

La SCENIA

PRINTEMPS 2011 SPRING VOL.4.3

WWW.SCENA.ORG

CALENDRIERS
des ARTS :
DANSE,
ARTS VISUELS,
THÉÂTRE,
MUSIQUE

MONA
Ciciovan

MÉMOIRE *et*
PERCEPTION
MEMORY & PERCEPTION

KENT MONKMAN » WAJDI MOUAWAD » LA LA LA HUMAN STEPS » ET BEAUCOUP PLUS !



PHOTO Jonathan Govias

SYMPHONIE en PLUSIEURS MOUVEMENTS

par JONATHAN GOVIAS

Il fait 35 °C dans le gymnase de ce township situé au nord du Cap, en Afrique du Sud, mais le baryton-basse réussit très bien à nous faire croire qu'il gèle lorsqu'il chante l'air du Génie du froid tiré de l'opéra *King Arthur* de Purcell. Aux mots «beds of everlasting snow» (lits de neige éternelle), surgit une foule d'écoliers qui chantent en chœur «we chatter chatter chatter» (nous grelottons) alors qu'ils suent à grosses gouttes dans leurs uniformes. Voilà à quoi ressemble el Sistema dans la pointe sud de l'Afrique.

C'est le résultat d'une idée superbement audacieuse : s'appuyer sur la prolifération des chorales en Afrique du Sud pour attirer des artistes du pays et des quatre coins du monde, les faire collaborer à un opéra et créer des expériences musicales enrichissantes pour les premières générations nées après les horreurs de l'apartheid. Et cette audace est couronnée d'un franc succès, malgré des pépins de dernière minute comme on en connaît au Met. En Europe, Shirley Apher, fondatrice et directrice du festival, est une critique musicale respectée qui publie dans le *Financial Times*, mais en Afrique du Sud, c'est une citoyenne engagée au remarquable esprit d'entreprise.

Loin de là, de l'autre côté de l'Atlantique, un orchestre de jeunes répète le *Concerto pour piano n° 2* de Chopin en prévision d'un spectacle au Royal Festival Hall avec le pianiste Lang Lang. C'est l'ensemble Neojibá, qui relève du programme el Sistema, seulement il ne vient pas du Venezuela, mais de Salvador, au Brésil. Conformément à la stratégie d'Abreu, le núcleo a commencé par un orchestre d'excellente tenue pour renforcer sa crédibilité et la confiance du public avant de prendre de l'expansion sous forme de modules satellites. En cinq petites années, l'orchestre est devenu le principal ambassadeur artistique de l'État,

au grand dam de la formation professionnelle locale. Jusqu'à récemment, les deux groupes se partageaient le chef Ricardo Castro, éminent pianiste et lauréat du concours de Leeds, mais à présent, lorsqu'il se trouve à Salvador, il consacre toutes ses énergies à Neojibá.

Sur chaque continent, une façon différente d'aborder el Sistema. Malgré tout ce qui les distingue, ces stratégies sont aussi fructueuses les unes que les autres. En effet, l'idée qui sous-tend el Sistema, celle de créer un cadre permettant de faire de la musique tout en produisant des avantages sociaux, s'adapte parfaitement aux réalités linguistiques, culturelles et économiques de chaque région. Des programmes font leur apparition à l'échelle planétaire, dans une extraordinaire variété de contextes : Corée, Inde, Écosse, Nouvelle-Zélande, Kenya ou Autriche. Au Canada, il existe deux programmes en voie d'acquiescer une excellente réputation internationale : à Ottawa, la Leading Note Fondation, et l'Orchestre de jeunes du Nouveau-Brunswick. Il est fort probable que d'autres initiatives ont discrètement vu le jour. Toutes ces activités adoptent une grande variété de modes de financement, de fonctionnement et de gestion, mais elles ont un point commun : elles font effet. Les cinq fondements d'el Sistema (voir le 5^e article de la série) ne visent ni à imposer ni à proscrire quoi que ce soit ; ce ne sont que des lignes directrices qui aident à réorienter les activités musicales existantes de façon à produire le plus grand bien dans la communauté. C'est la simplicité d'el Sistema qui rend ce programme si efficace.

LSM

[TRADUCTION : ANNE STEVENS]

Jonathan Govias revient tout juste d'une tournée de direction d'orchestre, d'enseignement et de consultation au Brésil et en Afrique du Sud. Pour en savoir davantage sur ses aventures, visitez www.jonathangovias.com.

MUSICAL VISIONS

The World Premiere of Robert Frederick Jones's La Terra Promessa

by DANIEL HARLEY

The Vanier College Music Department will be celebrating its 40th anniversary with fifteen events, including the world premiere of Robert Frederick Jones's oratorio, *La Terra Promessa*.

