

Our spiritual connection to music ... David Chase



I think of Berlioz as the most "1960's" composer of the 19th century. I can't teach a course in 20th century music without him, and every time I introduce a class of freshmen to "Symphonie Fantastique" I'm amazed all over again that it was written in 1830. I also have fond memories of reading his memoirs when I was a rebellious "young turk," marveling at his pluck -- his confidence in his own genius in the face of adversity from the Old Men of the Conservatoire. Oh, to live such a difficult, exultantly artistic life! To write such passionate, brilliant but unevenly-conceived music! (It ain't all like the last movement of "Fantastique"!) And to be remembered and revered, in spite of yourself, centuries after you're gone! That was the dream of a long-haired music student. . .

Steve and the orchestra will give us a "Symphonie Fantastique" in February. And, if their opening concert is an indicator, it will be fantastic. But in the meantime, our December concert surveys a very different Berlioz: the composer of a mostly-gentle and ultimately spiritual depiction of Mary, Joseph and Jesus. It's not the normal retelling of the Nativity story. In fact, most of the libretto refers to the *apocrypha*, the stories that were not made official in the Bible, but stories that are still part of the fabric of the religion. It seems an odd choice of subject and mood for the "bad-boy" composer who gave us *The Damnation of Faust* in Technicolor.

Surely part of the explanation lies in the peculiar genesis of "The Shepherds' Farewell" and Berlioz' initial claim that it was the work of a baroque church musician. Eric's fine program note tells that story, so I'll leave that one to him. Don't miss it, though! It's a quintessential "Berlioz story!" Only Berlioz -- only in the tumultuous music scene of 19th century Paris!

However, in reading about this work, I've run across something that paints Berlioz in a light that many of our performers might identify with. This is the insightful statement by the foremost Berlioz scholar, David Cairn:

Beyond the possession of a style able to encompass such simple sublimities lay something else: the memory of childhood beliefs once central to Berlioz' life and of music experienced as drama in the context of religious ceremony. The intensity of recollected emotion was such that in composing the work he could momentarily re-enter a world in which the events and personages of the Christmas story, as they stamped themselves on a hypersensitive child, were once again vibrantly alive.

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The pang of regret gives an added sharpness to the re-telling. He remembers what it was like to have faith. And at the end, having re-enacted the age-old myth and stepped out of the magic circle, he can only pay tribute to the power of the Christian message and, agnostic that he is, bow before the mystery of Christ's birth and death.

David Cairn

In this description of Berlioz' re-entry into the sphere of faith, I see not only an explanation of this work's surprising character, but also an answer to one of the most persistent questions that choral music has raised since it moved from the exclusive service of the church into the public sphere. It makes me think again about why we perform music and what in it is so important to us.

La Jolla Symphony Chorus is a secular, campus-based, community chorus, but we sing a lot of religious words and tell a lot of religious stories. Most of these works are associated with the Christian faith. (Some notable exceptions are Bloch's *Sacred Service* and Holst's *Hymns from the Rig Veda*, and of course, *Faust*.) This is because we are dedicated to performing great works of art and the composers of the greatest music have far more often set sacred texts than secular. Such is the history of music in the Western culture.



The Flight into Egypt – Carpaccio, c. 1500

But this fact often disturbs individuals who see religion in exclusive terms, and I hear their concerns. From Jews and Muslims, I hear, "Why so much Christian music?" From secularists, "I want to go to a concert, not a church service!" And you would be surprised to find out how many Christians have quit my choirs -- not only over "profane" music we've done (think *Catulli Carmina*), but also because religious texts were set in ways that didn't suit the mores of their sects.

To these challenges, the standard reply is that we are not a religious organization and are bound only by the quality of the music we choose, not its religious message. But, for me, there's something still deeper in our experience of music with words. Something that Cairn illuminates in his perspective on the prickly character of Berlioz.

