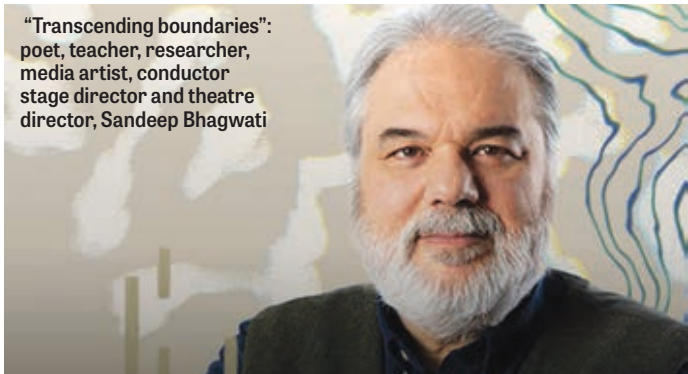


"Transcending boundaries":
poet, teacher, researcher,
media artist, conductor
stage director and theatre
director, Sandeep Bhagwati



Third of three

The third event in this month's account of recent and upcoming new music events is coincidentally another three-day festival. Titled Future Resonance and brought to us biennially by New Music Concerts, it takes place from April 26-28 in three different venues. It begins on April 26 at the Canadian Music Centre with a panel discussion titled "What Is the Real Sound of Toronto" aimed at stimulating a lively conversation about alternate ways of approaching the creation and presentation of newly made music. Doors open at 4.30 and the event wraps up with a reception from 6:30 to 7pm.

On April 27, the action shifts to St. George by the Grange, the previous home of the Music Gallery, for the concert that promises to be the centrepiece of the festival, titled "Swara Sutras Goes Electronic." "Swara sutras" in Sanskrit means an assemblage of notes, and the concert lives up to its title. In its first half, it offers four world premieres by Canadian composers where the sounds of guzheng, tablas, bamboo flute, percussion, kora, and Metis fiddle, are individually and in combination blended with new technologies. The concert's final work features a nine-musician Swara Sutras Ensemble assembled for the occasion under the direction of Sandeep Bhagwati.

The final event on April 28 takes the festival uptown to the Aga Khan Museum for a full-day immersive event titled "Śabdāgatitāra: How to Inhabit These Different Temporalities?" "Śabdāgatitāra" is again from Sanskrit meaning the crossing over (tāra) of methods of making (gati) sound (śabda), and promises to be an event "celebrating many musical roots and containing wonderfully unexpected sound worlds," including pipa, Bulgarian singing, Turkish violin, double bass and musical sculptures.

Coming full circle, Soundstreams appears again on the calendar for a May 4 performance of *Grandma's Shawl* which reveals the story of the bond built in the early 20th century between Ukrainian and Indigenous women. Struggling to cope in their new surroundings, the Ukrainian immigrants are welcomed and supported by Indigenous women through food and Khustka shawls. The musical narrative for soprano, mezzo, piano and violin unfolds through the combining of works by both Ukrainian and Canadian composers, and takes place at the Redwood Theatre, a classic 1914 theatre, newly renovated, at 1300 Gerrard St in Toronto's east end. 🎧

Wendalyn Bartley is a Toronto-based composer and electro-vocal sound artist. sounddreaming@gmail.com

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ART OF SONG

A NEW JOURNEY Reimagining art song for the 2020s

STEPHANIE CONN

Lieder, or art song, might seem a tough sell at times. With just two performers on stage, singer and pianist, it does not offer the visual dazzle of opera with its scenery, orchestra and casts of thousands. Texts are usually by 19th-century poets such as Verlaine, Goethe, Rilke, Heine and Hesse, and in German or French which makes them less accessible to English-speaking listeners. To do justice to the texts, songs were often through-composed and so they lack choruses that might catch the audience's ears.

Lieder, however, holds all the dramatic possibilities of opera – especially when the songs are presented as an entire set or cycle – but the responsibility for realizing the poet's and composer's intentions lies entirely with the singer and pianist. Art song can be compared to short story form, eschewing the grandeur of opera, as short stories do novels, to instead capture truth in a more compact or even epigrammatic form.

Confluence: There are several musical organizations in Toronto that are taking on art song these days and updating it in a way that hopes to win new audiences, and also to afford artists new possibilities for interacting and creating. This May, Toronto audiences will have the chance to hear an especially inventive re-imagining of Heinrich

Teiya Kasahara 笠原 真野 (L) and pianist David Eliakis





▶ "Kasahara's *The Butterfly Project: The Ballade of Chō-Chō San*

Heine's *Dichterliebe* as set by Robert Schumann, reinterpreted as *Dichterliebe: Whose Love?* It is presented by Confluence Concerts and co-created by Teiya Kasahara 笠原 貞野 and pianist David Eliakis. Kasahara told *Wholenote* that "David Eliakis and I will look at Schumann's setting of these poems with a queer and trans lens of our lived experiences. We started with the central question, 'Whose love is important, valid, and celebrated?', and that is why we are presenting *Dichterliebe: Whose Love?*"

"Lieder is where I began my classical vocal education at age 15," says Kasahara. "It was the place I first was able to express myself through my singing voice. I think what is special about Lieder is that one can take more into consideration their own lived experience in relation to the poetry. There is less prescription in dramatic portrayal – in "performance" – in comparison to opera, where we are asked to play specific characters in usually very structured narratives." It's worthwhile to note that in a previous project with Confluence, Kasahara re-examined Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* in *The Butterfly Project: The Ballade of Chō-Chō San*.

