

TABLE OF CONTENTS

***LOS ANGELES TIMES* ARTICLES**

PUBLISHED BY

UTKU ÇAKIROZER, *LA TIMES* STAFF WRITER

AND DANIEL PEARL FELLOW

AT ALFRED FRIENDLY PRESS FELLOWSHIPS

Articles	Page
1. UCLA organist Christoph Bull pulls out the stops with 'Organica' June 8, 2008	2
2. If Turkish coffee gets hot, he could get rich August 18, 2008	6
3. It costs what?! Calculating the CPI requires a lot of shopping around July 17, 2008	10

Los Angeles Times

CLASSICAL MUSIC

UCLA organist Christoph Bull pulls out the stops with 'Organica'



Richard Hartog, Los Angeles Times

AT THE KEYBOARD: Organist Christoph Bull at the organ at Royce Hall on the UCLA campus in Westwood.

UCLA Live event mixes organ, dance, voice and video.

By Utku Cakirozer, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
June 8, 2008

CLAD IN jeans and a long-sleeved Von Dutch T-shirt, blond, blue-eyed Christoph Bull shucked his rock 'n' roll boots and got set to work. Nearby, Max Kaplan, a twentysomething student in a T-shirt, khaki shorts and flip-flops, whipped out his ax and got ready too.

Soon, the sounds of a clarinet-organ jam filled the air of the UCLA music studio. Bouncing on the pedals of a Noack mechanical-action pipe organ in his blue socks, as his hands flew across the multi-rowed keyboard, Bull traded licks with Kaplan, both clearly caught up in and relishing the improvised musical moment.

"It is important that you try a little bit of mixture -- of traditional and modern, of classical and

contemporary," Bull told Kaplan and the other students, all from such nonorgan majors as saxophone, trombone and violin, with whom he would play this day -- sometimes in duos, sometimes in trios.

Such groupings might seem odd, but not to Bull, who insists that the organ is far more than a musical relic best left to churches and horror movie soundtracks. It's "back in vogue," says the German-born scholar-performer and UCLA faculty member, who is among those happy to pipe up to explain how and why.

Since coming to Los Angeles in 1990 -- after training in Mannheim, Germany, and at the Berklee College of Music in Boston -- Bull has played not just in cathedrals and concert halls but also at the Whisky a Go Go, the Viper Room, Cinespace and the Hotel Cafe. His fellow performers have included funk bassist Bootsy Collins, P-funk master George Clinton and violinist-composer Lili Haydn, with whom he opened for Cyndi Lauper.

Tonight, though, Bull will be appearing in more traditional surroundings -- UCLA's Royce Hall, where he will present the latest version of the show he has dubbed "Organica." In the UCLA Live presentation, scheduled to emphasize French organ masterworks and especially pieces in honor of the 100th anniversary of Olivier Messiaen's birth, he will be joined by mezzo-soprano I-Chin Feinblatt; artist Norton Wisdom; videographer Benton-C Bainbridge, who will create live images for projection; Catch Me Bird dancer-choreographer Nehara Kalev; and two other organists, Chelsea Chen and Maxine Thevenot.

"The music dictates my imagery, guides my hand," says Wisdom, explaining his paint-by-music role in the program. The "organ is like a symphony. It creates forms. It has an imagery that is very archaic and like the collective unconscious of the human race. It is inclusive of human feeling." The instrument "really mimics almost any human feeling and emotion, and that kind of depth" truly inspires him, he says, adding that Bull is on the "leading edge in both the rock 'n' roll and classical music communities."

Says David Sefton, the executive and artistic director of UCLA Live, for which Bull has performed "Organica" twice before, "I have always been open to a less-conventional approach to the organ, which is why Christoph and 'Organica' are a perfect fit. He brings a different kind of enthusiasm, a multidisciplinary and much more 21st century approach, which is not what you would expect to find from traditional organists." In audience terms, Sefton says, "You get more people when it is Christoph than a conventional classical recital or a straight organ repertoire."

Bull, 41, has twice been honored by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers for his innovative programming. The "Organica" concept, he says, is "my creation. I started it nine years ago and trademarked it. I was playing a lot of rock on keyboard or piano in clubs with other musicians. Then I wanted to do an organ concert with the flow and feel of a rock concert. The idea is to present the organ in a fresh and colorful way."

