

## Noise and ritual ... Music Director Steven Schick



I remember a March day of my childhood as I watched my father walk out onto a field of black Iowa earth, look around with his hands on his hips, sniff the warming spring air, and decide that it was time to plant. His decision was an act of trust in nature, of virtuosic improvisation in the realm of business. It was a yearly ritual of creating order and productiveness out of the chaos of possibility. By choosing to plant, my father took sides in the ageless disputation between wilderness and cultivation. His son, the musician, thinks in terms of noise and ritual. Either way, father and son confront one of the overriding questions of their lives. How do we encounter the uncontrolled and irrational – the “other” – in our lives? What tools do we use to understand it and how do we rephrase it in a language of custom and tradition?

It’s not only in the realms of music and farming that the dichotomy between noise and ritual, chaos and order, has leverage. I love baseball and like football. Every significant moment in those two sports has been signposted by the quick alternation between ritualized action and a spontaneous explosion of noise. (If you saw the end of game six of the World Series this year then I rest my case.) Elsewhere: the trauma of childbirth – certainly this must be a noisy experience if you’re the one being born – is followed quickly by the potentially confusing ritual of a quick spank and parental adoration. Even in the social sphere of a concert, the noise of applause is to be answered by the ritual of tuning.

The presence of noise is how we know we are someplace interesting, and ritual is how we make sense of that place.

To explore this question we partner two pairs of works: one made mostly of noise and another that seeks to understand it through ritual. With David Lang’s *Grind to a Halt*, a raucous piece even for the composer of such gritty music as *The Anvil Chorus* and *International Business Machine*, we find the noise of creation. Building things always makes noise and David Lang’s musical language could be uniquely summarized by the word “construction.” He builds one rhythmic cycle on top of another, eventually confusing the ear and creating, well, noise. Béla Bartók’s *Cantata Profana* is our riposte. It is not a constructed, but rather a “natural” ritual in the vein of the Bach “Passions” but where there is “the accordance of dignity and rightness to a natural as opposed to a civilised state,” in the words of Paul Griffiths. Nestled in Bartók’s middle period among the late string quartets, the first performance of the *Miraculous Mandarin*, and the composition of *Music for Strings Percussion and Celeste* the *Cantata* seems designed as a work that bridges Bartók’s profile as a composer of concert music to the pull he felt towards “more primitive” influences among the folk musics of central and eastern Europe. The *Cantata* is Bartók’s own ritual in order to understand the turbulence of his inner creative world.

## In this issue...

- Noise and ritual
- News from the Executive Director
- Why ‘Fantasia’ Mattered—Just ask Gunther Schuller
- Gala 2011, ‘Fly Me to the Moon’ – a photo recap
- The North Coast Singers needs you
- Congratulations Cindy McGregor!
- Article Watch



Our second half reprises the pattern, starting with another Hungarian composer of progressive tendencies, this time György Ligeti, and moving to a stylized ritual in *Les Noces* of Igor Stravinsky. Ligeti's *Poème Symphonique* is a piece more often talked about than experienced. But experience it you will! One hundred metronomes set to prescribed speeds are wound and then released, creating a cacophony of noise that results, as the metronomes wind down, in a fascinating polyrhythmic array of clicking that eventually thins to silence. We link it here without pause to *Les Noces*, Stravinsky's ritualized version of a Russian wedding. In *Les Noces* we are very pleased to welcome back our friends, the Tijuana dance troupe "Lux Boreal" with choreography by Allyson Green.

And so we seek to understand our world through opposing compass points. But not so fast: when we actually confront noise and ritual they seem more similar than contrary. The noisiness of *Grind to a Halt* is a latticework of rhythmic overlay – in many ways as sophisticated a structure as the Bartók that follows it. And Ligeti, for all the hubbub he creates on stage, rightly calls his piece a "poem." There is something questing and melancholy about hearing the machines we've made wind down and shed their utility. So, there is order embedded in noise. And, conversely, if the *Canata Profana* and *Les Noces* are any examples, our rituals can be pretty boisterous.

Isn't it marvelous? That opposing forces might in fact be different forms of the same basic stuff. That noise can be the source of art – the breath of the world as John Luther Adams calls it. That the memory of a farmer standing on his bare field would turn out to be the abiding poetic image of my life.



