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A LATE BLOOMER
 Christina Ricci grows up **D7**



Maestro mission

Composer and violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain spreads the word on the benefits of his art.
Kelsey Munro reports.

"It's not missionary work but I do feel I'm part of a mission," Daniel Bernard Roumain says.

The 35-year-old Haitian-American composer talks like this, approaching his music with a fervour that edges towards evangelism.

"If you look at the statistics for young black men in my country, they're dire," he says.

"So why am I different?"

"The only thing I can say is maybe it was the violin. Those four strings."

Yet after a long, freewheeling phone conversation with the New York musician, I'm certain it wasn't just those four strings that made him different.

Some critics have said the dreadlocked violinist has done for his instrument what Jimi Hendrix did for the Stratocaster.

He's a classically trained composer with his own YouTube channel and MySpace site. He regularly collaborates with musicians as diverse as Philip Glass and DJ Spooky.

Roumain is not, in short, lacking in ways he is different.

"Me playing the violin in Harlem is one wonderful thing," he says.

"But me playing the violin in the Sydney Opera House in one of its smaller rooms?"

"Let's be honest about these things — that's something that I think is a needed thing. Why? Because I'm an African-American person of Haitian extraction.

"I do wear my hair in a particular way. I do live in Harlem. I have something that, quite frankly, only I can say. And by saying it, I... provide the occasion by which we can have a meaningful conversation."

Roumain is a regular visitor Down Under. He performed a piece called *24 Bits: Hip-Hop Studies And Etudes* in Melbourne last October.

He first picked up the violin as a 5-year-old in Margate, Florida, and his subsequent education was deeply formal — he completed his doctorate in music composition and theory at the University of Michigan in the late '90s. Sharing this education is central to his mission.

"I see it as my responsibility — I do," Roumain says.

"In this country we learn about Thomas Edison, we certainly learn about George Washington, but you have a whole generation of students who do not know Mozart or Beethoven."

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String theory: Composer and violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain.

Coffee culture

MATE
 MARK WILSON



REMEMBER when a cafe was something run by quaint little old ladies. There were those monolithic sterile-looking silver pie-warmers full of good old-fashioned treats like cheese rolls. And who could forget the artery-clogging, made-with-real-fat sausage roll. If it was something sweet you were after, then Belgium biscuits, reminiscent of the ones your nana used to make, sat nestled beside the humble custard square. Then there was coffee and tea, black or white out of a pot, with one or two sugars. There was often a free top-up on offer if you listened to the ladies' stories about the time they walked to school barefoot in the snow, uphill both ways.

As the new millennium dawned and my life took me north to Dunedin, I encountered this strange coffee culture phenomenon, which I have grown to believe is the biggest single time-waster on this planet behind Facebook. Needless to say when first asked if I wanted to pop down to Starbucks, I replied in my proudly naive Southland manner "what the hell is Starbucks?"

After a few shocked glances from some of the big city gals, I was promptly sat down and educated to the merits of cappuccinos, mochaccinos, lattes, espressos, paninis and gluten-free biscuits. At that point my whole universe was turned upside down. Why was it necessary to have so many types of the same drink? They sounded a bit fairyish to me. Something you would drink in Paris before going to get your man-scape from the local male beauty clinic then taking your poodle for a walk.

As time unfolded, however, even the sacred bastions of Dee and Esk Sts were invaded by designer coffee shops and inundated by cellphone waving, designer bag or even man satchel brandishing patrons, sometimes frequenting multiple times a day.

It's not cheap to live this coffee culture fairytale. It takes time — time when often there is work to be done. It costs money — up to \$5 a pop. The 50c cup of tea is as long gone as Adam Parore's cricket career should have been. Is it just fashionable and cool like smoking once was... is coffee the new smoking?

Society is addicted to the daily rush of a coffee hit but where does it end? Can you live without it? Is there any productivity left in society in between three daily coffee breaks, Facebook and reality TV?

I can proudly say I have never bought a single thing from Starbucks and never had a designer coffee.

Bring back the humble cheese roll and cup of tea.



Heaps went into it, so you'll get more out of it.

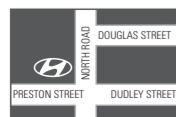
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