

THIS WEEK ON

Aspen Public Radio
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The Official Voice
of the Aspen Music Festival and School

Festival Notes

9:01 and 10:01 am weekdays
A daily, five-minute report on the goings-on of the Aspen Music Festival and School.

Aspen Music Festival Showcase

1-3 pm weekdays
KAJX classical music host Nikki Boxer is your guide to the music world, through the lens of the Aspen Music Festival and School. Tune in for music associated with the AMFS, and for interview features.

The Dean's List

1 pm Tuesdays
Tune in with AMFS Dean Joan Gordon as she discusses the week's events with an array of students, artist-faculty, and guest artists.

Aspen Public Radio is heard on 91.5 and 91.1 FM in Aspen, on 90.9 FM in Snowmass Village, Redstone and Thomasville, on 89.7 FM in Woody Creek and "Old" Snowmass, on 90.1 FM in Basalt, and on 88.9 FM in El Jebel, Carbondale, Glenwood Springs, and Rifle. It is also on Comcast Cable channel 8.

THIS WEEK AT



Bringing critics' favorites from the art-house circuit to Aspen each week!

Rudo y Cursi

(MEXICO, 103 minutes, R)

8 pm Sunday, July 19

Oscar-nominated screenwriter Carlos Cuarón (*Y tu mamá también*) directs this entertaining rags-to-riches fable about family, soccer and fame featuring two of Mexico's hottest young talents, Diego Luna and Gael García Bernal (*Y tu mamá también*).

Afghan Star

(AFGHANISTAN/UK, 88 minutes, unrated)

8 pm Sunday, July 19

Earning awards at Sundance, *Afghan Star*, an American Idol-like television phenomenon, gives a voice to those unheard in a part of the world where even small freedoms are taboo.

All films screen at Paepcke Auditorium at 8 pm with doors opening at 7:30 pm. All tickets for the series are \$12 and will go on sale through Aspen Show Tickets at the Wheeler Opera House. Call 970-920-5770 or visit www.aspenhowtickets.com. Single tickets are available at the door nightly, cash or checks only. For more information on SummerFILMS 2009 or Aspen Film, visit www.aspenfilm.org or call 970-925-6882.

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AMFS MEDIA SPONSORS



Eli Epstein teaches music 'from the inside out'

by **MATTHEW E. CAMPBELL**
Festival Focus

Aspen Music Festival and School artist-faculty member Eli Epstein likes to teach French horn "from the inside out." He uses everything from breathing exercises to Stanislavski's acting methodology to help his students create deeper musical experiences for themselves and their audiences.

Epstein, who has been teaching at the AMFS and playing horn in the Aspen Chamber Symphony since 2000, says that young musicians crave emotional involvement with the music they play, though often they end up focusing too much on technique. Epstein emphasizes technique, but he says his biggest goal is to get the creative right side of his students' brains just as involved as the analytical left side.

"One of my missions is to change the paradigm of how the music conservatory is run—from a black-and-white, it's-either-right-or-wrong-and-it's-usually-wrong perspective to one where students feel empowered, they feel like they're creative beings and they have good ideas," he says.

To help students get more involved in the music, Epstein talks his students through the pieces and asks them to tap into their memories and channel that emotion into their playing.

It was after a media interview that Epstein realized his methods paralleled those of the great acting pedagogue Stanislavski. Epstein researched Stanislavski and read his *An Actor Prepares*.



LIZ UNDER

Epstein uses acting methods to help his students with interpretation.

Now, Epstein incorporates many of Stanislavski's ideas into his teaching. For instance, this summer, a group of horn students wanted to work on some excerpts from Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5.

"I told the students, there's so much that is ruthless in this piece. Shostakovich was trying to find covert ways of protesting ruthless people like Stalin," Epstein says. "So, I told the students, 'Try to be as ruthless as you possibly can. I know that most of you aren't ruthless people, in fact, you seem like pretty nice people, but to really get into it, you have to pretend.'"

The result: "They sounded very scary, just militaristic and relentless," he says.

Epstein created a course from these ideas and teaches it at Boston Conservatory.

Epstein also runs *Inside Out*, a concert series held in a Boston church in which he tries to break down some of the formality associated with classical music and help

audiences connect with the music.

