



PRO ARTE: Above, in a 1948 recording session (l to r) Bernard Milofsky, viola; Albert Rahier, violin; Ernst Friedlander, cello; Rudolf Kolisch, violin. Below: today's Pro Arte

Centennial

When Bob and Linda Graebner were first dating at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the **Pro Arte Quartet** was date-night material. The ensemble was the university's quartet-in-residence, and the concerts were free: it was a nice perk for music-loving undergrads. That was back in the early 1960s; nearly a half-century later, the Graebners still live in Madison, and not only are they still Pro Arte fans, they're impassioned advocates.

The quartet was already over a half-century old when the Graebners were courting. It had been founded in 1912 in Brussels, and soon developed a reputation as a proponent of new music. The Pro Arte made a series of classic recordings for HMV during the 1930s. It introduced new works by Milhaud and Honegger, and gave the premiere of Samuel Barber's *Quartet in B Minor*, with its famous *Adagio*. Bartók dedicated his fourth quartet to the Pro Arte. In 1940, while the ensemble was playing a concert at the University of Wisconsin during a U.S. tour, word came that Germany had invaded Belgium. Stranded in America, the Pro Arte soon accepted a residency from the university; in 1959, the group became Wisconsin's faculty string quartet, a position it has maintained ever since.

Needless to say, the quartet's personnel saw much change over the years. The war

years were particularly unsteady, with three first violinists within four years. Rudolf Kolisch, whose own eponymous quartet had disbanded in 1939, took over in 1944; his tenure lasted until 1967. The current members—David Parry (first violin), Suzanne Beia (second violin), Sally Chisholm (viola) and Parry Karp (cello)—have all been in place since 1995; Karp's tenure dates back to 1976.

This present group plays with a sense of the Pro Arte's legacy—one that has been preserved in the quartet's many recordings. "Our configuration has a certain refinement in the sound that maybe the original group would not be unhappy to have heard," says Chisholm. "The big difference is we're much taller!"

But the Graebners' involvement is longer-standing than any of the musicians', starting in the Kolisch era and continuing to this very day. Seven years ago, they started trying to drum up interest in celebrating the quartet's centennial. "We thought that this was going to be an important event, and we could get things rolling," says Linda. "I said to my husband, 'You need to do this.'" The couple enlisted local enthusiasts and donors to join in the preparation, with their own dining-room table as *Ground Zero*; there the group would meet and plan the festivities over food and wine. "It was a bit of a Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland let's-put-on-a-show kind of thing," Linda says.

The results of their efforts are on display throughout this hundredth-anniversary

season. The festivities, which started in October, include concerts, guest lectures, masterclasses, dinners and parties. The performances will include a significant amount of classical and 20th-century music. But fittingly, the central focus is new music: a series of four high-profile commissions, from Walter Mays, Paul Schoenfield, William Bolcom and John Harbison, with each of the four composers staying at the university for a one-week residency.

For the Graebners, the centennial endeavors are a continuation of the quartet's longstanding commitment to new music, which they themselves witnessed during the Kolisch years. "It's not only a celebration of a hundred years of history," says Bob Graebner, "but a launch into the next century." ■ www.proartequartet.org



DUO RENARD's Texas venue,
the Mount Vernon Music Hall

Country Music

Something about the area just felt *right*. In 1995–96, the violin/viola team of Mark and Ute Miller—also known as **Duo Renard**—were posted in Big Sandy, Texas, on a CMA Rural Residency grant. Neither was a Texas native: Mark is from the central coast of California; Ute from western Germany. But both grew up in small towns, and found the rural environment congenial and oddly familiar.

At the very first full-length recital they gave during the residency, the couple met a group of people from a town an hour away: Mount Vernon, pop. 2,286. Fast-forward a decade to the mid-2000s. Through their Mount Vernon contacts, the Millers, now living in the Dallas metropolitan area, heard that the town's oldest church was about to be razed. They intervened, chartering a nonprofit association and acquiring the structure (as Mark Miller says) "for a song." The result: Mount Vernon Music, regular series of chamber music concerts, with that

church, now a 150-seat concert space called the Mount Vernon Music Hall, as its main venue.

"We've made a concert space in a place that really doesn't get a lot of classical music," says Mark Miller. "In this part of the country, when you turn on the radio, you hear country-and-western and gospel—you don't hear classical. I almost feel that's the reason the people who support us have been so welcoming. We're swimming against the current—but I think there's a sizable chunk of people out there that would love to swim against the current."

In Ute's words: "It seems to us like this is a dry sponge, waiting for the water to soak up."