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

After attending an on-stage production meeting this week for "Les Noces," the scope of this piece – which includes four grand pianos, percussion ensemble and 25 dancers – is beginning to sink in! In fact, the entire program is incredibly exciting and our patrons are snapping up tickets. Look for a concert preview from the dancer's perspective, written by dance reporter Janice Steinberg, in an upcoming issue of the *San Diego Union-Tribune*.

### Give Big

Soon we will be sending out our annual fund mailing – our biggest fundraising drive of the season. This year, we are participating in the San Diego Foundation's first "Give Big" promotion on December 14-15. On those dates, our donors will be able to make a donation to LJS&C via the Foundation's "Give Big" website, and the Foundation will match a portion of every gift. Details about how to make a gift in this manner will be included in the annual fund mailing, which will be mailed in early December.

A few photos from the Gala are included in this issue of *Tutti*. In addition, the *La Jolla Light* ran a photo spread on November 17<sup>th</sup>. To see more photos from this event, please visit LJS&C's Facebook page.



## Contributors:

Barbara Peisch, Ed.

Judy Gaukel

Kathryn Kinslow

Jean Lowerison

Tom Peisch

Val Rubins

Diane Salisbury

Steven Schick

David Siccardi

Mary Ellen Walther

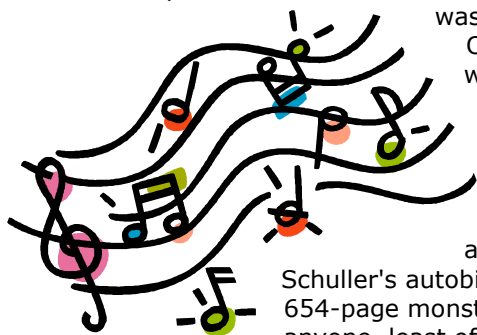


## Why 'Fantasia' Mattered—Just Ask Gunther Schuller ... submitted

by Mary Ellen Walther

Original article by Terry Teachout and originally published in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 28, 2011. Reprinted from *The Wall Street Journal* © 2011 Dow Jones & Company. All rights reserved.

If you'd done a quarter of what Gunther Schuller has done in his lifetime, I'd want to read your memoirs, too. Mr. Schuller, who turns 86 next month, is a much-admired classical composer and conductor and a distinguished jazz scholar. Before that, he



was the principal horn player of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. He is the only musician in the world who can claim to have played with Maria Callas, Miles Davis, Ethel Merman, Frank Sinatra, Igor Stravinsky and Arturo Toscanini.

In "Gunther Schuller: A Life in Pursuit of Music and Beauty," just out from the University of Rochester Press, he talks about all this and much, much, *much* more. Mr.

Schuller's autobiography, which takes him up to 1957, is a 654-page monster that appears not to have been edited by anyone, least of all the author. It's garrulous, unselective and riddled with errors (somebody really needs to tell Mr. Schuller how to spell Ralph Vaughan Williams's name). I don't care. I couldn't put it down, and I can't wait until he finishes the second volume.

Paradoxical as it may sound, it is Mr. Schuller's lack of discrimination that helps to make "Gunther Schuller" so compulsively readable. Yes, he's led an unusually varied life, and no, we don't need to hear about all of it, or even most of it. But it is precisely because he thinks otherwise that Mr. Schuller has inadvertently given us what amounts to a cultural history of America in the 1940s and '50s, viewed through the prism of his personal experience. If you're not especially interested in what he's talking about at any given moment, all you have to do is turn the page.

I was especially interested in what Mr. Schuller had to say about "Fantasia," Walt Disney's 1940 animated feature film about classical music, which he saw for the first time when he was 14: "That film masterpiece truly changed my life, particularly its Stravinsky 'Rite of Spring' sequence, which, as far as I can remember, was the first time I heard that remarkable music. It completely bowled me over. I knew then and there that I had to be a composer."

Needless to say, snobs of all kinds have long taken a dim view of "Fantasia," with its dancing mushrooms and cavorting hippos. Not so Mr. Schuller: "I hope [Stravinsky] appreciated that hundreds—perhaps thousands—of musicians were turned onto 'The Rite of Spring' (and by implication lots of other modern music) through 'Fantasia,' musicians who might otherwise never have heard the work, or at least not until many years later."



