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MUSIC

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

THE SYMPHONIES

Our essential guide to classical music's most revolutionary masterpieces

120 REVIEWS CDS, DVDS & BOOKS see p61

Plus

Beethoven's *Fidelio*
The very best recordings revealed

The Rev. Richard Coles
The presenter on his musical loves

Richard Morrison
My tribute to Sir David Willcocks

Partition.

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Was he blighted by Beethoven?

Icy inspirations
A musical expedition to the north

In Bach's footsteps
We go on a JSB pilgrimage

Top of the class
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THE MONTH IN MUSIC

The recordings, concerts, broadcasts and websites exciting us this December

ON AIR
Due North

As Radio 3 begins its *Northern Lights* season – celebrating the music and landscape of the world's uppermost regions – composer Emily Hall performs a special commission on *In Tune*. For inspiration she has visited the remote Shetland island of Unst, taking sound recordings of, among others, children's folk songs, a church organ and even a wind turbine or two. *See pp48 & 96*

ON STAGE
Four-score Scots

With its renowned expertise in contemporary music, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra is one of the most forward-looking ensembles around. Now, though, is the time for a quick look back. On 3 December the BBC SSO celebrates 80 years since it was founded by treating the audience at Glasgow's City Halls to a concert of Mozart, Mahler and Matthias Pintscher. *See p100*

ON DISC
Finn finale

The 150th anniversary year of Sibelius's birth might be drawing to a close, but there's still time for some significant additions to the CD shelves. Take, for instance, the Berlin Philharmonic with Simon Rattle (pictured) and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra with Okko Kamu, who have both recorded all seven of the Finn's symphonies. In both cases, the results are ear-opening. *See p68*

ONLINE
Dancing scene

The Opéra national de Paris has launched '3e Scène', a new digital stage that shows ballets exclusively online. The 'stage' features a mix of both contemporary and traditional works, using both specially filmed new sequences and footage of vintage productions. Directed by Karim Zeriahen, Debussy's *l'Après-midi d'un faune* is a highlight. *See operadeparis.fr/en/3e-scene*

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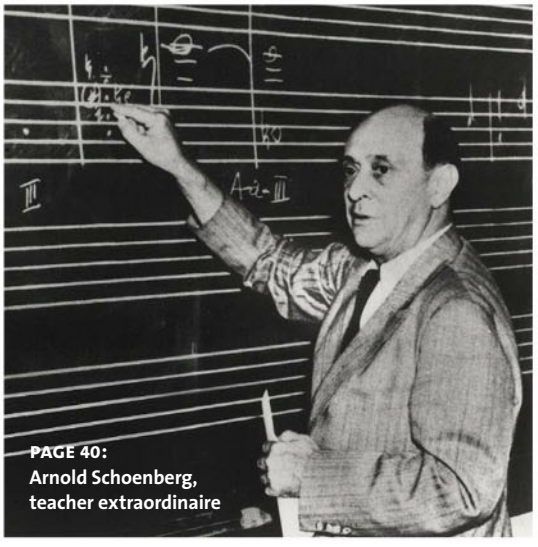
We explore the nine great symphonies that flowed from the pen of Beethoven

PAGE 32:
Semyon Bychkov talks to James Naughtie



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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

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Music critic, The Independent

'Hearing Ravi Shankar at the Festival Hall in 1965 was the start of my musical promiscuity, which has continued via passionate flings in Georgia, Albania, Kazakhstan, Vietnam and Japan: an unending quest, unending pleasure.' *Page 44*

Michael Scott Rohan
Author and critic

'My fascination with northern Europe's extraordinary culture began as a child – from Tove Jansson's Moomin stories to Norse myth and nature – but the music of Grieg and Sibelius launched me on a lifelong quest to discover more...' *p48*

Chris de Souza
Author and broadcaster

'During my lifetime, Schubert – like Mozart – has come to be taken on his own terms, rather than just as a pale imitation of Beethoven. I am fascinated by his individuality, and utterly gripped by his unique story.' *Page 54*

DECEMBER REVIEWS

The important new recordings, DVDs and books reviewed

COVER: GETTY **THIS PAGE:** ISTOCK, RICHARD CANNON, ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG CENTRE

The licence to publish this magazine was acquired from BBC Worldwide by Immediate Media Company on 1 November 2011. We remain committed to making a magazine of the highest editorial quality, one that complies with BBC editorial and commercial guidelines and connects with BBC programmes.

Welcome

We like our geniuses to be a touch fallible: Mozart the vulgarian, Bach the bad-tempered, intolerant perfectionist, Beethoven the scruffy, afflicted idealist whose indecipherable sketches and drafts reveal just how hard it often was for him to summon the muse. For Beethoven, music had to *say* something, not just take harmony, orchestration and form in different directions. For the first time, a symphonic composer was working less within musical grids than on huge expansive canvases, painting visions of fate, the indomitable human spirit and brotherhood. And none of that should come easily, surely? Beethoven's nine symphonies (p22), however, were the result not just of artistic struggles, but personal too, his encroaching deafness so early on in his life providing unimaginable impetus to write single symphonic movements whose scales far outstripped

How did you first encounter Beethoven's symphonies?

anything that had come before. Music, of course, would never be the same again, a phrase that is hard to apply to many other composers, if any.

I do hope you enjoy our explorations of each of Beethoven's monumental symphonies. In return, we'd love to hear from you about how you first encountered these incredible works, whether it be concert experiences, great recordings or even your own performances in orchestras… I used to play piano duet arrangements of them with my dad when I was young (I've since lost the sheet music, alas) which gave me a wonderful insight into Beethoven's symphonic plans, harmonic schemes and textures. By the time we'd got the end of the *Eroica*, the wine bottle was almost always empty.

Finally, I'm very sorry to say that BBC Music Direct, our service that helps you buy any disc mentioned and reviewed in the magazine, is currently unavailable. We're looking to get the service up and running again in the next few months, but until then, do turn to any of our friends at Presto Classical (+44 (0)1926 317025), Europadisc (+44 (0)115 982 7500) or MDT (+44 (0)1332 540 240) who will all be only too delighted to help.

Oliver Condy *Editor*

LETTERS

Write to: The editor, *BBC Music Magazine*, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol, BS1 3BN or email: music@classical-music.com

LETTER OF THE MONTH

WILFUL OPERATOR?: the Met's Peter Gelb (right) talks to James Naughtie

ITALIAN OVERLOAD

James Naughtie conducted a fascinating interview with Peter Gelb, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera (October), who comes across as quite wilful. He wants an expanded audience, but some New York Met lovers are sorry to see some new productions that seem to be made for the sake of having new ones. When conductor James Levine's philosophy was obviously more dominant, the Met had a better balanced season too. The current season is overloaded with Italian pieces. I can see only one piece by a French composer, one by Wagner, one by Richard Strauss and one by Berg. Nothing at all of the great works of Britten, Janáček, or Debussy, and nothing American or Russian. In his quest for 'new opera regulars' does Gelb want to lose those of us who are the 'Met dependables' of the last half-century?
Donald H Jones, *New York, US*

Every month the editor will award a **SolarDAB 2 Roberts radio (retail value £80 – see www.robertsradio.co.uk)** to the writer of the best letter received. The editor reserves the right to shorten letters for publication.

RICHARD CANNON

SIMPLY MAAGNIFICENT

Reading Terry Williams's *Building a Library* overview of the recordings of Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony (October), I am pleased to see that he considers conductor Peter Maag's 1997 recording, on the Arts label, the best. My favourite recording of this work is also Peter Maag's – not, however, the 1997 version with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, but a recording made in 1986 with the Bern Symphony Orchestra, recorded on the MCA Classics label. Although the two readings are similar, and the timings of the movements almost identical (except for the first movement, which is half a minute longer in the 1986 version), I find the earlier version slightly more lively and piquant, and the recorded sound is, to my ears, significantly better. The 1986 recording also has three of Mendelssohn's overtures, including the *Hebrides* – a fine, propulsive reading that I consider to be the best I have ever heard. Every time I listen to this disc, which is often, it makes me, in Terry Williams's words, 'smile with pleasure'.
Stephen A Bergquist, *Massachusetts, US*

SWEDISH DELIGHTS

Any attempt to list hidden gems from Scandinavia (*Letters*, November) would quickly exceed the space allowed to the *Letters* page, so I will mention just two. The violin concertos by the Swedes Wilhelm Peterson-Berger and Lars-Erik Larsson are two of the most beautiful violin concertos of the 20th century. But do you ever hear them? Instead we seem to get Mendelssohn *ad nauseam*.
Roger Musson, *Edinburgh*

SOGGY SOLOIST

Seeing Benjamin Grosvenor playing Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto at the Last Night of the Proms this year took me back more than 50 years to when I first heard the concerto, also at the BBC Proms, played by Eileen Joyce. If memory serves, this was the first performance of the concerto in the UK, so there was great excitement. The concert was a Friday night and so a 'Beethoven Night'. Due to torrential rain, Joyce arrived late and wet, and so the order of the first half was re-arranged – we had a Beethoven overture and symphony and then the Fourth Concerto with Joyce in a blue gown. After the interval, Joyce reappeared in a yellow gown to perform the Shostakovich, to wild acclaim. This was followed by, if my memory is as good as I think it is, the *Firebird Suite*. What a programme! Those were the days!
Alistair Jones, *via email*
THE EDITOR REPLIES: Your memory is as good as you think it is! The overture, incidentally, was *Fidelio*, Op. 72 and the symphony was the *Pastoral*. You can find details of all past BBC Proms on the excellent archive on the BBC website.

