

Music of New Orleans
A Concert in Honor of Vivian Perlis



Society for American Music
45th Annual Conference
New Orleans, Louisiana

22 March 2019
George and Joyce Wein Jazz & Heritage Center
7:00 p.m.

Sarah Jane McMahon, soprano
Peter Collins, piano

The Society for American Music is delighted to welcome you to the fourth Vivian Perlis Concert, a series of performances of music by contemporary American composers at the society's annual conferences. We are grateful to the Virgil Thomson Foundation, the Aaron Copland Fund, and to members of the Society for their generous support. This concert series honors Vivian Perlis, whose publications, scholarly activities, and direction of the Oral History of American Music (OHAM) project at Yale University have made immeasurable contributions to our understanding of American composers and music cultures. In 2007 the Society for American Music awarded her the Lifetime Achievement Award for her remarkable achievements.

The George and Joyce Wein Jazz & Heritage Center is an education and cultural center of the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, the nonprofit that owns the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. It is a 12,000-square foot building that boasts seven music instruction classrooms for the Heritage School of Music, a recording studio, and a 200-seat auditorium. Additionally, a large collection of Louisiana art graces the walls of the center, creating an engaging environment for the educational and cultural activities in the building.

The auditorium was designed by Oxford Acoustics. It can be adapted to multiple uses from concerts to theatrical productions to community forums and workshops. The room's acoustics are diffusive and intimate, and it is equipped with high-definition projection, theatrical lighting and a full complement of backline equipment.



Program

President's Welcome

The Early Days

Polonaise héroïque (from *Album louisianais*)

Emil Johns

Places and Events

Crescent Hall Polka
Keno Galop

Theodore von la Hache
Charles Mayer

Carnival March
Exhibition Waltz

Bessie Shearer
Basil Barès

Song in the Nineteenth Century

Rappelle-toi
La Créole
Viens, O ma belle: Serenade

Samuel Snaer
Hubert Rolling
Louis Moreau Gottschalk

Regional Influences

Dejamé: Danza Mexicana
Souvenir de Puerto Rico: Marche des gibaros

arr. W. T. Francis
Louis Moreau Gottschalk

Sentimental Refinement

Vers le soir: Poésie musicale
Un Rêve: Valse romantique

Marguerite Elié-Samuel
Edouard Déjan

Into the Twentieth Century

Creole Songs from New Orleans
Quan' Mo Té Dan' Gran' Chimain
Salangadou

arr. Clara Gottschalk Peterson

Lizette, ma chère amie

arr. Camille Nickerson

Waltz
Pavane

Genevieve Pitot

The Fourth Autumn

Ellis Marsalis

The Negro Speaks of Rivers
Music I Heard

Roger Dickerson



Hailed by *The New York Times* as “bright, active, and fastidiously musical” and by *Opera News* as having “a golden sound,” Sarah Jane has sung opposite Plácido Domingo and with The San Francisco Symphony, Munich Philharmonic, Santo Domingo Festival, the Wiener Konzert Haus and Bremen's Die Glocke. With New York City Opera, she performed in Purcell's *King Arthur*, the role of Mabel (*The Pirates of Penzance*) for which *The New York Times* called her “the most polished and flexible singer in the cast,” and the role of Galatea (*Acis and Galatea*), earning the coveted Kolozsvár Award. Other roles performed include Marguerite (*Faust*), Violetta (*La Traviata*), Fiordiligi (*Così Fan Tutte*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Musetta (*La Bohème*), Micaela (*Carmen*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Maria (*West Side Story*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), The Infanta (*Der Zwerg*), and Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*). She has sung leading roles with Los Angeles Opera,

Dallas Opera, Arizona Opera, Virginia Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, New Orleans Opera, Central City Opera, the Washington Concert Opera, Bard SummerScape Festival, and Des Moines Metro Opera. A Master's graduate of Yale University, other concert appearances include Carnegie Hall, Avery Fisher Hall, the Colorado Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Cleveland Pops, and numerous Broadway by the Year concerts at Town Hall, NYC. Sarah Jane has three recordings available at www.sarahjanemcmahon.com. This spring, she debuts at Teatro Colón as Stella in Andre Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

New Orleans-based pianist **Peter Collins** holds the distinction of Professor Emeritus of Music from Missouri State University where he taught and served as coordinator of the keyboard area for twenty-five years.

