

TAFEL



WELCOME

Welcome to the second issue of *Tafel*, our magazine for the musically curious. The world, and our 2020/21 season, have definitely changed since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, but we remain committed to sharing joy and comfort with you through our music and ongoing conversations.

The winter months will be challenging for all of us, and as our stages remain dark for the time being, we are so very grateful for your support and encouragement. We have been delighted to venture into the “film” business, bringing audiences digitally what we can’t bring live. Our investment in a new way of sharing music is just one of the ways we’re moving Tafelmusik forward through this uncertainty. We know music is a way to build bridges and engage audiences around the world and across a wide spectrum: music and the arts are, after all, an expression of our collective humanity and play an important role in our well-being.

In this issue, we meet UK-based double bassist and Chineke! orchestra founder Chi-chi Nwanoku, take a wander through the metaphors of Mary’s garden, and hear about two unique takes on Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. Enjoy!

Elisa Citterio Carol Kehoe
Music Director Executive Director



Mary’s Garden
by Alex McLeod

Digital
2020

Alex McLeod, visual artist, is concerned with ideas of interconnection, life cycles, and the unseen. He uses flowers as an allegory for humankind. Specific species taken from Mary’s flowers have been interwoven, reinterpreted, and rendered using 3D software. McLeod intends to take the viewer to a familiar place, yet somewhere they have never been.

SOUND BITES

Tafel Talks

On December 2, 2020, an all-star group of panellists discussed Music as Resistance. Moderated by frequent Tafelmusik collaborator Raha Javanfar, with guest speakers Torquil Campbell (Stars), Reginald Mobley (Handel and Haydn Society), and Kate Helsen (Tafelmusik Chamber Choir), this thought-provoking discussion left us with many questions and the desire to explore this rich topic further. Stay tuned for announcements on Winter and Spring Tafel Talks.

Tafelmusik in the Community

This season, we’ve partnered with several organizations to bring the beauty and comfort of our music to their clients and residents. Three safe, small chamber concerts are planned in collaboration with COSTI and the Istituto Italiano di Cultura for refugees new to Canada. Several of our digital concerts are being screened for residents of Luther Village retirement home in Waterloo. And the first Tafelmusik at Play video for young people featuring the baroque violin was developed for our friends at Safehaven Project for Community Living.

New Digital Release: Baroque for Baby

Curated by Tafelmusik violinist and mother of two Cristina Zacharias, this kid-friendly playlist explores baroque repertoire with appeal for younger listeners — catchy dance tunes, singable melodies, repetition, and lots of opportunity to showcase the textures and sounds of various instruments. Available now on all major streaming and digital music services.

The Gull, the Raccoon, and the Last Maple

“No creature is an island, entire of itself; every creature is a piece of the continent.” — John Donne, baroque poet. With music by Abigail Richardson and words by Alexis Diamond, this contemporary fable commissioned by Tafelmusik for orchestra and narrator pits two of Nature’s most successful scavengers, the Gull and the Raccoon, against each other as they engage in a battle of wits over the Last Maple and the tiny slip of dry land upon which the tree sits. As the swirling waters rise and drenching storms threaten, the three must combine forces, harnessing their resourcefulness and adaptability — or perish. Stay tuned for more on this exciting new project.

For the latest information and updates, subscribe to our email newsletter at [tafelmusik.org](https://www.tafelmusik.org).

In Paradisum:

RAMBLING

"We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden"

Joni Mitchell

IN MARY'S
GARDEN

by Laurretta Santarossa

Thirty years ago, I bought a house in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood with the dream of planting a garden. But I needed help. The space was small — just 23 × 23 feet — and accessible only through the house. A garden enclosed.

Enter Ashley Thomas, a young landscape architecture student. Noting my collection of religious folk art, Madonna figures especially, he suggested a Mary garden. I knew that medieval monastery gardens often featured plants that were symbolically connected with the Virgin Mary, the Passion of Christ, and the saints. The Mary garden theme was a perfect fit — horticulturally focused, with lots of scope and full of spiritual and symbolic meaning. I loved the idea of making a place for Mary in my life in this organic way.

Throughout history, the garden has been both archetype and metaphor. It's a place of shelter and blessedness, nourishment, fecundity, beauty, peace, meditation, contemplation, spirit, and soul. In the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, the garden is, literally and figuratively, paradise, from the Persian *pairi daeza*, meaning enclosure.

Adam and Eve's brief sojourn in the Garden of Eden ended when they were cast out. So when the medieval minstrel sang "Nova, nova, Ave fit ex Eva," he was proclaiming a new Gospel — the fallen, exiled Eve (and all human-kind) redeemed by Mary, who gave birth to Christ, the Saviour. A complex, profound story that is the stuff of myth, legend, symbol, and metaphor.

