Music/Social media

Erica Goodman / Harpist

By

DAVID EISENSTADT

Growing up, I never knew any budding young musician(s) who studied the harp. So when I think about the harp, the first person in my mind's eye is Harpo Marx, the vaudevillian silent film star. Though he admitted that "he played it the wrong way," according to imdb.com, he taught himself well enough that when "he took proper lessons from various harpists and music teachers in New York and Los Angeles," many were fascinated by his approach and even adopted his unconventional techniques.

Erica Goodman

It was our friend/neighbour Sheila Katz Levine, who first told me about Canadian Jewish harpist Erica Goodman. Writing in allmusic.com , Robert Cummings said she is "arguably the most prominent Canadian harpist of her generation, and easily among the top several from North America. Her technique is all-encompassing and her interpretive skills incisive and imaginative."

She was very much part of a musical family. Her father, Hyman Goodman, also Toronto-and-Jewish-born, was an acclaimed violinist and teacher who studied with Vladimir Graffman, Kathleen Parlow and William Primrose. He played with many ensembles and was the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's well-respected concertmaster from 1948-67.

Born on January 19, 1948, young Erica took piano lessons with Myrtle Guerrero at 10, and at 11 started to learn the concert chromatic harp. A teenage performer, she confirmed "she played under the baton of Igor Stravinsky when he recorded in Toronto." Her teachers included Judy Loman from 1958-65 at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto; summer sessions with Charles Kleinsteuber at Interlochen in Michigan from 1959-65; and Carol Baum at UCLA from 1966-67. She studied with Marilyn Costello at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, PA from 1967-69, and performed as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

After graduation, she joined the newly-created National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa under Mario Bernardi, who "gave her the honour of playing (as a soloist) Harry Somers' Suite for Harp and Chamber Orchestra" at the orchestra's New York Lincoln Center debut performance in 1972, reported . Ottawa Citizen's Music Critic Jacob Siskind reported, "Erica Goodman's tremendous technical ability makes the listener believe that the harp has no restrictions."

noted that "she is acclaimed as one of the world's outstanding solo harpists" and has appeared at international festivals and across Canada, the United States and Europe. She has performed for hundreds of radio and TV productions, commercials and film scores, and performed with Tony Bennett, Gene DiNovi, Percy Faith, Hagood Hardy and Henry Mancini, among many others."

Walter Boudreau wrote in the Quebec Contemporary Music Society (Société de musique contemporaine du Québec), "Ms Goodman can be heard on several recordings for the BIS, Marquis, Open CBC labels with various artists including Robert Aiken, Paul Brodie, James Campbell, and the Amadeus Ensemble."

She was the first co-winner, with Lawrence Pitchkin, of the Mona Bates Award in 1978, a scholarship established to honour the respected pianist performer and teacher at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Two years later, she garnered the Grand Prix du Disque Canada for her recording Flute and Harp with Robert Aiken and won a Juno Award for her solo album Erica Goodman Plays Canadian Harp Music. A NOW Magazine 'Best of Toronto' readers' poll selected her as Best Classical Musician in 1996.

Galleryplayers.ca confirmed (that as a member of Toronto's Esprit Orchestra), "she played Alex Pauk's harp concerto on the Orchestra's inaugural European tour in 1999 and is frequently featured as a concerto soloist with the Hamilton Philharmonic."

Over the years, Goodman has also appeared with Camerata, the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Esprit Orchestra, the Festival Singers, her father Hyman Goodman, Suzanne Shulman and Riki Turofsky. Marjan Mozetich and Jeffrey Ryan, both Canadian composers have also written music expressly for their talent.

A New Music Concerts Ensemble charter member, she has recorded three albums on the Naxos label featuring the music of Toru Takemitsu (awarded Editor's Choice by Gramophone), George Crumb and Elliott Carter.

She has a couple of very listenable albums on tidal.com: For There and Then, Jeux A Deux, Erica Goodman And Friends. Reflection. Her work is guaranteed enjoyable listening. I enjoy Heavenly Harp.

