

THE

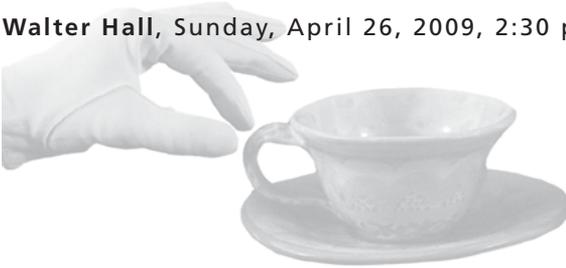
# *Aldburgh*

C O N N E C T I O N

## Thé Chantant

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Walter Hall, Sunday, April 26, 2009, 2:30 pm



We wish to thank Iain and Barbara Scott  
for sponsoring Allison Angelo

and Dr Hugh MacLean  
for sponsoring Jason Nedecky

We also thank James and Connie MacDougall  
for providing the flowers on stage

We are performing on the Edith McConica Steinway

# Thé chantant

Allison Angelo, soprano

Jason Nedecky, baritone

Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata, piano

with Erica Iris Huang, mezzo, and Frank Mutya, tenor

We need not apologize, we hope, for the fact that our programme today is largely an exercise in nostalgia. The beginnings of our relationship, in life and in art, were in England and that country's culture has, inevitably, had a lasting influence on our development. What could be more emblematic of an English afternoon than a cup of tea? From its eastern homelands, the tea-bush and its leaves became known throughout the western world, being imported first of all into France, Holland and (surprisingly) the Baltic coast. There is no record of tea being sold in England before 1658, at which time the coffee-houses of London were well established. For about a hundred years, the drinking of tea was an exotic pastime, beyond the means of the average person. After the closure of the coffee-houses in the eighteenth century, public tea-drinking took place in the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall, Ranelagh and elsewhere and, whereas coffee-houses had been frequented only by men, these gardens appealed to men, women and children of all classes. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Duchess of Bedford is credited with being the first to serve afternoon tea with some light refreshment and thus to have started a trend which is still an integral feature of British life.

Our founding patron, Sir Peter Pears, had his particular effect on our own tea-drinking. We still make use of his favourite, quite simple, blend: two spoons of Assam with one of Earl Grey - "to stiffen the flavour," as he would say. When asked how he took his tea, he replied: "With just a little milk - so as not to stain the cup." He was the only person whom we ever observed taking "a dish of tea", that is, pouring from the cup into the saucer in order to lower the temperature and drinking therefrom.

We have called today's concert "Thé chantant" as an allusion to the famous "Thé dansant" which was a feature of the early twentieth century. In particular, "Tango teas" became extraordinarily popular, tango clubs were set up in

hotels, restaurants and theatres and musicians such as Victor Silvester (who started his career teaching the tango at Harrods tea dances) made their fortunes. While our programme, of course, consists of songs, we may permit a little dancing, for the sake of authenticity . . .

A shorter version of this concert was initially presented in the Royal York Hotel on Sunday, July 5, 1998 as part of the 45<sup>th</sup> Convention of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. We are greatly indebted to the Association, and to the Convention's Program Co-Chairs, Lorna MacDonald and Jo-Anne Bentley, for their assistance and encouragement.

SR and BU

## A ROYAL PASTIME

**Buckingham Palace** (A.A.Milne)  
(soprano/baritone)

H.Fraser-Simson (1872-1944)

Harold Fraser-Simson's biggest success was the hit of 1917, *The Maid of the Mountains*. He was also known for his children's songs, including his settings of poems from A.A.Milne's *When we were very young*.

**Old Sir Faulk** (Façade) (Edith Sitwell)  
(soprano)

William Walton (1902-83)

Walton's well-known settings of Sitwell's poems, originally for speaker and chamber orchestra (1921), exist in arrangements by him in many forms, including those of solo song and piano-duet. The text of this piece, a kind of English surrealism, evokes and conflates the various worlds of childhood, farming, hunting, religion - and teatime!

**Tea for two** (No, no, Nanette)  
(piano-duet)

Vincent Youmans (1898-1946)

Youmans's show, arguably the most successful musical comedy launched in America or Europe during the 1920s, opened on Broadway in September, 1925. This arrangement of its most famous song is by J. Louis Merkur and was published in 1940, the year of one of the film versions, starring Anna Neagle.

## SALON DE THÉ

**Le Thé** (*Théodore de Banville*)  
(baritone)

Charles Koechlin (1867-1950)

One of the earliest of Koechlin's songs, published in 1890 in his set of *Rondels*, Op.1, this setting of a poem about Miss Ellen suggests an early fondness for things English. Later on, the composer became obsessed with Hollywood, writing an Epitaph for Jean Harlow and a suite of dances for Ginger Rogers.