An award winner in several national and international piano competitions, he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Peabody Conservatory and his doctorate from the University of Michigan.

Peter Collins has completed nine compact-disc recording projects (for the Albany, MSR and Centaur labels) featuring works of living American composers, music by women composers, original arrangements and transcriptions and piano music of nineteenth-century New Orleans.



Notes on the Program

Polonaise héroïque (ca. 1831)

Emile Johns (ca. 1798-1860) was born in Cracow, Poland, and moved to New Orleans before 1820. His 1819 performance of a Beethoven piano concerto in New Orleans is believed to be the first in the United States. *Polonaise héroïque* is drawn from his *Album Louisianais*. Co-published with Pleyel in Paris, it appears to be the earliest printed music to have been produced in New Orleans. Subtitled *Hommage aux dames de la Nouvelle Orléans*, it is a collection of songs and piano pieces each dedicated to a different lady of New Orleans. While in Paris he befriended Frédéric Chopin who dedicated his opus 7 mazurkas to “Monsieur Johns de la Nouvelle Orléans.”

Crescent Hall Polka (1866)

Theodore von la Hache (1822-1869) was a native of Dresden and immigrated to New Orleans in 1842, where he remained for the rest of his life. He quickly established himself as a teacher and choral conductor and gained national recognition through the publication of his compositions in the northeastern United States. The polka pays tribute to the Crescent Hall, formerly located at the corner of St. Charles and Canal streets.

Keno Galop (1869)

“Performed nightly at 66 St. Charles Street,” Charles Mayer’s *Keno Galop* is another example of location-specific music. The middle section quotes a song with the indication “Kücken,” possibly referring to the German composer Friedrich Wilhelm Kücken, whose songs were immensely popular with amateurs and the general public of the day.

Carnival March (1894)

Bessie Shearer’s *Carnival March* is one of many pieces inspired by the complex social fabric of the Mardi Gras celebration. “Respectfully dedicated to the Mystic Society of the Atlanteans,” it was published near the dawning of the jazz era.

Exhibition Waltz (1870)

Basile Barès (1845-1902) was a Creole of color who was born a slave and was part of the household of the piano importer Adolphe Périer. After the Civil War, Barès maintained a professional relationship with Périer’s widow who continued to manage the music emporium. Barès traveled to Paris on business and on one occasion performed at the Paris World Exhibition of 1867. *Exhibition Waltz* was actually published with a different title in 1870, but Barès reissued it in 1884 in celebration of the World Cotton Exposition.

Rappelle-toi (1865)

Samuel Snaer was a New Orleans native of African, French and German ancestry whose family had roots in St. Domingue. Relatively few of his compositions have survived since many existed only in manuscript form. Two movements of his Mass for three voices were printed in James Trotter’s 1880 book *Music and Some Highly Musical People*.

La Créole (1876)

Hubert Rolling (1824-1898) was born in the Alsace region and received his training in Strasbourg and Paris. He immigrated to New Orleans in 1841 and remained in the city until his death. Rolling is distinguished from the other New Orleans composers by having written several serious large-scale works. Some were published in Paris generating widespread praise

from important music figures and critics. *La Créole* is based on a poem of Onésime de Bouchel (1847-1880). Born in Plaquemine Parish, he was a well-traveled literary figure who was part of a movement to preserve the French language in Louisiana.

Viens, O ma belle (1861)

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-69) is like the most recognizable New Orleans composer from the 19th century on today's program. While best-known for his solo piano music, he also wrote several songs, many published by William Hall & Son and Ditson for amateur parlor singers. Dedicated to tenor Pasquale Brignoli, with whom he performed the piece in New York in 1862, this song was published in 1863 by Hall under the English title "Idol of Beauty".

Dejamé (1885)

The American composer and virtuoso pianist W. T. Francis was one of the most prominent musicians in New Orleans until his departure in 1890. Francis assimilated many musical styles heard in the city and had a particular interest in the Mexican influence. *Dejamé* is part of a Francis' series of "souvenirs of the famous band of the 8th Mexican Cavalry as played at the World's Exposition at New Orleans."