MISSING BASSOONS

I agree with Richard Morrison's support for the forlorn bassoon (October). It's a wonderful instrument and it's well worth raising its profile. However, when

it comes to the absence of jazz bassoonists, I want to set the record right. There are at least a few. Garvin Bushell played bassoon with Louis Armstrong and, years later, played with John Coltrane at the Village Vanguard. In the 1960s Gil Evans used bassoons frequently with, for instance, Bob Tricarico who was a multi-reed player – no solos, but clearly a more-than-competent musician. Another well known player was Frank Tiberi, who played in the Woody Herman band in the 1970s and '80s, while the likes of Karen Borca and Paul Hanson are very much alive and playing. On a sadder note, Lindsay Cooper, a Scottish jazz reed player who specialised in the bassoon, died in 2013 as a result of MS. Cooper recorded many of her own CDs – do Google her if you are interested. And I hope that Richard Morrison is interested too!
Tony Roberts, *West Cork, Ireland*

STAN THE MAN

In August, I had the pleasure of hearing Stanisław Skrowaczewski, featured in October's *Music That Changed Me*, conduct the Cleveland Orchestra playing Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony at Severance Hall. Besides the excellence of the music, it was thrilling to be a mere 30 feet from a contemporary of Shostakovich – someone who knew him personally and was now interpreting the piece as only a contemporary of the composer could. And the event was even more memorable as I was seated next to an elderly gentleman who attended Maestro Skrowaczewski's first concert with the Minnesota Orchestra. That human connection, through the generations, going back to Bach and beyond is one of the qualities that has drawn me deeper into the fascinating world of classical music. And the willingness of world-class musicians to not only perform in Erie, my hometown, but to personally meet and greet interested members of the audience is something unique to the genre.
Joe Krol, *Pennsylvania, US*

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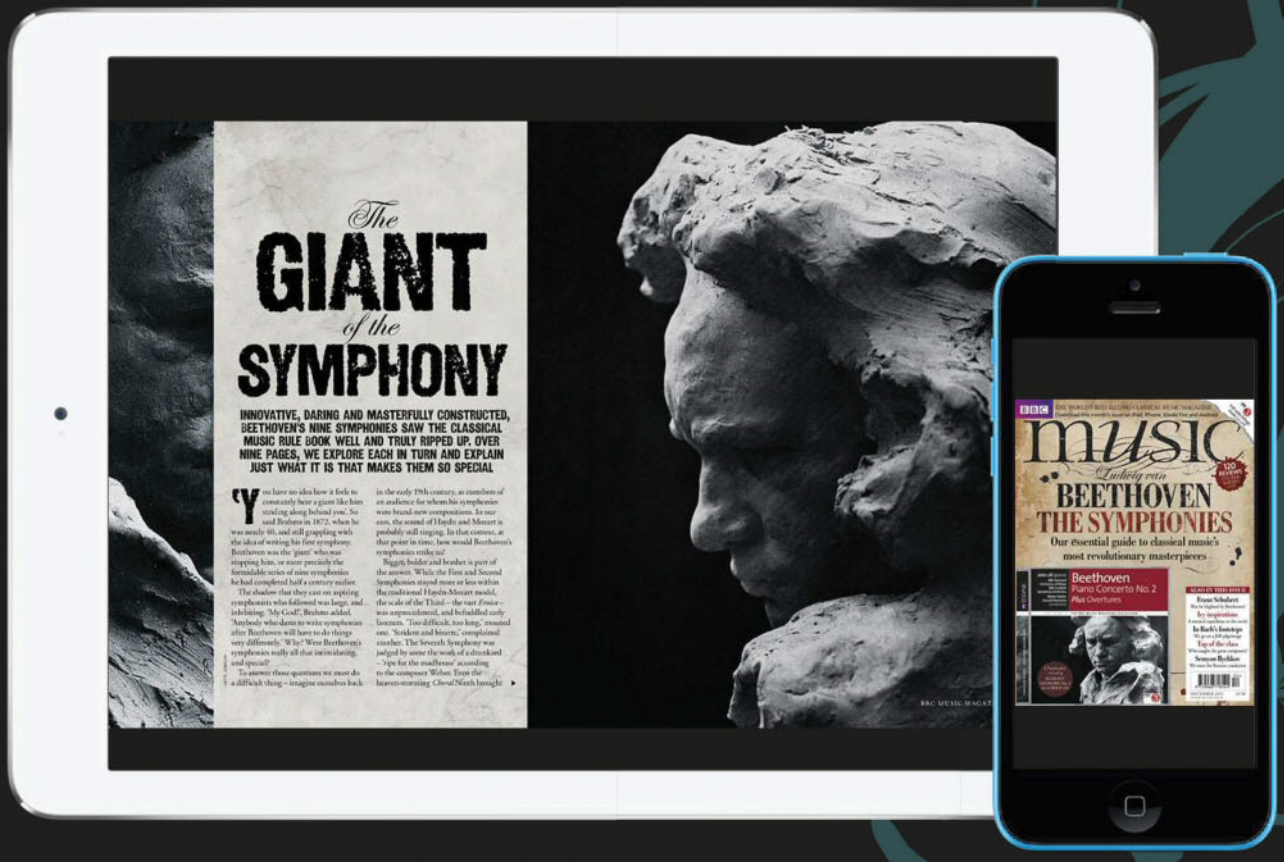

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BBC music MAGAZINE

The Full Score

OUR PICK OF THE MONTH'S NEWS, VIEWS AND INTERVIEWS

New Generation Artists announced

Trombonist Peter Moore among seven new additions to BBC Radio 3's young talent scheme

SLIDE SHOW:
Peter Moore becomes an NGA

KAUPO KIKKAS

Peter Moore, who in 2008 became the youngest ever BBC Young Musician of the Year at the age of 12, has been named as one of Radio 3's seven new BBC New Generation Artists, the first trombonist to be invited onto the programme. Moore, who is currently co-principal trombone with the London Symphony Orchestra and an ambassador for the BBC *Ten Pieces*, will be a New Generation Artist (NGA) until 2017, spending his two years showcasing recording and performing with the BBC's performing groups and appearing on Radio 3. Moore will also have the chance to collaborate with his fellow NGAs, who this year include Italian pianist Beatrice Rana, *BBC Music Magazine*'s Rising Star last month, Turkish tenor Ilker Arcayürek and jazz trumpeter and composer Laura Jurd, the first NGA jazz artist since saxophonist Trish Clowes in 2012. 'The chance to be able to share my music with a much wider audience is an exciting thing,' says Jurd. 'Two years as an NGA is a good period of chance to explore new material and develop as an artist.'

The New Generation Artist scheme has been running for over 17 years, and can count some of the biggest names in classical music among its alumni. Trumpeter Alison Balsom, pianist Benjamin Grosvenor and the Belcea Quartet have all benefited from the unique opportunities the scheme can offer. 'It's a really important scheme for the station,' controller of Radio 3 Alan Davey tells *BBC Music Magazine*. 'We support talent at a particular time in a musician's career, and give them the exposure, support and mentoring to get them to the next level.' And, he adds, many of the artists appearing at this year's BBC Proms were current or former NGAs.

Alongside its new NGA roster, Radio 3 has launched a classical off-shoot of its already existing BBC Introducing brand. BBC Introducing Classical aims to discover talented composers and artists who will be able to upload their work via the BBC Introducing Uploader. The finest will be selected and invited to appear and perform on *In Tune*.

New Generation Artists

The 2015-17 list in full

FLOWER POWER: jazz musician Laura Jurd

Annelien Van Wauwe clarinet *(Belgium)*
Beatrice Rana piano *(Italy)*
Ilker Arcayürek tenor *(Austria)*
Kathryn Rudge mezzo-soprano *(UK)*
Laura Jurd jazz trumpet *(UK)*
Peter Moore trombone *(UK)*
Van Kuijk Quartet *(France)*

Anna Tcybuleva takes the Leeds

Russian pianist enjoys success in renowned piano competition

Anna Tcybuleva has won the 18th Leeds International Piano Competition. The 25-year-old Russian beat five other finalists with her performance of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2 – in addition to £20,000 prize money and the Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gold medal, Tcybuleva wins the Champs Hill Records Award and an opportunity to record her debut CD. Sir Mark Elder, whose Hallé Orchestra accompanied the finalists, called Tcybuleva 'a truly exciting winner'. She joins a prestigious list of winners that includes Radu Lupu and Murray Perahia.

WINNING ENSEMBLE: (left to right) Elder, Waterman, Tcybuleva and patron Dame Janet Baker

The jury was made up of 12 prominent musicians and industry figures, and was chaired for the last time by founder Dame Fanny Waterman, who leaves the organisation at the age of 95 and after 52 years as artistic director. The prize-giving ceremony focused on the achievement of Dame Fanny, who stressed her confidence that 'the Competition will continue to produce the greatest pianists in the world for many years to come.'

Among the runners-up, special mention was made of South Korean Heejae Kim who played Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. Kim won the Terrence Judd Prize, a special prize awarded by the Hallé and Sir Mark Elder, and is guaranteed at least three paid engagements with the Hallé and a solo concert at Bridgewater Hall.

Leeds roll call

First: **Anna Tcybuleva** *(Russia)*
Second: **Heejae Kim** *(South Korea)*
Third: **Vitaly Pisarenko** *(Russia)*
Fourth: **Drew Petersen** *(US)*
Fifth: **Tomoki Kitamura** *(Japan, pictured)*
Sixth: **Yun Wei** *(China)*

RISING STAR Great artists of tomorrow

Ariel Lanyi
Pianist

Being profiled as an 11 year-old in a TV programme entitled *Superhuman: Genius* would, some might argue, give one rather a lot to live up to. Thankfully, for pianist Ariel Lanyi, it hasn't proved too much of a cross to bear. 'I still get feedback about it!,' he says about the programme, which was broadcast on ITV in 2008. 'But really, I just do what I do – I had my musical path, and the documentary was just a short insight into it.'

> 'For me, competitions take the music out of music'

Born into a musical family in Israel, Lanyi, now 18, learned the piano and violin from the age of four. Over the years, it became clear that his strength was at the keyboard, but he still plays both instruments keenly today, and composes too. 'I find that playing the violin helps me a lot as a pianist,' he says. 'It gives me a deeper insight into a larger repertoire, playing traditions and ways of playing things – there are ways that a violinist would phrase a certain passage, for instance. And by writing music myself, I can sympathise more with particular composers.'

Television documentaries aside, Lanyi's career has moved relatively smoothly and serenely thus far. Studies at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and, now, Royal Academy of Music, have occupied the bulk of his time, interrupted occasionally by the recording of his debut disc – of Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and Janáček – in 2012, plus various masterclasses, most notably with the great US pianist Leon Fleisher. 'I've played for Fleisher on three different occasions, and each was quite a phenomenal experience. It was like a spiritual cleansing. His approach is so clean and free of mannerisms that it was a really good chance to reflect on myself. At first his ideas seemed radical to me, but soon I saw how true they are and how phenomenal his insights are.'

Learning from the greats? Yes. Competing with his peers? No. While many young pianists look to competitions to give their careers a push, Lanyi says they're not for him. 'For me, they take the music out of music. Musicians should want each other to succeed and enjoy hearing each other, but competitions do the opposite – you want others to go wrong. I'm here to enjoy music!'

Interview by Jeremy Pound; Lanyi plays Beethoven and Medtner at St Martin in the Fields on 24 Nov.

