

NOTES



“Serving a Great and Noble Art”

Eastman Historian Vincent Lenti
surveys the Howard Hanson years

E-Musicians Unite!

Entrepreneurship, ESM style

Tony Arnold

Hitting high notes
in new music

SUMMER 2009

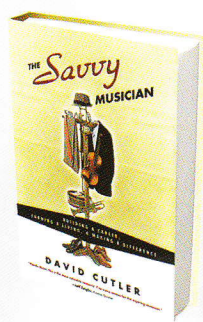
FOR ALUMNI, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS OF THE EASTMAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC



18 CONTEMPORARY MUSE TONY ARNOLD (SHOWN HERE WITH BRAD LUBMAN AND BAJINDER SEKHON) BROUGHT NEW-MUSIC CHOPS AND MUSICAL CURIOSITY TO EASTMAN THIS SPRING.



24 JAZZ PHENOM STEFON HARRIS HELPS LAUNCH EASTMAN'S NEW DIVERSITY INITIATIVES



5 RESOURCEFUL "E-MUSICIANS" EARN AS FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL EFFORT

8 COMPLEX, CLEVER, AND CHALLENGING: TWO EASTMAN STUDENTS TACKLE MOZART'S FIGARO.

FEATURES

5 Entrepreneurship, ESM style

Eastman alums on facing "the new reality" of the music business

8 Nature's nobleman

In this spring's production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, two ESM students explored one of opera's great roles

12 "Serving a great and noble art"

Eastman historian Vincent Lenti surveys the Howard Hanson years

18 Making meaningful noise

Soprano Tony Arnold brings a performer's perspective to brand-new music

2 BRIEF NOTES

4 COMING EVENTS

21 SCHOOL NEWS

26 IN TRIBUTE

27 IN MEMORIAM

28 ALUMNI NOTES

31 EASTMAN ALUMNI ON CD/DVD

35 FACULTY NOTES

36 STUDENT NOTES

ON THE COVER: A familiar sight to several generations of Eastman students, this bold portrait of Howard Hanson by Rochester artist Stanley J. Gordon has hung in the Main Hall since 1958, when it was presented by the Polish Arts League of Rochester.

ON THE WEB: More news about the Eastman School of Music, including an Adobe PDF file of *Notes*, can be found online at www.esm.rochester.edu.

Making





meaningful noise

*Soprano Tony Arnold brings
a performer's perspective
to brand-new music*

By David Raymond

TONY ARNOLD, THE SOPRANO WIDELY ADMIRERED for her interpretation of contemporary repertoire, was in residence at Eastman from February through April as the third Howard Hanson Visiting Professor of Composition, a position funded through the Hanson Institute for American Music.

The previous Hanson Visiting Professors, Mario Davidovsky and Yehudi Wyner, are award-winning, widely known composers. Arnold is considered one of the top singers of contemporary repertoire today, but she is not a composer. The composers at Eastman didn't mind at all.

"We wanted a fresh approach to the professorship," says associate professor of composition Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez. "So we decided to try a performer—a performer who not only is committed to contemporary music, but who also is known for working closely with composers, and who is helping to develop a repertoire."

"None of the experience I've had has been wasted," says Tony Arnold firmly. Now an assistant professor at the University of Buffalo, she never planned to be a singer; her early musical training included piano, woodwind, and composition studies at the Peabody Preparatory Institute and the Maryland Center for the Arts.

Tony Arnold, shown here in rehearsal with Brad Lubman and Musica Nova, found her voice through contemporary music, and is now a powerful voice for contemporary music.

“Composers benefit from direct contact with performers. It is good for them to know if what they put on the page is practical to a performer, if there are practical limitations ... If the music is difficult to perform, it is often because the concept is flawed.”

“I should have been singing all along,” she says, and indeed she received a bachelor’s degree in voice from Oberlin College in 1990 (she admits that when she auditioned for Eastman, she was turned down), and a master’s degree in orchestral conducting from Northwestern University in 1993.