*Tea: Miss Ellen, pour tea for me in the beautiful Chinese cup, on which goldfish pick quarrels with a terrified pink monster. I like the crazed cruelty of monsters one seeks to tame. There, beneath an angry, red sky, a proud and sly lady reveals in her wide, turquoise eyes ecstasy and innocence.*

**Placet futile** (*Stéphane Mallarmé*)  
(soprano)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Mallarmé's characters are drinking their tea out of the rarest eighteenth-century porcelain.

*Futile supplication: Princess! in envying the fate of a Hebe, who appears on this cup at the kiss of your lips, I waste my ardour, but my modest station is only that of abbé and I cannot be a naked figure on the Sèvres porcelain.*

*Since I am not your bearded lapdog, nor lozenge, nor rouge, nor affected games, and since I know that you look on me with indifferent eyes, blonde whose divine hairdressers are goldsmiths - appoint me . . . you whose many raspberried laughs are gathered into flocks of docile lambs, grazing through all vows and bleating deliriously, appoint me . . . in order that Love, with a fan as his wings, may paint me fingering a flute and lulling this sheepfold, Princess, appoint me shepherd of your smiles.*

**Réponse d'une épouse sage** (H.P.Roché) (Op.35/2)  
(soprano)

Albert Roussel  
(1869-1937)

The dignified lady who sings this song may be pictured on the Chinese cup of Charles Koechlin - or of Maurice Ravel.

*The chaste wife's reply (from a poem by Chang Chi, 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century): Knowing, sir, my married state, you have sent me two precious pearls and I, understanding your love, coldly placed them upon the silk of my dress.*

*For my house is of high lineage, my husband, captain of the King's guard; a man such as yourself ought to say: "The bonds of matrimony are not to be broken."*

*With the two pearls I send back two tears, that I did not meet you sooner.*

**Five o'clock, fox-trot** (L'Enfant et les sortilèges) (Colette)  
(mezzo/tenor)

Maurice Ravel  
(1875-1937)

In this little scene from Ravel's opera, an English teapot (tenor) and a Chinese cup (mezzo) threaten the naughty child in their own languages, dancing as they do.

**Two songs from Op. 2** (baritone)

Ernest Chausson (1855-99)

In the eastern homelands of the tea-bush (*Camellia sinensis*), insects and birds can drink directly from a flowery cup.

**Le Colibri** (*Leconte de Lisle*)

*The hummingbird, the green prince of the hills, seeing the dew and the sun's clear light shining into his nest of fine, woven grass, shoots up into the air like a gleaming dart. Hurriedly, he flies to the nearby streams, where the waves of bamboo rustle and bend and the red hibiscus with a heavenly scent unveils the glint of dew at its heart.*

*Down to the flower he flies, alights from above and from the rosy cup drinks so much love that he dies, not knowing if he could drink it dry. Even so, my darling, on your pure lips my soul and senses would have wished to die on contact with that first, fragrant kiss.*

**Les Papillons** (*Théophile Gautier*)

*Butterflies: Snow-white butterflies fly in swarms over the sea. Beautiful white butterflies, when can I travel the blue path of the air? Do you know, O fairest of the fair, my dancing-girl with the jet-black eyes - if they were to lend me their wings, do you*

*know where I would fly? Not taking one kiss from the roses, I'd fly across valleys and forests to alight on your half-closed lips, flower of my soul, and there I'd die.*

## THE NEW WORLD

**Dayton, Ohio - 1903** words and music by Randy Newman  
(baritone) (born 1943)

This example of tongue-in-cheek nostalgia appeared in 1972 on Newman's disc *Sail Away*. The album was listed in 2003 by *Rolling Stone* magazine as number 321 in the 500 greatest albums of all time.

**Hesitation-Tango** (Souvenirs), Op.28/5 Samuel Barber (1910-81)  
(piano-duet)

The composer writes: "In 1952, I was writing some duets for one piano to play with a friend and Lincoln Kirstein suggested that I orchestrate them for a ballet. One might imagine a *divertissement* in a setting reminiscent of the Palm Court of the Hotel Plaza in New York, the year about 1914, epoch of the first tangos; 'Souvenirs' - remembered with affection, not in irony or with tongue in the cheek, but in amused tenderness."

## TEA IN WONDERLAND

**Le Chapelier** (Trois Mélodies de 1916) (*René Chalupe*) Erik Satie  
(soprano) (1866-1925)

Satie's song, dedicated to Stravinsky, is (for some reason) an affectionate parody of music from Gounod's *Mireille*.

