

The sweet sounds of summer festivals

July festival crop includes Stratford Summer Music residency for star tenor Ben Heppner

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On any given day this month, and in early August, someone is presenting fine music either in Toronto, or within easy driving distance. It's like a second concert season, most of it lighter fare — the performance equivalent of a beach novel — but there is plenty of serious classical stuff, too.

Even a quick glance at the summer offerings reveals that you can hardly go wrong. But there are some standout July events pretty much guaranteed to be worth the price of admission — most of them featuring this country's finest performers. Here they are, in chronological order.

• **July 11:** Ottawa is host to the upstart **Music and Beyond Festival**, already underway. Organizers have lined up an impressive roster of Canadian and international artists. On this day, Ottawa-born countertenor Daniel Taylor conducts his Theatre of Early Music and the Coleman Lemieux dance company in a program of music inspired by the Sistine Chapel, including the soaring, much-loved *Miserere*, a setting of Psalm 50, by Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652). 8 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, Ottawa. Tickets: \$20 at 613-241-0777 or www.musicandbeyond.ca

• **July 13:** I can't imagine a finer setting for French composer Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* than the open-sided concert barn at the **Westben Festival**, just outside bucolic Cambellford. This intense, otherworldly and utterly mesmerizing masterpiece of 20th-century chamber music features clarinetist James Campbell and the Gryphon Trio. The evening opens with the pastoral *Shepherd on the Rock*, by Franz Schubert, performed by Campbell and Westben co-artistic directors Donna Bennett and Brian Finley. Tickets: \$5-\$33.50 at www.westben.ca

• **July 17:** The **Elora Festival** takes the prize for the most exciting single day of musicmaking in Ontario this month. It starts with Quebec City's Les Violons du Roy, conducted by Torontonians Eric Paetkau at 2 p.m. in the Gambrel Barn. Their concert focuses on chamber-scale music by Rossini, Schubert and Brahms, along with a recent composition by Michael Oesterle (Tickets: \$44.50). At 4 p.m., in St. John's Anglican Church, fantastic Toronto baritone Peter McGillivray and pianist Julien Le Blanc present a fascinating program of opera arias and art song woven around the themes of rascals, Epicureans and dirty rotten scoundrels (Tickets: \$39). After a bit to eat, head back to the Gambrel Barn for the 8 p.m. perfor-



Esteemed tenor Ben Heppner will be in Stratford July 20 to 25.

mance by Chris Donnelly. This young Toronto jazz composer-pianist has eclectic tastes and talent to burn. The bulk of his program is given over to the legendary Doug Riley, but there are treats of his own on offer, as well as a party piece by Russian jazzman Nikolai Kapustin (Tickets: \$39). Tickets and more info: 1-888-747-7550 or www.elorafestival.com

• **July 20, 22, 23 & 24:** **Stratford Summer Music** artistic director John Miller scored the coup of the year when he snagged Canadian tenor Ben Heppner for a nearly week-long residency. Heppner's concert offerings include three hour-long recitals that start at 11:15 a.m. with pianist John Hess at St.

Andrew's Church (Tickets: \$35). That program focuses on opera and the legacy of Edward Johnson, a Guelph-born tenor who, after a storied stage career, went on to become the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. There is a free companion exhibition on Johnson's life and times at Stratford City Hall. For a full-bore concert experience, go on July 20 at 7 p.m., when Heppner pulls out all the stops with Hess, at St. Andrew's Church (Tickets: \$40). Tickets and more info: 1-866-288-4313 or www.stratford-summermusic.ca

• **July 23:** **Music Niagara**, based in Niagara-on-the-Lake, has invited mezzo Krisztina Szabo, baritone Brett Polegato and pianist Robert Kortgaard to perform a substantial, eclectic and fun program of operarias as well as art and cabaret songs ranging from Mozart to Aaron Copland to Ivor Novello. 7:30 p.m. St. Mark's Church. Tickets: \$35-\$40 at 1-800-511-7429 or www.musicniagara.org

• **July 24:** Up in the tamed wilds ringing the **Festival of the Sound**, in Parry Sound, pianist Janina Fialkowska recreates her magical interpretation of the two piano concertos by Frédéric Chopin, as arranged for chamber orchestra. 7:30 p.m. Stockey Centre. Tickets: \$28-\$37 at 1-866-364-0061 or www.festivalofthesound.ca

• **July 25:** Indefatigable singer and comedian Mary Lou Fallis and her band of partners in musical levity introduce Prima Donna to the Ca-

nadian Shield. Hilarity is bound to ensue. 7:30 p.m. Stockey Hall. Tickets: \$63 (includes coffee and dessert) at 1-866-364-0061 or www.festivalofthesound.ca

• **July 26:** Honens piano competition laureate Hinrich Alpers joins violinist Annalee Patipatanakoon, violist Donnie Deacon and cellist Denise Jokic in an evening dedicated to the chamber music of Robert Schumann, for the **Ottawa Chamberfest**. 7 p.m. Dominion-Chalmers United Church. Tickets: \$35 at 613-234-6306 or www.chamberfest.com

• **July 27:** The **Toronto Summer Music Festival** features Matthias Goerne, the man who has inherited the mantle of German art song master from Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, in the company of pianist Andreas Haefliger. They present an evening of Brahms and Schumann, evenly split between voice and piano. 8 p.m. Koerner Hall, 273 Bloor St. W. Tickets: \$30-\$45 at 416-408-0208 or www.torontosummermusic.com

• **July 29:** Andrew Burashko and his Art of Time Ensemble make their first hometown summertime appearance with a reprise of a program that riffs on chamber music by film composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold. The offerings include new commissioned songs by Danny Michel, Martin Tielli and John Southworth. 8 p.m. Walter Hall, 80 Queen's Park Cres. Tickets: \$30-\$45 at 416-408-0208 or www.torontosummermusic.com