As an instrument, Bull says, the organ "is modern and predates the synthesizer and electronic music." He tries to play it "with the spirit of a rock musician. In 'Organica,' there is a way of doing it. It is different

every time I do it. Lots of innovation."

When it comes to technique and training, however, Bull has deep, traditional roots. He started as a pianist at age 5 but soon switched to the organ, partly because his legs were long enough to reach the pedals and "anything with black-and-white keys," he jokes, "fascinates me."

New World, new ideas

BULL'S education in his native Germany -- at the Heidelberg School for Church Music and the Freiburg Conservatory -- emphasized the conventional aspects of his instrument. "Germany has a good education system," he says. "But they only taught classical. I did not want to play only church music or pure classical music. I liked pop, rock and wanted to make my own music." So he decided to come to America, and he found the ideal destination at the Berklee school in Boston, where he could study not only organ but also composing, songwriting, recording, rock, jazz and music for film.

"He was already a musician when he came to us," says Berklee songwriting professor Jon Aldrich, who rates Bull among the Top 10 of the hundreds of students he has taught. "He was born with this art in his soul, brain and heart." Aldrich credits the conservatory with encouraging Bull's pop bent -- and with advising him to go to Los Angeles, a city that would welcome his eclectic aspirations.

As a result, Bull continued his studies at USC as well as the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. Eventually, he became organist and music director at Blessed Sacrament Church in Hollywood and the German-language Christuskirche in Glendale. He now is organist of the First United Methodist Church, Santa Monica, and plays at churches around Southern California. Last year, he performed a recital at First Congregational Church in Long Beach, where the organist there, Mark Dickey, says of him: "It is unusual to find an organist who has been trained by good teachers but also likes to play the Beatles. He is a great improviser and turns this to fun. He did a little bit of Beatles in addition to his classical repertoire. A few people were surprised, but others were happy."

Dickey responded especially to Bull's modest, populist approach, he says, adding, "If people like Christoph do not help to get more people interested, pipe organs are going to die."

According to at least one expert who has seen "Organica" and knows the power of its massive instrument, Bull and his novel methods will help ensure that doesn't occur. Manuel Rosales, who with architect Frank Gehry designed the spectacular "French-fry" organ in Walt Disney Concert Hall and is that instrument's curator, observes: "Though the organ is the most exciting instrument, it has been marginalized. Many organists have become complacent. They do not want to learn new music, know what average people listen to and what young people want to hear. And that is where Christoph has come in and tried to energize his organ recitals with music that appeals to more than just the traditional organ crowd."

All the same, Bull plays a big role as a keeper of tradition as well. A few years ago, when one of the great new venues in Los Angeles for religious repertoire opened with a dazzling new instrument, he auditioned to be the organist for the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. He was not picked. But he did catch the attention of UCLA, where the much-admired Thomas Harmon was retiring after 34 years as university organist.

"I was impressed with his excellent playing," Harmon says, speaking by phone from his home in Oregon. "His program was very innovative. I thought that he might be a very good way to put a new spark in the organ audiences at UCLA. And as I look in at what he does over the years, he very much stays in touch with the latest trends."

Indeed, Bull was hired as a consultant on Steven Spielberg's 2002 film, "Minority Report," with its key character of an organ-playing guard, and besides "Organica," he regularly employs Royce Hall's rumbling pipe organ for rollicking accompaniments to silent movies.

His technique in that role has won the praise of, among others, Times Music Critic Mark Swed, who after seeing the organist play in a white UCLA T-shirt and shiny red pants, likened the impish Bull to legendary organ showman Virgil Fox.

Swed noted that Bull, in showcasing Walther Ruttmann's "Berlin: Symphony of a City," mashed up a little Baroque, Mendelssohn, Rheinberger and Brahms to contribute "significantly to the mesmerizing depiction of a day in the life of a city. . . . 69 minutes of dramatically effective improvisation was no small accomplishment."

In addition, Bull has brought the art of improvisation to his repertoire of academic specialties. His students for those classes aren't organists but clarinetists, saxophonists and other instrumentalists who say they get a kick out of jamming with him in the small UCLA organ studio.

Chika Inoue, 20, a saxophone major, notes that "you can do a lot of sounds with organ. And this instrument goes well with saxophone and other wind instruments. The most exciting part is to improvise with him." For his part, Roger Bourland, who chairs the music faculty at UCLA, is gratified by the student interest that Bull has built. "He generates more interest in the organ," Bourland says. "I am surprised to see how students get excited once they get into the organ studio." That energy, he says, "could change their mind" about the virtues of the instrument.

