

Ensemble Vivant

Pianist **Catherine Wilson** is one of Canada's most interesting and innovative performers. Her unique, imaginative programming includes classical, tin pan alley, ragtime, tango-including Argentine Tango Master Astor Piazzolla, and jazz-related Latin stylings. She has also researched and recorded little-known gems in the classical and jazz genres. No matter the genre, Catherine has won the hearts of fans and critics alike with inspired, soulful interpretations. Her renditions of Chopin (described as "exquisite" by the Toronto Star) have been compared to the great Artur Rubenstein. She has been equally applauded in the ragtime and jazz worlds, including by jazz great and Order of Canada recipient Rick Wilkins, who said of Catherine's playing, "no matter the genre, there is magic in her music making".

Catherine's debut at **Carnegie Hall** in April, 2005, where she was the invited soloist with the New York Pops and Maestro **Skitch Henderson**, was a triumphant success. Her performance of Leroy Anderson's Piano Concerto with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra was filmed by PBS and appears in the documentary on Anderson's life, *Once Upon a Sleigh Ride*, which is frequently broadcast on PBS, Classic Arts Showcase and on Bravo. This performance is also included on the 2-CD recording *The Music of Leroy Anderson* which features Catherine as a soloist and her group, **Ensemble Vivant**, the core of which is piano, violin and cello. Hailed as "Canada's Chamber Music Treasure" by the Toronto Star, Ensemble Vivant has been performing to sold-out houses throughout North America and Europe and recording for over 20 years. Their recordings appear on many labels, including Fanfare, Pro Arte, Doremi, SPY and Opening Day/Universal, and are heard on classical radio around the world. Catherine was invited to be part of an educational classical music series that was produced and directed by New York's Peter Rosen. The 5 videos that became part of this series are broadcast frequently on television's Classic Arts Showcase.



Sharon Prater (cello), Catherine Wilson (piano), Erica Beston (violin)

Photo by Denise Grant

The year **2008** marked the twentieth anniversary of the release of Ensemble Vivant's first recording, **Palm Court Pleasures**, on the Fanfare/Pro Arte label, which was declared "joyous and compelling" by Music Magazine (Canada). Of Ensemble Vivant's 2008 celebratory release **Audience Favourites** on the Opening Day Label/Universal, Toronto Star critic John Terauds wrote: "...pianist Catherine Wilson and her collaborators achieve that all-too-rare balance between intellectual satisfaction and pure entertainment...this is a quality musical candy box". Of Ensemble Vivant's **2009** recording **fêtes française** (Opening Day/Universal), John Terauds (Toronto Star) wrote: "Beautiful, poised performances...reveal the deep musicianship and light interpretive touch of these Toronto-based musicians led by pianist Catherine Wilson". Ensemble Vivant's **Homage to Astor Piazzolla** recording is scheduled for release in 2010, again on Opening Day/Universal.

Catherine has performed for many heads of state, including Queen Elizabeth II. As a composer she has written for many CBC Radio productions and Ensemble Vivant recordings. Catherine is also the artistic director of **EUTERPE**, a not-for-profit charitable organization whose mandate is to provide opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as abused children, her personal target, to experience the healing and transformative effects of great music.

Catherine was Assistant Adjunct Professor of Piano at Wayne State University for over 5 years. Since September 2005 she has taught at Toronto's York University in the capacity of Course Director for the African America Musics Course, which is a Piano Performance Course that includes Ragtime, Boogie Woogie, Novelty Classics and Blues Piano repertoire. In conjunction with her PhD studies Catherine also teaches classical piano at York University.

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