



97

## SALON97

“CLASSICAL MUSIC FOR  
THE OTHER 97%”

By Clarence Smith, Jr.

Cariwyl Hebert grew up in the San Francisco bay area and has been listening to classical music since she was a toddler. She started with the violin in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and continued to develop her love of playing and listening to classical music throughout her academic years.

In high school, she created a string quartet and performed not only in school productions, but also public venues in her community. Hebert's performances and musical education continued throughout college at San Francisco State where she majored in music. She attributes the strength of her interest in classical music to regular exposure while growing up and the camaraderie of playing and listening to classical music with other enthusiasts.

Last summer she invited me to a classical music listening party. The entire notion was foreign to me but the idea of a classical *pop-up* music gathering intrigued me. Having spent a number of years in my youth holding first chair trumpet in orchestra, I was familiar with the genre and agreed to attend. It was an entertaining, insightful and thought-provoking experience—a carefully crafted musical salon composed and conducted by Hebert. The enterprising and cultural event was called *Salon97*, “Classical music for the other 97%”.





**What is Salon97 and what inspired you to create it? Where did the name Salon97 come from?**

Salon97 is a San Francisco-based non-profit with a mission to make classical music inclusive, educational--and awesome--for people with an interest in arts and culture, but who find the formal nature of the concert hall intimidating. Most of our events take place in the form of themed and curated listening parties wherein we listen to pre-selected works, learn about the featured composers, and discuss the music as a group.

Salon97 was created in 2008 after I attended SXSW Music and found that my classical music business affiliation was beyond boring to other attendees. I knew I had to do something to change the image of this art and industry, and this started with hosting a small listening party for a group of friends two months later.



The name Salon97 leads with the format of our events--salons--and the "97" is derived from a point Benjamin Zander, conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, makes in his [TED Talk](#) about modern orchestral management believing that only three percent of the population are interested in classical music. Zander states that everyone likes classical music; they just don't know it yet. Hence our title "Salon97" and our tagline "Classical music for the other 97%."

**Is there a particular listening audience that you hope to capture and engage?**

Generally, we target people between the ages of 25 and 45, though we've also had pre-teens and octogenarians (and everyone in between) in attendance at our events. We particularly strive to reach those who are intimidated by classical music as well as those who are already interested in the genre but are unsure of how to approach it.

**Where has Salon97 taken place so far? What is your perception of how well they have been received by the audience?**

Most of our events take place in San Francisco but we have also hosted numerous events in New York and a couple in Boston. Overall, attendees have left our events with a list of composers and/or classical works they'd like to explore further, a new-found curiosity surrounding the genre, as well as new friends and business contacts. It is a tremendously special gift to see these connections taking place!



 SAARIAHO

 BEACH

 COATES



*“The American classical tradition is far more robust than most of us are aware and additionally, there are a great many thought-provoking works written by American composers that deserve much more attention than they receive.”*



***Salon97 has both an insightful and enlightening quality to its format—can you tell us more about that?***

Our events provide people with a relaxed environment in which to listen to and discuss music. Wine and cupcakes are an integral part of our events, as is creating a space for attendees to network.

***Who are some of the composers and classical arrangements you have featured at Salon97? Has there been a favored arrangement or composer that has been highlighted in every salon?***

We have featured composers from many different eras, nationalities and composition style from household names such as Beethoven, Brahms and Mendelssohn to lesser-known composers such as Sarriaho, Beach and Coates.

There isn't a piece that we always feature; however we tend to highlight at least one American composer at every event. The American classical tradition is far more robust than most of us are aware and additionally, there are a great many thought-provoking works written by American composers that deserve much more attention than they receive.

***When the very first Salon97 finished and you had a moment to reflect, what was your first thought? Has that thought become the foundation for future salons?***

Our very first event was just an experiment to see if a listening party/salon-style format was a good way to introduce people to classical music. Everyone had a great time at this event so I decided at that point that this one-time gathering would turn into a quarterly series. Today's monthly events have a similar structure to that of our first listening party. Our universal goal at every event is to connect people to classical music while linking likeminded individuals to one another.

***Salon97 has the potential to be a bright, cultural beacon for the genre of classical music for years to come—do you already have designs for the future of Salon97?***

Our goal will always be to connect people and music and to be an unpretentious resource for classical music discovery and enjoyment, however I plan to continue expanding to more cities and continue forming partnerships with other organizations and performing ensembles. In the coming months I'll be developing ways to heighten the "user experience" for our fans and attendees, so hopefully I'll have more exciting announcements soon!



*Learn more about Salon97 & upcoming listening parties at <http://www.salon97.org>*



**CLARENCE SMITH, JR.**  
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

**EARLY-BIRD DISCOUNT  
FOR ENTRY INTO *DAM'S*  
501-WORD-WRITING  
CONTEST ENDS THIS  
JULY 4TH, 2011**



**ONLY  
\$ 2  
F O R  
LIMITED  
T I M E**

**HOW CLOSE CAN YOU GET TO A  
PERFECT PARAGRAPH?**

**FOR RULES / ENTRY -> [THEDIGITALAMERICANA.COM](http://THEDIGITALAMERICANA.COM)**