STRING SUPPORT: 'playing the violin helps me as a pianist'

SWPIX.COM

THE OFFICIAL CLASSICAL CHART

The UK's best-selling specialist classical releases

Chart for week ending 24 September 2015

1 Nessun Dorma – The Puccini Album
Jonas Kaufmann (tenor); Orchestre e coro di Santa Cecilia/Antonio Pappano
Sony Classical 88875092492
A tuneful, swoonful collection of Puccini hits

2 Still with the Music
Karl Jenkins
Warner Classics 825646100538
Twenty years of the Welsh composer's music are encapsulated on one carefully picked compilation

NEW

3 Songs from the Arc of Life
Yo-Yo Ma (cello), Kathryn Stott (piano)
Sony Music 88875103162
Long-term musical friends Ma and Stott enjoy each other's company in Elgar, Dvořák and all

NEW

4 Solo
Nicholas McCarthy (piano)
Warner Classics 825646052400
McCarthy displays one-handed brilliance in works ranging from Chopin to Gershwin

5 Home
Anoushka Shankar (sitar)
Deutsche Grammophon 479 4785
Two ragas by Shankar reveal the mesmerising beauty and virtuosity of Indian classical music

6 Rachmaninov *Variations*
Daniil Trifonov (piano); Philadelphia Orchestra/Yannick Nézet-Séguin
Deutsche Grammophon 479 4970
The formidable Russian performs Rachmaninov

7 Bach • Handel • Scarlatti *Gamba Sonatas*
Steven Isserlis (cello), Richard Egarr (harpsichord), Robin Michael (cello)
Hyperion CDA 68045
A sublime Baroque journey from Isserlis and co

8 JS Bach *Keyboard Concertos Nos 1-7*
Andreas Staier (harpsichord); Freiburg Baroque *Harmonia Mundi HMC 90218182*
Staier's playing is full of athleticism and flair in Bach's effervescent works for harpsichord

9 Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*
Katherine Broderick, Roderick Williams etc; Hallé/Mark Elder *Hallé CDHLL7542*
Conductor Mark Elder and crew ride the crest of a wave in Vaughan Williams's early symphony

NEW

10 Marcello *Psalms*
Voces8; Les Inventions
Signum Classics SIGCD391
Unknown choral gems are given immaculate first recordings in this superbly sung collection

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NEW VENTURE: Jamie Walton has launched his own label

Ayriel takes flight

Cellist Jamie Walton has launched a new record label, Ayriel Classical. Its aim is to explore 'great chamber music on a deep and profound level', with the first release bringing together Strauss's *Metamorphosen* and the String Sextet from his *Capriccio* with Schoenberg's *Verklärte Nacht*. It's not the first time Walton has branched out from his performing career: in 2009 he set up the North York Moors Chamber Music Festival, which will be closely linked to the new label. Ayriel Classics plans to release three or four recordings a year, primarily as digital downloads, and future plans include a recording of Ravel and Fauré.

Hong Kong Ring

Jaap van Zweden and his Hong Kong Philharmonic have embarked on Wagner's *Ring* cycle in a new recording project for Naxos. *Das Rheingold*, out this October, stars

mezzo-soprano Michelle DeYoung as Fricka, baritone Matthias Goerne as Wotan and baritone Peter Sidhom as Alberich. It was recorded live in Hong Kong in January 2015. The other three operas will be performed over the next three seasons, and all released on Naxos. *Die Walküre* is next up, to be recorded in January, with Stuart Skelton as Siegmund, Heidi Melton as Sieglinde, Petra Lang as Brünnhilde and Falk Struckmann as Hunding.

All we like Sleep

BBC Radio 3 has set two new Guinness World Records: for the longest broadcast of a single piece of music and the longest live broadcast of a single piece of music. The station broadcast the premiere of Max Richter's *Sleep*, composed in collaboration with the neuroscientist David Eagleman. A 'lullaby for a frenetic world', the chamber-scale piece was written to lull its audience to sleep over its record-setting eight hour, one minute and 23-second course. Performed at London's Wellcome Collection by Richter and an ensemble of six musicians, listeners were provided with beds to sleep in. 'It's rare a controller wills his audience to sleep,' said Radio 3 controller Alan Davey, 'but I hope Radio 3 listeners will enjoy slowing down to Max Richter's *Sleep*.' We review the album *From Sleep* on p85.

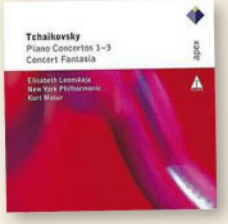
REWIND Artists talk about their past recordings

THIS MONTH
ELISABETH LEONSKAJA

The Russian pianist was a protégée of Sviatoslav Richter. Called 'Paris', her latest release features works by Debussy, Ravel and Enescu. This month, the eaSonus label also releases a set of her late Schubert Sonatas plus a Bonus DVD, to be followed by a set of the early Sonatas.

My finest moment

Tchaikovsky *Piano Concertos*
Elisabeth Leonskaja (piano); New York Philharmonic/Kurt Masur
Apex 2564680395 (1997)



One of my most interesting experiences was recording concertos with Kurt Masur. It's very special for a young musician to work with an orchestra for the first time – there's so much to learn. I made a recording of the Brahms's concertos with Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus: they have that wonderful soft string sound, and their phrasing evokes such exalted emotions. Then, when he went to the New York Philharmonic we recorded the Tchaikovsky concertos from live concerts. Masur always says that if you don't feel something together, words will not help. We never communicated using words, but we both had antennae attuned. The NYPO was a very different orchestra: such force, such brilliance and organisation, everyone working towards the same goal. They created this energy; it lifted me.

My fondest memory

Mozart-Grieg *Piano Sonatas*
Sviatoslav Richter, Elisabeth Leonskaja (piano) *Teldec 4509-90825-2 (1991)*

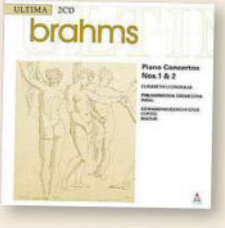
When I was living in Moscow, Sviatoslav Richter asked me if I would prepare a programme with him, for which I would need to learn Grieg's two-piano arrangements of Mozart's Fantasia in C minor and the Sonatas Nos 15 & 16. Exuberantly happy, I began work on these, but in the middle of preparations, in 1978, I received my visa to leave the Soviet Union for Vienna, and couldn't wait for the concert. It was only 13 years later that we finally played the pieces together, and the recordings were made at that time. Grieg's

Mozart arrangements are quite strange and of their time, but Richter grew up with an organist/pianist father who would have played them at home when he was a child, and I think he had a very sentimental, nostalgic feeling about them. To meet a great artist, a great person, gave me a whole new perspective, a way of thinking about things and recognising aspects of music. He's in my heart, and I remember him every day. To be next to him, to hear how he worked – everything was extraordinary.

I'd like another go at...

Brahms *Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2*
Elisbeth Leonskaja (piano); Leipzig Gewandhaus/Kurt Masur; Philharmonia/Inbal Ultima
Teldec 18948 (1997)

I would like to do both of Brahms's Piano Concertos again. They are such great pieces and I feel very close to them. I made recordings many years ago, but now I have much more experience to bring, especially with these pieces: I hope I'm closer to Brahms now, and better at playing with orchestras. I play both concertos very often, and sometimes both in one programme – why not? They are so different. The First is very stormy and youthful, the Second warm and expansive: the modes of music are very different. In an ideal world, I'd record them with the conductors Kurt Masur, Kurt Sanderling, Bernard Haitink or Charles Dutoit! They all understand Brahms.



As for the orchestra, I couldn't say. When a conductor lifts his baton, the sound of an orchestra changes – it just happens, and is something I will never quite understand.

BEN EALOVEGA, JULIA WESELY

STUDIOSECRETS

We reveal who's recording what, and where

DARK THOUGHTS: violinist James Ehnes

Violinist **James Ehnes** and his string quartet have turned to two dark and intense chamber works for their latest recording for Onyx. The group has recorded Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* Quartet and Sibelius's *Voces intimae* Quartet in the tranquil surroundings of Potton Hall, Suffolk.

Sibelius was also on soprano **Camilla Tilling**'s latest album, *Nordic Songs* (reviewed p80). She's now turned back the clock to explore operatic arias by Gluck and Mozart for her next album, recorded with Musica Seaculorum and Philipp Steinaecke in the Kulturzentrum, Grand Hotel Toblach, Italy.

Emma Johnson has brought together three English clarinet concertos for an album recorded at the Watford Colosseum for Nimbus Records. The pieces are by Patrick Hawes, John Dankworth and Will Todd, and are all premiere recordings.

Conductor **Miguel Harth-Bedoya** is at the helm of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra's new disc for Harmonia Mundi, pairing Lutosławski's *Concerto for Orchestra* with Schoenberg's arrangement of Brahms's Piano Quartet in G minor. It's recorded on the ensemble's home patch in Bass Performance Hall, Fort Worth, Texas.

Also for Harmonia Mundi, harpsichordist **Richard Egarr** follows up his BBC Music Magazine Award-nominated disc of Bach's *English Suites* and acclaimed recordings of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* with a recording of the *French Suites*.

#64 TRILL

DISCOVERING MUSIC

Stephen Johnson gets to grips with classical music's technical terms

NOW THIS ONE'S simple, isn't it? A trill is one of those extended wobbles on a long note you tend to hear at the end of a show-off solo in a concerto or coloratura aria. In the Baroque or Classical eras it's virtually a fixture. Yes, the wobble must be on two notes – neighbouring notes to be precise (either a major or a minor second) – but surely that's it.

Alas, no. Go back to the very early Baroque period (at this point regular readers of this column may be experiencing a slight anticipatory contraction of the stomach muscles), to the vocal works of Monteverdi and his contemporaries, and there you will find the word 'trillo' identified with something significantly different. There it's not so much a wobble as a shake, and on just one repeated note. The kind of trill described above is usually smooth, legato, but this one is jerkier, more like a vocal spasm. The gorgeous 'Duo Seraphim' from Monteverdi's *Vespers* contains plenty of these, as when the word 'Sanctus' becomes 'Sa-ah-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-han-ctus'. When historically minded performers first revived this kind of trill, critics and listeners found it rather funny; now we're used to it, it can be strangely touching or, even more strangely, erotic. Nowadays we'd be inclined to call this a 'tremolo'. Monteverdi would also have used the word 'tremolo', but what he meant by it would be what we would call a trill. At some stage during the 17th century, the two terms seem to have swapped over.

The sign for a trill is an italic *tr* followed by a wavy horizontal line, which for once looks very like what it represents, and perhaps for that reason it has remained standard since the early-18th century. What it doesn't tell you, however, is how to begin or end the trill. All sorts of exit strategies are possible. You can anticipate the final note by a fraction of a beat, or just drop onto it. You can preface the fall to the final note with an elegant downward twist or a breath-catching minute pause. As for the beginning, unless indicated otherwise, the modern trill starts on the lower note; the high Baroque trill, however, began on the upper note. The change seems to have happened around 1830. Not for the first time, I wonder if this was just a change in fashion, or whether there's some deeper sociological significance. A possible subject for a thesis?

A comic performance

Bianca Castafiore, undoubtedly the most celebrated opera singer in comic book history, has been brought to life on stage. The diva, who many readers will know as the lovable if formidable character from Hergé's *Tintin* adventures, was the star role of *The Castafiore Emerald*, a new production recently given its premiere by the Opera for All company at Château de La Hulpe in Belgium. Based on the book of the same name, *The Castafiore Emerald* features several *Tintin* characters, such as Captain Haddock and detectives Thomson and Thompson, but centre stage is given to the soprano who, played by Hélène Bernardy (above), performs some of the well-known arias that her character might have sung. The company now hopes to tour the production abroad.