Christ and the Virgin Mary had many prototypes in ancient Western religions, as did the flower and plant symbolism associated with many Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Celtic, Teutonic, and Middle Eastern deities. Christianity gave new symbolic meaning to many common plants, flowers, and trees, which served as mnemonic devices to evoke the stories they illustrated. The unschooled learned the names of plants and flowers along with Mary's virtues and stories of salvation — a visual catechism for those who could not read.

As medieval piety and devotion to the Virgin Mary grew, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ were seen through the prism of Mary's life. Marian devotion subsumed many important elements of the courtly love tradition, which exalted love, dedication, loyalty, and service. Countless hymns and poems praised Mary's beauty, virtue, and purity. She was strongly associated with the bride in the biblical Song of Songs, especially the metaphorical *hortus conclusus*, or "garden enclosed."

Each of us has our own personal history of gardens, which we carry in our memory, articulated or not. Mine, it turns out, is the *cortile*, the enclosed courtyard of my childhood in Northern Italy, which in turn inspired my own garden in Parkdale — simple and defined, an intimate sanctuary full of abundant yet hidden life. Whether it is the colour, shape, texture, fragrance, or time of bloom or fruition of the plants and flowers, from hostas to hellebores and plume poppies to Solomon's seal, everything means something, everything is connected. This, more than anything, continues to inspire me. ♦

Laurretta Santarossa is the author of Bring Flowers of the Fairest: Mary gardens for Everyone. She gives talks and workshops about Mary gardens, and gardening and the spiritual life. Laurretta can be reached at laurretta.santarossa@bell.net.

Reflections of Mary, Tafelmusik's luminous concert inviting you to contemplate two composers' takes on this sacred icon of motherhood and mercy, airs online March 11, 2021, at 8pm EST. Single tickets go on sale approximately 3 weeks before.

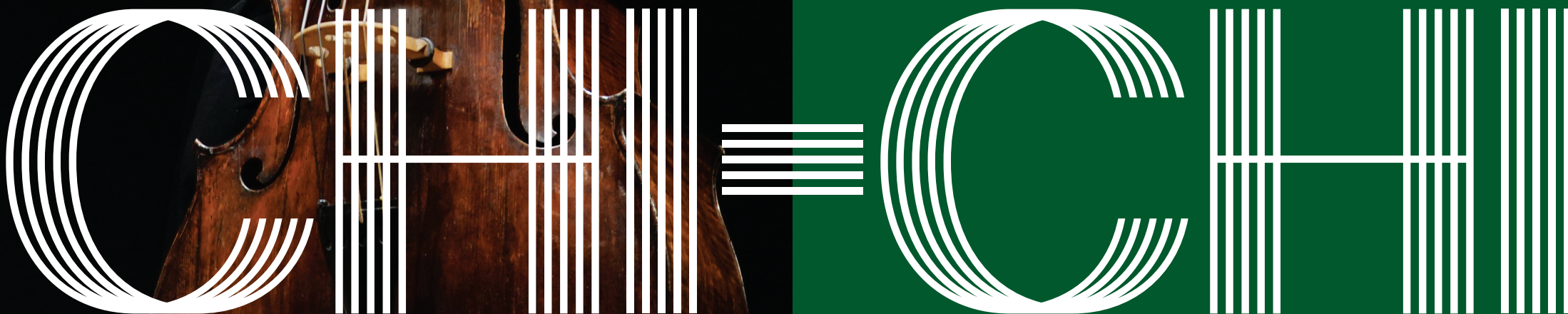
Chi-chi Nwanoku is a towering figure on the international music scene. The London, UK-based double bass principal, chamber, and solo musician is also professor of historical double bass at the Royal Academy of Music. Born in London of Nigerian/Irish heritage, she founded Chineke! Orchestra with the mission of championing change and celebrating diversity in classical music.

Chi-chi was awarded the Order of the British Empire for Services to Music in 2017. She won Black British Business Awards Person of the Year 2016, Association of British Orchestras Award 2017, and Commonwealth Cultural Enterprise Award 2018. She

broadcasts regularly for BBC radio and television, and recently presented a Sky Arts documentary about Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Chi-chi was the subject of *Tales from the Bass Line*, a documentary by Barrie Gavin, and contributed to the 2020 BBC documentary *Being Beethoven*.