For Bull, it's fascination like his students' with the possibilities of the pipe organ that promises a real future for it, because "especially composers [will] find it interesting and write for it. This will keep it alive.

"At my concerts," he says, "you will find people from all ages, young and old -- which is not the norm. I like old people, but the young people who normally do not go to an organ concert come to mine. And this is good!"

If Turkish coffee gets hot, he could get rich

Mustafa Arat is proud of his homeland's namesake brew, and he's proselytizing about it on the Web.

By Utku Cakirozer, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
August 18, 2008

Mustafa Arat knows how to sell.

He did it for 27 years for Xerox Corp., Pitney-Bowes Inc. and other Fortune 500 companies. Now he's doing it for himself, peddling something that almost every grown-up craves. Only, as Arat figures it, he's providing a healthier alternative. And he's not selling a product so much as a method that he sees as a hot trend.

From his home in Corona, Arat runs www.turkishcoffeeworld.com, a retailer for everything needed to make and serve Turkish coffee. He offers a big selection of pots, grinders, gift items and fresh coffee.

"I actually kind of stumbled onto Turkish coffee as a possible product idea by a coincidence, while I was searching for ways to stop smoking," said Arat, 55, whose health issues forced him to make lifestyle and career changes.

"As anyone who has tried to stop smoking knows, after meals can be one of the worst times to deal with the urge to smoke," he said. "I decided to prepare Turkish coffee after my meals to deal with my urges, and it sure has worked for me."

Turkish coffee, he said, "takes several minutes to prepare . . . which keeps a person busy."

A demanding job, hectic days and a four-hour work commute had occupied him for much of his life -- and contributed to his suffering a heart attack in 2005, leading him to quit smoking, he said. Before he took up Turkish coffee, he didn't even own a *cezve* (pronounced "jazz-veh"), the brew's special pot.

Arat -- who holds anthropology and international business degrees from Western Michigan University and Indiana University -- considered selling other products, especially items in the technology sector, before he struck on Turkish coffee.

"Sales and marketing is something in me," said the Turkish native, who remembers selling gum

in front of an Istanbul circus when he was 12.

Arat took two years to research Turkish coffee and its varied associated products and sources worldwide. He got samples from manufacturers and sold goods on Amazon .com and EBay for a year before launching the website in January.

His venture is percolating now. Arat is loath to invite competitors by disclosing too much but said he expected to reach \$250,000 in sales by the end of next year. He speaks of a market potential in the "tens of millions," envisioning a *cezve* in every U.S. kitchen.

The market for Turkish coffee is growing, he said, because of customers like Alicia Watins, 42, a Long Island technology consultant. She and her husband, Michael, have never been to Turkey but they love the Turkish coffee served in New York restaurants.

As a gift to Michael, she bought a set from Arat's site. "Before I bought, I researched through the Internet and talked with several" vendors, she said. "I had no idea what to buy." But Arat "guided us all the way."

Arat said his last three orders came from Australia, Lithuania and a U.S. Marine base. He's getting traffic from Chile, South Korea and China.

"I get a lot of orders from the U.S. military, probably because they are discovering Turkish coffee in the Gulf and Iraq," he said. "They usually buy my most expensive items."

As his business has grown, Arat has experimented with packaging to lower shipping costs. He's mastered how to get paid online and handle currency fluctuations. He's also tinkering with Internet advertising.

And he's still learning strategies so Google, Yahoo and other search engines bring up his site at the top of their list of results. Once prospects get to him, he wants to know how long they stay, where they come from and what kind of technology they use. So he's studying Web analytics.

His site gets its largest share of visitors from the U.S., which drinks more coffee than any other country. And he believes Turkish coffee will be the hot new consumer choice -- so fervently that he chose Nextrend Marketing as his company's legal name.

"Many people think that the Turkish coffee is a special blend that is only grown in Turkey, so it has to be exported and bought separately," he said.

But the name actually describes a method of making the brew, which the Ottomans perfected by

roasting coffee beans and grinding them to powder. They spread the drink across Europe and the world.

"You can make Turkish coffee from any type of coffee you buy as long as it has been ground to a fine powder," Arat explained. "And every major grocery store in the U.S. has a grinder with a 'Turkish coffee' setting."