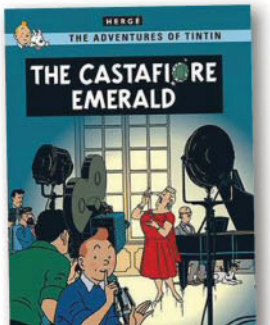


ILLUSTRATION: ADAM HOWLING
JEAN-MARCEL HUMBERT

APP REVIEW

Every issue we explore a recent digital product

CymaScope Music Made visible £7.99

A CymaScope is a clever new piece of kit that takes sounds and gives them visual form by displaying their vibrations in patterns formed in water. This app does roughly the same, but in electronic format – play or sing a note, and the image that appears on on your tablet or phone screen is pretty much what you'd see produced by a CymaScope itself. There are two main ways of creating sounds to be turned into images here: either press the notes on a circular piano keyboard on the screen or, via the microphone, supply sounds from elsewhere. Also included is a demonstration of patterns produced by the CymaScope when Debussy's *Clair de Lune* is played by pianist Daniel Levy and, for some reason, the ability to retune the piano keyboard to 432 Hz and 444 Hz pitch. It's all very pretty and (briefly) fun to play around with. But the actual point of it? That's anyone's guess... *Jeremy Pound* ★★★

Nelsons sails into Leipzig

HEADING EAST: Nelsons bags Riccardo Chailly's old post

A late-summer of orchestral comings and goings, wild speculation and grand announcements has been rounded off with the appointment of Andris Nelsons as the chief conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. The Latvian will take over the position of Gewandhauskapellmeister (to give it its official title) from Riccardo Chailly, who has left the German orchestra to give himself more time for his own new role of music director of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra – Nelsons himself had been tipped to take over at Lucerne before Chailly's appointment was announced in August. Nelsons, whose family is based in Germany, will begin his new job officially at the beginning of the 2017-18 season.

TWITTER ROOM

Who's saying what on the micro-blogging site

***@lang_lang** I was waiting until water was confirmed, but now I feel comfortable booking my #LangLangOnMars 2018 Inter-Planetary Tour! Who's in?*
Pianist Lang Lang (left) spots a potential new audience

***@iestyn_davies** Just seen on my delayed train a) girl waxing her legs and b) girl rehearsing plainchant in corridor outside disabled toilet.*
Countertenor Iestyn Davies's train gets stuck in the Renaissance era

***@RBPviolinist** Very tempted to get a circle of fifths watch. But I love my violin watch and can only wear one at a time. What to do? #musicianproblems*
Violinist Rachel Barton Pine needs more time...

***@StuartSkelton** Hey ITV what on God's earth was that caterwauling of 'The World in Union'? #bringbackshirleyandbryn*
Paloma Faith's singing at the Rugby World Cup grates with tenor Stuart Skelton

***@JoyceDiDonato** Let the Japanese Jet Lag Games Commence: 2 days to recover from the #30hourjourney and #14hourtimedifference*
The life of the long-distance mezzo takes its toll on Joyce DiDonato (right)

PETER FISCHLI

Notes from the piano stool
David Owen Norris

I'd been wondering for some time where my beloved book of Byrd had got to. A previous owner had written all sorts of interesting things about the melancholy Pavanes and sprightly Galliards. I'd put fingering in. Lovely olive-green cover. I missed it regularly about once a month, but I could never find it. Then just the other day, the chap I'd lent it to found it, and sent it back with a charming letter. Turns out he'd had it for 30 years.

I sat down gladly to play it through, and I noticed an odd thing. The editor had put in a couple of diagonal lines to show that Byrd had not really written parallel fifths. If you pretended that the first note up from the bass was the alto, and the bottom right hand note was the tenor, Byrd had not transgressed. It's a job to hear the difference on a keyboard, though.

Parallel fifths are a shibboleth, sorting sheep from goats. They occur when two vocal parts, five notes apart, move to other notes that are also five notes apart. Palestrina didn't write them, though opinion is divided about why not. Beethoven was touchy enough about them to

Some of us notice parallel fifths, and when we hear unintended examples, we exchange glances

bluster 'Well, I allow them!' when someone challenged him. Vaughan Williams made his reputation by allowing them. Some of us notice them, and when we hear unintended examples, we exchange glances.

Liszt, in his transcription of Schubert's song 'The Linden Tree', tacitly corrected a 'forbidden' harmonic progression at the end. Actually, Schubert's manuscript shows that it was the printer who got it wrong. In this instance, the 'transgression' was a falling leading-note – another thing that Palestrina didn't do, though Bach's altos had to put up with it a good deal.

I came across an extraordinary example of tacit correction when I recorded Mansel Thomas's choral arrangement of John Ireland's 'Sea Fever' ('I must go down to the seas again') with the Carice Singers. Thomas changes the top line of Ireland's piano part here and there, precisely to avoid the impression of parallel fifths. The amazing bit comes at the end, though, where Ireland's bass falls darkly from G flat to F. And here Thomas (not Ireland) puts exactly the same notes at the top of the chords too. NOT allowed, Mansel! Parallel octaves!! Between the treble and the bass!!! I hear whirling subterranean noises from Leipzig and Rome.

Mansel Thomas knew the rules. I think he put that parallel octave in as a signal to kindred spirits, for it was only after I'd marveled over it that I went back to notice his earlier corrections. And, of course, it sounds terrific. ■

David Owen Norris is a pianist, composer and radio presenter

MUSIC TO MY EARS

What the classical world has been listening to this month

NICHOLAS DANIEL *oboist*

I listen to every single disc that the Gabrieli Consort and their conductor Paul McCreesh make, as the quality of them is always stupendous. I've heard them sing **Howells**'s Requiem both live in Poland and on disc, and each was as good as the other – I suspect that very little editing was needed on the disc. The way that Howells uses the vocal lines to create colour in this totally unaccompanied work is really remarkable, and this recording of it is exceptional.

■ I was recently introduced by the clarinettist Mark Simpson to the music of **Georges Lentz**. Originally from Luxembourg, he's quite a mysterious composer who works fairly slowly – his pieces tend to be a little like sculptures in that they evolve, and he makes changes to them over time. His *Guyuhmgan*, composed for large orchestra, is very beautiful and spiritual, and has very big parts for oboe and cor anglais – I like the work despite that rather than because of it, I should add!

■ I can't stop listening to the slow movement of **Beethoven**'s Second Piano Concerto, played by Alfred Brendel with the Vienna Philharmonic under Sir Simon Rattle. No matter how many times I've listened to this recording, there are things in there that I can't quite work out how they do it. It was one of the last things Brendel recorded before he retired, but there's no lack of power and nothing missing technically. The only thing you hear is an incredible wisdom and the freshest music making.

■ On **James Blake**'s *Overgrown* album, there's a song called 'Retrograde' that I really like. I found out about Blake before he won the Mercury Prize, and have been telling everyone about him. His voice can sound like he's feeling a little lost, but he can open up when he wants to. *Overgrown* is an incredibly well made album and 'Retrograde' a really interesting song – Blake knows exactly how to work with the fragility of his voice.

Nicholas Daniel is performing John Tavener's The Hidden Face with Iestyn Davies and Fretwork at Kings Place, London, on 18 December

OUR CHOICES

The BBC Music team's current favourites

Oliver Condy
Editor
In the stunning church in the Mallorcan village of Banyalbufar last month, I heard **Manuel de Falla**'s seductive song cycle, his *Siete canciones populares españolas* performed alluringly by soprano Amaia Azcona and guitarist Morgan Szymanski. They're wonderful pieces, each tackling the sensitive issues of love, from unbridled passion to infidelity. Falla's melodic gift shines through, especially in the beautiful 'Lullaby'.

Jeremy Pound
Deputy editor
The highlight of my recent visit to the Honens International Piano Competition in Calgary, Canada, was a very polished and thrillingly powerful performance of **Prokofiev**'s desperately difficult Second Piano Concerto by Henry Kramer from the US. It was, alas, not enough to win him the overall first prize, but I expect we will hear a lot more from this brilliant young player in years to come.

Rebecca Franks
Reviews editor
Egon Wellesz isn't a household name, but on the strength of his *Sonnets by Elizabeth Barrett Browning* he deserves to be much better known. A Viennese pupil of Schoenberg who ended up in Oxford, Wellesz's 1934 songs bring to mind Berg and even Richard Strauss, especially when sung with the velvety richness of soprano Renée Fleming on her new recording. She's matched by the immaculate Emerson Quartet.

'WHEN WE GROW UP...': ***Matilda*** **proved a hit with mezzo Jennifer Johnston**

JENNIFER JOHNSTON *mezzo-soprano*

■ I'm performing **Shostakovich**'s *From Jewish Poetry* song cycle next season with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Vasily Petrenko. Shostakovich is a little unknown to me as a vocal composer, so I've been listening to his First String Quartet by the Fitzwilliam String Quartet as a way in. It's an extraordinary piece of writing – there's something rather beautiful about the quartets because of their intimate scale.

■ Next year also sees my debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in **Stravinsky**'s *Oedipus Rex*, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner. Although I've performed this piece before, it's a tricky part musically and my job as a singer is always to keep on top of upcoming performances. I specifically wanted to listen to Jessye Norman's performance of Jocasta, which is simply majestic. She's without comparison in this recording: the way her voice fits around the music is hugely enlightening.

■ In the school holidays I took my seven-year-old daughter to see **Matilda – The Musical** in London. We absolutely loved it – it's the best I've ever seen in the West End. We've been singing along in the car to the soundtrack for the past couple of months, and we know every word. Tim Minchin's words and music are so intelligent, which has been a great pleasure in discovering. It's also a huge relief to have a break from listening to *Frozen*!

■ **Candice Hoyes**'s debut album *On A Turquoise Cloud* is a collection of rare Duke

Ellington songs that is one of my most-played records. Hoyes trained as a classical soprano and has since branched out into jazz, and you can hear in her singing how assured she is technically. Because she is so aware of her instrument, she can manipulate it to an extraordinary extent. She is a serious talent.

GRAHAM FITKIN *composer*

I first heard **Harrison Birtwistle**'s *Tragoedia* at university, and I'd never heard anything like it before. It has such an extraordinary soundworld, but I lapped it up. In the last year or so, I've dug out my old recording by the Ensemble Intercontemporain, and have found myself struck by it almost as much as I was then. It has a very high, piercing, raw sound – even more modern pieces that try to be brutal don't quite hit the same level.

■ On a car journey, I heard **Shostakovich**'s String Quartet No. 4 on Radio 3 – I enjoyed it so much I had to stop in a lay-by to listen to it! When I got home, I had another listen, this time on my recording by the Moyzes Quartet. It is such a beautifully constructed work. I've also been listening to the Seventh, which has a lightness of touch that, as a composer, I could only ever hope to try and get close to.

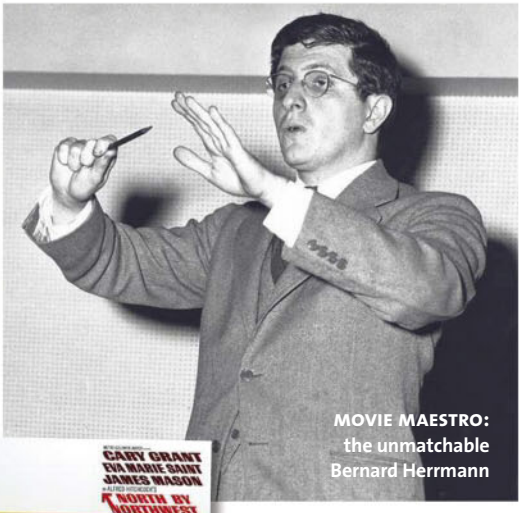
■ I've been really enjoying **Bernard Herrmann**'s soundtrack to the 1959 film *North by Northwest*. I love Herrmann's use of the orchestra, and his ideas are so great – it's the way, for instance, he uses alto flutes in a certain range, or eight horns together. So much of it is so beautifully done, there is so much to appreciate and, of course, because I know the film very well, listening to it is very evocative.