Any person who has lived long enough to develop a spiritual life of his own has evolved through many contrasting experiences that maintain deep meaning, even though they are not the center of that person's emotional or spiritual life. The arts, and especially music, plumb these depths as nothing else in life can. I think of my own visceral response to music as contrasting as the favorite church hymns I sang with my family, the Miles Davis Quintet, Beethoven's late string quartets, early Barbra Streisand and the *St. Matthew Passion*. Each of these can give me what Cairn describes as, "[t]he intensity of recollected emotion." It gives me a spiritual connection to the world around me, but more importantly, the world within.

This influence of music on personal spirituality can be seen in most of the great composers who worked outside the church. (Think *Missa Solemnis* or Verdi's *Requiem*.) And I feel that it helps explain the devotion of so many different individuals who sing and play together.

So I don't argue with the fundamentalists of faith or of secularism. I just quietly maintain that we musicians have the best of all worlds. If music could bring that rascal Berlioz in touch with his inner spiritual self, it can't hurt the rest of us!



Contributors:

Barbara Peisch, Ed.

David Chase

Walt Desmond

Victoria Eicher

Beda Farrell

Ida Houby

Tom Peisch

Satomi Saito

Diane Salisbury



Member spotlight

Ida Houby, Soprano and Board Member

Beginnings

I am from summer nights that stay light till about midnight, and winter days that never quite wake up before darkness descends again, calling for the lighting of candles so as not to curse...

I am from narrow, winding tree lined highways, thatched roofs on half timber houses, from dolmens dotting the fertile landscape, reminders of prehistoric ancestors long gone, and from the gentle waters that sheltered the famous little mermaid.



For as long as I can remember, the Danish theme of my life has been accompanied by an American voice, and it is a curious coincidence that the invitation to introduce myself to you came the very month when the American voice has become the main theme of my life, and the Danish voice an accompaniment, as I have just become an American citizen (after 30 years).

I heard the voice of America quite early sitting in the bathtub as a small child. My father owned a cinema in a little provincial town, and the projection booth was next to our bathroom, so that one could hear the music and voices of Hollywood quite clearly. I listened and dreamed.

As I learned to read I quickly began to learn a bit of English, by reading the subtitles to the movies I was allowed to watch. I think my love of America and my love of music began with films like "With a Song in my Heart", and, looking back, I think these two loves have been intertwined forever, although I didn't know it then.

Early music instruction and dreams

Our apartment had taken in the grand piano that had served the cinema during the era of the silent movies. My older sister was given piano lessons. I was six years younger and deeply intrigued by the amazing sounds she could produce on that grand old instrument. I got her to teach me how to play "Scotty is the world's best dog" (c-e-c-e-g-g-c) with the index finger, thus launching a continuing love affair with piano playing.

As it happened, my sister didn't much like practicing the piano, which means I owe her both for being my first piano teacher, and for letting me have the lessons and all the time at the piano.

As an adolescent I dabbled in other forms of music making: the obligatory recorder, guitar, even the B clarinet for a short while, but the piano was my mainstay - along with singing. My family sang while doing dishes, on road trips, etc. - often harmonizing, though never more than 3 voices, even though there were four of us. But it was as a scout that I was introduced to, and fell in love with ballads and spirituals.

All this singing had me dreaming of singing in a real chorus, but our town did not have one. What I really coveted was a spot in the "Danmarks Radios pige kor" (girl's choir of the Danish Radio) which was highly esteemed, but Copenhagen was too far away, so a dream it remained.

But I got my chance, both with the ballads and the chorus singing - even before finding the LJSC.