The process demands the *cezve*, a pot with a narrowing neck necessary to make the vital foam. His *cezves* are hand-hammered, etched with elaborate designs, then polished and hand-painted by artisans in Turkey and Bosnia. His *finicans* -- the tiny traditional cups -- are hand-painted in Turkey. He buys coffee from Bosnia, Croatia, Greece and Turkey.

In other brewing methods, water or steam is forced through the coffee. The Turkish method mixes the grounds into the brew. Arat says this makes Turkish coffee the most natural, flavorful and, he contends, healthy.

"Recent studies done on cafestol [a molecule with anti-carcinogenic properties] showed that it is present in the highest quantity in unfiltered coffee drinks, such as French press coffee or Turkish coffee," he said.

Turkish coffee also carries another bounty: its requirement to socialize.

"You have to sit down first before you even take a sip," Arat said. "Otherwise, due to the small cups it's served in, it will spill on you. This is probably another reason why it is traditionally shared with others."

He recited a Turkish proverb on the role of drinking with another: "The memory of sharing even a single cup of coffee will last for 40 years."

"This is a new way of drinking coffee," said Joanna Basko, 70, a retiree in Birmingham, Ala., and a regular at Arat's website. "It is fun to prepare it and serve it in little cups. . . . And the taste is great."

She and her husband, Roy, first tasted Turkish coffee on a visit to the country in 2006. Then she found Arat's site and started ordering. When she felt comfortable making the drink -- the website features instructional videos -- she shared it with friends.

"Turkish coffee is sort of catching on in central Alabama," she said.

Such enthusiasm is generating more business for Arat from wholesalers, such as Oakland-based Sweet Maria's, one of the largest green coffee bean distributors and a major player in the home roasting industry. Coffee shops, too, are becoming his regular customers.

"Most coffee shops these days," he said, "are searching for unique products to offer." Some shops buy

from him and serve Turkish coffee at customers' tables using a small burner.

"People are tired of the espresso and the milkshake-like coffee drinks. They are not unique anymore," he said. "Even the gas stations sell these."

As for Turkish coffee, "I think that once people taste it," he said, "they will come back for more."

Los Angeles Times

It costs what?! Calculating the CPI requires a lot of shopping around

The Consumer Price Index, used to gauge inflation, has jumped 5% since June 2007. Figuring out the figure means Bureau of Labor Statistics staff must collect prices for pizza, laptops and car parts.

By [Utku Cakirozer](#)

[July 17, 2008](#)

Kim Gomory treks more than 850 miles each month, stopping by more than 120 grocers, gas stations, restaurants, stores, health clubs and other businesses.

But Gomory, a tall, blue-eyed hybrid [Honda](#) Civic owner in her 40s, isn't a soccer mom drawing a bead on bargains. Trace a line from her calculating consumerism in Claremont, Walnut and other communities, and you'll see how national economic policy gets made.

Shielding a tablet computer with skill worthy of a CIA operative, Gomory is among 400 Bureau of Labor Statistics staffers, including about 70 in the Los Angeles area, who compile data used to calculate the Consumer Price Index, the best-known gauge of U.S. inflation.

The latest survey, released today, calculated that the [Consumer Price Index](#) rose 1.1% in June – the second-largest increase since 1982 – and jumped 5% compared with June 2007. Prices in Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties rose by 1.1% in June and 5.4% compared with a year earlier.

To the consternation of critics who say the index fails to reflect Americans' struggles to make ends meet, the CPI is holy writ for bankers, economists, policymakers and politicians as they set mortgage and credit-card interest rates, wages and government benefits programs such as food stamps and Social Security.

Before such macro decisions are made, however, it is the micro, meticulous labor of staffers such as Gomory that matters.

Quietly, with extreme discretion, she helps fashion a national market basket, figuring what shoppers pay for a variety of goods and services. Gomory spends 10 minutes to an hour at each location,

talking to folks, scrutinizing prices and taking down information while attracting as little attention as possible.

“Anything that consumers spend pennies on is eligible for pricing” as part of the 80,000 items her agency tracks to compute the CPI, explained Gomory, who earned a liberal arts degree at the University of La Verne and has taken economics courses at several local universities.

Gomory spoke as she made her rounds recently at more than a dozen spots, including a health club, a cleaners and a camera store. In exchange for seeing how the “economic assistant” does her work, a Times reporter and photographer agreed not to identify the enterprises that participate voluntarily. This information is so closely held that Gomory doesn’t even disclose it to her family.