I'm with Mr. Schuller. Hollywood used to do a lot to introduce youthful moviegoers to the joys of classical music. I first encountered Rossini, for instance, in Chuck Jones's "Rabbit of Seville," which made brilliantly apposite use of the "Barber of Seville" overture as background music for one of the looniest of all Looney Tunes cartoons. I can still close my eyes and see Bugs Bunny whacking away at Elmer Fudd's lather-covered face with a straight razor ("There, you're nice and clean / Although your face / Looks like it might have gone / Through a ma-chine").

You can view *Tutti* online!

You can download this and previous issues of *Tutti* from:

[www.peisch.com/tutti](http://www.peisch.com/tutti)



Back in the days of middlebrow culture, the movies weren't the only way for children to get a taste of the classics. I initially made the acquaintance of such literary gems as "Macbeth" and "Moby-Dick" in comic-book form, courtesy of the unjustly mocked Classics Illustrated series ("Featuring Stories by the World's Greatest Authors"). A few years later I graduated to Reader's Digest's Best Loved Books for Young Readers, whose first volume contained condensed versions of "The Call of the Wild," "David Copperfield," "Madame Curie" and "Treasure Island."

The key to grasping the effectiveness of these unpretentious little objets d'art is that they yoke the familiar with the unfamiliar, in the process implicitly suggesting that it's no big deal to move from the one to the other. Bugs Bunny is funny, and so is a Rossini crescendo. "Macbeth" may be a poetic masterpiece, but it's also a blood-drenched ghost story. And as Howard Dietz reminds us in "That's Entertainment," all art, be it great or crude, aspires at bottom to do the same thing, which is to thrill us: "It might be a fight like you see on the screen / A swain getting slain for the love of a queen / Some great Shakespearean scene / Where a ghost and a prince meet, and everyone ends in mincemeat."

So how do you get young people to appreciate high art? The indispensable, irreplaceable first step is to expose them to it, and to do so in a way that doesn't lead them to assume that they're not going to have any fun. Do that and there's no telling what will happen next. One day in 1940 a 14-year-old kid from New York City went to the neighborhood movie house to see a Disney cartoon. A couple of decades later, he composed "Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee" and wrote "Early Jazz." If the gatekeepers of American culture don't find equally effective new ways to introduce today's teenagers to Stravinsky, Rossini and Shakespeare, the next Gunther Schuller may not be so lucky—and neither will we.



## Gala 2011, "Fly Me to the Moon" ~ A photo recap ... Photos by David Siccardi



*The silent auction room*



*Ann Chase wins the bid!*

## Need to contact the LJS&C?

La Jolla Symphony & Chorus Association

9500 Gilman Drive  
Mail Code 0361  
La Jolla, CA 92093

(858) 534-4637

[www.lajollasympphony.com](http://www.lajollasympphony.com)

Diane Salisbury,  
Executive Director  
[dsalisbury@lajollasympphony.com](mailto:dsalisbury@lajollasympphony.com)







*A toast to Charlene Baldrige!*



*Michael Kaehr and Karen Johns*



*Jeanne Saier, Diane Salisbury and David Chase*

## The LJS&CA Board

(Board representatives to the ensemble in bold)

### OFFICERS

Stephen L. Marsh, President  
Paul E. Symczak, Vice President  
Jenny Smerud, Treasurer  
Dr. Ida Houby, Secretary

### BOARD MEMBERS

**Evon Carpenter (orchestra)**  
Gordon Clark  
Frank Dwinnell Jr.  
**Peter Gourevitch (chorus)**  
Eric McCall  
Amee Wood





*Listen to that Big Band music!*



*Carol and Ted Bietz*



*Robert Whitley and Joe Bauer*

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!)



## The North Coast Singers needs you ... Val Rubins

Most of us know who the San Diego North Coast Singers are. They have joined us frequently in the past in some of our most memorable performances. Most recently they performed with us in Bernstein's *Mass* and they will be joining us this year in Britten's *Spring Symphony* performing both here in Mandeville as well as in Carnegie Hall. The artistic director of this pretty amazing group of young singers is our own Sally Dean, a long standing member of the chorus.

As an organization, NCS is strong and ongoing. We have a fantastic Board of Directors and a track record of bringing beautiful music to the San Diego community and beyond. Our board cares deeply for these kids and works to help keep this fine organization running smoothly. We currently have openings on our Board and are looking for some new ideas and energy. The time commitment is low – we meet once a month, about 10 times per year, and serve for two years. It is a small amount of time for a big payback in satisfaction and fun.