OUR CHOICES

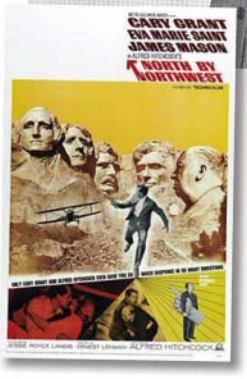
The BBC Music team's current favourites

Neil McKim
Production editor
I've been enjoying **Terry Riley**'s *In C* performed by New York contemporary music ensemble Bang on a Can. This work can be played by any number of performers on a variety of instruments, and in this spell-binding recording that lasts over 45 minutes, the metronomic pulse and shimmering textures build up brilliantly, with ethereal use of clarinet and violin midway.

Elinor Cooper
Editorial assistant
I was recently introduced to the music of **EJ Moeran**, a composer often overlooked in favour of more famous contemporaries such as Ireland and Walton. The Finzi Singers' 1993 recording pairs Moeran's most popular works with music by Peter Warlock (they were close friends), contextualising Moeran's intense harmonic language within the more familiar Warlock repertoire. It's well worth a listen.



MOVIE MAESTRO: the unmatchable Bernard Herrmann



■ The German band **Brandt Brauer Frick**'s album *You Make Me Real* is great. Their style is very minimal – they've taken a lot of Minimalist techniques and they've got a bit of German post-Kraftwerk electronica about them. It's not music that I'd want to write myself, though it's not a million miles away from what I do. As a composer, I find it fascinating how someone can use not dissimilar vocabulary and techniques, and come up with something very different.

'Lost', Graham Fitkin's new album with harpist Ruth Wall, will be reviewed in our Christmas issue

AND MUSIC TO YOUR EARS…

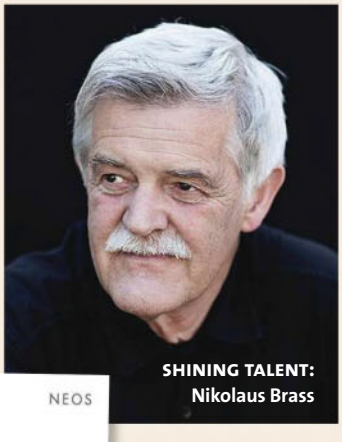
You tell us what you've been enjoying on disc and in the concert hall

Lawrence Jones
Brandon, Canada
I've been listening to the music of **Donald Francis Tovey**. His Cello Concerto, written for Casals in 1934, is recorded by Alice Neary and the Ulster Orchestra under George Vass, conductor. The programme notes to the concerto show Tovey at his wittiest, while the concerto itself illustrates his habit of creating, as well as describing, lively characters. I couldn't help recalling a very different composer who builds his forms around musical characters, defined by choice of instruments: Elliott Carter.

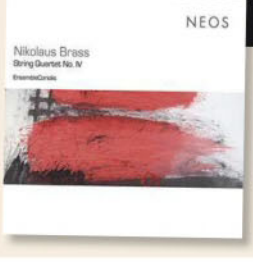
Camiel Boomsma
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Every part of the day demands a different genre. I have a particular taste for the evening, during which **Debussy**'s music suddenly becomes 'alive'. His musical language is so extremely delicate that it speaks to you more directly late in the evening, especially in the hasty modern life of today. And how magical it becomes. I enjoy his early piano pieces: his Nocturne, Ballade, *Rêverie*, *La plus que lente*...

Robert Fletcher
Ingatestone
I've been listening to the late-Romantic Austrian composer **Franz Schmidt**'s Second Symphony. I heard the brilliant Vienna Philharmonic play it at the BBC Proms this summer and am now listening to the CD again and again. The pre-Prom talk was helpful with reference to Schmidt's Hungarian ancestry. I like the work, but cannot always pick tunes out from my memory – so what does that mean?

John Prokop
California, US
I've been enjoying two fine string quartet albums put out by the German label Neos this year. The German composer **Nikolaus Brass**'s (pictured right) five-movement, almost hour long Quartet IV combines Messiaen mysticism with Feldman sensibilities, and a brief Haydn *Seven Last Words* finale. Christian Ofenbauer's six string quartet 'movements' (plus a seventh, unrelated piece), meanwhile, explore spare, delicate microtonal textures, with Webern's String Trio as its initial launching point.



SHINING TALENT: Nikolaus Brass



Tell us what concerts or recordings you've been enjoying by emailing us at ***musictomyears@classical-music.com***

GETTY, HANS VANDERWOERD

NEWSINBRIEF

HONENS HERO: Italian Luca Buratto

CALGARY GOLD

Luca Buratto has been named as the winner of the 2015 Honens International Piano Competition in Calgary, Canada. In a three-man final, the 22-year-old Italian impressed with Mozart's *Jeunehomme* and Prokofiev's Third piano concertos, earning a prize of $100,000 (£49,900). Also in the final were Henry Kramer of the US and Artem Yasynskyy of the Ukraine.

JUST BLOG OFF

Not picking up a prize, however, is Grigory Sokolov, who has turned down the Cremona Music Award because previous winners include journalist Norman Lebrecht. 'According to my ideas about elementary decency, it is shame to be in the same award-winners list,' says the Russian pianist about Lebrecht, who runs an arts blog.

SECOND BEST

Who was spotted playing in the second violins of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra at its opening concert of the season? James Ehnes, no less. Having appeared as soloist in Glazunov's Violin Concerto in the first half, the brilliant Canadian decided he fancied joining in Mahler's Tenth Symphony in the second, and so took his seat at the back. We approve.

TRAFFIC JAMMING

Also making an unexpected appearance were the Clarion Quartet, whose recent performance on the M5 motorway must surely have been a first. Stuck in non-moving traffic in Devon, the Clarions helped pass the time by exiting their car, getting out their instruments and treating fellow motorists to Pachelbel's Canon. The response, we learn, was appreciative.

Minuet and tree-o

Bristol beech to inspire new work

What does a tree sound like? This is the question being asked by TreeSong, a Bristol project turning arboreal sounds into a piece of music. The brainchild of the Bristol Ensemble, TreeSong involves a 100-year-old beech being fitted with sensors that, over four days, pick up every movement – from the rustling of its leaves to the flapping of birds and the scurrying of squirrels in its branches. Those movements are translated into musical sounds providing the material for composer William Goodchild to create a 15-minute orchestral work. The result will be heard at St George's Bristol on 29 Nov, but will it be tree-mendously exciting, or more a case of light re-leaf? 'We have no idea,' admits TreeSong project manager Audrey Michael. 'Weather, wildlife and nature will all play their part...'

AFTER HOURS

Musicians and their hobbies

BEAN THERE: Cheryl Frances-Hoad shows off her crop

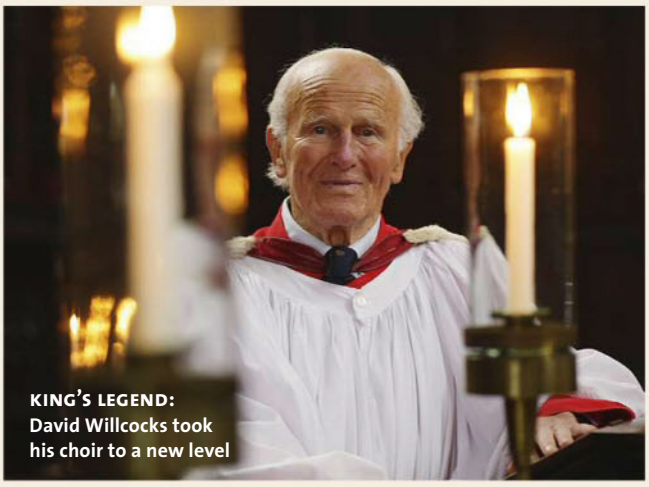
CHERYL FRANCES-HOAD
Composer

VEGETABLE GARDENING

My grandmother was a very keen gardener, so I'd grown up with it, but I started it seriously myself until we moved to our new house in Bedford two years ago. My vegetable garden is about 10' by 10', though that doesn't include the tomatoes which are all in growbags. This year, I've been growing marrows, cucumbers, sweetcorn, beans, and tomatoes – I also have two aubergine plants, but I haven't had a single aubergine – and then on the windowsill we've got four varieties of chilli and several normal peppers. Last year, we had a huge glut of courgettes and tomatoes and were able to freeze them in bulk, but this year's weather has meant that we haven't been able to achieve our aim of self-sufficiency. Vegetables need regular watering, and that's rather what I like about it. Watering takes quite a long time – about 30 to 40 minutes – and while you're doing it you can't be doing anything else like checking your emails or whatever. As a result, it's the closest to meditation that I ever get. I also like the connection to nature it gives me and, occasionally, I have some good ideas while I'm doing it too!

ILLUSTRATION: JONTY CLARK MONIQUE DE ST CROIX

Farewell to…



KING'S LEGEND: David Willcocks took his choir to a new level

TOBY AMIES

SIR DAVID WILLCOCKS

Born 1919 ***Conductor, composer and organist***

David Willcocks will be forever remembered as director of music at King's College, Cambridge. During his 17 years in charge at King's, Willcocks turned the choir into the world-renowned outfit that it is today. The many descants that he wrote for the King's choristers to sing at the famous annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols have since become an essential part of the festive repertoire. Born and raised in Cornwall, Willcocks sang in the choir of Westminster Abbey as a boy. His first spell at King's began when he was appointed organ scholar in 1939, quickly securing a double first before being called up when the Second World War broke out – his bravery in battle would see him win the Military Cross. After the war he held the position of organist at both Salisbury and Worcester Cathedrals, before returning to King's in 1957. Willcocks went on to become director of the Royal College of Music, conductor of the Bach Choir and, in 1981, organised the music at the wedding of the Prince of Wales to Lady Diana Spencer. In the words of composer John Rutter, with whom he worked on the hugely popular *Carols for Choirs* series, Willcocks was 'the father of the English choral renaissance'. *See Richard Morrison, p21*

Also remembered…

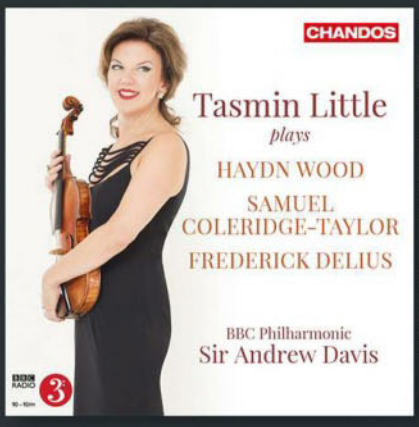
The Northern Irish conductor ***Alexander Faris*** (born 1921) was best known for his expertise in the works of Offenbach and Gilbert and Sullivan, conducting at Sadler's Wells regularly in the 1960s and '70s. As a composer, he wrote music for a number of TV series including, most notably, *Upstairs, Downstairs*.