*The Hatter (after "Alice in Wonderland"): The hatter is astonished to find that his watch is three days slow, despite always greasing it diligently with the best butter. But he has dropped breadcrumbs into the works and, though he dips his watch in the tea, that will not make it go any faster.*

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## INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the Torel Room,  
with the kind assistance of students of the  
Opera Division, Faculty of Music.

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## ENTR'ACTE

The second half of the programme extends our view to some other moods and activities of the afternoon.

**Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune** Claude Debussy (1862-1918),  
(piano-duet) arr. Ravel

Debussy's orchestral masterpiece of 1894 has been hailed by Pierre Boulez as "the beginning of modern music". It certainly impressed younger composers of its time, including Ravel, who arranged it for piano-duet (before the advent of recording, an accepted way of promoting new works). Debussy himself, who had originally intended a suite in three movements, wrote a programme note:

"The music of this prelude is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the fearful flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature."

## INTIMATE ENCOUNTERS

**Gigerlette** (Otto Julius Bierbaum) Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)  
(soprano)

In 1901, Schoenberg moved from his home city of Vienna to Berlin, where for two years he was the musical director of the Überbrettl cabaret company. Around this time, he set several of the verses of the young German poets associated with the cabaret movement.

*Fräulein Gigerlette invited me to tea. Her evening gown was as white as snow; she was done up exactly like a Pierrot. I'd wager that even a monk would look upon Gigerlette with pleasure.*

*A red room it was, in which she received me. Yellow candlelight shimmered in the space, and as always, she was full of life and esprit. Never can I forget it: the room was as red as wine, she white as a blossom.*

*And in a coach-and-four, the two of us went for a ride to that land called happiness. So that we shouldn't lose reins, goal and track, Cupid sat behind us, driving the fiery four.*

**Erlafsee** (*Johann Mayrhofer*), D586  
(soprano)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

This song has the distinction of being the first by Schubert to be printed. The red-letter day for the composer was the 6 February, 1818, and the book was Franz Sartori's *Mahlerisches Taschenbuch* (Pictorial Pocket-Book). The music was accompanied by a copper engraving of the Erlafsee (on the river Erlaf, a tributary of the Danube in Lower Austria).

*Lake Erlaf: I am so happy, yet so sad, by the quiet Lake Erlaf. A blessed silence in the pine trees, motionless the blue depths; only the cloud shadows drift across the smooth mirror of the lake. Fresh breezes gently ruffle the water and the sun's golden corona grows pale.*

**The Trellis** (*Aldous Huxley*)  
(baritone)

John Ireland (1879-1962)

The poem reflects the "long afternoons and evenings endlessly drawn out" which guests would enjoy at Garsington Manor, Oxfordshire, the country retreat ninety years ago of Lady Ottoline Morrell and many of the Bloomsbury group.

**Have some Madeira, m'dear!** (*Michael Flanders*) Donald Swann (1923-94)  
(baritone)

*At the Drop of a Hat* (which included this song) was a phenomenally successful two-man revue which opened in London in 1956, received hundreds of performances and subsequently transferred to Broadway.

**Tea for Tea** (No, no, Nanette) (*Irving Caesar*)  
(tutti)

Youmans

Nanette is the ward of a New York millionaire - but she has a wild side and decides to have some fun in Atlantic City. Her suitor, Tom, pursues her there and they fantasize about married life together, when she will have lived through her wildness . . .

Choreography by CHRISTINA GORDON  
Staging by MICHAEL PATRICK ALBANO

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This is the final concert in our Sunday Series. Please join us next season! The dates of the series will be October 18, November 22, January 24, March 14 and May 2. Full details and booking information will be included in our season's brochure, to be mailed out in June. If you wish to be added to our mailing list, call our box office at 416-735-7982, or contact us through our website, [www.aldeburghconnection.org](http://www.aldeburghconnection.org).

Our next presentations will take place at the Bayfield Festival of Song. The concerts in this beautiful village on Lake Huron will include celebrity recitals by BRETT POLEGATO and SHANNON MERCER, together with a series of performances by alumni of our Discovery Series: EVE-LYN de la HAYE, ERICA IRIS HUANG, PATRICK JANG and PHILIP KALMANOVITCH. For more details, call 416-735-7982 or visit [www.aldeburghconnection.org](http://www.aldeburghconnection.org).

Copies of our CDs, including the Juno-nominated *Schubert among friends* and our latest, *Our own songs*, which features works commissioned by the Aldeburgh Connection, as well as our double album *Twentieth anniversary collection*, are available during the intermission or through our website.

