



TAFELMUSIK

Galileo Project: Music of the Spheres

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The idea for the concert was born ...



In the spring of 2007, Tafelmusik received an e-mail from **John Percy** (left), Professor of Astronomy at the University of Toronto and an expert on variable stars and stellar evolution. Dr. Percy is former president of the Royal Astronomical Society and the Royal Canadian Institute and an award-winning educator, both for the excellence of his institutional teaching and for his contributions to the public awareness of astronomy. He is also a Tafelmusik subscriber. On behalf of the advisory board of the Canadian division of the International Year of Astronomy, he proposed a concert in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Galileo's development and use of the astronomical telescope.

The International Year of Astronomy, 2009, is a global effort initiated by the International Astronomical Union and UNESCO to help the citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe through the day- and night-time sky, and thereby engage a personal sense of wonder and discovery.

www.astronomy2009.org



John Percy suggested that the subject might inspire Alison Mackay to create another of her imaginative concert programmes, in the spirit of *The Grand Tour*, *The Four Seasons: A Cycle of the Sun*, and *In the Garden of Delights: Music from the Song of Songs*. We forwarded the e-mail to Alison and she immediately saw that the fusion of baroque music and astronomy could realize a longstanding dream of creating a concert with the theatrical components of set and lighting design, dramatic image projection and stage movement. She formulated a programme outline, which was enthusiastically embraced by Music Director Jeanne Lamon and Managing Director Tricia Baldwin. We approached The Banff Centre to see if the orchestra could develop its project at this cradle of creativity, which has inspired Canadian and international artists for the past 75 years. We received a welcoming invitation from Sarah Iley and Barry Shiffman of The Banff Centre, and thanks to the generosity of Margaret & Jim Fleck; Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life; the Canada Council for the Arts; and The Banff Centre itself, *The Galileo Project: Music of the Spheres* received its premiere performance in Banff on January 9, 2009 after a seven-day residency.

We assembled our team ...

A narrated concert with set design, lighting and stage movement required the orchestra to work with a new set of partners, and we looked for some of the most exciting talents in the country:



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Actor: Shaun Smyth

Shaun Smyth is thrilled to be working with Tafelmusik again after performing and eating pounds of lobster with them in *The Grand Tour* in Halifax. Shaun was born in Glasgow, raised in Calgary and is based in Toronto. He has worked from coast to coast in both theatre and film. Most recently he played Laertes in *Hamlet* with Necessary Angel and Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, a wordless physical theatre piece performed entirely to the music of Claude Debussy at the Stratford Festival. Shaun's other Stratford credits include *Macbeth*, *Amadeus* and *The Country Wife*. Other favourite stage credits include *The Pillowman*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Closer* and *Trainspotting* (which garnered him a Dora Award nomination), all for The Canadian Stage Company. Selected film & television credits include *Four Minutes*, *Proteus*, *Kevin Hill*, *Three to Tango*, *Steal This Movie*, *Soul Food*, *Pit Pony*, *Laughter On The 23rd Floor*, *The Associates*, *Blue Murder*, and *Relic Hunter*. Shaun is a graduate of the BFA acting program at the University of Alberta.



Set & Lighting Designer: Glenn Davidson



Glenn Davidson has been designing in Canadian theatre for 25 years with over 300 productions to his credit. Selected recent credits include *The Pillowman* for Birdland Theatre and Canadian Stage; *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* for Birdland Theatre (Dora Award Outstanding Lighting Design); *Dance of the Red Skirts* and *The Anger In Ernest and Ernestine* for Theatre Columbus (Dora Award Outstanding Set Design); *Dying to be Sick* for Pleiades Theatre and the National Arts Centre; *Romeo & Juliet* and *Coppelia* for Ballet Jørgen and the Hong Kong Ballet; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Letters from Lehrer* and *The Story of My Life* for Canadian Stage. He was Lighting Director for Bruce Cockburn's 2003 North American tour, and in 1993 he was the recipient of the Pauline McGibbon Award.

Glenn Davidson has been assisted on this project by Raha Javanfar, whose services were made possible through Theatre Ontario's Professional Theatre Training Program, funded by the Ontario Arts Council.

