



Photo by Paul Wellman

## Thankfulness and Reflections, Post-Inferno

By Josef Woodard

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With Thanksgiving upon us, the community of Santa Barbara is in a state of expanded thankfulness and also lingering, unsettled shock. Thankfulness arrives with a special fervor for those whose houses were spared by the Tea Fire's night of incendiary infamy, and also for those grappling with the aftermath of losing their houses and trying to appreciate the blessings of life beyond "things." But our hearts continue to go out to those who suffered, directly or indirectly. In the face of community calamities such as this, we tend to think in terms simultaneously both intensely personal and openly communal.

On that afternoon, I had been up at **Tom Lackner**'s great studio-with-a-view up on Mountain Drive, affectionately known as "The Tompound" (so named by **Todd Capps**). We finished a session with singer **Julie Christensen** for a CD-in-progress by our band, Headless Household, and walked out on the driveway where an unusually unruly sundowner wind had us speculating

on the potential danger. The time: 4:45. An hour later, the fiery incident would begin. Many hours glued to the TV, radio, and Internet sources later—all at the same time—we down in the flatlands (but two blocks from the evacuation warning zone) resisted the urge to head toward the flames in some lame effort to help.

By the next day, Tom offered the news that the Tompond and his house, which he and his wife, Diana, built, miraculously survived, although devastation enveloped the area—including the trailer on their property where guitarist **Pat Milliken** lived. Tom's brother Lucas, whose house was down the road past Coyote and near Westmont, was not so lucky. Among the victims were many artists and bohemian-spirited folks in that bucolic area, who lost not only house and home, but art studios and irreplaceable artworks.

As if we need reminders that fire is an ever-present threat where we live, echoes of the past loop around and catch you. The last such devastating fire in town, swooping down and destroying dwellings in its terrible wake, was the Painted Cave fire in 1990. As we drove by the affected areas, my then three-year old son, **Sam**, called it “fire town.” Oddly enough, almost exactly a decade ago, Headless Household had been working on an album at the old Beagle Studio (in the structure where Reds now is), when the power went out. We walked outside to State Street to find Stearns Wharf ablaze (incidentally, we had been working on a tune called “Angry Poodle” at the time).

So it is fire town time once again, with the sadness and grateful qualities hovering in the air above our beautiful and vulnerable parcel on the planet.

Somehow, the sound of **J. S. Bach** always comes as a welcome source of inspiration and spiritual repair, and the weekend after that ravaging Thursday night was blessed by two major Bach events in town. **Lynn Harrell**'s glowing, righteous performance of three Bach Cello Suites—some of the greatest music ever created—summoned unexpected depth at Hahn Hall, where many in the audience were evacuees, some as-yet uninformed of the fate of their houses. Also that weekend, Bach's Christmas Oratorio was laid out in its full orchestral-choral splendor by the **Santa Barbara Master Chorale** at First Presbyterian Church. Director **Steven Hodson**'s house was one of the victims, but the show went on.

On Tuesday at the Lobero, the rejuvenating sound of Bach continues, when the acclaimed German violinist **Christian Tetzlaff** performs music for unaccompanied violin, in the next encounter hosted by the greatest gift to the local classical music calendar, CAMA.

**TO-DOINGS:** Also next Tuesday, tilting toward the contemporary, is the first **ECM** (Ensemble for Contemporary Music) concert of the season, at Lotte Lehmann Concert Hall. Of key interest on the program—stocked with **Stravinsky**, **Tom Johnson**, ECM director **Jeremy Haladyna**'s music, and more—are a few pieces by the late, great **Henry Brant**, the “spatial music” hero who lived in Santa Barbara since the early '80s.

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