At the concerts, Epstein tries to put his audience at ease and even walks them through a breathing exercise to help them relax physically. He tells stories about the music and asks the audience to put themselves in the composer's place.

"I try to get people to put themselves into the music, project their own lives and feelings and stories onto the music and thereby have a more personal musical experience," he says.

Epstein has been running *Inside Out* for eight years, and just won the national Entrepreneur Arts contest. He will appear on Heartbeat of America and discuss *Inside Out* with host William Shatner.

"I'm really happy because I've been working in the trenches for a long time to get *Inside Out* off the ground," Epstein says, "And—I get to meet Captain Kirk."

Epstein recently finished a book, *Horn Playing from the Inside Out*, and is working on getting it published.

Don't miss a free, guided cell phone tour of the AMFS's history, as seen through Ferenc Berko's unforgettable photographs, at the Benedict Music Tent through August 23. Powered by Guide-by-Cell.com. Part of the AMFS's 60th anniversary initiatives.

Faculty Focus

Opera pulls Sri Lankan Goonetilleke to U.S.

by **MATTHEW E. CAMPBELL**
Festival Focus

Tharanga Goonetilleke has come a long way: From singing in her school chorus in Sri Lanka—where opera is virtually nonexistent—to singing the role of Mimi in the Aspen Opera Theater Center's production of Puccini's *La bohème* (July 16, 18, and 20 at the Wheeler Opera House).

It's been an unlikely journey, one Goonetilleke says she could not have imagined. For one thing, opera is quite uncommon in Sri Lanka. Still, Goonetilleke's few encounters with classical music were enough to get her hooked.

"Although it's not my heritage, I was more moved and deeply touched by classical music, perhaps more than even by my own," she says. "I don't think there are boundaries when it comes to that."

Goonetilleke started learning the piano from her mother and also joined her middle school choir. The director liked her voice and gave her solos, she says, and she became confident in her singing.

However, as Goonetilleke approached college age, singing was still just a hobby, and she was cramming for exams to get into medical school.

But a "twist of fate," as Goonetilleke calls it, started her on another career.

An American pianist and professor from Converse College was touring Asia and stopped to play a concerto in Sri Lanka. When the concert organizers realized they didn't have enough music for a full concert, they drafted Goonetilleke for the performance.

Goonetilleke's singing intrigued the Converse professor.

"He really liked my singing and talked

me into considering going for a music degree to Converse, so that's how it all kind of happened," she says.

The professor was only in Sri Lanka briefly, and it took months of discussion between the college and Goonetilleke before she finally decided to go.

Goonetilleke says she was in disbelief that she could actually go abroad to study classical music and be successful at it—"I never thought this was an option," she says—and credits her parents for encour-



Goonetilleke was convinced by a touring pianist to study singing in the United States.

aging her to pursue it.

"They believed in me more than I did, to let me even go," she says. "They knew things because they had read about them, but not necessarily experienced them."

So, Goonetilleke embarked on her trip to the United States. She developed quickly as a singer at Converse, and was a winner for South Carolina of the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions.

One of the judges, a faculty member at Juilliard, encouraged Goonetilleke to apply to Juilliard. Goonetilleke says she was

surprised, but applied and was accepted, earning her master's degree before entering the Juilliard Opera Center, where she just finished her first year.

At the AMFS this summer, she says she is overjoyed to sing the role of Mimi in Puccini's beloved opera.

"Anything I would say would be an understatement, because it's anybody's dream to be in that opera," she says.

Goonetilleke tries to visit her family in Sri Lanka at least once a year. She says she always has some explaining to do when she tells people she's an opera singer.

"I'm happy to explain, though, because I want more people to know about it and maybe hopefully even try it out themselves," she says.

Goonetilleke, remembering her own disbelief that she could become an opera singer, also wants to show people in Sri Lanka that anything is possible.

"Just because I'm the person who got the chance doesn't mean that there aren't others who are talented or have the potential, or perhaps even have more potential than I," she says.

"It just doesn't seem fair that they don't hear about it, get exposure to it, or have someone coincidentally just fly into your country and tell you that you should go study music or simply follow your heart."

Goonetilleke is a student of Marlena Malas at the Juilliard Opera Center and holds a master's degree from Juilliard. Next year is Goonetilleke's last at Juilliard. After graduating, she will audition for young artist programs and continue her training for a career in opera.