

## Persephone versus Gotham ... Music Director Steven Schick

It's been magical in La Jolla this past week. While the rest of the country has slugged it out in below-zero temperatures, my morning hikes have been essays in green and blue: foamy rolling breakers powered by the deep ocean, the overnight dew still glistening on gray-green cacti. Spring has arrived in Southern California, and it's breathtaking!

We owe our modern notion of springtime to the ancient Greeks. The season itself has existed since the planet started turning, of course, but our conception of it – as a



time of reawakening and regeneration – can be traced directly to the myth of Persephone. This myth is one of the oldest stories we tell each other, a tragic account of a young girl kidnapped from under her mother's nose by the King of Hades and held in the underworld until a lengthy search and complex set of negotiations allowed her to spend part of her time on the surface of the earth with her mother. As the story goes, Persephone's annual return to the fields, accompanied by flowers and sun, is what brings springtime to the planet.

In Igor Stravinsky's setting of a text crafted by André Gide, many of the complexities and side characters of the myth have been edited out. In Gide's view, the story is Persephone's – her mother, Demeter, has all but disappeared in the narrative point-of-view. Persephone leaves the beautiful surface of the earth, spends a season

in hell and eventually finds her way back, having been changed in important ways. Perplexing to the modern mind is that Persephone was actually pretty happy in the underworld, not a starving prisoner waiting to be rescued, but a mature and complete woman having tasted the sweet fruits of adult human experience. Accordingly, the Stravinsky/Gide version of the myth is as much about the loss of innocence as it is the return of spring.

Thus the relatively neat package that Stravinsky and Gide offer us is mostly about duality. There is darkness and light; home and away; absence and return. Stravinsky's neo-classical harmonic language with its prolific combinations of major and minor tonalities makes the perfect vehicle for a morality tale of binary values. Where Stravinsky goes deeper is in the extraordinary textures he achieves through unconventional orchestrations. A moment in which pure, rising melodies in the women's voices is accompanied by melancholy falling string lines is simultaneously a tender encomium to innocence and the foreshadowing of its imminent demise. A proto-jazz phrase, remarkably orchestrated in colors that Miles Davis and Gil Evans would make famous 20 years later, ties an ancient myth to contemporary musical

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sensibilities. And finally, the late arrival of children's voices – fascinatingly not a part of the original statement of innocence in the first movement, but appearing in the third movement as a part of the more problematic innocence of Persephone's reappearance – shows that for Stravinsky musical color is not a secondary characteristic, applied as an ornament after the fact, but has, in and of itself, emotional weight. In *Persephone*, as in both his earlier *Rite of Spring* and very late works like the *Requiem Canticles* – pieces that have very little in common in the way they treat melody and harmony – Stravinsky demonstrates that the emotional weave of a piece of music consists of strands of highly-worked musical color. Sound, in its most basic form, equals feeling and memory.

This idea brings us to *Gotham*, Michael Gordon's vivid depiction of the creation of New York City, with a film by Bill Morrison.

On the musical surface, *Gotham* and *Persephone* seem wildly different. Where Stravinsky is neo-classical and refined, Gordon is noisy and post-industrial; where Stravinsky is mercurial, Gordon insistent; and whereas Stravinsky alludes gently to an underlying narrative; Gordon pummels you with it.

Nevertheless there is common ground to be found in the simple directions of up and down, and how those vectors are mapped in a musical space. A common view is that hell is down. Countless composers, not the least Igor Stravinsky in *Persephone*, have depicted it with grittier textures and darker orchestrations. (The exception that proves the rule is the sweet walk that Tamino takes through the eternal flames, accompanied by bells and protected by a magical flute in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*.) But in *Gotham*, paradise is a 19<sup>th</sup> century Central Park with sheep grazing, and hell is depicted as the vertical struggle of the city, where higher and higher buildings are built in search of the same light and free air that was once available (truly for free) on the surface. As New York materializes in Morrison's film – ever higher, ever noisier – Gordon ratchets up the intensity level of the music. Siren-like brass and wind slides create a cacophonous out-of-tune counterpoint to obstinate strings, and a 12 bar repeated phrase of thorny counterpoint gradually silts over as instrument groups are added one by one. The result is a dizzying conflation whereby the rising arc of the musical intensity yields diminishing contact with the natural world. Nevertheless, one senses the love that both Gordon and Morrison have for their hometown, in all of its complicated, noisy, fascinating, and sophisticated splendor. In *Gotham* as in *Persephone*, one person's hell is another person's home.