Tafelmusik's principal double bassist, Pippa Macmillan, considers Chi-chi Nwanoku to be her greatest inspiration. As Pippa's first historical bass teacher, Chi-chi introduced her to historically informed performance practice and taught her to shape bass lines in a way that brings them to life.

In Conversation: Pippa Macmillan and Chi-chi Nwanoku



Pippa Macmillan: How did music first enter your life?

Chi-chi Nwanoku: It was one of those incredible, stark nights; my father was carrying me in his arms and we were standing on the balcony looking out into the night. I was mesmerized and fascinated by the brilliance and abundance of the multitude of sparkling objects in the black sky. That was when Dad told me they were called stars. He proceeded to sing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” to me. To this day I still consider that to be my first music lesson.



Chi-chi Nwanoku and her father.

PM: When did you decide to become a professional double bassist, and how did you find your way into historical performance?

CN: I played recorder and piano from a young age. It was a passionate hobby, but I was seriously preparing to become a professional sprinter. When I was 17 and a half years old, I sustained a career-ending knee injury, and my dreams were over. My school music teacher guided me towards the double bass, as he thought I had a chance of a music career playing, in his words, “an unpopular instrument”! After graduating from the Royal Academy of Music and a further two years’ study with Franco Petracchi in Rome, the quirky and wonderful Francis Baines gave me a few baroque bass lessons.

PM: How do you view your work as a mentor and teacher, and how have your own role models shaped the way you relate to young musicians?

CN: You cannot underestimate the power of a role model. I take this very seriously and try to be open and honest with my students, encouraging them to be as authentic, passionate, and literal as possible in their approach. Never do anything half-heartedly! The three people who liberated me as a bassist were Petracchi, Ray Koster (Academy of St Martin in the Fields principal bass), and Francis Baines.



Chineke! Orchestra; Wayne Marshall, conductor.

PM: What inspired you to establish Chineke! Orchestra, Europe’s first majority Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse orchestra?

CN: After a 35-year career in classical music, the culture minister asked me why I was “the only Black musician” he ever saw in the orchestra on the international concert platform. My “light bulb” moment happened at the Kinshasa Symphony Orchestra’s concert at Royal Festival Hall. Everyone agreed something needed to be done, because if the creative arts industry is to survive in today’s climate, it has to be relevant to everyone in today’s community.

PM: How can orchestras become better champions for diversity, equality, and inclusion?

CN: Be more open and curious; deliberately go out of your way to forge connections and collaborations with people who are not necessarily “like” yourselves, because creativity and new discoveries are fed by disparate things and points of view, sparking connections and enriching the whole process.

Actively choosing to invite people from different backgrounds is beneficial to your artistic process, and enhances diversity on a societal level. It takes a certain generosity to invite people to collaborate, and musicians need to cultivate this open-mindedness soon, otherwise they risk missing out on wonderful opportunities and stagnating in the same old way of doing things.

Whilst it’s important to ask questions about racism and how to combat it, first educate yourself so that your questions are informed. Very often, people lazily think by asking Black, Asian, and ethnically diverse people questions, they don’t need to do their own research or educate themselves. It can be draining for a Black, Asian, or ethnically diverse person to have

to engage in multiple conversations about racism and to have to educate people about it, when many questions can be answered simply by reading books, watching documentaries, and listening to podcasts.

Engaging in conversation is important (I am by no means discouraging this), but spending time educating yourself is equally important and ensures your conversations are worthwhile and progressive. Ensure the entire orchestra wants the same diversity, inclusion, and belonging; diversify the orchestra’s board and management, as well as repertoire. Ensure the culture within your organization wants and is prepared for a more inclusive level of membership.

PM: Can you name some neglected composers whose works should be heard by a much wider audience?

CN: Esteban Salas, Jose Mauricio Nunes Garcia, Joseph Boulogne (Chevalier de Saint-Georges), Ignatius Sancho, Chiquita Gonzalez, Florence B. Price, Margaret Bonds, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Avril Coleridge-Taylor, William Dawson, and William Grant Still, to name a few.



Pippa Macmillan, Jenny Macmillan, Lyra Albrecht, and Chi-chi Nwanoku. Photo taken by Sebastian Macmillan at Glyndebourne Opera.

“If the creative arts industry is to survive in today’s climate, it has to be relevant to everyone in today’s community.”

Variations on Bach's GOLDBERG VARIATIONS

Elisa Citterio and Bernard Labadie on the inspiration
behind their orchestral arrangements

By Luisa Trisi

What is it about the music of Bach, specifically *The Goldberg Variations*, that inspires endless reinvention? With its complex beauty and astonishing symmetry, this remarkable set of variations has captured the imagination of musicians and listeners since it was first published as a work for solo harpsichord in 1741.

