

# PVSO ends season with twin musical events

**W**ell, clearly William Perry is a composer who gets around. I used to see him playing all that live melodramatic music at the Museum of Modern Art's silent film series in Manhattan way back in the 1960s. This same fellow is premiering his "Gemini Concerto," which he composed for twin sisters Ambra and Fiona Albek of Switzerland, under the aegis of Paul Phillips and the Pioneer Valley Symphony on May 8.

Little did either of us suspect that — nearly half a century later — destiny would finally introduce us to each other.

It was the original and still horrifying "Phantom of the Opera," that I most vividly recall, with Lon Chaney at his stunning best in the title role. I remember how intrigued I was by the presence of Perry's solitary figure in the darkness, seated at the keyboard, his gaze fixed on the flickering screen upon which life and death, tragedy and triumph were unfolding at furious intensity, his hands galvanized into instantaneous activity at each fateful juncture in the narrative.

And, how evocative and effective I found the performer's inventions. There were beguiling original themes in the great romantic style, snippets of the masters and of period pieces ingeniously woven into the musical fabric. There were beguiling harmonic changes and neat modulations — sudden key changes — that shed shifting emotional tints onto the drama's underlying color-scheme. The audience's emotions, were, to a great extent, not being controlled by the silent-screen story itself, but quite literally in Perry's hands.

Through this boot camp in musical emotion, Perry got a first-hand education in just where the human heart hangs out and how to create music that connected on the spot, so to speak. After all, you don't dare disappoint a roomful of film connoisseurs — who've paid their nickels expecting to be thrilled, moved and awed — with wimpy music. You provide the goods, there and then.

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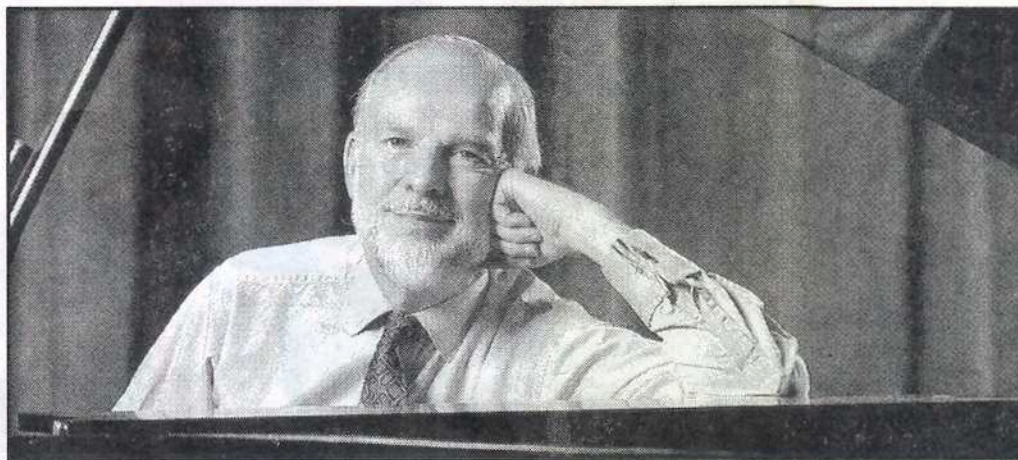
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Joseph Marcello

## Encores & Curtain Calls



Submitted photo

The May 8 concert will feature the premiere of "Gemini Concerto," which William Perry, above, composed for twin sisters Ambra and Fiona Albek of Switzerland, who are pictured below.

## Show notes

These are the last two concerts of the season for the Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

■ **SOUTH OF THE ALPS**, a special benefit recital featuring twin sisters Ambra and Fiona Albek of Switzerland. Northampton Center for the Arts, 17 New South St., Sunday, May 2, 2 p.m. \$35.

■ **MUSICAL TWINS**, May 8, 7 p.m., Greenfield High School, Greenfield. Adult, \$20, seniors and students, \$17, children under 18 (Age 14 and under must be accompanied by adult), \$6. [www.pvso.org](http://www.pvso.org), (413) 773-3664.

Advance single tickets are also avail-

drive disaster, vanished forever from our midst, I can confirm that he is, in his self-effacing way, a charming gentleman, a raconteur rich with stories of his colorful past in film and television work and a musician whose personal aesthetic is nothing less than to create ready enjoyment for his listeners — with no highbrows in sight.

Instead, he places his art well within reach of anyone with a decent pair of ears and a hankering for a good tune. At my request, Perry sent on computer-generated versions of his six movement concerto and I'll be darned



Submitted image

Ambra and Fiona Albek

able at World Eye Bookshop, 156 Main St. Greenfield; Broadside Bookshop, 247 Main St., Northampton; and Boswell's Books, 10 Bridge St., Shelburne Falls.

if I couldn't follow the tunes and their adventures from start to finish, with not so much as a micro-second of suffering. Indeed, his music is emphatically the child of a buoyant, fun-loving and optimistic spirit.

Fortunately, Perry did send along some thoughts about his new baby or, should I say, twins?

"I might note in passing that a double concerto for violin, piano and orchestra is really very rare. Nothing important enough to be recorded has been written since one concerto

each by Hummel and Mendelssohn. Beethoven's Triple, yes, but, seemingly, no doubles for this combination.

"I also want to add one bit of fun that there was not room to mention in full in the printed notes. The Gemini opens with a blast on an Acme Thunderer whistle that initiates the Travel Music movement. This is the legendary brass whistle that is used to start railway trains throughout Europe. I wrote it into the 'Gemini' as a kind of salute to a colleague, Richard Rodney Bennett, who famously used it in his score for 'Murder on the Orient Express.' Bennett is president of the Peter Warlock Society in the U.K., as I am for the Warlock Society in North America.

"One other thing that I wish you might mention in your article. Ambra and Fiona Albek, in addition to their appearance with PVS on May 8, are also presenting a chamber music concert as a benefit for the orchestra. It takes place at 2 in the afternoon on Sunday, May 2 at the Northampton Center for the Arts. They call the program 'South of the Alps' because they live in Switzerland at the southern end of the Alps, and their program consists of music from Italy, Spain and southern France. There'll be some really interesting stuff: sonatas by Turina and Poulenc, dance pieces by de Falla and Albeniz and a rip-roaring 'Fantasy on Themes' from 'Tosca' by a contemporary Italian composer named Alessandro Lucchetti. Very timely considering the pro- and-con publicity surrounding the new Met production of 'Tosca.'"

The concerto is something of a musical travelogue in six movements, with a recurring theme that Perry likened to the promenade that connects the various pictorial sections of Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition." Well, perhaps this work might be considered "Cultures at an Exhibition," if, perhaps in a more lighthearted mood.

After the introduction and "Travel Music" there are excursions to shifting destinations — a "Celtic Air" and "Runaway Reel" in Dublin, a polka in Vienna, a troika in Moscow and a march in Berlin. A "Broadway Ballet" in the Big Apple leads to the grand finale.

So, if after all that globe-trotting and music-making, he gets us back home to the U.S. safely, what are you worrying about?

Grab your hat and coat, head down to the Greenfield High School Auditorium for your flight and take a whirlwind world tour with the peripatetic William Perry and two fetching lasses from Switzerland.

An author and composer, columnist Joseph Marcello of Northfield focuses on music and theater. He can be reached at [josephmarcello@verizon.net](mailto:josephmarcello@verizon.net).