Stage Director: Marshall Pynkoski

Tafelmusik has collaborated with Toronto's Opera Atelier for over 20 years, so we are particularly delighted that Co-Artistic Director Marshall Pynkoski is able to join us as Stage Director. Marshall founded Opera Atelier with choreographer/dancer Jeannette Lajeunesse-Zingg in 1985. The company holds a unique place in the North American theatre community, producing opera, ballet and drama from the 17th and 18th centuries, and has been acclaimed throughout Canada, in Houston, Cleveland, New York, Stuttgart, Halle, Bremen London (BBC Proms), Paris, Montreux, Citta di Castello, Singapore, and South Korea. Mr. Pynkoski and Ms. Lajeunesse-Zingg have won numerous awards, including the distinction of Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from the Government of France and the Toronto Arts Award. Mr. Pynkoski received the Muriel Sherrin Award for outstanding contribution to music in Toronto. Their 2005 production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* won the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best Production. In 2007 they received a Ruby Award for outstanding achievement in Canadian opera.





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Projection Coordinator: Ben Chaisson



Ben Chaisson is a Certified Montessori Classroom Assistant, and an award-nominated Sound and Projections Designer. He has worked on stages in places as distant as New Zealand, Scotland, Italy and Germany. In Canada, Ben's designs have been seen and heard in theatres in St. Johns, his native Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. His sound, video and set designs for *Bigger than Jesus* (with wife Beth Kates) were nominated for two 2005 Dora Awards as well as two Betty Awards. He is currently creating a number of his own new works, and is busy making noise and images for the latest Brooks/Miller creation, *Hard Sell*. Ben would like to thank Beth Kates for her assistance with *The Galileo Project*.

We are also very grateful to **Kelly Robinson**, Director of Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre, for his advice on many aspects of the project.

Constructing the concert programme ...

Researching and writing the script went hand-in-hand with choosing the music and took Alison Mackay about a year, with many meetings along the way with Jeanne Lamon. Over the summer, librarian Charlotte Nediger prepared the music, transcribing some pieces from original sources, and making an integrated set of scores and scripts as well as individual parts for each orchestra member. Lucas Harris spent many hours reconstructing a lute concerto movement by Sylvius Weiss for which the orchestra parts have been lost.

Preparation in the orchestra ...

Because of the unusual theatrical aspects of this concert, the orchestra took on the monumental task of learning the music by memory – something orchestras never do. They worked hard in their own practice studios and got together many times to make informal archival recordings for private practice and to have “memorization parties.” E-mails flew to share memorizing tips and to report progress.



A memorization session during Tafelmusik's Western Canada tour in November

We assembled the images ...

After Glenn Davidson had designed his set, featuring a 12-foot-high round screen,



he and Alison met to choose the images that were to be projected on the screen during the concert. They were generously granted permission to use a collection of photos by **Alan Dyer** (left), Canada's renowned astronomy writer and astronomical photographer, Associate Editor of *SkyNews Magazine*, author of *The Backyard Astronomer's Guide*, and producer of science programs for the TELUS World of Science in Calgary.



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He and his colleagues at the Calgary Planetarium also offered the use of animated films about Galileo's writings that they had made as part of a special programme about Galileo for the International Year of Astronomy. Drawing on these resources and the image and video bank of the Hubble Space Telescope, Alison, Glenn and Glenn's assistant Raha Javanfar worked at matching images to the meaning of the script and the emotions of the music. Projection Coordinator Ben Chaisson then programmed the images for our unusual round-screen format.

Set construction begins ...

The remarkable Theatre Arts department at The Banff Centre undertook the challenge of constructing Glenn Davidson's set. The department's Technical Director **Robert Rombough** worked with stage carpenters **Bruce McComb** and **Claire Prosser** and scenic artist **Omanie Elia** to create the set in the Centre's workshop. Project Manager for *The Galileo Project* is Tafelmusik's Tour Production Manager **Cooper Smith**, who spent an exciting 12 days in Banff in December, 2008 coordinating all aspects of the project with The Banff Centre staff, and watched the set come to life. Cooper writes, "The tagline for The Banff Centre is "Inspiring Creativity," and one cannot help but be inspired by the beautiful, picturesque views and wonderful facilities. But it is neither the buildings nor the breathtaking views, but rather the people who work at The Banff Centre who make it the globally recognized arts institute that it is today. Without their combined efforts and countless thoughtful acts, this project would not be what it is today. Our sincere thanks to all who work at The Banff Centre."



