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OFF THE TOP
PUT A NAZI ON IT

Graffiti artist Banksy's New York City residency is nearly finished, but the artist is showing no sign of slowing down. His latest piece involved buying a painting of a pastoral scene for \$50 from a thrift shop, then donating it back to the same thrift shop — but only after reworking it, adding a Nazi soldier to the scene, pictured right. As he does with all his works, Banksy posted the image on his website, titling it *The banality of the banality of evil*. He also included a photograph that shows the painting in the thrift shop's front window. The 23rd Street Housing Works store in New York City is now auctioning the painting, with bidding reaching \$220,000 by Wednesday afternoon. The auction will benefit Housing Works' homelessness and AIDS initiatives. *The Associated Press*



MATTHEW SHERWOOD FOR NATIONAL POST



Homecoming queen

Renowned classical guitarist Liona Boyd returns to Canada with a tribute

BY JONATHAN FORANI

In Liona Boyd's Toronto apartment, five Juno Awards spanning three decades sit atop a table of stickered guitar cases. The stickers — flags or crests of cities and countries — read like pushpins on a map: Morocco, Belgium, Venezuela, Denmark and New Zealand.

"Every one of those stickers is a story," says the 64-year-old Canadian icon of the classical guitar, whose new album, *The Return... to Canada with Love*, finds her sticking a pin on Toronto again.

Boyd enjoys telling the stories of her life so far. And so she does, dropping names of Canadiana and musical legends with ease.

She was an eight-year companion to prime minister Pierre Trudeau: "He wanted me to live with him in Montreal and have his daughter," she recalls. A Beverly Hills neighbour to Ozzy Osbourne: "We had some good times; lots of parties." She was also a long-time pen pal to Prince Philip: "In fact, I just got a letter from him two days ago."

She has "lived through hurricanes and storms and gone all over the world," she says. "I guess I must have gypsy blood or something."

But Boyd is back. The Canadian legend is living in Toronto again (a "funny time warp," she calls it) as she releases her new album, an apt ode to the True North.

Born to British parents in London, England, Boyd came to Canada at age 8, and spent most of her early life in Toronto. Renown in the classical guitar world took her around the globe. She debuted at Carnegie Hall in 1975 and has since been known as "the First Lady of the Guitar."

Boyd is credited with bringing the classical guitar into the mainstream. She appeared on *The Tonight Show* three times, toured with Gordon Lightfoot and Tracy Chapman, and

recorded with the likes of Eric Clapton and Pink Floyd's David Gilmour.

Though she spent much of the last 20 years married in the U.S., Boyd is back in Toronto (for good, she says), and single again. She's focusing the music on her homeland now. *The Return* is part tribute, part autobiography of her homecoming. It's a record that epitomizes the ideal of Canadian content.

"Why don't we in music celebrate Canada?" asks Boyd, who called on many Canuck artists for the album. "I was kind of shocked, amongst even the great classical composers, there's hardly anything. Nobody's done a symphony for the Rockies, or a concerto for Lake Superior. Oscar Peterson did the *Canadiana Suite*,

the anthemic album closer features

Jann Arden, Serena Ryder, Divine Brown and Randy Bachman of The Guess Who. Even space crooner Chris Hadfield and *Hockey Night in Canada* host Ron MacLean make appearances.

A lesser known name on the track is Toronto classical guitarist Michael Savona, a key player on much of *The Return*. A long-time fan, Savona now tours with Boyd and says he's learned much from collaborating with the Canadian guitar legend.

"It's like a window into the past of all the great guitarists that she's worked with," he says.

Boyd's Toronto apartment is a window into her past, too. Walls and countertops are adorned with memories, the least of which are her many gold and platinum albums. Instead, it's a photograph of her parents, a portrait of Prince Philip, a candid shot with Antonio Banderas, and a framed coil of guitar strings from classical legend Andres Segovia, that excite Boyd the most.

But though she's had an amazing life, she admits something is missing. In a new track on *The Return*, Boyd sings, "Who would have thought that by this time, I'd be living my life alone?" She continues, "I was that girl who was loved and adored, so is this now my karmic reward?"

It's a heartbreaking, revelatory moment in the middle of a patriotic love letter. "I would love to find a soul mate, a companion," she says. "Somebody who loves classical music. Who would put up with my career. Because my career is my gift to the world. I don't want to give that up."

For now, playing music in Canada again is Boyd's comfort. "I have roots here, and I think that's important. It feels like home."

National Post

The Return ... To Canada With Love is in stores now. For more information and tour dates, visit LionaBoyd.com.

BOOKS

Writing on the margins

Thomson content to be a cult figure

BY MIKE DOHERTY

Rupert Thomson's books are page-turners whose plots often zag when you'd expect them to zig. Their dark, macabre imagery deflects attention from their psychological depth. They don't tend to win literary prizes, but they're celebrated in other ways: in September, his 1996 novel *The Insult*, about a man blinded by a gunshot wound, appeared on David Bowie's list of his 100 favourite books — along with the likes of Homer and Gustave Flaubert. "That was a real thrill," says Thomson, his long fingers wrapped around a cup of tea in the lounge of his downtown Toronto hotel. "David Bowie's list is going to be there forever, and the prizes come and go."

In town to promote his new novel, *Secrecy*, the 57-year-old, London, England-based writer is aware of being permanently perched on the cusp of greater success: "If I had a dollar for every time I'd heard someone say, 'Why aren't you more well known?' ..." And yet, ever since giving up a career in advertising in the mid-'80s ("I was making too much money," he tells an astounded uncle in his 2010 memoir, *This Party's Got to Stop*), Thomson has been driven by telling stories: "I feel pointless if I don't write."

Stories flow out of Thomson almost unbidden: he has barely sat down for our interview before spinning a yarn about a recent visit to the north coast of Norway, where he was researching an upcoming novel ("a very loose sequel to *Frankenstein*"), aboard "a magical boat that looks like it has a soul."

The conversation veers into his next novel after that, which will be about surrealist artists opposing the Nazis in Jersey, before it finally settles on *Secrecy*, which embeds stories within stories within stories. Ostensibly, it's the heavily fictionalized tale of Gaetano Zumbo, a real-life sculptor who worked in late-17th-century Florence under the patronage of Cosimo III de' Medici, as told to Marguerite Louise d'Orléans, the Grand Duke's estranged wife. But within Zumbo's narrative, his lover, Faustina, relates a story told her by her father, who once knew Marguerite — so her older self hears her own words reflected back to her decades later. Thomson sees *Secrecy* as "a trap-door narrative — it keeps dropping" from level to level. At the same time, it surges forward, as Zumbo and Faustina are menaced by malevolent forces within Cosimo's court.

Thomson is often accused of bewildering readers because each book is so different from the last. But *Secrecy* shares some preoccupations with his earlier work: for one, like his first novel, 1987's *Dreams of Leaving* (about a town in the south of England where a totalitarian police force prevents anyone from escaping) and 2005's *Divided Kingdom* (about a parallel-world U.K. where everyone is sorted according to their supposed personality types), it has a dystopian feel. "We all think we know Florence, but it's quite a postcard vision," Thomson says. He spent many hours at the British Library, combing through old Italian texts like *The Physiology of Hate* (in which he discovered some bracing medieval swear words), and found that by the late 1700s, the city was in decline, and Cosimo III's regime repressive.

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