After making his debut in Bucharest in 1949, Romanian baritone ***Dan Iordăchescu*** (born 1930) performed over 1,000 operas at such prestigious venues as La Scala and the Vienna State Opera, and across Europe and the US. Singing opposite the likes of Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, he was in his element in Verdi.

The Canadian early music specialist ***Christopher Jackson*** (born 1948) founded the Société des Concerts d'orgue de Montréal and the Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal in the 1970s, and conducted both to great acclaim. He was also an accomplished organist and harpsichordist.

CHANDOS

New Releases



Disc of the Month
Tasmin Little plays British Violin Concertos

BBC Philharmonic / Sir Andrew Davis

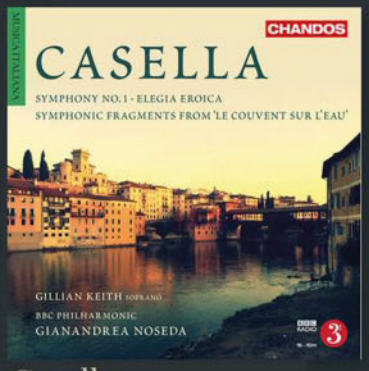
Following their acclaimed Elgar and Moeran concerto recordings (CHSA 5083 and CHAN 10796, respectively - the latter an Orchestral Choice in *BBC Music*), Tasmin Little and Sir Andrew Davis give further evidence of their special affinity for British music with this exciting recording of works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Haydn Wood, and Frederick Delius.

CHAN 10879

Neeme Järvi
conducts Offenbach

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande / Neeme Järvi

CHSA 5160



Casella
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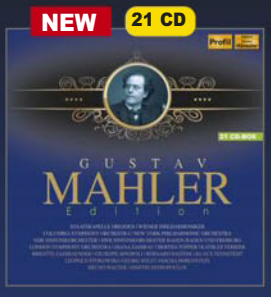

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PPA Columnist of the Year

The Richard Morrison column

Why all choral conductors should be paying homage to Sir David Willcocks

In my other life, I run a church choir. My colleagues at the newspaper say 'Does your choir keep you from going completely bonkers?' On the other hand, people in the choir say 'At least you've got your journalism to stop you going mad'. The truth is, after nearly 40 years of doing both, I have no idea any more which gives me greater pleasure or causes more stress.

Newspapers are notoriously unstable places, perpetually in a state of revolution. You cling to your desk by your fingertips. Parish church choirs, in contrast, are stable to a fault. Nobody ever gets thrown out. Choir leaders spend their whole lives waiting for an intonation-deaf tenor to retire (or, more likely, die in the pews) so they can finally hear Stanford in C without the aleatoric frisson of added quarter-tones.

But that brings its own stress, of course. Winston Churchill said that the price of democracy is eternal vigilance, and the same is true of running a church choir. Take your eye off the ball and the entire alto section is on strike because you gave a solo to someone who has been in the choir for less than five years, or your only sane bass has accepted a job transfer to Milton Keynes. At such times, the prospect of writing 500 words in 45 minutes about an incomprehensible new opera production seems like a walk in a rose garden.

All that, however, is forgotten at this time of the year. One perk of being a church choir leader – perhaps the only perk – is choosing carols for the Christmas services. I approach the task with all the diligence of a latter-day Rommel drawing up his battle-plans. I wade through dozens of carol books. I listen to pristine recordings of impossibly complex arrangements sung by irritatingly good professional choirs. Like Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn attempting to convert his MPs to the notion of scrapping Trident, I surreptitiously insert the odd medieval carol or Renaissance motet here and there, while being painfully aware that the vast majority of the congregation would much prefer the *Shepherd's Pipe Carol*. It's not an easy task, but the rewards are great. A rousing carol service or Christmas concert lifts choir morale for the whole winter.

Sir David's best brainwaves in *Carols for Choirs 1* changed the sound of Christmas for ever

This year, though, carol services will be tinged with sadness for thousands of singers throughout the world, amateur and professional. The man who did more to widen, enliven and enrich what choirs sing at Christmas is no longer with us.

Reading the obituaries of Sir David Willcocks (see p19), I was struck by how hard it must have been for the writers to do justice to the variety of his achievements. Only one newspaper, for instance, gave a full account of the military action – rallying his hideously depleted regiment in a fierce battle soon after D-Day – that won him the Military Cross. He was also an outstanding organist at two cathedrals, Salisbury and Worcester, and a revitalising director of the Royal College of Music before and after the posting for which he is chiefly remembered: director of music at King's College, Cambridge.

Yet for choirs around the world even those achievements pale into insignificance beside the one that will guarantee his immortality for as long as the Anglican Church totters on. In 1961 he persuaded Oxford University Press to launch a series called *Carols for Choirs*. Book 1 was swiftly followed by Books 2, 3 and 4, and Willcocks was not the only editor: Reginald Jacques, the longtime conductor of the Bach Choir, and later John Rutter were also important guiding hands. But it was Willcocks's arrangements in that first volume – 'the green book', as it is universally known by choirs across the land – that had the most impact.

Just as the ethereal and impeccably tuned blend he wrought in his King's College heyday (though now considered old-fashioned) permanently changed notions of choral excellence, so his best brainwaves in *Carols for Choirs 1* changed the sound of Christmas for ever. Think, for instance, of the way he deftly twisted the 'Gloria' from 'Ding, Dong! Merrily on High' into a quasi-coloratura descant for 'O Come, All Ye Faithful', or concocted that tinkling toccata accompaniment to the Sussex Carol, or conjured one stupendously startling chord (a dominant minor with a suspended second setting up a spine-tingling semitonal clash with the descant, for those of you who want to get technical) to shake the firmaments in the last line of 'Hark, the Herald Angels Sing'.

I'm sure Sir David's long life and exceptional work are being celebrated this winter with some stunningly well-performed memorial concerts and services in many distinguished musical institutions. But it would be good if we humble amateurs also paid our homage too, in the most obvious way: by sending his soaring descants and ripe harmonies echoing through every church and school hall in the land this December. I shall certainly be doing that. And praying that, in this season of goodwill, my aleatoric tenor restricts his quarter-tone variants to the congregational carols only. ■

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

GETTY, LEBRECHT

The GIANT *of the* SYMPHONY

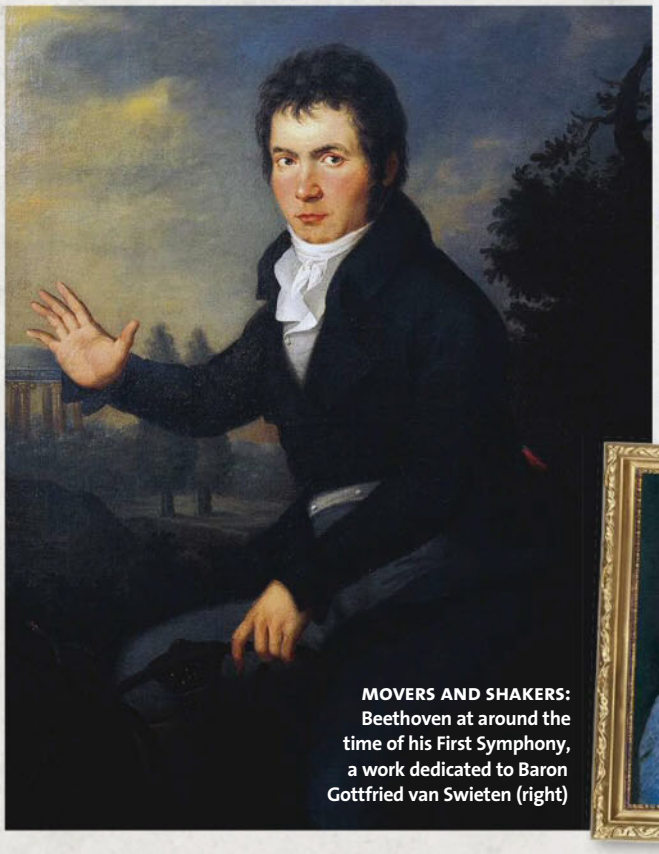
INNOVATIVE, DARING AND MASTERFULLY CONSTRUCTED, BEETHOVEN'S NINE SYMPHONIES SAW THE CLASSICAL MUSIC RULE BOOK WELL AND TRULY RIPPED UP. OVER NINE PAGES, WE EXPLORE EACH IN TURN AND EXPLAIN JUST WHAT IT IS THAT MAKES THEM SO SPECIAL

'You have no idea how it feels to constantly hear a giant like him striding along behind you'. So said Brahms in 1872, when he was nearly 40, and still grappling with the idea of writing his first symphony. Beethoven was the 'giant' who was stopping him, or more precisely the formidable series of nine symphonies he had completed half a century earlier.

The shadow that they cast on aspiring symphonists who followed was large, and inhibiting. 'My God!', Brahms added. 'Anybody who dares to write symphonies after Beethoven will have to do things very differently.' Why? Were Beethoven's symphonies really all that intimidating, and special?

To answer those questions we must do a difficult thing – imagine ourselves back in the early 19th century, as members of an audience for whom his symphonies were brand-new compositions. In our ears, the sound of Haydn and Mozart is probably still ringing. In that context, at that point in time, how would Beethoven's symphonies strike us?

Bigger, bolder and brasher is part of the answer. While the First and Second Symphonies stayed more or less within the traditional Haydn-Mozart model, the scale of the Third – the vast *Eroica* – was unprecedented, and befuddled early listeners. 'Too difficult, too long,' moaned one. 'Strident and bizarre,' complained another. The Seventh Symphony was judged by some the work of a drunkard – 'ripe for the madhouse' according to the composer Weber. Even the heaven-storming *Choral* Ninth brought ▶



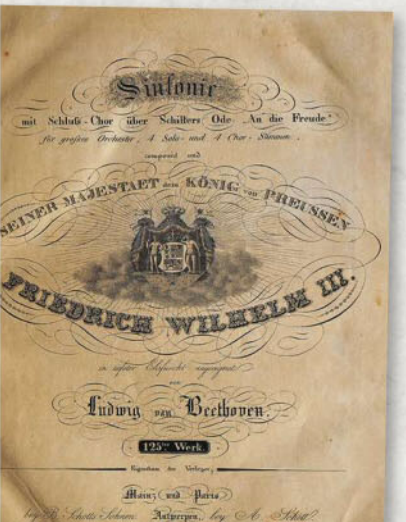
MOVERS AND SHAKERS: Beethoven at around the time of his First Symphony, a work dedicated to Baron Gottfried van Swieten (right)

dissension, one critic begging for 'a more concentrated shape' in a work twice the length of a Haydn or Mozart symphony.

The same reviewer argued, as many have since, that Beethoven himself would have modified the scope and sound of his symphonies 'if cruel fate had not robbed him of the ability to hear his creation'. While it's true that Beethoven was already partially deaf when writing his First Symphony, and almost totally so by the Ninth, it's difficult to credit that the judgement of his 'inner ear' – that of the consummate musical technician who honed his scores repeatedly towards perfection – was ever seriously affected.