Addressing the tastes of Mount Vernon and the surrounding area, the Millers offer a diverse roster of music to supplement the classics: jazz, bluegrass, Broadway—even mariachi, addressing the region's sizable Hispanic population. "We want to make sure everybody views the hall as their musical

home," says Mark. The layout of the hall, with its curved pews and concert platform raised just a foot above the audience, buttresses the community feeling. "It's enveloping and inviting, with no barrier between the audience and the stage," says Ute.

The Millers program their classical concerts with a similar concern for drawing in the audience. They take pains to offer approachable repertoire; a discussion of programming the Hindemith Octet lasted (in Mark's words) "about half a minute."

"The last thing we want is for them to feel alienated," he says. "We don't want to go someplace where they can't share the experience with us; we want them to feel this is *their* music they're listening to. We are committed to communicate this message: this music doesn't just belong in a metropolitan setting. It belongs to *all* of us as our cultural heritage." ■ www.mountvernonmusic.org



Marlboro on the Lake

Chicago has a long opera tradition, and it's home to one of the world's greatest orchestras. But historically, it had never been a mecca for chamber music. Twenty-five years ago, a group of musicians decided to change all that by founding **Chicago Chamber Musicians**, which began as the resident ensemble of WFMT, Chicago's fine-arts radio station. The group began to add live performances, starting with the free First Monday Series at the Chicago Cultural Center, then a subscription series, held at various halls around the city.

"We started extremely modestly," says violinist Joseph Genualdi, a founding member. "We raised money for guest artists but didn't pay ourselves. Then it started to get legs." Originally run out of pianist Deborah Sobol's house ("That's where the fax machine was," says Genualdi), the CCM slowly but surely became more businesslike, acquiring an office in downtown Chicago and eventually hiring a fulltime executive director, Amy Iwano.

The commercial model for CCM, according to Iwano, is the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Like the New York organization, CCM consists of a core group of members, playing in various combinations with guest artists. But Iwano cites Marlboro

Music as CCM's *philosophical* model. Four of the founding members—Genualdi, Sobol, clarinetist Larry Combs and cellist Jerry Grossman—came out of Marlboro. (The fifth founder is horn player Gail Williams.) The connection has only deepened through the years, with the addition of other Marlboro alumni.

One element of CCM that echoes Marlboro is its democratic nature. "Everybody has a say," says Iwano. "whether a founding member or a guest artist, everybody's equal." But music-making at Marlboro isn't necessarily geared toward performance; often the musicians will study a piece together, then put it away. Back in the real world—aka Chicago—busy musicians don't have that luxury. But in the intensity of the rehearsal process, CCM replicates the Marlboro method. Says Genualdi, "We never put ourselves in a position where we're just squeezed. Everyone who works with us knows that we want to rehearse. It's something we've really stuck to all this time."


CCM's most recent project has been perhaps its most audacious endeavor. Launched this past June, EncoreCCM is an online audio archive, offering over two decades' worth of recorded performances in streaming form. "The idea was to share

Chicago Chamber Musicians' music with audiences near and far," says Iwano. "We really hoped that it would be a tool for the field. If there are ensembles looking to program a piece of music, they can listen to it to help make a decision. It's a tool for us, as well—a database to easily look up who performed what and when."

The archive's menu of composers features all the names you'd expect to see: Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert. But it includes a healthy proportion of living composers. In its "Composer Perspectives" series, the organization brings in composers to talk to the audience and to put together concerts that will illuminate their own works. Joan Tower programmed Beethoven and Stravinsky, precursors to her own rhythmically driven style; John Harbison's program included Bach and "The Girl from Ipanema."

Through it all, CCM has developed an audience eager to follow the players on their musical adventures. "They know the classics, they *love* the classics, but they're pretty good at listening openly to what we have to offer," says Iwano. "We've built their trust over the way we program." ■

www.chicagochambermusic.org



CCM PERFORMS Dvořák's *Bagatelles* in 2010, with Joseph Genualdi in foreground.

It used to be that instruments such as the *shakuhachi* (a bamboo flute) and the zither-like *koto* were heard nearly exclusively in Japanese traditional music. But in the mid-20th century, that began to change. In 1946, Henry Cowell, the pioneering American composer, wrote *The Universal Flute for shakuhachi*; in 1967, the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu wrote *November Steps* for *shakuhachi*, *biwa* (a short-necked lute) and orchestra—for the New York Philharmonic.