Robert Frederick Jones is a composer, pianist, conductor and pedagogue who has been teaching at Vanier College since 1976. A prolific composer, he has a large body of chamber music and choral works to his name, and his compositions have been performed around the world.

With an MFA and PhD from Brandeis University, Jones studied with many noted composers and music theorists, including Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, and Robert Cogan. In a 1984 interview, he described his style in terms of "freedom to combine traditional and novel features in the same piece, freedom to vary the stylistic mixture from piece to piece and movement to movement, freedom to combine the rigidly predetermined with the freely intuitive, and a desire to involve the listener's whole self, not just the ears or the intellect."

Born in Wisconsin but raised in Arizona, Jones's compositions often allude to the desert landscape where he grew up, and his works often contain strong spiritual elements. His new work, *La Terra Promessa*, combines these influences. The idea for the work originated thirty years ago and has always been something that Jones returned to while working on other projects. After he was diagnosed with cancer last year, he renewed his focus on the piece, and continued work even when bedridden. The act of writing the music was therapy, he said, and the piece is an artistic summation, containing references to work throughout his career.

La Terra Promessa is a symphony for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, with texts in Sanskrit, Latin, Chinese, Italian, French and English. It is a large-scale work of twelve movements. According to the composer, the movements are "musical visions" that "evoke images of our world and the world beyond, and of outer and inner states of being." The work, an ode to friendship, begins with the world at the dawn of time and the musical visions lead us from barren but beautiful prehistoric landscapes through to the ascent of humankind. Each movement has a different dedicatee, and the entire work is dedicated to his wife, Pamela. As a whole, the work is a spiritual progression ending with a "collage of songs sung by the heavenly beings."

La Terra Promessa will be Vanier College's Gala Concert. Directed by Philippe Bourque, it will be performed by the Vanier College Choir in collaboration with the St. Lawrence Choir and l'Orchestre symphonique Joseph-François Perrault.

LSM

» May 6 at 7:30 p.m., Église St. Sixte
www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/music

SYMPHONY IN MANY MOVEMENTS

IT'S 35°C IN THE TOWNSHIP gymnasium north of Cape Town, South Africa, but the bass-baritone is doing a very credible job of the Frost Scene in Henry Purcell's *King Arthur*. As he sings about "rising from beds of everlasting snow," a massive chorus of township schoolchildren emerges, flash-mob style, singing "We chatter chatter chatter" in reasonable facsimile of a shiver, while sweating profusely in school uniforms. This is *el Sistema* at the southernmost tip of Africa.

It's an extraordinarily ambitious idea: to capitalize on the wealth of existing choral activity in South Africa, bring artists from across the world and the nation to collaborate in an opera, and to create enriching musical experiences for the first generations to be born outside the atrocity of institutionalized racism. It's not just ambitious, it's successful, despite all the tribulations of last-minute cancellations and logistical problems one might expect at the Met. Shirley Apthorp, the festival founder and director, is a highly distinguished music critic in Europe, writing for the Financial Times, but in South Africa she's a concerned citizen and entrepreneur.

On the other side of the Atlantic, a youth orchestra is rehearsing Chopin's *Piano Concerto No. 2* for a performance at Royal Festival Hall, UK, with pianist Lang Lang. No, it's not a Venezuelan group, but an ensemble from the *Sistema* program *Neojibá* in Salvador, Brazil. Following Abreu's original strategy, the núcleo first created an excellent orchestra, to build credibility and public trust, and then expanded

to include outreach satellite modules. In only five years the orchestra has emerged as the foremost artistic ambassador of the state, to the chagrin of the local professional ensemble. Until recently the two groups shared a conductor in Ricardo Castro, the eminent pianist and laureate of the Leeds Competition, but now Ricardo devotes all his attention in Salvador to *Neojibá*.

Different continents, different takes on *el Sistema*; widely divergent operational strategies, but both entirely successful in their own way. The reality is that the idea behind *el Sistema*, that of creating a context for music making in which the social benefits are emphasized, is supremely adaptable to local linguistic, cultural and economic conditions. Programs are emerging world-wide in extraordinarily diverse settings: there are initiatives in Korea, India, Scotland, New Zealand, Kenya and Austria, to name a few. Canada has two programs of growing international reputation in the Leading Note Foundation in Ottawa and the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, with probably many more unheralded initiatives appearing. All of these operate under very different funding structures, operational models, and leadership, yet all make a difference. The Five Fundamentals of *el Sistema* (See installment 5 of this series) are neither prescriptive nor proscriptive, but a guide to re-aligning existing musical activity to the greatest community benefit. It is the simplicity of *Sistema* that makes it powerful and possible. ■

Jonathan Govias just returned from conducting, teaching and consulting in Brazil and South Africa. For more on his experiences there please visit <http://www.jonathangovias.com>