



## An Oasis Of New Music At The Cabrillo Festival

SCOTT SIMON, host:

The Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music gets underway tomorrow at Santa Cruz, California. For nearly half a century, it's been an unflagging champion of new music. Earlier this summer, the organization won an award from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers for its commitment to American music.

SIMON: That's from John Adams' composition "Dr. Atomic Symphony," played by the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra at its West Coast premiere last summer, conducted by long time Cabrillo music director and friend of our show, Marin Alsop. When she is not at Cabrillo or conducting the Baltimore Symphony or the (unintelligible) Symphony, she makes her home in Denver. That's where we tracked her down. The maestro with the most just joins us now from the studios of member station KCFR in Denver.

Ms. MARIN ALSOP (Conductor): Yeah, I'm here Scott. Nice to hear your voice. (Soundbite of laughter)

SIMON: As opposed to actually being across for me in the studios with the... Ms. ALSOP: No, I mean that's always nice too, of course...

(Soundbite of laughter)

Ms. ALSOP: Nothing like getting off to a good start.

SIMON: Good to talk to you, Marin. There're so many music festivals in the country during the summer and around the world for that matter. What makes Cabrillo distinct?

Ms. ALSOP: Well, you know, by saying Cabrillo is a contemporary music festival, it's almost misleading. Cabrillo is - it's like a little oasis in Santa Cruz, California, which is a quirky, unique little town. And Cabrillo is a - it's a festival about creativity and innovation and sort of being part of the creative process. And we have a wonderful orchestra of musicians from across the United States that convene every summer there. And we do four or five, sometimes even six big orchestra concerts. And we have workshops for young conductors and young composers.

But I think more importantly it's a real participatory kind of experience for the audience, the listeners and the community. Everything we do is open to the public. We have usually 10 composers in residence. So there is this sense of creation before your eyes that I really haven't experienced anywhere else.

SIMON: Tell us about some of the music that's queued up this year. Someone who was on the show, on our show few months ago, is of Avner Dorman.

Ms. ALSOP: Yes, Avner is a - he's now a good friend to the festival and this will be his second summer. And we're performing a piece of his for percussion duo and orchestra. It's called the "Spices, Perfumes and Toxins," so our two percussionists will - two of our percussionists will be the soloists, and that will be a big

event which then we're going to place some of that for - we do a free family concert for the whole community. So you know, we try to maximize every opportunity we have there.

SIMON: We have a piece of music by Avner Dorman, not as I understand it the one he's going to be playing this summer. But let's give you some flavor of his compositions.

Ms. ALSOP: It's incredibly intense music, isn't it, Scott?

SIMON: Oh, yes. Seemed to be such an unassuming man when we talked to him too.

Ms. ALSOP: Well, that's what so fun about getting to know these composers. You know, I listen to their music and then I meet them and I think, it's like meeting someone probably on the Internet or on the phone, and then you meet them in person, you think, good grief, how could you possibly have written something this violent? But it's so exciting to get to know these composers. And the piece we were doing by Avner this summer, the percussion concerto piece, is a lot more tuneful and has a lot more world music elements to it.

SIMON: Can you tell us about Enrico Chapela?

Ms. ALSOP: Enrico Chapela is a composer, he's a Mexican composer. I haven't met him yet. And this is an exciting part for me too. You know, often I - I get scores every day, as you can imagine, from living composers. I mean, it would odd if they were dead, I suppose. But you know...

SIMON: Well, if there's a delay in FedEx, that could happen...

Ms. ALSOP: Listen, and that definitely could happen, I'm sure. But I get scores all the time of composers wanting me to listen to their works. And I really try to listen to everything I get. I probably shouldn't say that on the air, but...

SIMON: Marin, you know what? Can I send you something? I've been - after all our conversations, I've been working on a few ideas and...

Ms. ALSOP: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

SIMON: Our daughters played it on the xylophone.

Ms. ALSOP: There you go. But Chapela, he's sent me a CD and a few scores. And this is a piece which I thought really would resonate with our Cabrillo audiences because it's got - it's very inventive, but has got a lot of humor, and there's also this sort of back story to the piece that connects it to Cabrillo because he wrote it for the Carlos Chavez Orchestra. And Chavez was one of the early music directors at Cabrillo. And this is a piece about soccer, in essence, about the FIFA Cup, when Mexico won it in 1999.

So Chapela takes each group of the orchestra. The brass represent the - I can't remember exactly, but the offense, and these guys are the defense, and the best part about the piece, I mean the music is very good, of course, but I get to play the role of the referee. So I have a whistle and I have a yellow card and a red card and I get to throw them at various orchestra members. So I mean, you know, again, I think humor is an important part of the creative process and I'm not sure who's going to win this particular game, but it's going to be a lot of fun.

SIMON: I'm told we have some of that here. Ms. ALSOP: Yes.

SIMON: Oh, so the ball's going back and forth, right?

Ms. ALSOP: Right. So they're - I get - you know, they're just - they're sort of, what are they, passing, dribbling? Do you dribble? No, you don't dribble in soccer. What do you do?

SIMON: You pass it, you pass it, yeah.

Ms. ALSOP: Okay.

SIMON: If you dribble, it's because you had a late night the night before. (Soundbite of laughter)

Ms. ALSOP: Maybe I'm the only one that dribbles in soccer, but - so they're passing the ball. And you can hear them kind of running up and down the field in this and eventually it gets quite heated.

(Soundbite of music)

SIMON: That sounds like a delightful piece.

Ms. ALSOP: Yeah. It's going to be a lot of fun, and I think fun is an important quality of this festival. But at the same time, you know, as a conductor, I think I'm drawn to pieces that explore our emotional extremes, so that we have the depths of despair and, you know, the heights of ecstasy. And so, you know, along with a lot of fun, I think there's an important emotional pay-off.

SIMON: Is there something - I'm sorry to use a pop psychological word, but is there something renewing about going back every year and seeing people and exchanging ideas and having stuff rub off and bounce off each other?

Ms. ALSOP: Oh, I mean that's a - it's the - that's a perfect observation, I think, although it's incredibly intense. We rehearse all day long every day. I think there's this sense of recharging our batteries. To see all the musicians - they come there, they don't get paid, they just get a per diem to come out there. They live with families and they - you know, they've known them for years. And there's this sense of gathering.

You know, we have an audience following that comes and collects and gathers in Santa Cruz, plus new people coming through all the time. So there's really this - I think it puts us all in touch with why we couldn't resist being musicians in the first place.

SIMON: Marin Alsop, music director among so many others of the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music that kicks off tomorrow in Santa Cruz. The maestro joined us from the studios of KCFR in Denver. Marin, thank you so much.

Ms. ALSOP: Great pleasure, Scott. Thank you. (Soundbite of music)

SIMON: And you'll find samples of the Cabrillo sound at the new [npr.org](http://npr.org). And if one music festival just isn't enough for you this weekend, you can also listen to live coverage of the Newport Folk Festival's 50th Anniversary today from 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. That's available at [nprmusic.org](http://nprmusic.org).

SIMON: Thank you, thank you. This is WEEKEND EDITION from NPR News. I'm Scott Simon.

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