Fast-forward a couple of centuries. A flurry of new arrangements of Bach's masterpiece has emerged — from orchestral remixes to renditions for solo harp, guitar ensemble, saxophone quartet, and even viol consort. Among these are adaptations by Elisa Citterio and Bernard Labadie for two renowned Canadian ensembles, Tafelmusik and Les Violons du Roy, the Quebec-based modern chamber orchestra whose playing is rooted in period performance practice.

Originally scheduled for April 2020, the world premiere of Citterio's arrangement was to be a major highlight of Tafelmusik's 2019/20 season, before the global pandemic forced the postponement of the program. Meanwhile, two variations (#1 and #30) — recorded remotely by musicians in their homes and stitched together through the magic of technology — were presented online as part of the orchestra's #TafelmusikTogether initiative.

Labadie's arrangement for strings and continuo dates back to his tenure as Music Director of Les Violons du Roy. Labadie cites a 1995 arrangement for string orchestra by Russian violinist Dmitri Sitkovetsky as the catalyst for many subsequent versions, including his own.



Title page of Bach's own publication of "Aria with various variations for a two-manual harpsichord," now commonly known as *The Goldberg Variations*.



Elisa Citterio



Bernard Labadie

THE INTERVIEW

Pressured by his musicians to program Sitkovetsky's popular arrangement for Les Violons' 1996/97 season, Labadie responded by creating his own version using the same musical language as Bach and his contemporaries. "I believe an arrangement must sound idiomatic for the new medium. In the case of *The Goldberg Variations*, creating an idiomatic version for strings using the same instrumental forces for each variation seemed impossible to me — hence the idea of turning the whole into a huge concerto grosso, with different instrumental combinations depending on each variation."



Citterio, who was juggling parallel careers in baroque and modern violin in her native Italy, heard the 2000 Dorian recording of Labadie's version, which was reissued on the ATMA Classique label in 2015. "I completely fell in love with the arrangement, so wonderfully played by Les Violons du Roy and so well conceived that the *Variations* seem originally written that way."

Like many musicians who are not keyboard players, Citterio longed to play *The Goldberg Variations*. Her first tour with Tafelmusik brought her one step closer, when the orchestra performed transcriptions of two excerpts on a 2017 tour of its multimedia program *J.S. Bach: The Circle of Creation*.

Armed with a concept and some help from her brother, composer Carlo Citterio, she set out to complete an arrangement for strings, winds, and continuo for the core members of Tafelmusik. "With deep humility, I decided to arrange the piece because I am certain that the precious essence of Bach's profound message remains intact despite the different timbres."

Labadie reminds us that baroque composers, including Bach himself, were the ultimate musical recyclers. "The idea of arranging the *Goldbergs* makes sense from a historical perspective. For 18th-century composers, the concept of a sacred,

untouchable version of something was completely unknown. Granted, *The Goldberg Variations* is an absolutely iconic piece of music, especially for Canadians because of Glenn Gould's interpretations. The *Goldbergs* stand as the cornerstone of the huge cathedral of work that Bach built. When you arrange such a masterpiece, you're not replacing the original. You're not even competing with the original, because you're going to lose that competition."

Citterio embraced the challenge of creating a new version, describing her arrangement as a kaleidoscope of different sonorities. "By distancing myself from the keyboard version, from the sound of a single instrument that sustains the long journey through 30 variations, I wanted to leverage the artistry of the musicians of Tafelmusik as much as possible — from solo instrument to the coupling of different instruments to orchestral tutti sections, where two oboes and a bassoon are added to the strings. I tried to imagine what sounds could best describe the images that each variation brought to mind, with the understanding that the possibilities are endless."



"You feel like you are walking in a perfectly ordained world which breathes organically like a human being — and yet it brings you wonderment, surprise, and awe at every turn. That sounds like an ideal world to me."

Bernard Labadie



Left: Elisa Citterio greets listeners in *Goldberg Variations*, #1 and #30 on YouTube. Below: Tafelmusik members play *Goldberg Variations* #1 and #30 from their homes.



In his current role as Principal Conductor of the New York-based Orchestra of St. Luke's, Labadie conducted the American premiere of his arrangement at Carnegie Hall in 2019. "The experience reminded me how powerful this music is and how grateful musicians who are not keyboard players are when allowed the privilege of performing Bach's *Goldberg Variations*."

It's no accident that during the pandemic, countless musicians have turned to Bach more than any other classical composer. In a world where change is the only constant, Bach's music reminds us of that which is eternal, transcendent, and enduring. Or as Labadie says, "Bach is my *feste Burg*, my mighty fortress. When I was going through a very serious illness a few years ago, I naturally turned to Bach because his music is food for my soul."