Box office revenues cover only a portion of our operating budget; grants, corporate funding and individual donations are needed for the balance. We encourage you to consider joining one of our supporting categories: Benefactor (\$1,000 or more), Champion (\$500 or more), Patron (\$100 or more) and Friend (\$50 or more). Donations may be made by cheque, VISA or MasterCard, and may be made in instalments. You will receive information about our activities and all donations will be acknowledged by a receipt for income tax purposes. Donors may act as sponsors for a concert, an artist or a special commission. Suggestions for corporate sponsorship are also very welcome. Your support is vital to the continuation of these concerts! Please reach us at 416-735-7982 or through our website: [www.aldeburghconnection.org](http://www.aldeburghconnection.org).

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following in the presentation of today's concert, and of the other events in our season:

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**Aldeburgh** is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Artistic Directors **Stephen Ralls** and **Bruce Ubukata** visited and worked there for many summers, as has a large number of the singers who appear with the Aldeburgh Connection.

**Allison Angelo** has been hailed as “a fabulous discovery” by the Toronto Star’s John Terauds. Highlights of the current season include concerts with the Aldeburgh Connection, Chorus Niagara, Orpheus Choir of Toronto, St. Cecilia Concert Series and a return to Toronto Operetta Theatre as Kristal in *The Bird Seller*. In her 2007/08 season, Ms. Angelo was active in the world of operetta as the leading lady in the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada production of *The Merry Widow*; later, she debuted for Toronto Operetta Theatre as Juliette in *The Count of Luxemburg*. In concert, she was heard as the soprano soloist in Rossini’s *Petite messe solennelle* with the University of Ottawa Orchestra & Choirs and was a guest artist at the Governor General’s Arts Awards Gala.

An alumna of Atelier Lyrique de L’Opéra de Montréal, Ms. Angelo sang the roles of the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw* and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas* with the Atelier, as well as the High Priestess (*Aïda*) and Naiade (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) on the mainstage and has returned since as Rose in *Lakmé*. Other operatic performances in recent seasons include Kolombine in I Musici de Montréal’s production of Salieri’s *A Little Harlequinade*, and she was guest soloist with l’Opéra d’Avignon in France. After her performance in the title role of Banff’s *Filumena* production, Ms. Angelo returned to Banff to workshop the role of Anna in *Frobisher*, the latest Murrell/ Estacio opera.

A semi-finalist in the Montreal Symphony Competition, Ms Angelo was awarded the 2006 L’Opéra de Montréal Prize and is a recipient of awards from the Nova Scotia Talent Trust, including the Portia White Award for Voice. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Music and Theatre from Dalhousie University and her Artist Diploma in Voice and Master’s in Opera from the University of Toronto.

**Jason Nedecy** performs regularly as a soloist in concert engagements and on the operatic stage. He has been reviewed in Opera Canada as “one of the fine new voices on the block”, “always displaying a rich, sonorous sensitivity.” In addition to his previous appearances with the Aldeburgh Connection recital series, he has performed at the Bayfield Festival of

Song, with the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, the Toronto Consort, the Toronto Chamber Choir, the Mountain View Connection Recital Series in Calgary, the International Bach Festival Toronto, Talisker Players, the Mooredale Concert Series, the Brantford Symphony, the Bach-Elgar Choir of Hamilton, and the Valley Festival near Ottawa.

On the operatic stage, he has performed roles with the Canadian Opera Company, with Saskatoon Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*, with Toronto Masque Theatre, in the title role of *Don Giovanni* at Opera Nuova in Edmonton and in the Brott Summer Music Festival in Hamilton, and in Opera Atelier productions of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, as well as Lully's *Persée*, released on DVD by EuroArts. Mr. Nedecky has been recently involved in ongoing Baroque recording projects with the Aradia Ensemble on the Naxos label. He sings the role of Corrado in Vivaldi's opera *Griselda* and is featured on Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. Future releases include a recording of Purcell incidental music, and Samuel Arnold's opera *Polly*.

Jason Nedecky studied at the University of Toronto, at the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Baden bei Wien, Austria, at the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme in Aldeburgh, England, at L'Académie Musicale de Villecroze in Provence, France, and at the Banff Centre. In 2007 and 2008, he was soloist for Consort Caritatis on their tours of Eastern Europe.

**Erica Iris Huang** and **Frank Mutya** are currently participants in the program of the Opera Division at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, where they each took several roles in the recent double-bill of Ravel's *L'Heure espagnole* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*.

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