Robert Rombough (right) & Bruce McComb working on the Galileo set at Banff

Sharing the project with a wider audience ...

The excellence of the sound and film faculty as well as state-of-the-art recording facilities at The Banff Centre offered us an unusual opportunity to experiment with the documentation of our concert. **John D.S. Adams**, Senior Recording Engineer, has a longstanding relationship with Tafelmusik, having worked with us on many of our Analekta recordings. **David New**, winner of several Geminis as



well as a Golden Sheaf Award, is a renowned writer and director of documentaries and performing arts films. We are thrilled that John and David were able to join us in Banff to make three short video films of performances of music from the concert by Handel, Vivaldi and Lully. Special thanks also to **Kerry Stauffer**

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and Tom Montvila of Banff's Digital Film & Media Production department for their assistance. Working in Banff's "green-screen" room made it possible to film against a neutral background that can later be animated with images capturing the spirit of the live performances. These films will be available in the near future for audiences around the world via the internet.

The curtain rises ...



The final rehearsal in Ralston Hall, The Banff Centre

The culmination of the week's work in Banff was the premiere of *The Galileo Project* at Rolston Hall on January 9, 2009 to a sold-out audience and resounding applause. The crew dismantled and crated the set to be shipped to Toronto, and the orchestra members bid farewell to the amazing staff at The Banff Centre. Two weeks later, Tafelmusik offered five performances of *The Galileo Project* to Tafelmusik's home audience at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre, and the response was overwhelming. As reviewed by John Terauds in *The Toronto Star*, "It's a cliché to tell performers to reach for the stars, but one doesn't really expect them to accomplish such an outlandish goal. Yet that's exactly what Toronto's Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra has done with *The Galileo Project: Music of the Spheres*. Simply put, this is one of the best, most imaginative shows based on classical music seen here in years, [...] a mix of music, words and high-definition images of space that converge in a mesmerizing treat for the eyes, ears and heart."

Galileo takes to the road ...

A few days rest, then the artistic and technical team met to discuss logistics of the Ontario tour of *The Galileo Project*. Orchestras usually travel relatively light – all of our instruments and music fit on the bus with the musicians (even the harpsichord!) – so touring with a theatrical set on an orchestra's schedule of one or two venues each day presents special challenges. The set was cleverly designed so that it could



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Shaun Smyth
as Halley's Comet

be packed in relatively small crates, and arrangements were made to reduce the complex lighting system used in Banff and Toronto so that the production could be adapted for each hall in the few hours available to the crew.

Halley's Comet comes to life ...

A special part of the Ontario tour is the premiere of a version of the project for school children and family audiences. Alison Mackay wrote a new script, in which actor Shaun Smyth takes on the character of Halley's Comet to lead children on a delightful adventure in baroque music and astronomy.

The journey continues ...

Interest in *The Galileo Project* continues to grow, and plans for future tours are well under way. Next season will include performances in Mexico and the Western US, including the renowned Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. In the 2010-11 season we look forward to Galileo tours of Asia and the Eastern US.

In all aspects of *The Galileo Project*, we are deeply grateful to the vision of The Banff Centre, to the exciting creativity of our artistic partners, and to the generosity of our funders for making it possible for Tafelmusik to explore exciting new territory in our musical life and in our relationship with audiences at home and abroad.

Alison Mackay

The Creative Force behind The Galileo Project

Alison Mackay has played violone and double bass with Tafelmusik since 1979. Alison's creative and innovative programming has greatly enriched the Tafelmusik concert experience. In the spring of 2005 she was co-director (along with her husband, David Fallis) of the Metamorphosis Festival, a Toronto-wide festival of music, art, dance, film and theatre inspired by the stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Her concert on this theme featuring Tafelmusik with Canadian actor R.H. Thomson has toured in Canada, the US and Europe. Her multi-cultural creation *The Four Seasons: A Cycle of the Sun* has been made into a feature documentary by Toronto's Media Headquarters, and a concert version of this project toured in Asia last season. This past spring she was active in organizing a special project for the orchestra called *Sacred Spaces, Sacred Circles*, a celebration of architecture and the arts in the varied worship spaces of many cultures in the city of Toronto. Alison is also active in the planning of educational projects for the orchestra, and her children's tale *Baroque Adventure: The Quest for Arundo Donax* (Analekta) was awarded a 2006 JUNO Award.