Kyo-Shin-An Arts is working to keep the East/West dialogue going. The New York-based organization was founded to create contemporary repertoire for traditional Japanese instruments. It's the brainchild of Meg Fagan, an arts administrator and former oboist, and her husband James Nyoraku Schlefer—one of the few Western grandmasters of the *shakuhachi*, an instrument that presents a challenge to even the most gifted wind players.

Schlefer was a freelance flutist when he first heard the *shakuhachi* in the late '70s. A graduate school professor of his gave a musical soiree featuring a trio of Japanese instruments; Schlefer went over to the *shakuhachi* player and asked about his "flute." As he tells it now: "The guy said, 'Want to try it?' and I said, 'Sure.' But I could not make a sound on that thing." After three days with a borrowed instrument, Schlefer was finally able to produce a sound. He began intensive study, and after some years, started teaching it himself. He was awarded his grandmaster's certificate in 2001.

Meanwhile, Japan itself has recently reached what Schlefer calls "a tipping point" in the mixing of traditions. These days, the great musicians trained to play indigenous instruments are emerging from the country's conservatories shaped by influences from the West. The result is the kind of cross-pollination that Kyo-Shin-An Arts seeks to foster. Schlefer has written a *shakuhachi* concerto under the organization's auspices, while Daron Hagen has composed a *koto* concerto called *Genji* (a Kyo-Shin-An commission in collaboration with Meet The Composer). Kyo-Shin-An will present chamber versions of both works on May 5 at New York's World Financial Center in a program featuring the Voxare Quartet. Also on the program are a piece for *shakuhachi* and quartet, by Paul Moravec, and a sextet featuring the *shakuhachi* and *koto*, by the Japanese composer Somei Satoh.

Kyo-Shin-An educates composers on the technical and expressive capabilities of the instruments and encourages them to examine the *philosophical* differences between Western and Eastern music. "In Japanese music, there's a lot of emphasis on *ma*, which is emptiness, or space," says Schlefer. "Western music embraces some of that, but approaches it differently. From the composer's point of view, the question is: What is the sound really about? What's more important—sound or silence?"

"There's no answer to any of this," Schlefer says. "But the goal is to create music that's engaging and meaningful, so that the sounds themselves are now new." ■ www.nyoraku.bizland.com/kyoshinan

East Winds



New Visions

In New York for the 2003 CMA National Conference, Amy Anderson decided to wander uptown to the Guggenheim Museum. There she encountered an exhibition that changed her life: Bill Viola's *Going Forth by Day*, an epic 35-minute-long video installation depicting timeless human themes—birth, death, regeneration—on five huge panels. "It had a profound impact on me," says Anderson, board president of **Chamber Music Monterey Bay** in Carmel, California. "I never have gotten it out of my head."

Anderson didn't keep her musings private. Instead, she got CMMB to use Viola's work as the focus of a four-work commissioning program, *The Arc of Life*. The project starts on April 14, with the premiere of a string quartet by Joan Tower, performed by the Daedalus Quartet. The next three seasons will see premieres by three other prominent American composers: Kevin Puts, George Tsontakis and Chris Theofanidis. All four pieces are inspired by *Going Forth by Day*; although Viola's videos will not be part of the performances,

audiences will get to look still images drawn from the installation before the musical works themselves are played.

The Arc of Life is the most ambitious project yet for the 45-year-old organization, which each year presents a series of top classical ensembles in Carmel's 718-seat Sunset Center. It's a big step for a presenter that as recently as the 1990s offered its brochures on Xerox paper and kept its books in an old-fashioned ledger. The project also represents an aesthetic leap for an organization that until recent years shunned contemporary music. In eras past, its programs would contain "nothing later than Debussy," according to Anderson. But by adding newer works to its offerings, CMMB has both broadened the tastes of its audience and added a vital component to its own identity.

"When Sunset Hall first opened, in 2002–03, there were six presenters there who produced chamber music," says Anderson. "It was, of course, unsustainable. The competition was extreme. We had to distinguish ourselves, so we decided to that we would be the organization that presents some

contemporary music."

CMMB starting offering works from the past half century and in 2007 presented its first commission, Keven Puts's *Credo*, performed by the Miró Quartet. "We are not a college town," Anderson says. "We couldn't have a completely contemporary series here—it wouldn't fly." But the organization has gained the audience's trust for its contemporary fare by mixing the new works with the classics, and providing pre-concert lectures by musicologist Kai Christiansen.