Studying conducting, she says, made it seem natural to her to interpret music for herself, and to be sensitive to instrumental and vocal balances. However she found that in singing traditional song repertoire, “I just didn’t excel. Intellectually, I knew how Bach or Schubert should sound, but I felt bound by performance traditions. I needed to create a sound world that was mine.”

She found it in contemporary music, whose appeal began when she was 16 years old and heard the famous recording of George Crumb’s *Ancient Voices of Children* by Jan DeGaetani. Arnold found it “incredibly evocative—she was making meaningful noise.”

She found equally meaningful noise years later, when she studied Luciano Berio’s classic *Sequenza III* for solo voice. “To perform it you need to find a balance in your body, and you have to be prepared to make a very deep exploration of the music and its dynamic with the text.” She found this required a completely different set of tools from music in the *lieder* tradition—difficult for some singers, congenial to her.

“I found that my tension level was way lower when singing contemporary repertoire,” she says. “I found freedom from performance traditions. I could flourish and relax—it had a liberating effect.” (On her performing of any music, she adds; just before our interview, she was practicing for an upcoming performance of Bach’s *St. John Passion*.) “I found my own voice through that music.”

Tony Arnold won the Gaudeamus International Interpreter’s Competition for contemporary music performance in 2001, and since then she has made numerous recordings of touchstone contemporary vocal repertoire: not only Berio’s *Sequenza*, but also György Kurtág’s *Kafka Fragments*, Elliott Carter’s *Of Challenge and of Love*, and—the work that started it all for her—*Ancient Voices of Children*.

The Warren and Patricia Benson Forum on Creativity, which began in 2007–2008, is supported through an endowed fund established in memory of Warren Benson by his family and friends. Benson, who died in 2005, was professor of composition at Eastman from 1967 to 1993 and was appointed Professor Emeritus in 1994. He died in 2005. The idea behind the Benson Forum, according to its artistic director Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez, is a simple one: to bring artists from different disciplines together and see what develops.

The Benson Forum and the Hanson Visiting Professorship came together in late March, when Tony Arnold coached a total of 13 Eastman composition students, nine singers, and 15 instrumentalists in the writing and performance of brand-new songs written to poems by Lia Purpura, writer-in-residence at Baltimore’s Loyola College.

As might be expected from a singer who at one point described herself as “a professional voice user,” Arnold took a no-nonsense approach in assessing both music and performances, from such practical matters as posture (“Don’t fold over,” she told a singer bending over her music) and the need for additional music stands, to matters of text setting (summed up in the phrase “Honor the English language”), to interpretation for singers (“the exaggeration level in singing in huge”) and to instrumentalists performing with singers (“Be in their breathing world”).

During the period of her professorship, Arnold also premiered David Liptak’s *Folgore Songs* with Mark Davis Scatterday and the Eastman Wind Ensemble, and joined Brad Lubman and Musica Nova for first performances of two student works: *Post* by Baljinder Sekhon and *Into Winter’s Grey* by Paul Coleman. She had given master classes at other institutions, but never was a guest on a sustained basis. “To return to Eastman two or three times a week for several weeks [was] a luxury,” she says—and it was a great situation for the composers and performers.

“Composers benefit from direct contact with performers,” says Arnold. “It is good for them to know if what they put on the page is practical to a performer, if there are practical limitations, notational issues, musical phrases that should be re-organized. If the music is difficult to perform, it is often because the concept is flawed.”

The composition department was delighted to host “someone who can help young composers realize that writing for voice and writing for an instrument really are two different things,” says Sanchez-Gutierrez. “Working with Tony forced them to write with a degree of clarity and to make sure that the listener is going to listen.”

Sanchez-Gutierrez also appreciated the “enthusiasm and commitment” of the voice faculty and all the student participants: “All of ESM enjoyed this collaboration.”

Tony Arnold’s committed musicianship and forceful teaching remind Sanchez-Gutierrez of one of the singer’s early inspirations: Jan DeGaetani, who taught at Eastman in the 1970s and 1980s while maintaining a lively performing career: “Because of her interest in new repertoire, and her excellence as a teacher, I think they are very much alike.”