The fact is that Beethoven wrote symphonies longer and more powerful than anything heard previously – because he had to. More than any composer before him, he used the symphony as a means of chronicling his own reactions to the world around him, examining his own emotions, and articulating a heroically optimistic vision of how human beings might overcome the imperfections of everyday living and a tendency to inflict suffering on one another.

With Beethoven, the symphony as a forum of profound existential debate was born. Its terms of reference became broader, the space it occupied larger, its tone of voice more argumentative and assertive. Music itself gradually changed as a consequence, becoming an intensely personal medium, fit for psychological and philosophical investigation. Wagner and Mahler, among others, exploited these startling innovations: both were ardent Beethovenians. Audiences today continue to draw sustenance from Beethoven's nine masterpieces, which pose questions still not adequately answered, and which few other artists have asked so bravely. Over the following pages, we explore each symphony in turn…



SYMPHONY NO. 1

Premiered: *KK Hoftheater nächst der Burg, Vienna, 2 April 1800*

After permanently settling in Vienna in 1792 at the age of 22, Beethoven set about mastering an impressive range of musical genres. In the following years, he completed a substantial body of chamber music (piano trios and string trios and works for wind instruments), duo and solo piano sonatas and a piano concerto (No. 1 in C major). Missing from this work list, however, were either symphonies or string quartets. The highly self-critical composer was evidently reluctant to tackle either medium until he felt fully equipped to write something that could match the achievement of his great forebears, Mozart and Haydn.

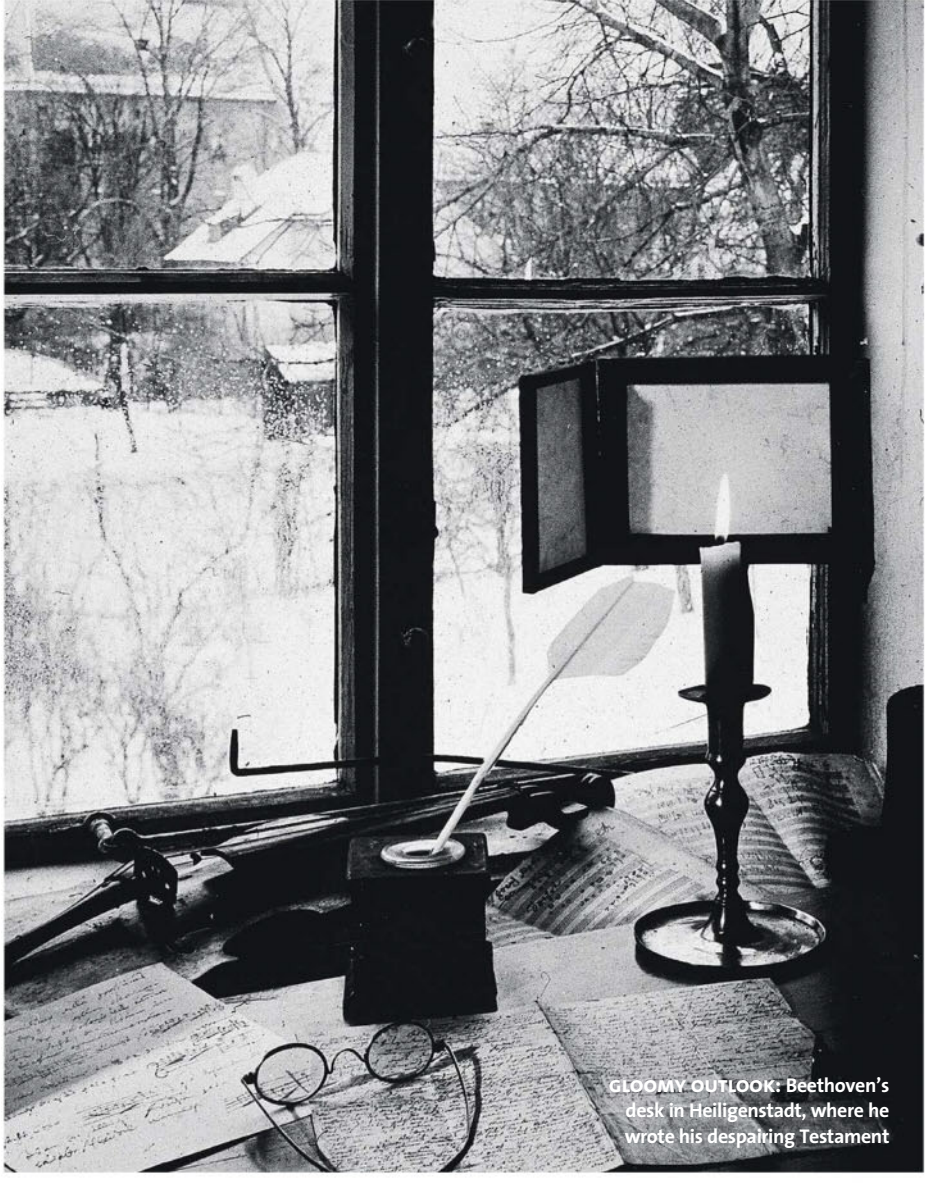
In fact, Beethoven had made an abortive attempt to write a symphony between 1796 and '97, but the work was only completed two years later. It was unveiled for the first time before the Viennese public at a concert on 2 April, 1800 and published the following year. The First Symphony bears a dedication to Baron Gottfried van Swieten, one of the most vociferous supporters of Beethoven at the time and the librettist of Haydn's oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*.

As befitting a work composed at the turn of the 19th century, Beethoven's First pays homage to the great Viennese classical tradition, but also offers tantalising anticipations of his innovative symphonic writing in the next decade. The retrospective elements are most obviously manifested in the close thematic relationship that exists between this Symphony in the 'festive' key of C major and previous works bearing the same tonality, most notably Haydn's Symphony No. 97 and

Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony (No. 41). The First also follows a similar structural outline to the late Haydn symphonies, even though Beethoven places more emotional weight on the finale. Perhaps most notably, Beethoven designates the third movement as a minuet, but his recommended tempo marking of *Allegro molto e vivace* suggests that it is in essence the first of his dynamic symphonic *scherzo*s.

The orchestra Beethoven uses in the First Symphony (double woodwind, two horns, two trumpets, timpani and strings) is no different in size to that employed by Haydn. Yet his orchestration is radically different, as immediately evidenced in the brief slow introduction to the work. Many commentators highlight the provocative nature of Beethoven's musical argument here, particularly its opening of a dominant seventh chord resolving to the 'wrong' key of F major. But no less striking is the unprecedented textural effect of combining *pizzicato* strings with sustained woodwind chords.

Indeed, throughout the First, Beethoven creates a different orchestral balance than his predecessors, giving the wind instruments far greater parity with the strings. A reviewer present at the first performance of the work took great exception to this tendency, claiming that Beethoven was writing something that was more appropriate for a wind-band than for a symphony orchestra. It was a complaint that Beethoven totally ignored in his subsequent symphonies.
Erik Levi



GLOOMY OUTLOOK: Beethoven's desk in Heiligenstadt, where he wrote his despairing Testament

GETTY

SYMPHONY NO. 2

Premiered: *Theater an der Wien, Vienna, 5 April 1803*

On 6 October 1802 in the village of Heiligenstadt on the outskirts of Vienna, Beethoven wrote an impassioned letter to his brothers Carl and Johann. Including instructions that it should be read after his death, the 'Heiligenstadt Testament' describes in bleak terms the composer's despair at the onset of deafness. 'How could I possibly admit an infirmity in the one sense which ought to be more perfect in me than others, a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection?' he wrote. '…What a humiliation for me when someone standing next to me heard a flute in the distance and I heard nothing, or someone heard a shepherd singing and again I heard nothing.'

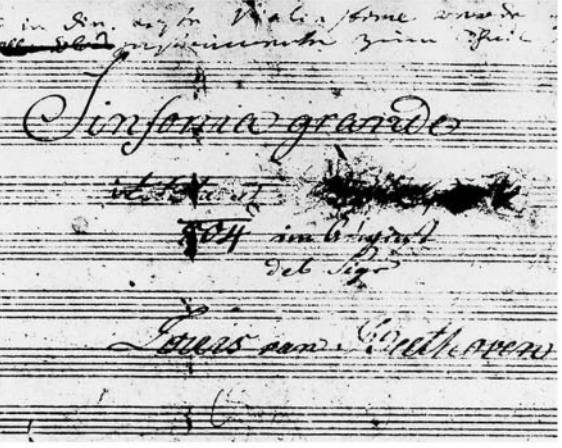
It was also while staying at Heiligenstadt over the summer months of that year that Beethoven composed the bulk of his Second Symphony. Does the composer reflect in this work the frustrations expressed in his letter? In fact, cast in a sunny D major, the overall mood of the Second is largely upbeat. Here and there, though, there are moments that point towards the growling and fist-thumping composer of Beethoven's later years. The score is scattered with brutal *sforzando*s and sudden, and dramatic, changes of dynamic markings. And listen out, too, for the moment at the end

'A HIDEOUSLY WOUNDED, WRITHING DRAGON THAT REFUSES TO DIE'

of the exposition in the long first movement when the key unexpectedly shifts from A major to an unusual and ever-so-slightly disconcerting D minor.

Taken as a whole, Beethoven's Second is by no means a game-changer in the course of classical music – that would come with the *Eroica* two years later. There are, though, already plenty of signs here that he was itching to go his own way. Take for instance, the third movement, where he ventures a step further along the path he'd already began to tread in the First Symphony (see above) – where tradition would normally place a courtly and graceful minuet and trio, here Beethoven presents us with a decidedly rustic *scherzo*. And then there is the finale's coda. Why follow convention by finishing with a charming little endpiece, when there's the opportunity to go out in a blaze of timpani- and trumpet-adorned triumph? Here was a precedent that he would continue in the symphonies to follow.

And the Second Symphony's reception? Not great, with the descriptions of some critics almost matching the colour and inventiveness of the work itself. Complaining about its 'barbaric chords', Paris's *Tablettes de Polymnie* reckoned that it sounded 'as if doves and crocodiles were locked up together'. Vienna's *Zeitung für die elegante Welt*, meanwhile, described it as 'a hideously wounded, writhing dragon that refuses to die'. Posterity has treated it more kindly.
Jeremy Pound



FALLEN IDOL: Beethoven's dedication to Napoleon is scratched off the score of the Third Symphony

SYMPHONY NO. 3

Premiered: *Theater an der Wien, Vienna, 7 April 1805*

Like many artists of his generation, Beethoven drew powerful inspiration from the French Revolution, revelling in the collapse of an oppressive monarchy and in the new freedoms which the march of popular democracy appeared to promise. For Beethoven, himself a cussed individualist, the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte epitomised the new spirit of liberty and self-determination sweeping Europe.

The Third Symphony was conceived as a tribute to the French military commander – until, that is, Napoleon declared himself Emperor of his country, prompting an enraged Beethoven to tear the title page of the finished manuscript, on which he had written 'Bonaparte', in two pieces. A new title was eventually adopted, less specific in its references: 'Heroic Symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man'.

