

# TORONTO STAR

## CLASSICAL

# Found: a soundtrack for the city

Off Centre kicks off its season with an inspired program of the sounds of Toronto

**JOHN TERAUDS**  
CLASSICAL MUSIC CRITIC

There's no better way to get excited about your hometown than to take in its sights as if for the first time.

Boris Zarankin and Inna Perkis, husband-and-wife artistic directors of Off Centre Music Salon, are using their accessible format to showcase the sounds of Toronto.

Sunday afternoon's kick-off for their 14th season is a loving musical homage to the past and present of this, their adopted city.

The Glenn Gould Studio stage will host impressive collaborators, including former Toronto Symphony concertmaster Jacques Israelievitch, accordionist Joseph Maccorollo, marimba player John Rudolph, Robert Aitken on flute, soprano Shannon Mercer and bass-baritone Olivier Laquerre.

Helping out are composer-broadcaster-pianist Peter Tiefenbach as host, and actors Don McKellar and Tracy Wright adding literary colour with Toronto-centric readings.

With Zarankin and Perkis at the piano, the program spans about 200 years of the city's musical history. It's an embarrassment of riches — much like our city itself.

Laid out on the table of the Perkis-Zarankin dining room/music salon recently was a tantalizing sampler of music scores.

"When smiles the lake 'neath a sky ever blue,/ Where blooms the maple tree,/ There stands Toronto, the Pride of the North ..." goes a "prize-winning song of the University of Toronto" from 1874, written by a long-forgotten H. H. Godfrey.

I sit down at the piano to experience the dusty, 1884 magic of *A Storm on the Lake*, "A barcarolle for the pianoforte, a souvenir of Toronto by William Horatio Clarke."

A gentle tremolo on the left hand announces the shimmer of the water, while a bit of text (to be read by Tiefenbach) helps set the mood: "The graceful yacht Oriole sets sail in the Bay of Toronto at the close of a delightful summer afternoon ..."

There is an Italian band onboard, the (perhaps tipsy) passengers begin to sing, a storm gathers and unleashes its force before everyone survives to a peaceful end.

The piano part dances and roils accordingly.

"Such melodrama," says Zarankin, as we laugh.

There's modern fun on the program in some French songs by Tiefenbach, inspired by items in his kitchen cupboard. "There's an ode to Japanese seaweed in the style of Debussy," he says. "The second is an ode to Canada's national spice, cornstarch."

The lyrics come from labels, including "a cautionary tango about aspirin," Tiefenbach adds.

The audience will be treated to Alexina Louie's boogie woogie-fuelled *Fastforward*, written for the 2008 Montreal piano competition.

Modern Canadian classics include Michael Colgrass's *Hammer & Bow*, commissioned by Israelievitch's wife as a present for his 50th birthday, Harry Freedman's *Toccata for Soprano and Flute* and Srul Irving Glick's wonderfully evocative *Wilderness on Centre Island*, to be sung by Laquerre.

Zarankin says composer John Beckwith was particularly helpful in helping source 19th-century music, including a four-handed *Galop* for piano, originally performed as an interlude piece at "Mrs. Morrison's Toronto Opera House" on Adelaide St. in the 1880s.

The contemporary works come from the artistic directors' own research. "We found so many pieces we liked that we already have three-

quarters of a program for next year," says Perkis.

The couple loves the city they have been called home since 1987. This music has made them fall in love with it all over again.

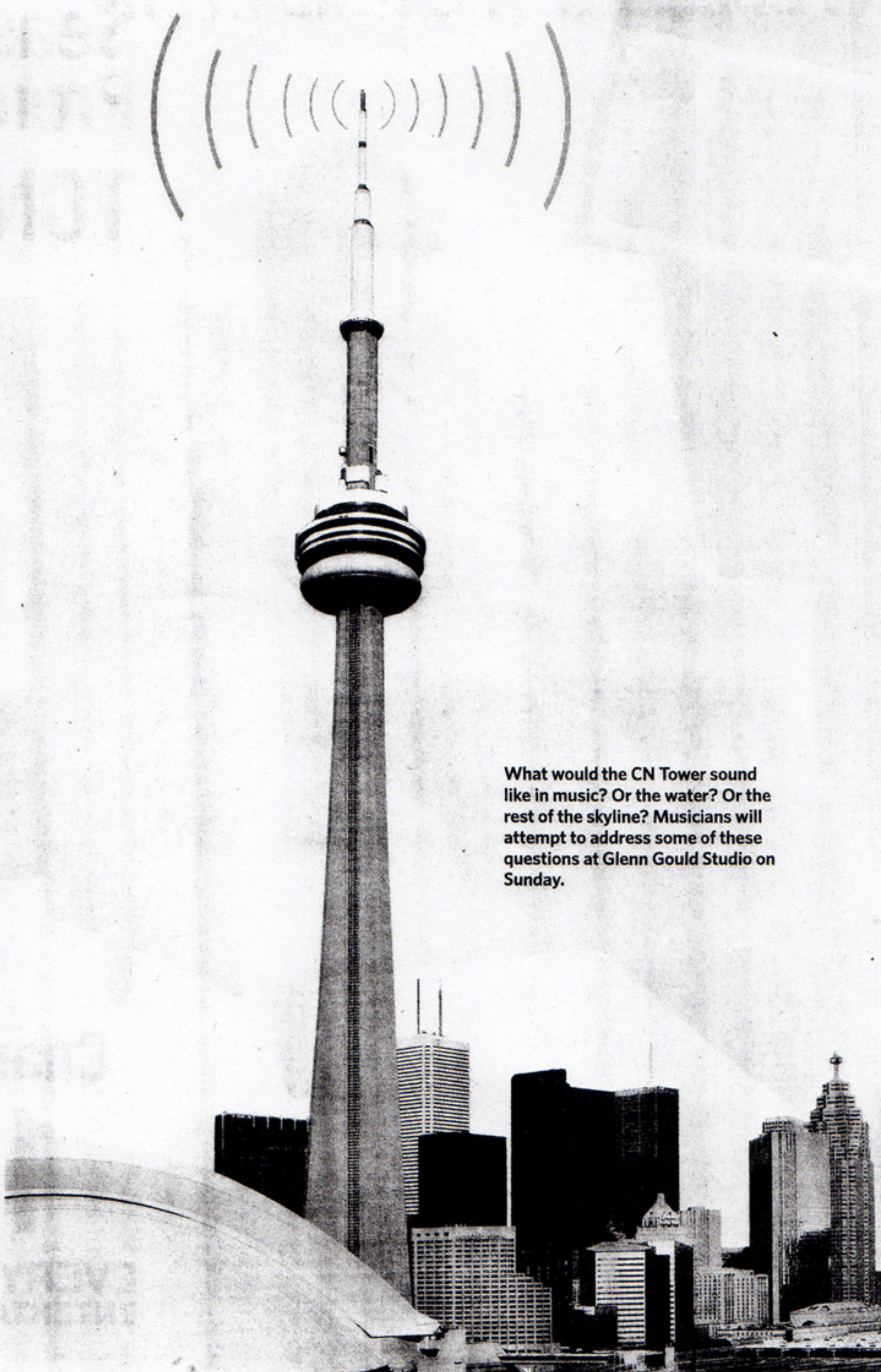
### Just the facts

**WHAT:** Off Centre Music Salon

**WHERE:** Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W.

**WHEN:** Sunday @ 2 p.m.

**TICKETS:** \$40-\$50 @ 416-205-5555



What would the CN Tower sound like in music? Or the water? Or the rest of the skyline? Musicians will attempt to address some of these questions at Glenn Gould Studio on Sunday.