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www.peisch.com/tutti



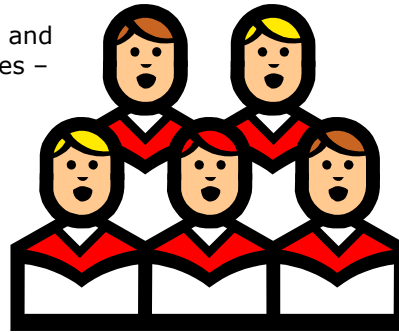
Meeting the "real" America

When I was a junior in high school (1961) I won a sort of scholarship to travel a part of the United States with scouts from America and the rest of the world in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the American Girl Scout movement. For 3 delicious months I traveled with 12 American scouts, 2 Brits, 2 French, and my fellow Dane throughout the Southeast quadrant of the country, staying with American families, learning about America and introducing Denmark to my American hosts. This was the era – among other things – of Joan Baez, and one of the American Scouts spent countless hours on the bus (taking us from state to state), teaching me Baez' songs – complete with the finger picking guitar accompaniment. I consider this gift one of the treasures I brought back with me, along with Alan Lomax's then recently published book of collected folk songs.

Finally singing in a chorus

The chorus dream was fulfilled a few years later. After high school I had considered studying psychology at the University of Copenhagen, but rejected the idea in favor of studying music and Scandinavian Languages and Literature after learning that all you did in psychology was formulate null hypotheses and run rats through mazes.

As a student of music (in between theory, musicology and voice/piano instruction), I finally got to sing in choruses – and what a joy! There were such highlights as singing Brahms' Requiem for the first time in the concert hall in Tivoli, and Heinrich Schutz's double choruses from the balconies in Copenhagen's oldest renaissance church.



Music is great, but how do I eat?

Unfortunately, having earned my BA with a double major in music and Scandinavian literature, I'd had a lot of fun and learned a lot, but I wasn't qualified for much in the way of gainful employment. But then Fortuna smiled on me unexpectedly.

The Danish state had been importing what was euphemistically called "guest workers" – people from Yugoslavia, Turkey, and Egypt, mainly - who left their warm climates to come and earn a living wage, working in factories in the north. It was soon decided that they should be given Danish language instruction. So, I figured that while I decided on graduate school, I might as well put my language degree to good use and applied to support myself as a DSL instructor. This turned out to be a pivotal decision.

How do you conduct a class with about 15-20 students whose levels of sophistication were as diverse as that of the villager from Egypt, the American average college student and the odd Chinese Kierkegaard scholar? I learned a lot about the showmanship necessary in this kind of teaching, and of the help you get from your students when they become engaged with each other. Most of all, though, I reconnected with my interest in psychology, in the form of a fascination with the people, their welfare and their stories, and I formed some friendships that brought me on a second visit to America.

The big leap

This time the visit "took". I met Bill, my husband of more than 25 years, on this trip, and decided – after a brief detour into the music therapy department at NYU – on graduate studies in clinical psychology with the heavy hitters in humanistic psychology – Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Victor Frankl, and others - who happened to be teaching in a place I had never even heard of: San Diego, California. I came, sight unseen, and in time wrote my masters thesis – perhaps not surprisingly - on risk taking, and later my PhD dissertation on the efficacy of a method to help cancer patients cope. I may have been one of the few people who actually enjoyed their dissertation, as I raced up and down the backstairs at Scripps Clinic, eager to meet each new person referred by the oncologist or surgeon to my study.

Need to contact the LJS&CA?

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For years after graduation I led support groups for cancer patients and for their caregivers and families, again marveling at the amazing strength people can bring to each other when they really connect.



Ida, with her husband, Bill

Musings on music and psychotherapy

In the group setting my job was often somewhat akin to what I imagine might be asked of the conductor: encourage the participants to listen to each other, so they can achieve cohesiveness, and once that functions, stay out of the way as much as possible, allowing the momentum to carry the day, and the "music" to unfold.

In the mode in which I work now, individual psychotherapy, I see people who struggle with a variety of issues, including physical illness. In this mode, the musical metaphor for my role is more that of the chamber player.

One listens for one's cues, which are mediated partly through manifest content: theme, tempo, timbre, sequence, etc. – and partly, and as importantly - through what is NOT there - the equivalent of the pauses in music, I suppose. The music making of psychotherapy happens when one "gets" the cues and responds in tune, so to speak.