Souvenir de Puerto Rico: Marche des gïbaros (1857)

This piece, one of Gottschalk's most familiar, employs a Puerto Rican folk tune to represent the island's rustic farming peasants referenced in the subtitle as well as syncopations based on *tresillo* and *cinquillo*. Its daring and colorful harmonic language prefigure the sounds of ragtime and jazz by almost a half century, while the increasingly challenging figurations of the variations were a highlight of his virtuosic solo performances. This year marks the sesquicentennial of Gottschalk's death in Rio de Janeiro in 1869.

Vers le soir (1878)

Marguerite Elié-Samuel (1847-1912), the daughter of an accomplished violinist, was born in New Orleans and received her training from some of the leading teachers in Paris. By 1877 she had resettled in New Orleans and committed herself to the development of a more refined musical style and appreciation of chamber music. Her performance and teaching career thrived until the turn of the twentieth century.

Un Rêve (1885)

Edouard Déjan was a Creole of color and native of New Orleans who relocated to Paris late in the nineteenth century. In Paris his performances were praised as "perfect in every respect" and "one of the best musical events of the season." *Un Rêve* was composed during his time in New Orleans and displays uncommon harmonic sophistication and melodic subtlety. More than any other composition by a New-Orleans born composer of the time, it reflects contemporaneous European trends.

Quan' Mo Té Dan' Gran' Chimain Salangadou

Clara Gottschalk Peterson (1835-1919) produced her brief collection *Creole Songs from New Orleans in the Negro Dialect* to document the folk melodies heard in her youth. She writes that the accompaniments were kept as simple as possible not to detract from the nature of the songs. Published in New Orleans by the Grunewald firm in 1902, the volume represents the final stage of the once bustling music publishing industry in New Orleans.

Lizette, ma chère amie (1942)

Camille Nickerson (1888-1982) was born in New Orleans and educated at Oberlin College, Juilliard and Columbia University. From 1926-1962 she served on the faculty of Howard University. Nickerson collected and arranged Creole folk songs and for many years toured as the “Louisiana Lady,” performing her arrangements in period dress. In 1954 she was sponsored by the US State Department in a tour of France.

Waltz

Pavane

Genevieve Pitot (1901-1980) was born into an old New Orleans family that traces its lineage back to the second mayor of the city, James Pitot. She received her training as a pianist in Paris, and by the 1930s she had established herself in New York. She composed and arranged music for dance sequences in several still-popular musicals and formed professional relationships with choreographers such as Martha Graham and Jerome Robbins. Toward the end of her life she returned to New Orleans.

The Fourth Autumn (1984)

The Fourth Autumn is a fully notated piece by jazz pianist Ellis Marsalis, patriarch of the Marsalis family. The composer speaks of being influenced by the great pianists of the past as well as younger artists in whose hands the line between classical and jazz is blurred.

The Negro Speaks of Rivers (1961)

A poem as significant as Langston Hughes’ brilliant early work (1921) demands a profound musical treatment; both Howard Swanson and Margaret Bonds composed settings of it in the 1940s. Dickerson’s song combines unsettled, dissonant harmonies and constantly shifting rhythms with soaring vocal lines that often end in sustained notes, highlighting central words in the poem – *blood, rivers, Congo, sleep, Nile, and sunset* among them. Listeners are left uneasy, troubled; we reflect on the text and the sorrowful, fraught history it evokes.

Music I Heard (1956)

This lovely setting of a poem by American writer Conrad Aiken infuses the text, a bittersweet memorial to a lost loved one, with a warm and tender nostalgia. Its subtly changing meters and undulating vocal line impart a lullaby-like atmosphere at the song’s beginning. The mostly tonal language gains rhythmic momentum in the second strophe, reaching a sweetly emotional climax on the words “In my heart, they will remember always” before the song’s quiet end.



Program notes by Peter Collins and Laura Moore Pruett

Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-69)

The logo for the Society for American Music features a stylized graphic on the left composed of several diagonal bars in black, teal, yellow, red, and purple. To the right of this graphic, the text "Society for American Music" is written in a large, bold, black sans-serif font.

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The logo for The Historic New Orleans Collection features a stylized monogram of the letters "H", "N", and "O" stacked vertically within a square frame.

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