

Stanford Makishi has been announced as the new director of programmes at the Asian Cultural Council (ACC), a newly created position charged with recognising and developing the cultural, educational and artistic exchange between the US and Asia. His responsibilities will include leading the organisation's grant-making process, as well as supporting individuals funded by ACC.



Sir Rodney Brooke

West Yorkshire Playhouse has appointed **Sir Rodney Brooke** as chairman of its board. Brooke will take over from Brian Bouttell with immediate effect. As well as working in the public sector and taking leading roles in local government throughout the UK, Brooke has served on the board of English National Opera. Sheena Wrigley, general director of WYOP, said Brooke would bring to the role 'a rich palette of leadership and governance experience and a passion for both the arts and Yorkshire'.

Theatre Royal Winchester, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary this October, has announced that **Mark Courtice** has been permanently appointed as director and chief executive. Courtice had already been acting as interim director since the departure of former chief executive Fiona Burn, who left to join York Barbican. Speaking on his appointment, Courtice said: 'Winchester is privileged to have a beautiful theatre with strong links to touring companies, loyal audiences, huge support from local business supporters and a dedicated team behind the scenes. The arts scene in the UK is in a period of change and I am thrilled to be leading Theatre Royal Winchester at this important time.'

Sydney Dance Company has extended the Spanish choreographer **Afael Bonachela's** contract as artistic director for another three years, he will now stay until December 2014. 'I am delighted to be able to have this

opportunity to explore more long-range plans,' Bonachela said in response to the announcement. 'The renewal means I can really consolidate the artistic direction of the company and the management of the company.' Bonachela was one of three guest choreographers installed in 2008 after Tanja Liedtke was killed in a road accident only three months after she stepped into the position.

Willie White has been appointed as the new artistic director and chief executive at The Ulster Bank Dublin Theatre Festival. A former television arts reporter and founder of the Loose Canon theatre company and *Irish Theatre Magazine*, White has been artistic director of the city's Project Arts Centre since 2002. He will take up his new post in September. He replaces Loughlin Deegan, who departs after four years to become the first director of The Lir, Ireland's National Academy of Dramatic Art, which accepts its first intake of students later this year.



Willie White

Opera star **Cornell MacNeil**, who performed alongside Luciano Pavarotti, Shirley Verrett, Hildegard Behrens and Plácido Domingo, has died aged 88 at an assisted-living facility in Charlottesville. The son of a Minneapolis singer and a dentist father, his early public appearances included a speaking role as the backstage announcer at Radio City Music Hall. MacNeil's glamorous career was launched at an important opera debut in 1950, where he took the leading role of Menotti's hugely successful *The Consul*. He went on to join the New York City Opera and then, in 1959, the Metropolitan Opera, where from 1959 to 1987 he made 600 appearances. Both those debuts were in Verdi roles, and it was Verdi, and to a lesser extent Puccini, that defined his career. MacNeil retired from the opera in 1988 following medical tests showed he had a possible blockage of the carotid artery.

MIXING IT UP



From Cuban rumba to New York Jazz, composer Michael Colina draws his inspirations from all types of music

Two of Michael Colina's works are about to be given their world premieres in London and New York, but in fact his career started off over twenty years ago, far from the bright lights of the world's top classical venues. The composer spent the first part of his musical life in jazz, producing and writing for some of the most renowned players, including Bob James and David Sanborn and he feels he learnt a great deal from the genre.

'What I got from that was their spontaneity, the exciting nature of their ability to improvise, their willingness to take risks, their adaptability,' recalls Colina. 'And they're crazy as hell. I used the skills I had as composer to have fun bringing their music to life.' It was towards the end of the 90s that Colina realised he wanted to move away from writing jazz music (a genre he considers equivalent to writing 'short stories') to writing orchestral music, which he likens to novels.

For Colina, finding his own voice in the classical sphere evoked memories of his childhood growing up in Charlotte, North Carolina. 'Out of the cacophony of music that was going on around me — country, R&B, music of TV and films — I chose classical music as the music I loved most of all,' he says.

Studying piano at age six, Colina began composing tunes by age nine, and developed a love for the 'language' of the classical genre. 'At the same time, jazz and soul were in my environment,' he continues. 'And my father was Cuban so I had lots of Cuban piano music and

rumba in my house; this was all a big blend going on unconsciously for me. So when I emerged from the jazz world I already has this wide range of flavours that I loved. I innately infuse classical music with the harmonies of jazz and Latin rhythms.'

This side to Colina's composing is especially evident in *Los Caprichos*, commissioned by the National Theatre Orchestra of Brazil in 2008. Over 1000 excited school children attended a performance of the piece in Brasilia that year. 'They came in a rowdy crowd, and I was worried there would be nothing but cacophony in the audience,' Colina laughs. 'But as soon as the music started, they quietened down and were riveted. I was really moved by the kids' response to this unknown American composer in Brazil.'

Colina's upcoming premieres, taking place in November, will allow him to draw on rather different influences. Audiences at Carnegie Hall will hear *Baba Yaga*, a two-movement concerto featuring violinist Anastasia Khitruk and based on Slavic folk stories.

Colina says the duality of the *Baba Yaga* tale fascinated him: 'Somewhere inside there's a moment of humanity; that's a very curious twist that you don't find in *Hansel and Gretel* or *Little Red Riding Hood*. I got to work with romantic and lyrical essences,' he adds, 'and in the second movement I got to be playful and wicked with the music.'

Three Cabinets of Wonder will then be performed by the London's Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the end of November at Cadogan Hall, conducted by Ira Levin.

www.michaelcolina.com