving artists in a garret, but the romanticism and mythmaking of *Just Kids*, and their tenancy in the tiniest room at the Chelsea Hotel, brings them pretty close to that ideal.

They went to museums able to afford only one ticket (The one who saw the exhibition would describe it to the one who waited outside). They went to Coney Island, able to afford only one hot dog (Ms. Smith got the sauerkraut). They loved the same totems and ornaments and flourishes; they valued the same things, though in different ways. 'We were both praying for Robert's soul,' Ms. Smith writes of Mapplethorpe's frank ambition -- especially when he fell under the influence of Warhol, someone she deeply mistrusted -- 'he to sell it and I to save it.' She goes on to suggest caustically that it was his prayers that were answered. But much of *Just Kids* unfolds before Mapplethorpe did the taboo-busting, shock-laden photographic work for which he is best remembered ('I admired him for it, but I could not comprehend the brutality,' Ms. Smith writes of his sadomasochistic imagery). And it occurs before his illness (He died of AIDS in 1989). Of the two of them it was Ms. Smith who made her mark first. Like *Chronicles*, *Just Kids* carries its author to the verge of fame but stops right there on the brink, so that its innocence is never compromised by circumstances too surreal or hagiographic for the reader. This book achieves its aura of the sacrosanct by insisting that the later, more doomy and fraught part of Ms. Smith's life story belongs elsewhere. It's possible to come away from *Just Kids* with an intact image of the title's childlike kindred spirits who listened to Tim Hardin's delicate love songs, wondered if they could afford the extra 10 cents for chocolate milk and treasured each geode, tambourine or silver skull they shared, never wanting what they couldn't have or unduly caring what the future might bring. If it sometimes sounds like a fairy tale, it also conveys a heartbreakingly clear idea of why Ms. Smith is entitled to tell one. So she enshrines her early days with Mapplethorpe this way: 'We gathered our colored pencils and sheets of paper and drew like wild, feral children into the night, until, exhausted, we fell into bed.' They sound like Hansel and Gretel, living in a state of shared delight, blissfully unaware of what awaited on the path ahead" [Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*, 1/17/10].





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