“Neither my husband nor my children or my friends know the locations I visit for CPI data, because to keep our respondents’ confidentiality is the most important thing,” said Gomory, who carefully locks documents in her car trunk and palms her purple bureau credentials to hide her identity. “People can be fired from BLS if the agreement is breached.”

In Claremont, Gomory breezed into a cavernous health club where a receptionist greeted her as a regular and announced her to a boss just as a visitor from “the Bureau.”

Gomory checked the single member initiation fee, charges for a new family membership and monthly costs for seniors. All were unchanged from a month earlier.

Consistency counts in this nationwide tally, as she shows when she pops into a popular La Mirada restaurant. There, her bosses in Washington, D.C., have told her, she must price a “cinnamon roll combo” with two eggs and two slices of bacon. Even if the shop owner says the dish hasn’t changed, “it is my duty to verify that there is no change. And then I look at the price: Same. \$5.99.”

She repeats the exercise for the biscuits-and-gravy plate and the children’s cheese pizza; all were unchanged. Most products are so easy to price that Gomory often doesn’t even talk with owners.

But computers and cars? Complicated. Detailed. Time consuming.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics, which is part of the Labor Department, updates its survey twice a year to keep up with technology; it does an annual revision on cars. This means, for example, that Gomory must check 40 specifications for a laptop to ensure it was the same computer she priced at a local store the previous month.

At a Walnut car repair shop, where the checklist is lengthy, she was careful to show up at a convenient time to consult with its owner, Jose “Pepe” Rosenfeld, 62. “She knows how busy we are,” the car repairman said, “so she often comes on the lunch breaks.”

Gomory prices 20 parts or repairs. She dumped data into her computer, stopping suddenly as she punched in the \$771.51 cost of an air conditioner compressor.

“Hey wait a minute! Wasn’t it \$823 last month?” she asked Rosenfeld.

“The distributor lowered it,” he said. “Probably, they have a big stock and want to sell it. It is good for the customers, though.”

“Of course, anything that goes down in price is good,” said Gomory, who later asked why another part had gone up from \$193.75 to \$209.97.

“Simple,” Rosenfeld answered, “they increased the price.”

Such hikes – including a recent \$5 boost in his hourly labor cost to \$70, the first increase in 15 years – add to inflation. He sees consumers reacting daily: “Rather than buying new cars, people try to fix their cars. And everybody is looking for small cars.”

Her bosses, after cross-checking her data and crunching reports nationwide, come up with the CPI each month.

The survey’s critics have plenty of complaints but get particularly incensed about the monthly report’s “core rate” excluding food and energy costs. They say it is nonsensical to talk about core inflation nationally of 0.3% in June and 2.4% compared with a year earlier. (For Los Angeles it was 0.2% and 3%, respectively.)

“In the grocery store, they are getting two bags with what they used to [be paying to] get three,” said Judy Dugan, research director of Consumer Watchdog, an advocacy group based in Santa Monica. “In the gas station, they are paying double what they were paying two years ago.”

Dugan said an inaccurate CPI punishes ordinary Americans, ultimately lowering their wages and government benefits such as Social Security.

But economist Michael Boskin thinks the CPI historically has overstated inflation although lately “there are a variety of factors that make it difficult to tell how accurate it is. Foremost of these is housing.”

Bureaucrats such as Gomory “are doing a professional but a complicated and difficult job, because measuring consumer prices is trying to measure something that is moving,” said Boskin, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, a Stanford University economics professor who chaired a 1996 national advisory commission that studied the index. “The economy is changing, the way people shop is changing, and to capture this is not easy.”

The advisory commission praised the CPI for “the underlying simplicity of its concept: pricing a fixed [but representative] market basket of goods and services over time.” The group said the index didn’t do a good job reflecting decisions by consumers to substitute cheaper items for costly ones. It’s hard-pressed to keep up with new products or innovations.

At the Bureau of Labor Statistics, they’ve heard the gripes before.

Amar Mann, a BLS spokesman in San Francisco, said the agency makes a good-faith effort to account for many economic variables. It accounts for other factors, such as the extremes that Los Angeles residents pay for housing (which gets a 46% weight in the L.A. CPI).

“We do a good job,” Mann said. “Gas and food are high. But many other items like housing, apparel, cars, electronics are not.”

Price investigator Gomory is proud of what she does.

“Many important things in life,” Gomory said, “school lunch prices, Social Security benefits, monetary policies, are all set up by CPI.”

utku.cakirozer@latimes.com