

Eight guest conductors at R.I. Philharmonic among highlights of new classical music season

By Keith Powers / Special to The Journal

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James Sommerville will be the first. The principal horn of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and long-term (2007-2015) conductor of the Hamilton (Ontario) Philharmonic Orchestra, Sommerville leads the opening night program on Saturday, Sept. 16. Repertory includes Jennifer Higdon's "blue cathedral," Tchaikovsky's violin concerto (Simone Porter, soloist), and Sibelius's Second Symphony.

Sommerville's program is representative of the entire season: in an effort to make a strong, positive impact, each of the conductors has programmed works that are unusual, virtuosic and potential crowd-pleasers.

Eckart Preu follows suit in the Oct. 14 performance, conducting Miguel del Aguila's "Conga-Line in Hell" (gotta love that title), Mozart's elegant D minor piano concerto (No. 20, with Alon Goldstein as soloist), and the Saint-Saëns Organ symphony.

On Nov. 18, conductor Bramwell Tovey returns to the Philharmonic with soloist Inon Barnatan, performing a bracing program featuring Brahms's first piano concerto, Berlioz's "Le Corsaire" overture, and Elgar's atmospheric "Enigma Variations."

Each of the conductors also gets a second chance to impress: Preu leads a Friday Rush Hour series repeat of the Saint-Saëns symphony (Nov. 13), and Sommerville (Sept. 15) and Tovey (Nov. 17) lead open rehearsals of their programs.

Ken-David Masur (Jan. 20), Michael Christie (Feb. 17), Victor Yampolsky (March 17), Jacomo Bairos (Apr. 7), and Edwin Outwater (May 5) will also guest after the first of the year. The Philharmonic's executive director, David Beauchesne, notes that not all of the guests are actual candidates for the permanent job: "This is not a beauty contest," he's said, "we need to find the right chemistry" ... but that won't stop the speculation. (www.ri-philharmonic.org; 401-248-7000)

Community Music Works

Now in its 21st season, Community Music Works continues its extensive educational mission, and mounts multiple different series of public concerts as well. The Sonata Series Sept. 17 and Oct. 17 at the RISD Museum tackles adventuresome repertory: Anna Clyne's "Within Her Arms" and Julia Wolfe's "Cruel Sister," in the opening concert; Minna Choi and Sebastian Ruth perform André Cormier's "Scattershot," and cellist Adrienne Taylor offers works of Beethoven with pianist Andrei Baumann in the October program.

Cormier will be composer-in-residence for this year's Ars Subtilior series (Sutton Space Gallery, Oct. 20 and 21), where CMW musicians and guests explore experimental music. And on the more traditional side, CMW's annual BachFest runs from Nov. 4 through Nov. 9, with many programs scattered around town. (www.communitymusicworks.org; 401-861-5650)

Rhode Island Chamber Music Concerts

Young quartets with already glittering resumé's fill the fall season at McVinney Auditorium for the Rhode Island Chamber Music Concerts season. First up (Oct. 11) is the Attacca Quartet, venturing works by Brahms, Haydn and Shostakovich, joined for this concert by pianist Irina Nuzova. Formed in 2007, the multiple prize-winning foursome have already been resident artists at Juilliard and at the Metropolitan Museum.

The Schumann Quartet — three brothers named Schumann, as well as Estonian violist Liisa Randalu — comes to McVinney Auditorium Nov. 8. Yes, they are playing Schumann's music on the program (along with Haydn and Barber). In the midst of a three-year artistic residency at New York's Chamber Music

Society of Lincoln Center, the quartet, also formed in 2007, tour internationally from their home base in Germany. Their most recent recording, this year's "Landscapes," features music of Takemitsu, Bartok, Pärt and Haydn.

Choral Music

Baroque music fills the program for Christine Noel's Providence Singers, Nov. 11 and 12 at the Carter Center in East Providence. Noel's chorus and orchestra perform Purcell's "Come Ye Sons of Art," Handel's patriotic anthems "Zadok the Priest" and his "Dettingen Te Deum," Zelenka's "Magnificat," and other works. (www.providencesingers.org; 401-751-5700)

Fall River-based Sine Nomine, with founding music director Glenn Giuttari returning for a second stint as the group's leader this season, sings a program ranging from Josquin to McMillan at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Bristol on Nov. 19. (www.sinenominechoir.org; 508-748-2178)

Narragansett Bay Symphony Orchestra

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