## Note from the Executive Director ... Diane Salisbury

**CONGRATULATIONS** (and thank you) to our orchestra for an outstanding February concert. Despite a scheduling conflict with Super Bowl Sunday, we managed to attract large and enthusiastic audiences and still make it home in time for second quarter!

**NEW SEASON ANNOUNCED SOON.** At the March concert we officially announce the 2016-2017 season, which was approved by the Board of Directors on February 23. Those of you in the orchestra and chorus will receive a preview from our conductors at an upcoming rehearsal. I can't give away any secrets here, but expect a year of blockbuster classics and wild and wonderful new works by some of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's most exciting composers.



## Contributors:

Barbara Peisch, Ed.

Beda Farrell

Pat Finn

Tom Peisch

Diane Salisbury

Steven Schick



**MUSIC MENTORS PROGRAM.** A new program for LJS&C student orchestra and chorus members, "Music Mentors," got its start prior to rehearsal on Monday evening, February 22. Six student members of our ensemble joined emeritus professors Mark Appelbaum (Psychology Department) and Henry Powell (School of Medicine) to learn how the program can help them balance academic loads with LJS&C activities, prepare for their futures, and more. A third mentor, Carol Plantamura (Music Department), was unable to attend but has also volunteered to mentor. If you are a student member of LJS&C and would like to contact one of the mentors who are volunteering to work with us, you can reach them through the UCSD Emeriti Association at [emeriti@ucsd.edu](mailto:emeriti@ucsd.edu).



*Students and Mentors interact*

**STEVEN SCHICK NAMED "ICON OF CLASSICAL MUSIC"** Steven Schick was recognized for his contribution to the classical music scene in San Diego with the presentation of an award by Bravo San Diego. The local performing arts circle of critics nominated Steve for the award with the final vote cast by the online publication's readers. The award was one of a dozen special awards presented by County Supervisor Dave Roberts in a ceremony at the County building, emceed by Bravo San Diego's founder Rob Appel.



*Diane Salisbury accepts the award from Dave Roberts on Steven's behalf*



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## Meet Melissa Chu ... Pat Finn

Like most of us, 25-year-old cellist Melissa Chu has moved around a bit.

Melissa started her young life in Taipei, Taiwan, where she had her first piano lesson at age three. Then it was on to Houston, and back-and-forth to Taipei, and then on to San Francisco. It was in Taipei where she first picked up the cello at age 11, but she says she had her "fun, cello-learning days in Berkeley." That meant two-to-four hours of daily practice – sometimes eight hours in the summer.

She came to San Diego in 2009 for undergraduate studies at UC San Diego, where her academic schedule ran from mathematics to economics, and Chinese to music performance. Not a line-up for lightweights. After graduation in 2013, she stayed here, to the good fortune of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus. She is currently an actuarial analyst at Insurance Company of the West, where she spends her workdays calculating risk. "Which is why," she says, "I need my cello on the side to keep me sane from having to work with numbers all day."

To learn more about Melissa, Tutti gave her a mildly impertinent questionnaire on music, life, likes and dislikes:

*What do you like most about your instrument?*

I like the cello for its wide range and beautiful curves. I like my cello, Mel, for its bright sound and the vibration it creates from sounding a low G-flat.

*What do you like least?*

Cellos are expensive to maintain and repair. My cello is extra weather-sensitive and often rebels by letting some strings completely loose.

*What's the piece you've played with LJS&C that you liked best?*

Vaughan Williams "Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis," because it's one of my favorite string pieces, and we rarely do strings-only pieces in LJS&C.

*What was the most difficult piece and why?*

I find most of the new music pieces difficult – especially the ones that involve treble-clef upper ledger lines along with gnarly rhythms – because it is difficult to get back on track by ear, once you miss a note or a rhythm.

*What kind of stuff do you bring with you to rehearsals?*

I bring my cello, at least one bow, some rosin, a pencil, a spare set of strings, my music, a bottle of water, my fingers, arms and brain, and sometimes a small stuffed animal as my personal audience.

*What do you do in your spare time (assuming you have any)?*

I play lots of music in my spare time to keep me sane. I enjoy playing chamber music with my friends the most. Aside from music, I enjoy soaking up the sun – anything from hanging out at the beach to hiking the lovely San Diego trails.

*What's your favorite rock band?*

I rarely listen to rock bands. My favorite orchestra is the Philadelphia Orchestra for its full and schmaltzy string sound and, of course, for its relationship with Mickey Mouse and Leopold Stokowski.