Enthusiasms

I guess I have described how music is central in my life. Singing in the chorus is a very important part of that. There are other enthusiasms as well – our book club, which is now in its 15th year, a slightly younger movie club, hiking in the back country, and let me not forget, the practice of yoga.

My newest interest is in the inner workings of the LJS&CA. I was glad to be asked, and accepted to serve on the board of LJSC last year. I have spent a fascinating year learning about this unique organization and how much in the way of resources, hard work and attention goes into helping us survive and thrive. I feel fortunate to have gone to the Messiah Sing 10 years ago that led me to become part of this vital and extraordinary group of singers and musicians.

Have some news to report?

Let the editor know!

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LJS&C Music Outreach and education ...

Victoria Eicher

In school performances: Encinitas

The Measure

a vocal ensemble program led by LJS&C assistant choral conductor Ken Bell and sponsored by the Encinitas Arts Commission.

Tuesday, November 27, 12:15

Mission Estancia Elementary
3330 Calle Barcelona, Carlsbad, 92009
760-943-2004

Tuesday, December 18, 12:15 and 1:00

El Camino Creek Elementary
7885 Paseo Aliso, Carlsbad, 92009
760-943-2051

Latin American Music Project

City Heights student music ensembles sponsored by Price Charities and Qualcomm

Saturday, December 8, 6:00 PM

Afro-Cuban Ensemble
Balboa Park December Nights
The ensemble has been invited to perform by the Old Globe on their outdoor stage set up for the festivities.

Friday, December 14, 5:00 PM

City Heights Mariachi and Afro-Cuban Ensemble
Holiday Festival, City Heights Performance Annex
3795 Fairmount Ave, 92105

In other news...

Outreach letters and flyers have been mailed to selected schools throughout San Diego in the next few weeks. The letters offer schools a choice of in-school LJS&C outreach ensemble performances sponsored by Qualcomm.



Congratulations to Chorus Alto Debby Park on the arrival of her new granddaughter, Rachel Lee Presley. Debby's daughter Melissa gave birth to 10 lb. 8 oz. Rachel on November 25.



53rd Season Opens to Sold-Out Crowd, Accolades, and a Champagne Reception ...

Diane Salisbury

The LJS&C and new Music Director Steven Schick kicked off the season with a sold-out opening-night performance on Saturday, November 3, featuring the American premiere of Philip Glass's *Cello Concerto* with cellist Wendy Sutter, John Luther Adams' *The Light that Fills the World*, and Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony*.

Philip Glass attended the premiere, hearing for the first time a live performance of his concerto. After the concert, 125 guests gathered at the UCSD Faculty Club for a private reception celebrating Steven Schick's debut as music director and orchestra conductor, and in honor of special guests Philip Glass and Wendy Sutter. In attendance were Supervisor Pam Slater-Price and her husband Hershell Price, Del Mar Deputy Mayor David Druker and his wife Kristen, Gary Margolis of the City of San Diego's Commission for Arts and Culture, and Felicia Shaw from San Diego Foundation. Composer and UCSD music faculty member Roger Reynolds was on hand as was Rand Steiger, music department chair.

The season also celebrates LJS&C's 40th year on the UCSD campus as an affiliated organization – an occasion marked by the attendance of the organizations' three music directors from that 40-year period: Tom Nee (1967-1998), now music director emeritus, Harvey Sollberger (1998-2005) and Steven Schick. Choral Director David Chase joined the festivities, celebrating the beginning of his 34th season with the ensemble. The reception was underwritten by Ida Houby and Bill Miller.



