



Looking back at yourself ...? Violin isn't an easy instrument at the beginning, and it takes years to get a nice sound. But I also remember how much I enjoyed walking around with my small violin case! I'd like to ask her which piece of music she was playing because I can't remember it. I would encourage her by saying that music is the best way to connect with oneself.

Just the basics ... I was born and raised in Brescia, an Italian city just east of Milan. My mother is a pianist and composer who taught music privately and in middle school and my father was a bank employee, now retired. He has been an amateur painter since his youth. I have a brother and two sisters, and music was a big part of our lives growing up. We had a lot of fun playing together, especially when I used to sight read accompanied on piano by my brother. We didn't play all the notes correctly, but we played like actors in a show! All of us now work professionally in music.

Your earliest memory of hearing music? The sound of my mother playing the piano. In addition to being a composer, my mother plays piano and taught it and I remember hearing the sound of her playing in our home. Anyone who spent time with my mother fell in love with classical music. Music, both live and recorded, was constant in my childhood home. In addition to hearing live music played by my mother or siblings, I would hear music on the radio, which my mother had on most of the day, tuned to a classical station. My lullabies were symphonies by Mozart or Shostakovich. My brother and his friends experimented with jazz, and I have clear memories of listening to them as they practised "Autumn Leaves."

Your very first recollection of making music? After seeing an orchestra on TV at the age of five, I became fascinated by the violin. I begged my parents for a violin of my own and the next day, they presented me with a tiny quarter-size instrument, which I began learning to play with a violin teacher. I also played piano from an early age. **And singing?** Yes, in the choir at the Conservatory.

First music teachers? I started with piano before the age of five, which is when I became interested in the violin. My first music teacher was my beloved Aunt Anna, who taught me piano. Then I started violin with an elderly violinist in Brescia. I didn't have a great time studying with him, and at age ten switched to another teacher who I loved and who inspired me. There is a test at the end of the eighth year of violin study which includes viola playing. I liked it so much that later I also got a degree in viola (in addition to violin). My new viola will be ready soon!

First performances? My mother organized concerts every year with her students, and I played every time on both piano and violin. The first time I probably played a Bach minuet on the piano, and a violin concertino by K uchler. My first professional performance was the award ceremony of a violin competition: I was 12 and I played an easy Vivaldi concerto.

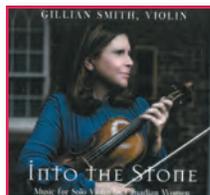
When did you begin to think of yourself as a career musician? Probably around the age of 16, when I gave up my piano studies to focus solely on the violin. I've never thought about doing anything else!

UPCOMING ... There's so much I'm looking forward to, it's hard to pick highlights! In October, in addition to "Baroque Roots," we're doing several community concerts around Toronto including one for asylum seekers at Toronto Plaza Hotel, a family concert at Cloverdale Mall, a Nuit Blanche performance at the Aga Khan Museum, and "Caf  CounterCulture" – our first Haus Musik of the season at the Burdock Music Hall. In November: our first Europe tour in several years, and I'm thrilled to have this first opportunity to work with soprano Karina Gauvin. We'll perform in several cities in England including London's Barbican Hall, also in Bruges, Belgium.

Elisa Citterio's full-length interview can be read at thewholenote.com/musicchildren, along with previous artist profiles and full-length interviews. You can also view them in their original magazine format by visiting our online back issues <https://kiosk.thewholenote.com>

Editor's Corner

DAVID OLDS



Into the Stone (Leaf Music LM228 leaf-music.ca) is a particularly interesting and timely disc of "Music for Solo Violin by Canadian Women" featuring **Gillian Smith**, a dynamic East Coast performer who serves as instructor of violin and viola at Acadia University in Wolfville and is head of the upper strings department at the Maritime Conservatory of Performing Arts in Halifax.

I suppose it is the adage "never ask a woman her age" that explains the lack of birth years given for the composers in the liner notes. I will not give away any secrets further than saying the five composers involved were born in places as far flung as Hong Kong, Australia, Serbia, Ontario and Quebec in the two decades between 1956 and 1975. The pieces themselves span 1997 (the title track) through 2010 (the opening selection, Alice Ho's *Caprice*). The latter is a playful work that, in the words of the composer, is "a fancy, a virtuosic piece... [in which the] performer is asked to show both technical skill and musicality." Smith's performance abounds with both. This is followed by Ana Sokolović's *Cinque danze per violino solo*. The five dances are rooted in the angular and often dissonant folk music of her native Balkan region, although Sokolović says there is no direct quotation involved. Each movement is distinct, although distinctly related, ranging from the somewhat abrasive first to the contemplative, although at times somewhat enervated, finale. "I try to create different climates while keeping material and gesture strongly related." Both the composer and performer succeed in conveying this effectively.

The quiet ending of Sokolović's last dance is a perfect set up for Veronika Krausas' piece that gives the disc its title. It begins gently in the lower register but gradually rises in both pitch and intensity. Krausas says: "The piece is inspired by a line from Canadian poet Gwendolyn MacEwen: 'What lives inside the stone? Miracles, strange light.'" Kati Agócs' *Versprechen* (Promise) is based on Bach's harmonization of the Lutheran chorale *Ist Gott mein Schild und Helfersmann* (God is my Shield and Helper). "The piece casts the soloist as the hero in a musical peregrination... [that] traces spiritual yearning, supplication, and redemption, with the chorale melody always present, although at times 'refracted' as if heard through an auditory prism." With this uniting theme there is a continuity to the development, but the refractions are diverse enough that it is a sonic relief when the original melody is revealed toward the end of the eight-minute piece. For *Le ciel doit  tre proche* by Chantale Laplante from 1999, no translation is given for the title and neither is there a context in the program note. This makes it unclear whether "ciel" refers to sky or to heaven, but as the piece is built on "the use of intervals slowly introduced in widening order, keeping the perfect fifth as the final step to some serenity" I'm going to translate it as *Heaven must be near*. This serenity provides a very satisfying end to a stunning debut album by a rising star from the East (coast). Congratulations to Smith and all concerned.

Concert Note: Gillian Smith launches *Into the Stone* at Glenn Gould Studio on October 5 performing works by Ho, Sokolović, Agócs, Krausas and Laplante. Composer Alice Ping Yee Ho will be in attendance to introduce her *Caprice*.

Growing up in northern Etobicoke the Richview library, 20 minutes down the road on the Islington bus route, became a major resource and influence on my musical development. It was there that I discovered such diverse artists as Thelonious Monk, the Modern Jazz Quartet and Terry Riley. I remember bringing home a recording of Riley's