

Musicians of the world founders mine their own back yard

Laurent Castellucci

The tragic earthquake in Haiti Jan. 12 has provoked an outpouring of sympathy and support worldwide. People have donated time, money, equipment and now even music.

The Musicians of the World Symphony Orchestra acted as the lynchpin for the Espoir Haiti benefit concert last month at the Église évangélique haïtienne de l'alliance chrétienne in St. Michel.

The event featured not just the MWSO but also performances from Katia Cadet, dancers from the Arthur Murray school, and Jethro Auguste and the Culture X Gospel Choir.

Lucy Ravinsky, a founder of the symphony, was listening to CJAD when she heard the pastor of the church, Wilner Cayo, discussing the quake. She called the station to get his number and immediately started talking about a date for a benefit.

"They're not calling it a concert, they're calling it an event," Ravinsky said last month, answering multiple phone calls with the boundless energy necessary for anyone thinking of organizing the kind of artistic endeavour a symphony represents. She called the breakneck scheduling for the event "quite crazy," but well worth it.

The program was put together in three weeks, and ran only one month before the 25th concert of the MWSO, a tribute event at Notre Dame de Grâce Church that will be dedicated to the people of Haiti, although it isn't a fundraiser.

The MWSO is itself something of a rescue mission, having been founded in 2006 by Ravinsky and her husband, conductor Joseph Milo.

After discovering in short order that his doorman was a classically trained cellist who had spent years with a major Russian orchestra and that his pizza deliveryman was a violinist in a Romanian orchestra, Milo decided he had to find a way to restore for these people their professional dignity.

Within a year, he had created the MWSO, an orchestra consisting primarily of immigrants who



Photo courtesy of Lucy Ravinsky

Joseph Milo founded the Musicians of the World Symphony Orchestra with his wife, Lucy Ravinsky.

had professional music backgrounds but could not find work as musicians in their new country.

The orchestra has a base of 50 musicians from 18 countries, has performed 23 concerts in the last three years, and was praised by Marcel Tremblay when he was Mayor Gerald Tremblay's special adviser on cultural communities as a model for integrating immigrants into the cultural and professional life of Quebec and Canada.

Despite the MWSO's explicit mandate to perform professionally and for money, 37 of the musicians volunteered to make the benefit concert happen, an example Ravinsky is optimistic others will follow.



**In Home
Nursing Care**

"We hope that complete strangers giving \$30,000 of their time and energy will spur more people to donate," she said.

The Musicians of the World Symphony orchestra performs Mozart's Requiem and Haydn's Seven Last Words of Christ on March 27, 8pm. Notre Dame Church, 5333 Notre Dame de Grace Ave. Info: 514-484-7428.

Play within a play, within a play

Who knew putting on a play could be that complicated?

Kiss me, Kate is a Tony Award-winning musical playing at Casgrain Theatre. It tells the story of a production of William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, a play within a play. Gangsters, jealousy between lovers, and egos threaten its production.

The show is produced by the John Abbott College Theatre Workshop by Sam and Bella Spewack and directed by Jason Howell.

It runs from March 25 to April 3, Tuesday to Saturday at 8pm with matinees on March 26 at 11am and April 3 at 1 pm. \$14, students/seniors \$8.

Info: 514-457-2247.

Classic-pop rendezvous

The Stanbridge East Carre Cultural will present Musique Active at the St. James Anglican Church March 27 at 7:30pm at 15 Maple St. in Stanbridge E. This musical evening will be presented in two parts, classical and popular works.

Musique Active will perform extracts from religious as well as opera pieces. The works of Bach, Purcell, Puccini, Handel, Mozart and Strauss will be played.

The second half features popular, jazz, and Irish traditional music.

Admission: \$10. Space is limited. Tickets and info: 450-248-7827 or 450-248-2018. Tickets will also be available at the door.

Suzanne Lamarre