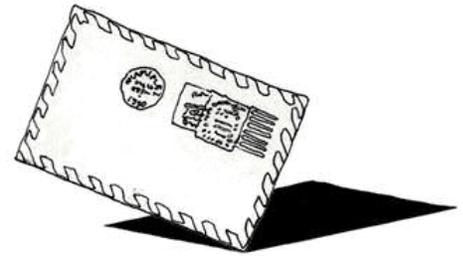


Letter from Mari



July 2014

I hope you are all well and that the season is fulfilling for you and yours. The following represents a review of my work and life over the past several months. I look forward to the next time our paths cross.

Nantes Folles Journees, featuring composers John Adams & Samuel Barber

The year 2014 started with the joyous Nantes Folles Journees Festival, fueled by the energetic ideas of Rene Martin, who directs this festival. This year, he chose "America" as the theme. This was, surprisingly, an enlightening experience for me. I say this because America is my second home in the world. It is the land where I raised my daughter and where I own a home, and where I have lived off and on for the last 20 years. Despite this, the music that Rene explored was not familiar to me in the least. This project represented a discovery of what felt like a completely new language, and what defines America.

The charming four-hand piece called "Souvenirs" by Samuel Barber was the opening of the concert. It presented several scenes evoking New York City at the beginning of the 20th Century.



Nantes in January - Total concentration is needed!

Immediately, I sensed the joy and optimism of the American spirit. It was eye opening to realize how deeply Barber's work captured what is distinctly American.

Next, in the program, we played "Hallelujah Junction" by John Adams, one of the composers considered to be representative of the U.S. today.

His music is minimalist, with repeated patterns, gives a wonderful sense of being in a flow of rhythms. They are, at first, harmonious, but then get "shifted" in an unusual way. The effect is as natural as the sound of falling raindrops. This composer helps us appreciate the beauty of this phenomenon. It is a movement and a progression, and, to me, represents the greatness of American earth and nature.

The audience of Nantes, a rather dark provincial town on a cold January day, seemed to appreciate the joy and hope brought by the concerts of American music over a long weekend.

Dvorak's Slavonic Dances

Before this project, I was not familiar with the rich culture of Central Europe. I had never visited any Eastern European country, with the exception of the cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

When the Russian/Serbian pianist Igor Lasko proposed a project to play the Dvorak Slavic Dances for four hands, it was a great way to make a virtual trip to this part of the world through music. Our repertoire covered all of the Slavic cultures, from north to south.

The selections included the entire range of music from this part of the world. I learned that this consists of both the energetic dances from Slovenia, the nostalgic dances in Polish style, and the romantic dances based on popular Czech motifs. There are nuanced differences, region by region, with variations in timing. These are the result of the language and temperament of each distinct sub-culture. Lasko provided the context I needed to understand the distinctions among the different forms of dance pieces, which are otherwise typically grouped as a single style by those from outside the region.

We presented the program in Paris in an old church in the 6th arrondissement in St. Germain. This venue was perfect for these pieces - it was old, dark, and mysterious. It is the type of sound that makes you imagine glowing candles emerging from a dark and mysterious setting, and this is just the type of venue we had that day.

The "three B" program on one of Nature's most amazing stages

It always is a pleasure to play compositions by the British composer George Benjamin, especially when it is surrounded by the other great "B"s, Bach and Beethoven.



Schloss Elmau

To play the timeless "B"s and in the most beautiful part of the German Alps in Schloss Elmau is breathtaking. This is a place where culture and nature come together and one senses having entered an era-gone-by. While in a remote location in the middle of the Alps, the town attracts thought- and cultural leaders from around the world. This unique setting offers stunning views, beautiful

accommodations, meeting spaces of various sizes, world-class concerts, three 5-star restaurants, etc. The combination of natural beauty, culture and the caliber of the other guests makes is a very special community.