## Need to contact the LJS&C?

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Diane Salisbury,  
Executive Director



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## A perfect day for Young Artists Winners Recital

On Sunday, February 28<sup>th</sup>, nine winners from our 56<sup>th</sup> annual Young Artists Competition performed for an appreciative audience at the home of Michael and Nancy Kaehr in La Jolla Farms. The Recital presented a lively and varied program moderated by Steven Schick and David Chase, that was followed by an outdoor reception. Thank you to June Allen and Jeanne Saier for arranging for volunteers to bring appetizers and desserts for the reception and to help setup and clean up. And special thanks to our hosts, Michael and Nancy, for lending us use of their beautiful home.



## Two "Sacred Voices" concerts

The Chorus will be giving two "Sacred Voices" concerts this year:

**David Chase, conducting**  
**Jared Jacobsen, organist**

Sat. April 9, 2016	7:00 PM	St Paul's Cathedral, San Diego
Sun, April 17, 2016	4:00 PM	Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe

### Program

Vierne	"Kyrie" and "Gloria" from <i>A Solemn Mass</i> (with organ)
A. Parker	<i>An American Kedushah</i> (Rebecca Ramirez and Myles Mayfield, soloists)
Davis	<i>Bell of Silence</i> (Chamber chorus and handbells)
Di Lasso	<i>Prophetiae Sibyllarum</i>
Walton	<i>Coronation Te Deum</i> (with organ)



## The LJS&CA Board

(Board representatives to the ensemble in bold)

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### EX-OFFICIO

David Chase  
Diane Salisbury  
Steven Schick



## Editor wanted ... Barbara Peisch

I will be taking a break from Chorus next season and would like a break from editing *Tutti* as well. We are looking for someone who can take over the editing and production for next season. I can provide as much training and/or assistance as needed and will continue to provide the server that hosts *Tutti* online. We need someone who has access to a computer with software for document editing such as Word or Libre Office. Access to a duplexing color printer is a big plus. Anyone interested should contact either Diane Salisbury at (848) 534-4637 or me at (760) 729-9607.



## Greetings from the San Diego Youth Symphony

SDYS is aiming to strengthen its community through alumni outreach and networking with past musicians. They've asked for our assistance in getting in touch with musicians in the LJS&C who may have gone through their program. If you are an SDYS alumni and are interested in reconnecting, contact the SDYS at [www.sdys.org/alumni](http://www.sdys.org/alumni).



### 13TH ANNUAL WINE TASTING & BENEFIT

#### *Que Syrah, Shiraz!*

**Saturday, May 14**  
**2:00-5:00 pm**

**Event Chairs: Gordon & Lauren Clark**

*Hosted at the Carmel Valley residence of Dennie Smith*

Syndicated wine critic ROBERT WHITLEY leads guests on a tasting tour of the impressive world of Syrah—from France's Rhone region to the Americas to Australia (Shiraz). Join us for an enlightening and fun afternoon!

**Tapas & Wine Reception • Blind Tasting**  
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**and [www.lajollasympphony.com](http://www.lajollasympphony.com)**



**Have some news  
to report?**

**Let the editor  
know!**

[barbara@peisch.com](mailto:barbara@peisch.com)

(Be sure to mention *Tutti* in  
the subject so I know it's not  
spam!)



## Article Watch

**From Tom Peisch:**

*The San Diego Union-Tribune, February 8, 2016*

"La Jolla Symphony & Chorus taps into power of Debussy's 'Jeux'"

By Christian Hertzog

A review of our last concert:

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/feb/08/a-jolla-symphony-chorus-schick/>



**From Beda Farrell:**

*BBC.com, February 16, 2016*

"Mozart and Salieri 'lost' composition played in Prague"

A piece of Mozart music considered lost for more than 200 years has been performed for the first time since being rediscovered.

It was co-written by him and Antonio Salieri, usually considered a rival, as well as an unknown composer, Cornetti.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35589422>

and

***Cleveland Institute of Music***

"Conferral of Honorary Doctoral Degree"

Claire Chase (daughter of Choral Director David Chase and Ann Chase) is to receive an honorary doctoral degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music on May 14.

<https://www.cim.edu/promos/commencement/bios.pdf>



If you find an interesting, music-related article or web site, send the information about it to Barbara at [barbara@peisch.com](mailto:barbara@peisch.com) or Evon at [evon.carpenter@gmail.com](mailto:evon.carpenter@gmail.com). For web sites, send us a link to the site and include "Tutti" in the subject. 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 we can find it online. Or you can bring it to rehearsal and hand it to one of us or snail mail it to Barbara at:

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