With this program, Kasahara and Eliakis interrogate "their classical music educations, the traditions which they have perpetuated in both music and life, and the sex and gender norms that still govern much of today's performance practices and social discourse."

what has continued to bring me back to canonical works in Lieder and in opera is that my imagination, curiosity and creativity continues to inspire me to want to tell another story: queer stories, trans stories, BIPOC stories, my story."

Larry Beckwith founded Confluence Concerts in 2018, and says they've programmed "a good deal of art song, including Debussy's *Cinq Poèmes de Charles Baudelaire* in the fall of 2018, Marion Newman's program of Indigenous Art Song in 2019, a generous sampling from the fascinating Irish Art Song Project and a program of James Rolfe's songs in the fall of 2023." Their presentations have been creative, and as Beckwith explains, "Most have included art songs juxtaposed with jazz standards, folk or contemporary pop songs, such as last season's *All the Diamonds* cabaret, curated by yours truly, or the *Mandala* (curated by Suba Sankaran)



DAHLIA KATZ

Larry Beckwith

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BRUCE ZINGER

Soprano Meghan Lindsay and Atelier Ballet artist Eric César de Mello da Silva in *All is Love*

and *Gracias a la Vida* (curated by Patricia O'Callaghan) programs in the pandemic.”

Beckwith teaches music at the secondary school level and adds that he plans to bring his students to Matthias Goerne' and Evgeny Kissin's performance of *Dichterliebe* this month (April 21, Roy Thomson Hall). “The students in the voice program love art songs and often juxtapose them with musical theatre songs, which are often not dissimilar in their story-telling arcs.” With innovative productions like the Confluence show leading the way to spark interest, and the open-heartedness of young singers, art song might once again take centre stage for more listeners.

As Beckwith says, “Art songs endure because they are tiny perfect gems and poignantly marry words and music. We look forward to Teiya Kasahara's re-envisioning of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* with a goal towards de-mystifying and further popularizing what is in essence a very accessible, moving, timeless and entertaining art form.”

Elsewhere: Some other recent and current performances offering insights into art song include Opera Atelier's upcoming *All Is Love*, showcasing Measha Brueggergosman-Lee and including Reynaldo Hahn's setting of Verlaine's *L'heure Exquise*; and the Toronto Mendelssohn Singers, just before this issue went to press, presenting Franz Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise* in a new arrangement for choir, baritone Brett Polegato, and piano. This past March, in a clever contemporary turn, Nathan Keoughan and pianist/composer Peter Tiefenbach performed Tiefenbach's dramatic and humorous cycle, *The Long Walk Home*, as part of Against the Grain Theatre's Opera pub at The Drake Hotel. Jokingly referred to as “Die Tinderreise”, this original song cycle with text by James Ostime tells the story of a man's one-night journey, echoing cycles such as *Winterreise* but including contemporary details.

Listing details: Confluence Concerts. *Dichterliebe*: Whose Love? Teiya Kasahara 笠原 貞野, vocalist; David Eliakis, piano. Heliconian Hall, 35 Hazelton Ave. May 3 and 4, 7:30, with pre-concert chat at 6:45pm. Tickets: www.bemusednetwork.com/events. \$25. 📍

Stephanie Conn is an ethnomusicologist, writer/editor, and former producer for CBC Radio. A member of the ensemble *Puirt a Baroque*, she has also sung with *Tafelmusik* and other period ensembles, and is active as a traditional Gaelic singer and piano accompanist in Cape Breton. Her podcast “Friend of a Friend” can be heard at <https://meezstephanie.substack.com>

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT

and a toast to new creation

JENNIFER PARR

For months there has been speculation, in “the business” and out, about what the unannounced “secret” seventh show of the upcoming 2024/2025 Mirvish season might be. Possibilities mooted have included *Beetlejuice* and *MJ: the musical* among others.

The real news is much more exciting. It has just been announced (March 19) that this “secret show” will actually be a remount (or rather a newly enhanced version) of the hit Canadian premiere production of Dave Malloy's *Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*, currently finishing a triumphant and record breaking 16-week run at Streetcar Crow's Nest in Toronto's east end.

I have been a champion of this production from very early in the process, interviewing director Chris Abraham (Dec/

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