

# Great Work(s)

## PORTLAND OVATIONS Narrative

### 1. Describe the project. Articulate the work, artists featured and/or interpretation in terms of highest artistic quality

#### *About the project...*

On November 18, 2011, Portland Ovations will present the truly innovative concert Shuffle.Play.Listen featuring virtuosic musicians Matt Haimovitz and Christopher O'Riley. The inventive program for Shuffle.Play.Listen is in perfect sync with the criteria of Maine Arts Commission's Great Work program. The works to be performed are at once new, originally interpreted and always of the highest quality.

For Shuffle.Play.Listen, worldrecognized pianist O'Riley and pioneering cellist Haimovitz have come together to explore the lyrical and virtuosic properties of their instruments in a collaboration that crosses in and out of classical and contemporary music. Drawing deeply from their accomplished repertoire and groundbreaking projects, audiences will be captivated by a program that includes works by the esteemed J.S Bach and Baroque composer Domenico Gabrielli, altrock ensemble Radiohead and father of new tango Astor Piazzolla, romanticist Frederic Chopin and the adventurous Igor Stravinsky.

The project has multiple dimensions that invite the community to engage with the great works presented and the artists, including the concert itself. While the first half of Shuffle.Play.Listen is preset by the artists, the second half of the concert is programmed from the stage. This dynamic format gives the musicians the opportunity to share the context of the program directly with the audience while allowing the music to flow seamlessly from one genre to the next. This interplay satiates an important desire emerging among audiences for the arts – the desire to be active participants in the performing arts experience.

#### *About the Great Works...*

While this program is highly dynamic and tailored to each community, the following great works are integral to the project's repertoire:

**G Major Prelude from Solo Cello Suite:** Bach's Cello Suites are some of the most performed and familiar solo compositions ever written for cello. The suites contain a great variety of technical devices, a wide emotional range, and some of Bach's most compelling voice interactions and conversations. The Prelude from Suite 1 (in G Major) is probably the best known movement from the entire set of suites and is instantly recognizable from its regular use in television and films.

**Prelude from d minor English Suite:** The English Suites, are a set of six suites written for harpsichord and generally thought to be the earliest of Bach's 19 suites for keyboard. These great works have been recorded by such masters of the piano as Glenn Gould and Andras Schiff. This prelude is for the 6<sup>th</sup> Suite.

**Works by Radiohead may include Pyramid Song, Arpeggi, Sail to the Moon:** Radiohead – a fourpiece alternative rock band from England – is recognized as one of the most accomplished and relevant rock bands of our time. From BRIT Awards to Grammys to MTV Music Video Awards, Radiohead has received 13 awards from 38 nominations and was ranked number 73 in Rolling Stone's list of "The Greatest Artists of All Time". The relationship of their highly regarded music to this project is best explained by NPR host John Diliberto:

These aren't easy-listening piano renditions of Radiohead tunes, but deeply inspired, often challenging and dissonant reimaginings. O'Riley succeeds by taking the music on its own terms. He doesn't try to make it "classical" but lets the classical nature of the music ring out. From the storming chordal overtone clusters of "There There" to the Chopinesque refrain of "The Spinning Plates," O'Riley makes you forget these songs were originally played by a raging rock band. Instead, they seem born on the keys of his piano.

**Stravinsky's Suite Italienne for cello and piano** is an arrangement of several movements from his ballet Pulcinella. Of Pulcinella, Stravinsky said it is "the epiphany through which the whole of my late work became possible." In other words, this great work represented a major shift in his composing in which style in and of itself was the primary compositional determinate. The charm of the melodies and the piquant flavor of Stravinsky's arrangement make his Suite Italienne one of his most enjoyable works. It is his only work for cello and piano.

**Astor Piazzolla's Le Grand Tango:** Piazzolla was accused of "strange ideas" when he presented his "tango nuevo" in Argentina in the 1950s, blending elements of classical music, jazz, and rock with the sadness and desperation of the traditional tango. Piazzolla's tangos were no longer mere dance music, but great works of art for the concert hall that are now embraced by classical musicians in their programs.

As Haimovitz states: "I'm really excited about this program. It's a combination of some wonderful, lyrical 20th-century works by some great composers. Then we weave some vernacular into it. We're performing a new tango and a Radiohead song, 'Pyramid Song.'"

### ***About the Artists***

This far-reaching program showcases O'Riley and Haimovitz's skills as collaborators and soloists, defining what it means to be an artist in the 21st Century. O'Riley is regarded as one of the leading American pianists of his generation, touring extensively as a recitalist and chamber musician and appearing with every major orchestra. He has been honored with awards at the Leeds, Van Cliburn, Busoni and Montreal competitions, as well as an Avery Fisher Career Grant. O'Riley is hailed for his ability to expand chamber music's appeal with the Chicago Tribune remarking "O'Riley's greatest accomplishment, however, is the ability to introduce young fans of contemporary artists like Radiohead and Elliot Smith to classical music." He is perhaps most recognizable as the host of NPR's From the Top.

Haimovitz made his debut at the age of 13 as a soloist with Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic. By age 17, he made his first recording for Deutsche Grammophon with James Levine and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He has redefined what it means to be a classical musician today, bringing concerts of Bach, Golijov, and others to clubs and coffee houses across the country while maintaining a busy schedule of international appearances. Haimovitz has been awarded a Concert Music Award, the American Music Center's Trailblazer Award, the Avery Fisher Career Grant, the Grand Prix du Disque, the Diapason d'Or and he is the first cellist ever to receive the prestigious Premio Internazionale "Accademia Musicale Chigiana." He is on faculty at McGill University's Schulich School of Music.