David Eisenstadt is Founding Partner of tcgpr.com the Canadian Partner of IPREX Global Communication and a graduate of Carleton University's School of Journalism and the University of Calgary.

ADL develops algorithm to track antisemitism on social media

By ASAF SHALEV

March 10, 2022 (JTA) – When it comes to antisemitism on social media, the algorithms governing the major platforms shoulder some of the blame for their reach. But the Anti-Defamation League hopes to fight the spread — by creating an algorithm of its own.

The Jewish civil rights group announced Tuesday that it has built a system called the Online Hate Index, describing it as the first tool ever developed to measure antisemitism on social media platforms. The program can sift through millions of posts quickly to detect antisemitic comments and aid in their removal.

This system uses an algorithm informed by artificial intelligence to find and classify posts as possibly antisemitic. Those posts are then fed to a team of both volunteers and experts, who use their judgment to make the final call. The system also tracks whether the posts are eventually taken down.

The Online Hate Index was needed because social media companies are not being transparent enough about their efforts to curb the spread of hate speech on their platforms, according to ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt, whose organization has been pressing the big tech companies on the issue for years.

"We will use this tool to hold social media platforms accountable for how well they proactively take down hate and how well their content moderators respond to reports," Greenblatt said in a statement.

One of the project's goals is to demonstrate that if the ADL has developed the technology to track antisemitism, surely Silicon Valley can do so as well — and can therefore be doing more to address the issue.

Social media companies have attempted to tackle antisemitism in the past, but their track record is mixed at best. Facebook (now known as Meta) has stumbled following its decision to ban Holocaust denial on its platforms; engineers developed screens that also sometimes blocked legitimate educational posts meant to spread awareness about the Holocaust.

For its first analysis, the ADL used its system to scrutinize Reddit and Twitter, collecting posts from one week in August of last year. The ADL chose these platforms because they are the only major ones that provide open access to their data. Facebook, by contrast, does not typically allow outside groups to tap in for research.

The algorithm used by the ADL was trained to spot instances of possible antisemitism. In a process known as machine learning, human beings had labeled comments as antisemitic and fed them to the algorithm, which in turn began recognizing patterns. The more comments the algorithm processed, the better it became at catching the antisemitic ones.

Antisemitic statements like "Jews are lizard people prove me wrong" and "Jew mind control magic" were among the roughly 2,000 Reddit posts pinpointed by the ADL system, out of some 40 million total comments added to Reddit during that week.

The number of people who view a comment on Reddit is in part determined by whether users "upvote" or "downvote" it — and there's some good news in this regard. Users are on average scoring antisemitic comments a third lower than other types of posts, according to a report ADL published about its analysis.

"Statistical analysis of those scores shows that antisemitic content on Reddit is rewarded significantly less than non-antisemitic content," the report said.

For Twitter, which provides only a limited snapshot of its data, the ADL estimated there were some 27,400 antisemitic tweets among the 440 million posted during the week its software examined, and that these tweets could have been viewed by as many as 130 million people.

The ADL cautioned that it designed its dragnet to be conservative and that it looked only at English-language text, meaning that video, audio and images were excluded, as well as anything written in a foreign language.

On both platforms, most of the antisemitic comments stayed up for months after being posted and were not removed even after the ADL alerted the platforms about them.

One of the challenges for any attempt to stamp out antisemitic speech is defining the term, with scholars and members holding a wide variety of views on the question. One particularly contentious issue is deciding when criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism.

The ADL report says that its algorithm is trained by in-house experts and volunteers from the Jewish community. That doesn't mean human judgment is entirely outsourced to computers. In the ADL's system, artificial intelligence is simply used to sift through masses of content, with its human teams ultimately determining which posts constitute antisemitism.

To aid them in their decisions, each volunteer gets a primer that's also available on the ADL website. That primer includes a reference to the definition of antisemitism drafted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which has proven controversial because it focuses on anti-Israel speech.

Some examples in the primer of statements that can be considered antisemitic include "claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor" and "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination."