

Tomorrow Wilmot United Church in Fredericton will celebrate a most unusual ceremony, only the second one ever celebrated in New Brunswick. The Right Reverend Jordan Cantwell, moderator of the national church, will celebrate with us as we become an Affirming Diversity congregation, meaning that we welcome everyone. We've welcomed everyone for a long time, but this makes it official.

My brother--a minister in the Methodist Church--and I are grateful that we grew up in a home where everyone was welcome, and so it has been easier for us to be happy for all the changes of the last 50 years. But others who grew up in a different milieu have had a more difficult time, and I admire their courage and salute them.

Gay men have contributed immensely to religious art. Today I moved my stereo system out into the living room, hoping that it would be more convenient to use. I was going to listen to the two symphonies of the American composer Samuel Barber and googled him. Serendipitously, I read this note written when he was nine. "Dear Mother: I have written this to tell you my worrying secret. Now don't cry when you read it because it is neither yours nor my fault. I suppose I will have to tell it now without any nonsense. To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete [sic]. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I'm sure. I'll ask you one more thing.—Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football.—Please—Sometimes I've been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very)." This note contains a complex meaning. Later when Barber was studying music, he met the composer Gian Carlo Menotti, and they lived together as partners for the rest of their lives.

His "Adagio for Strings" is familiar because it is often played on solemn occasions: at the announcements of the deaths of Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, at the funerals of Albert Einstein and Jack Layton, for example. As well it has been used in dozens of movie scores.

The Fredericton Symphony New Brunswick support committee met recently with Reid Parker, the president of the Symphony and of the Symphony Foundation. He had good news to present about the state of the enterprise. I use "enterprise" advisedly because it has many parts. I'm not sure how they work together, but I think it goes something like this: The "core" of the operation is the six core musicians of the Symphony. Other musicians are added as needed, some of them regularly. The symphony performs five concerts a year in the major performing centres of the three principal cities of the province.

Four of the regular musicians form the Saint John String Quartet, performing in schools and smaller venues. The Ventus Machina, a woodwind quintet, also performs in smaller venues. In Fredericton this is in St. Thomas's McCain Hall, in Saint John the Arts Centre, in Moncton Resurgo Place. Camerata New Brunswick, a chamber orchestra, includes twenty of the orchestra members. Recently the symphony has teamed up with a professional choir, the Louisbourg. A new venture is *Andrew Miller and Friends*, performing in early December; I'm assuming this will be of experimental music. Miller, the Symphony's principal bassist, is known as a proponent of exciting off-the-wall compositions.

The first Symphony concert of the season is in mid-October--17th in Moncton, 18th in Fredericton and 19th in Saint John. Guest pianist Janina Fialkowska will play Chopin's first piano concerto. For me, and I think for many people, the piano is one instrument that rewards the listener better in person because the pianist and the piano are experienced as one entity, whereas on a CD only the piano exists. Chopin and his piano became a romantic figure as played by the handsome Cornel Wilde in the film a *Song to*

Remember. An image that lodged in my eleven-year-old brain--remaining for the rest of my life--is of a dying Chopin/Wilde playing passionately to save Poland, coughing out drops of blood on the ivories.

I thought that the New Brunswick Chapbooks series had died in 1983, but instead it was just hibernating. Shane Neilson, the editor of Frog Hollow Press out of Victoria, British Columbia, has awakened it.

The first one in the series just arrived at my house, and it is gorgeous with a wonderful cover, handsome typeface, jazzy colophons, classy end papers. The publisher of Frog Hollow Press, Caryl Peters, used the original cover design created by Marjory Donaldson and Bruno Bobak. Neilson decided that number one of the new series should be of my work because I was the publisher (I never called myself that) of the 25 chapbooks. My story is titled, "The Noise of the Weeping of the People."