



Self-Starters



Victoria Bond interviews composers at www.chamber-music.org/extras

New York's annual **Cutting Edge Concerts New Music Festival** always revolves around a theme, but for artistic director Victoria Bond, this year's topic, "The Entrepreneurial Composer," has special resonance. The composer/conductor has spent a long career in the service of contemporary music, much of it as a self-starter. In fact, Cutting Edge Concerts itself is very much an entrepreneurial project.

The roots of the enterprise go back to the '70s, when Bond assisted Pierre Boulez with the Juilliard New Music Ensemble. That was the period when Boulez, as music director of the New York Philharmonic, was staging "Prospective Encounters" concerts in Greenwich Village, featuring not only contemporary works, but discussions between Boulez and the composers themselves. "It made a profound impression on me," Bond says.

In 1998, Greenwich House, a venerable downtown community organization, invited

Bond to start her own new-music series. In a nod to the Boulez concerts of more than two decades before, she called her new venture *Close Encounters*. Like Boulez, she offered discussions with the composers as part of the bill of fare. "Composers like to say 'Well, the music speaks for itself,'" Bond says. "Sure, but when people are hearing it for the first time, a mass of information is flooding their ears and brain. It seems obvious to the composer what it's about—but that ain't necessarily so. You've got to bring people in."

The series, now called "Cutting Edge Concerts," moved uptown to Symphony Space in 2007, its full-throttle commitment to contemporary music unabated. New York has other new-music series, but this one is distinguished by its "festival" nature: the concerts all staged during the month of April, and they all fall within an overarching theme. Past years' themes include "Shaping Sound" (music and architecture) and "Can Music Heal?" (music and therapy).

This year's concerts, staged over three Mondays in April, feature an eclectic range of composer-founded ensembles, including Imani Winds (Valerie Coleman), Sequitur (Harold Metzger) and loadbang (Andy Kozar, Jeffrey Gavett, Will Lang). Not only will all the composers be on hand—they'll all be performing their own music. As usual, Bond will be talking with the composers before their pieces are played, getting them to articulate their ideas about the music in ways that audiences can appreciate. "The presence of the composer is the integral part," Bond says.

The task of keeping the project viable has drawn on Bond's vast experience as a musical entrepreneur. "As a conductor and music director of a number of orchestras and opera companies, this was not unfamiliar to me," Bond adds. "The trick is not to go out begging for money—it's asking people to be part of our team." ■

www.cuttingedgeconcerts.org