Nature was especially kind to us that day, providing a dramatic backdrop to the concert. While we started playing in the light of a long, European summer day, our natural setting took a quick turn. As I played, the summer day transformed into a thunderstorm, hitting the Alps and the trees in the middle of the concert.

It was the most wonderful light I have ever experienced during a performance.



After-concert dinner at Elmau with 2 other pianists who came to the concert - Tamar Beraia left and Einav Yarden far right

Stenhammer, again in Gothenburg

Wilhelm Stenhammer was a Swedish composer/pianist/conductor in the turn of the century (the last century, that is) who unfortunately is relatively unknown outside Sweden.

The sound and color of his music reminds us of the depth, the shades and great expanses of nature in Scandinavian countries. Here, the sound is never bright. I would describe it as "northern," and therefore dark.

My first encounter with this composer's work was about 20 years ago in New York. I was playing a cycle of the American Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leon Botstein. I enjoyed this every much.

This time, I played with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, the same orchestra that Stenhammer directed about 100 years ago. For me, playing his Concerto accompanied by this orchestra and under the baton of Kent Nagano gave me the impression of having been carried by the strength of waves by a large river. I felt moved, both literally and figuratively.

Bad Kissingen 2014

This year's Sound Factory Series in Bad Kissingen is a magical experience. It is set in a German town in the Black Forest, known for its curative baths, and music festivals.



BAD KISSINGEN Sound Factory -
Dmytro from Ukraine left and
Georgy from Russia right - July 5'14

This year was a particularly small group of honored musicians who attended - including two young pianists, a violinist and a cellist.

The promising young pianists were from Russia (Georgy Tchaidze) and Ukraine (Dmytro Choni), each with distinct approaches. Luckily, the chemistry between them was excellent and the sound remarkable. We were all especially appreciative, as tension between their two countries is high. The experience proved, once again, that music could overcome anything.

BAD KISSINGEN Sound Factory - Dmytro from Ukraine left and Georgy from Russia right - July 5'14

The other "news" of the day was the World Cup final. We all worked hard to stay focused on our music and finish in time to go to see the quarterfinal of that evening.

During this festival, we all enjoyed working with the violinist Mari Samuelson from Norway, always joyous and full of emotion, as well as Kian Soltani, from Iran, a virtuoso young cellist.

The second concert was a three-part "walking concert." Both the guests and the audience move through the night, starting in one location, and walking during each intermission. (The first intermission includes champagne, and the second coffee and cake).

My sister Momo came to open this concert with Hungarian violinist Kristof Barati. Additionally, we played compositions for two pianos together. The event was successful and well attended in spite of the World Cup Soccer semi-final where Germany won 7-1 to Brazil.

Karin's News

Karin released her first CD. In it, she plays Mozart Piano Concerti with Cecilia String Quartet. Since it was released in February 2014, it became an immediate best seller in Canada.



Karin in front of the CD store Archimbaud in Montreal



Karin and her violinist partner Nathalie and cellist partner Andreas after the concert in Augsburg

In July, she made her Japan debut in Tokyo followed by a recital debut in the Concert Series in Weiden, Germany.

Her Summer 2014 Season will be busy with appearances in North America (Montreal, Mont Tremblant, Forest Hill) before she starts the International Bacalaureat Program in September.

Kent's Update

Kent had an exciting season with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. Their European tour to Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Spain was greeted by rave reviews in each location. Back in Montreal, they also inaugurated the organ in their new concert Hall, called "Maison Symphonique."

Another highlight of the season was the opportunity for Kent to return to Lyon for the first time in 15 years, when he left his long-time position conducting the Lyon Opera. He had been invited to conduct a concert with the Lyon Symphony Orchestra, and enjoyed it very much.

By coincidence, it was also the week Karin had her internship at Paul Bocuse Institute, studying French



Kent coaching Karin, Nathalie and Andreas Beethoven Triple Concerto.

cuisine. This means we were fortunate to spend the week in this beautiful roman town enjoying both the musical and culinary experiences.

I wish you a peaceful summer wherever you are,

Mari