Remember your own musical experiences when you were a kid, either taking music lessons or singing in a choir? Sure, sometimes it was a pain to practice or make those rehearsals, but in hindsight, don't you credit that experience with making you the musician you are now? And don't you value your musicianship and musical experiences as a central part of who you are now as a person? This is what we want and need to create for these enthusiastic and talented children who just love singing together. The schools don't do it, so the community must. If you think you would like to be involved, please see me or Sally at rehearsals, or contact me at [verubins@yahoo.com](mailto:verubins@yahoo.com). You won't regret it.



## Congratulations Cindy McGregor! ... reported by Judy Gaukel

Sunday, November 13, 2011, at the San Diego Youth Symphony concert, awards were given to honor music educators. The second co-recipient of the 2011 Profiles in



Music Education Award, Cynthia McGregor (LJS&C horn) struck an unassuming figure on stage as she accepted her award but proceeded to inspire and entertain, offering a glimpse into the depth of her enduring

love of music. She spoke of the confidence and self-esteem students gain through musical training and how she believes that it not only gives students a way to express themselves, it teaches group cooperation, discipline and patience.

She said so much more than that - it was beautiful how she said how much MORE than learning notes it is.

---

## Article watch

### Reviews of our last concert

**From Tom Peisch:**

*The San Diego Union-Tribune, October 29, 2011*

"La Jolla Symphony keeps everything under control in season-opening program"

By James Chute

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/oct/29/La-Jolla-Symphony-opening-review/>

**From Diane Salisbury:**

*The San Diego Reader, October 31, 2011*

"La Jolla Symphony: Where's the Dominance"

By Garrett Harris

Part 1:

<http://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/jam-session/2011/oct/31/la-jolla-symphony-wheres-the-dominance/>

Part 2:

<http://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/jam-session/2011/nov/01/la-jolla-symphony-caribou-for-dinner-2-of-2/>





**From Jean Lowerison:**

Performed March 28, 2004

Mendelssohn Club's 130th Anniversary Concert

"An Evening of Passion"

These program notes include information about Béla Bartók and the *Cantata Profana*, which we are performing this concert.

[http://www.mcchorus.org/program\\_notes/Carmina032004.pdf](http://www.mcchorus.org/program_notes/Carmina032004.pdf)



**From Kathryn Kinslow:**

The New York Times, October 23, 2011

"A Hearing Aid That Cuts Out All the Clatter"

By John Tierney

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/24/science/24loops.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/24/science/24loops.html?_r=3)



**More good publicity**

**From Diane Salisbury:**

The San Diego Union-Tribune, November 16, 2011

By Diane Bell

<http://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/jam-session/2011/oct/31/la-jolla-symphony-wheres-the-dominance/>

In the section titled "East Coast bias?" it reads:

*A Nov. 15 New York Times review discussed the accomplishments of George Lewis, described as "vice chairman of the music department at Columbia University," and Steven Schick, "a virtuosic percussionist and an increasingly prominent conductor."*

*While the article made a fleeting reference to them having once worked together at UC San Diego, it failed to mention that Schick is currently a UCSD music professor and director of the La Jolla Symphony and Chorus, or that Lewis received a MacArthur Award while with UCSD's music department. Yes, culture exists west of the Mississippi.*

The New York Times, November 13, 2011

"Sharing Hoop Dreams of a Compositional Strategist"

By Steve Smith

[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/14/arts/music/george-lewis-composer-portrait-at-miller-theater-review.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/14/arts/music/george-lewis-composer-portrait-at-miller-theater-review.html?_r=1&emc=eta1)



**Also from Diane:**

La Jolla Light, November 17, 2011

"La Jolla Symphony & Chorus Honors its 2011 Arts Angel"

<http://issuu.com/lajollalight2010/docs/11-17-2011-la-jolla-light>

You'll need to navigate to page B12.



If you find an interesting, music-related article or Web site, send the information about it to me at [barbara@peisch.com](mailto:barbara@peisch.com). For Web sites, send me 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 I can find it online. You may also hand me the article during rehearsal or mail it to me at:

Peisch Custom Software  
2530 Vista Way #F190  
Oceanside, CA 92054