One demographic that has proved very receptive to CMMB's adventurous programming is a young one. The "Kids Up Front and Free!" program provides tickets gratis to 3rd- to 12th-grade students. The key to the program's success, according to Anderson, is that it seats the young people in the first rows of the concert hall. "They don't sit among the adults and fidget," she says. "Instead, they sit up close and really see the performers, which is magic. They behave—and they're really open to new music." ■ chambermusicmontereybay.org

THE MORGENSTERN TRIO
Stefan Hempel (violin), Catherine Klipfel (piano), and Emanuel Wehse (cello)
at Carmel's Sunset Center





Christian Howes

Hard-Won Wisdom

Christian Howes has a distinct philosophy as a musician—and he acquired it the hard way. When the young violinist was 20 years old, a drug offense landed him in the penitentiary for four years. In prison, usually playing a guitar, he used his talent to make connections with other prisoners, in genres ranging hip-hop to bluegrass to jazz. Although Howes's talent had already pointed him toward a musical career, his prison experience gave him a new sense of the *importance* of music.

"Music is one of the few things that enforce humanity in an atmosphere that's inherently dehumanizing," Howes says. "When you see a guy who's going to be locked up for the rest of his life, you hear music from a different perspective. It's not bound to commerce or to clunky institutional infrastructures. For four years, walking around the prison yard, I saw how music

is a human, organic social phenomenon."

When Howes emerged from jail in the mid-1990s, he quickly realized that in order to succeed, he needed to approach his career as an entrepreneur. "You can't say, 'Hey, I'm a jazz violinist—here's my résumé,'" Howes says. "The typical belief is 'If I practice my art, then the business is going to fall in my lap.' But that's only true about one percent of one percent of the time. The way to do it is to create your own opportunities. Being entrepreneurial and being a creative artist go hand in hand."

Howes has not only built a thriving career as a performer—*Down Beat* named him as this year's "Rising Star" in violin—but he has also devoted himself to teaching. Every year, he runs the Creative Strings Workshop, a week-long camp in his home town of Columbus, Ohio. He has also posted a series of videos online, teaching improvisatory violin techniques. In his educational endeavors, he

aims to get violinists—especially classically trained ones—to take a creative approach to their art.

Even here, the entrepreneurial spirit comes into play: by learning improvisation, classical players can explore career possibilities beyond orchestral jobs. "People go to a place like Juilliard; they go through the conservatory experience, which is a beautiful thing," Howes says. "But once you get out of college, you have to think about more than music—you've got to think about *eating*."

Howes's "creative musicianship" concept has its root in the philosophy he developed during his incarceration: it's a way of integrating music into human experience. "If you're a creative musician, you can play in a church band. You can pick up your violin and accompany a song. It's a *sustainable* way of making music.

"Music creates humanity," Howes says. "Let's not lose sight of that." ■ christianhowes.com

Segues

Pianist/composer **Vijay Iyer** will succeed **trumpeter/composer Dave Douglas** as head of the **Banff Centre's jazz program**.

CMA board member **Arnie Malina** will retire at the end of January from his post as artistic director of the **Flynn Center for the Performing Arts** (Burlington, VT) and the Burlington Discover Jazz Festival.

Yvonne Lam is **eighth blackbird's** new violinist, succeeding founding violinist/violist **Matt Albert**, who was recently appointed artist-in-residence in the division of music at Southern Methodist University's Meadows School of the Arts, where he will also serve as director of chamber ensembles.

Pianist/composer **Jason Moran** has been appointed artistic adviser for jazz, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Gerri Combs, executive director of South Arts, announced that she will retire in June 2012.

Chamber Music Monterey Bay has appointed Dana Werdmuller as its new executive director. She most recently served as director of marketing and communications for the Carmel Bach Festival.

In Memoriam

Olga Bloom, violinist/violist; founder, Bargemusic

Charles Hamm, music historian; author, *Music in the New World*; faculty, Tulane University, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Dartmouth College

Fredda Hyman, founder, Music in the Loft

Sena Jurinac, soprano

Andrew Kazdin, record producer

René A. Morel, luthier

Jack Arthur McCray, founder, Jazz Artists of Charleston; jazz columnist, *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, SC)

Paul Motian, drummer, bandleader, composer; Paul Motian Band, Bill Evans Trio; Keith Jarrett's American Quartet

Pete Rugolo, arranger, Stan Kenton Orchestra; composer and arranger, MGM studios; West Coast musical director, Mercury Records

Michal Schmidt, founder and president, Schmidt Artists International, Inc.

Jagjit Singh, singer, reviver of Persian ghazal

Piero Weiss, pianist, musicologist; co-author, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*; faculty, Peabody Conservatory

Roger Williams, pianist

Ingvar Wixell, baritone