Likewise, Citterio has a powerful personal connection to the work, drawing on Bach's timeless music for comfort, insight, and inspiration. "The *Goldberg Variations* is music that has been present at all the crucial moments of my life since I was a teenager. It has been described as a return journey from home and back again. The essence of the entire piece can be found in the opening Aria, from which we depart to explore marvellous places near and far, and to which we return enriched and fulfilled... and perhaps a little wiser."

Labadie's spontaneous and very personal response to the pandemic was *Having each other's Bach*, a series of 46 daily reflections on the composer's music. He sent these emails to more than 250 friends, colleagues, and eventually strangers, with the goal of "spreading the love of Bach in a viral way — the best vaccine there is against the gloominess of our times."

Written against the chaotic backdrop of imposed COVID-19 lockdowns, one of Labadie's emails aptly captures the universe according to J.S. Bach: "You feel like you are walking in a perfectly ordained world which breathes organically like a human being — and yet it brings you wonderment, surprise, and awe at every turn. That sounds like an ideal world to me." ♦

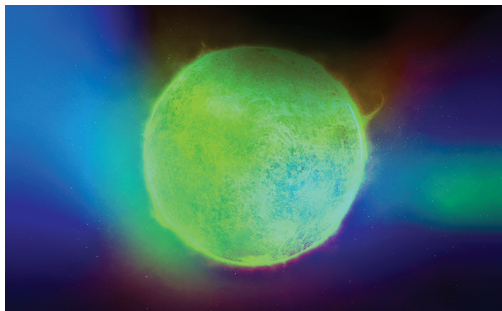
Luisa Trisi is the founder of Big Picture Communications, a Toronto-based company specializing in strategic communications. Luisa has been captivated by the music of J.S. Bach since her childhood piano lessons and has spent many hours obsessively listening to recordings of *The Goldberg Variations*.

Listen to two movements from Elisa Citterio's arrangement: [tafelmusik.org](https://www.tafelmusik.org)

Bernard Labadie's arrangement is available on ATMA Classique: [atmaclassique.com](https://www.atmaclassique.com)

2021 WINTER SEASON

Winter Season Presenting Sponsor



Il Seicento

Directed by Elisa Citterio

Join us to explore the ambitious, experimental energy of the music scene in early 17th-century Italy, where the new baroque style was just starting to emerge.

February 18, 2021
8pm EST
Online concert hall



Reflections of Mary

Directed by Ivars Taurins with Tafelmusik Chamber Choir

Contemplate the meaning of the Virgin Mary in this luminous concert offering two composers' takes on this sacred icon of motherhood and mercy.

March 11, 2021
8pm EST
Online concert hall



On the Road

Pack your bags for this virtual road trip, European baroque style. Our itinerary includes stops in 17th- and 18th-century England, Germany, France, and Italy, courtesy of chamber music by some of our favourite composers.

April 8, 2021
8pm EST
Online concert hall

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Warm up your winter with Tafelmusik!
Subscribers save on ticket prices and enjoy exclusive access to house program notes and extended viewing.

Interested in subscribing to winter?

Standard and Standard+ subscriptions are available online and through our Box Office now!

Standard • \$113

- Access all three winter online concerts
- Digital house programs

Standard+ • \$154

- Access all three winter online concerts
- Digital house programs
- One-week extended viewing access

Buy now at [tafelmusik.org/subscribe](https://www.tafelmusik.org/subscribe)

2020/21 Subscribers & Benefits

If you subscribed to the 2020/21 season before August 19, 2020, you should have been contacted by the Box Office team in December to confirm your winter digital season subscription. If you have questions, or have not heard from us, please call 1 (833) 964-6337.

	Standard	Standard+	Plus	Premium
Entry in the live performance lottery (expected in 2021)			♦	♦
Access to all three winter online concerts	♦	♦	♦	♦
One-week extended viewing for online concerts		♦	♦	♦
Unique pop-up events				♦
Tafel Talk panel discussions				♦
Pre-concert chats				♦
Subscriber artist Q&As				♦
Subscriber lectures				♦
House programs (digital)	♦	♦	♦	♦
Tafel magazine (print)				♦
Keep your seats for 2021/22			♦	♦
Weekly exclusive subscriber-only newsletter				♦
Exclusive discount benefits				♦

**Tafelmusik**

427 Bloor St. W., Box 14
Toronto, ON, M5S 1X7

MAILING LIST

Want future issues?

Sign up for emails at tafelmusik.org