## 2. Describe your plan to develop and present related educational, interpretive, or contextual components. Document evidence of program planning.

Portland Ovations has been awarded and rewarded for its design and delivery of educational and outreach activities that increase appreciation of and/or skill in the performing arts, connect artists and audiences in meaningful ways and foster the creative spirit. Ovations Offstage, the umbrella program for all nonperformance activities, seeks out collaborators and innovative ideas in order to make its programs relevant and accessible. The presentation of Shuffle.Play.Listen illustrates this vision and includes the following Ovations Offstage activities and offerings:

- **Free “Flash Concert” & Reception with Matt Haimovitz at SPACE Gallery** – This mini concert will serve as an introduction of Haimovitz and the main stage concert the following night. This collaborative event also serves both Ovations and SPACE in their desire to reach new audiences (including each others’, which are understood to be at rather opposite ends of the demographic spectrum) and gain marketing insights from each other.
- **Masterclasses in Cello and Piano** – by Haimovitz and O’Riley respectively will be made available to our longtime partner in music education, the University of Southern Maine’s School of Music. While these skillsbased sessions focus on music students, they are open to the public for a small auditing fee. Depending on the artist, we’ve enjoyed as many as 300 observers at one of our masterclasses.
- **PrePerformance Lecture** – led by a Mainebased music scholar on faculty at USM, Bowdoin or Bates, the free offering will examine the unlikely connections between the composers, their works and the enduring spirit of chamber music.
- **Ovations’ Chamber Music Primer** – developed several years ago to provide greater context for our patrons whether adult or student, this expansive study guide will be edited to incorporate Shuffle.Play.Listen, including advance program notes, and artists’ bios and statements. Our Primers and Study Guides are available free on our website, at iTunes University, mailed via USPS to student groups and when appropriate distributed through email in advance to ticket holders.

Fundamentally, the planning of this program started nearly five years ago when Portland Ovations made the strategic decision to expand its classical series, the historical programming core of the organization since 1931, to encompass nontraditional artists or ensembles that stretch perceptions of classical music. Planning in this area has been especially thoughtful and deliberate. Ovations’ Executive Director, who curates Ovations’ season, regularly attends professional development sessions that promote new approaches to the presentation of chamber work such as The New Face of Classical Music and The Classical Music EcoSystem 2010: Listening to the Future. Whenever possible these presentations engage the public in nontraditional ways, moving out of the concert hall and rehearsal room and into the heart of our community as is demonstrated above.

Since then, our season has included HaitianAmerican composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, genredefying string quartets Brooklyn Rider and the illustrious Kronos Quartet, awardwinning innovator Mark O’Connor, and later this spring “downtown” NYC composer Phil Kline in a new work that includes the Portland String Quartet and Portland municipal organist Ray Cornils with a cocommissioned prelude for organ.

Of note, both Haimovitz and O'Riley have been presented in the past by Portland Ovations, but never together and never for such an innovative and dynamic program. Haimovitz was in fact our first nontraditional chamber musician. The concert was an artistic and audience development success with our "old guard" experiencing the concert next to younger audience members bearing tattoos and piercings. During the 2009/10 season, O'Riley hosted Ovations' concert and national rebroadcast of NPR's "From the Top."

As is evident, the presentation of Shuffle.Play.Listen represents the fifth year of programming dedicated to the goal of expanding audience members' expectation and appreciation for contemporary, innovative (and for that matter nonWestern European) chamber music.

### **3. Describe how you will make the project highly visible? Describe the project's statewide and/or regional impact.**

Portland Ovations utilizes a multifaceted promotional effort to reach its community, including distribution of its season brochure; print, radio and television advertising; press releases; targeted direct mail and eblasts to past ticket buyers and education participants; communication through education networks; and regular contact with Members and subscribers.

We've also found in the past several years a more grassroots approach is often highly effective, therefore we rely greatly on our community collaborators to help us design and distribute communications to their constituencies. We especially look forward to learning from SPACE about their more savvy use of electronic marketing and social media.

Portland Ovations has an excellent relationship with local press that engenders regular previews, interviews with artists, and reviews. We have interest by MPBN's Suzanne Nance in interviewing either or both of these artists in advance of the concert, giving the program statewide visibility. Haimovitz and O'Riley are only giving a limited number of concerts this coming year (12 in all), which makes this concert unique to the region (ours will be the only stop in New England). Closer to home, the impact will be felt by classical music lovers, music students, music educators, our collaborators and their constituencies.

### **4. List any collaborators and their role in the project.**

As noted above: SPACE Gallery will host the flash concert and reception and provide promotional and outreach support. SPACE is also providing the marketing, venue and related staff costs in kind. USM's School of Music will host and build audiences for the masterclasses. Both collaborators have been involved in planning discussions. As we get closer, all collaborators will come together to discuss final promotion and outreach plans, especially as they can crosspollinate each of the three constituencies.

### **5. Provide URL links to demonstrate the quality of your marketing artistic programming.**

[www.christopheroriley.com](http://www.christopheroriley.com)

[www.matthaimovitz.com](http://www.matthaimovitz.com)

A music sample by each musician has also been made available at

<http://portlandovations.org/files/haimovitzoriley.zip>