Supervisor Pam Slater-Price with husband Hershell Price



(l. to r) LJS&C Board Vice President Liza Perkins-Cohen, Gary Margolis, and Felicia Shaw




Choral Director David Chase, Music Director Emeritus Tom Nee, former Music Director Harvey Sollberger, and new Music Director Steven Schick




Steven Schick, Philip Glass, Wendy Sutter





WINE TASING – Be sure to save Saturday, May 10 from 2:00 PM – 4:30 PM for the annual Wine Tasting fundraiser!



Article Watch

From Tom Peisch:

The San Diego Union-Tribune, Sunday, October 28, 2007

“They follow the beat of a ...”

by James Chute

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20071028-9999-lz1a28schick.html>

In case you missed this prominent article when it appeared in the paper, here’s a link to it. Unfortunately, it came out just after the previous issue of *Tutti* was finalized.



From Tom Peisch:

The San Diego Union-Tribune, Monday, November 5, 2007

“Symphony scores with U.S. debut of Glass’ work”

by Valerie Scher

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/features/20071105-9999-1c05lajolla.html>

Here’s the review of our November concert, which appeared in the Union-Tribune.



From Satomi Saito:

The Los Angeles Times, Tuesday, November 6, 2007

“Fires die out but heat stays on in San Diego”

by Mark Swed

<http://www.latimes.com:80/entertainment/la-et-sandiego6nov06,0,3429938.story?coll=la-headlines-calendar>



From Satomi Saito:

SanDiego.com, Monday, November 5, 2007

“La Jolla Symphony Premieres Glass Cello Concerto”

by Kenneth Herman

http://www.sandiego.com:80/index.php?option=com_sdca&target=2b33e834-0c3f-41f9-a63b-b13c609f24bf



From Walt Desmond:

The New Yorker Monday, November 5, 2007

“The endless scroll ... New works by Philip Glass”

by Alex Ross

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/musical/2007/11/05/071105crmu_music_ross



From Walt Desmond:

Powell’s Books

“Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain”

by Oliver Sacks

<http://www.powells.com/biblio/9781400040810>



From Walt Desmond:

Powell’s Books

“This is your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession”

by Daniel J. Levitin

http://www.powells.com/cgi-bin/biblio?isbn=9780452288522&atch=h&atchi=160073910&utm_content=You%20Might%20Also%20Like



From Walt Desmond:

The Washington Post, Friday, June 1, 2007

"It was 40 years ago today"

by Daniel J. Levitin

http://www.powells.com/cgi-bin/biblio?isbn=9780452288522&atch=h&atchi=160073910&utm_content=You%20Might%20Also%20Like

A look back at Sgt. Pepper and other popular songs and artists.



From Beda Farrell:

The San Francisco Chronicle, Friday, November 2, 2007

"Music to drink wine by: Vintner insists music can change wine's flavors"

by W. Blake Gray

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/11/02/WI80SAPJB.DTL>

Which goes better with a fine Napa Valley Cabernet: Mozart or Metallica?



From Beda Farrell:

The San Francisco Chronicle, Saturday, November 3, 2007

"A prodigy at the podium"

by Joshua Kosman

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/11/03/DDEFT5D0V.DTL>

An article about Gustavo Dudamel, the Venezuelan wunderkind who made his first appearance in Davies Symphony Hall at the helm of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra. He has been conducting since he was 12.



From Barbara Peisch:

The San Diego Union-Tribune, Thursday, November 15, 2007

"Singing in the Brain ... Neuroscience takes mental note of our affinity for music"

by Scott Lafee

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/science/20071115-9999-lz1c15brain.html>



From Barbara Peisch:

The San Diego Union-Tribune, Tuesday, November 20, 2007

"Keeping your words ... Healthy vocal cords are key to having a strong voice"

by R.J. Ignelzi

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/health/20071120-9999-lz1c20voice.html>



If you find an interesting, music-related article or Web site, send the information about it to me at barbara@peisch.com. For Web sites, send me a link to the site. For articles, you may either send a link to the article or just the name and date of the publication, along with the title of the article, and I can find it online. You may also hand me the article during rehearsal or mail it to me at:



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