Such is the backstory of the *Eroica* Symphony. How important is it to the actual music? Fascinating as the Napoleon connection is, posterity has gradually shied away from viewing the work as a glorified piece of musical hero-worship. 'Some say it is Napoleon, some Hitler, some Mussolini,' as the conductor Toscanini tetchily put it. 'For me it is simply *Allegro con brio*.'

And while it's true that vestiges of the Napoleonic element can easily be traced in the *Eroica* – the confident demeanour of the opening movement, the overtones of militaristic ceremonial in the *Marcia funebre* – they can easily obscure the extraordinary innovations in the piece, which one commentator calls 'the greatest single step made by an individual in the history of the symphony and in the history of music in general'.

What exactly makes the *Eroica* so revolutionary? For early listeners, size was certainly a major issue. 'I'll give another *Kreutzer* if the thing will only stop!,' one irritated audience member shouted at the first public performance. He would not have been alone in wondering why exactly Beethoven's newest symphony had to be twice as long as any that preceded it.

The reason was simple: Beethoven was bursting with musical ideas, and needed the broadest canvas on which to paint them. The development section of the opening movement is unprecedentedly fertile, introducing a new theme unheard in the exposition. The *Marcia funebre* has not one, but two interpolated episodes, one ringingly triumphant, the other gravely fugal. The finale's variations become a major statement in themselves, not just a mood-lightening way to drop the curtain on a major-key symphony.

Everywhere is plenitude, dynamism and surging energy, and a determination to use symphonic form to give these indomitable human qualities full expression. The Heiligenstadt crisis, barely over, had laid Beethoven low, but certainly not defeated him. In the *Eroica* Symphony he is resurgent; the composer himself is the ultimate hero of this extraordinary masterpiece.

Terry Blain

SYMPHONY NO. 4

Premiered: *Burg Theater, Vienna, 13 April 1808*

Beethoven spent the summer of 1806 as a guest of one of his principal patrons, Prince Lichnowsky, at his country residence in Silesia. On a visit to the nearby castle of Count Oppersdorff, who maintained a private orchestra, they heard a performance of Beethoven's Second Symphony, and it was probably on this occasion that the Count commissioned a new symphony from him.

The Fourth opens with a dark and brooding slow introduction which unfolds almost entirely in the minor, as though the music were groping its way towards the light. No less original is the way in which, in the following *Allegro*, the recapitulation is approached. This is the crucial moment

BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES ON DISC

Our writers select the must-have recordings of each work

SYMPHONY NO. 1

Following in the footsteps of Toscanini, Riccardo Chailly delivers a characteristically high-voltage account of the First Symphony, perfectly capturing its moments of brusque humour with superbly incisive *sforzando* accents from his Leipzig players, yet allowing sufficient space for the graceful aspects of the second movement to come to the fore.

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra/ Riccardo Chailly *Decca 478 3493*

SYMPHONY NO. 2

Skrowaczewski and his Saarbrucken players bring a rare fire and fury to the first movement. And few can match their bonhomie in the following two movements – as the music bounces from orchestral section to section, masterfully paced by the conductor, one gets the impression of players thoroughly enjoying each others', and Beethoven's, company.

Saarbrucken Radio Symphony Orchestra/ Stanisław Skrowaczewski *OEHMS OC522*

SYMPHONY NO. 3

When Rudolf Kempe made his Beethoven symphony cycle with the unfashionable Munich Philharmonic in the early 1970s, it was overshadowed by other, more glamorous interpretations, Herbert von Karajan's in particular. But Kempe's is a glorious *Eroica*, powerful and majestic, yet buoyed with lyricism and elegance. It remains a definitive point of reference.

Münchner Philharmoniker/Rudolf Kempe *EMI 636 5552*

SYMPHONY NO. 4

An exhilaratingly alert performance responding to every nuance of the music, and with a spellbinding account of the long *pianissimo* passage heralding the first movement's recapitulation. Violinist and conductor Joshua Bell and his co-players also convey all the warmth of the slow movement and the wit of the finale.

Academy of St Martin in the Fields/Joshua Bell *Sony Classical 88765448812*

SYMPHONY NO. 5

Voted in at No. 3 in *BBC Music Magazine*'s list of *The 50 Greatest Recordings of All Time*, this Carlos Kleiber performance has a compelling intensity and electric energy that is utterly suited to the emotional world of the Fifth Symphony. Kleiber didn't often go into the recording studio, but when he did the results were entirely unforgettable, with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra on blistering form here.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra/Carlos Kleiber *Deutsche Grammophon 447 4002*

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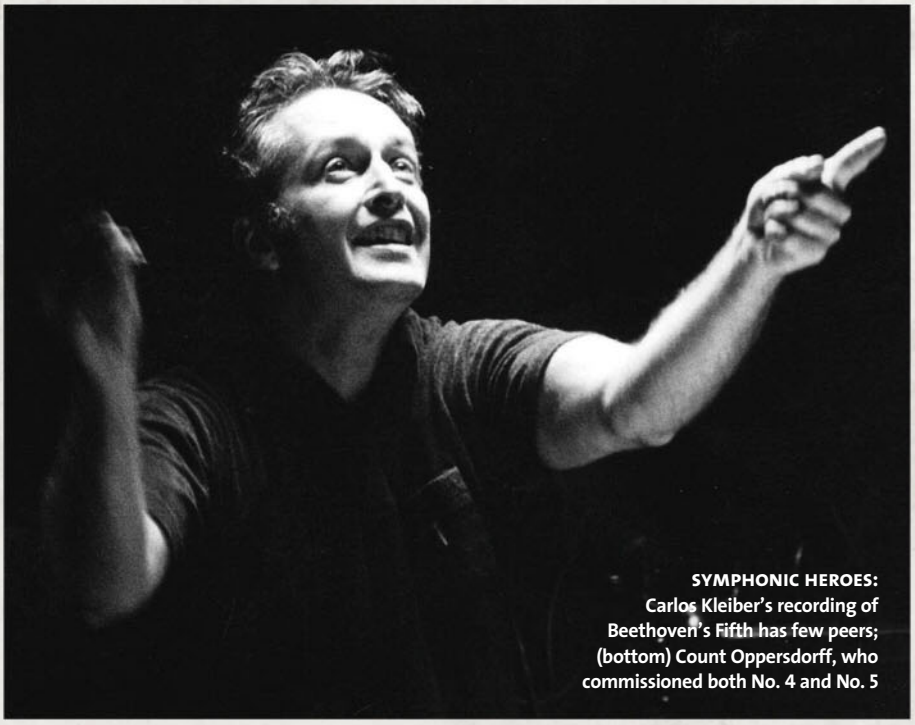
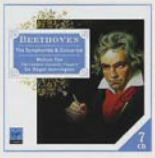


SYMPHONIC HEROES: Carlos Kleiber's recording of Beethoven's Fifth has few peers; (bottom) Count Oppersdorff, who commissioned both No. 4 and No. 5



SYMPHONY NO. 6

Still as fresh as ever – a combination of original instruments and conductor Roger Norrington's energy – this 1980s recording of the Sixth gets to the heart of Beethoven's titanic creativity. Every note, every phrase penetratingly re-thought, it's like hearing the music for the first time: the bird-calls sound startling, the 'beginner' bassoon in the *scherzo* wonderfully wittily, the storm elemental.
London Classical Players/Roger Norrington
Virgin 083 4232 (part of 7-CD set)

SYMPHONY NO. 7

Riccardo Chailly achieves the near-impossible, combining the classicising insights of period-style performers with the tonal richness and expressive gravity of old-school master interpreters such as Otto Klemperer or Carlos Kleiber. The rhythms are crisp and vital, the colours gorgeous, the expression intense and broad-ranging, and all is captured in superb recorded sound.
Gewandhausorchester Leipzig/Riccardo Chailly
Decca 478 3496

SYMPHONY NO. 8

Distinguished recordings of the Eighth are not rare, but to seize it in all its aspects turns out to be reserved for peculiar temperaments. An Eloquence recording from 1970 under Claudio Abbado, paired with a noble account of Bruckner's First Symphony, is a highly recommended modern-ish recording; but if you can tolerate decent mono sound, then Sir Thomas Beecham (Sony Classical) and Hans Knappertsbusch (Orfeo) are truly Jove-like.
Vienna Philharmonic/Claudio Abbado
Australian Eloquence ELQ4805952

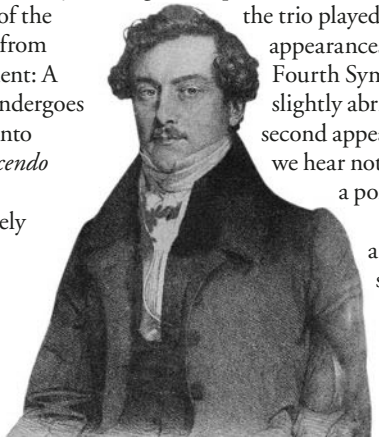
SYMPHONY NO. 9

Benefiting (as many recent recordings do) from Jonathan Del Mar's edition of the score, one of the finest modern versions of the Ninth Symphony finds conductor Osmo Vänskä and his Minnesota Orchestra on their tautest form in a 2006 account, notable for its keen focus on detail, its intelligent and sensitive handling of tempo relationships, and its overall organic integrity.
Juntunen, Karnéus, Norman, Davies; Minnesota Chorale & Orchestra/Vänskä
BIS BISSACD 1616

where the main theme returns in the home key, and Beethoven highlights it by creating an atmosphere of hushed expectancy, before a sudden outburst announces the arrival of the recapitulation itself. In the Fourth, the air of mystery is particularly prolonged, with fragments of the main theme punctuated by quiet timpani rolls. In an unprecedented stroke, Beethoven overcomes the limitations of the timpani of his day – they weren't able to alter their pitch without a cumbersome process of retuning – and uses them in the context of a remote key by effectively treating the note B flat, to which one of the two timpani had been tuned from the outset, as its aural equivalent: A sharp. After this, the music undergoes a luminous sea-change back into the home key, and a long *crescendo* unleashes the recapitulation.

The slow movement is largely based on one of Beethoven's favourite oppositions: a smoothly sustained melody unfolding over an accompaniment in a sharply defined, military-style rhythm. The rhythm pauses for the theme's luxuriant continuation, but it returns in the closing bars of the piece, where the spotlight again falls on the timpani, which give it out on their own.

As Beethoven's symphonic canvasses grew larger, he clearly felt the need to expand the scope of the *scherzo* to match that of the surrounding movements. His solution was to transform what had traditionally been a tripartite form into a five-part design, with the trio played twice, between three appearances of the *scherzo*. In the Fourth Symphony, the format is slightly abridged, and following the second appearance of the slower trio we hear not the complete *scherzo*, but a portion of its second part.



The bubbling finale is a piece imbued with the spirit of Haydn, and in its closing bars Beethoven takes a leaf out of Haydn's book by allowing the music to degenerate into pure farce: fragments of the main theme are limply played at half speed, as though the piece were about to collapse altogether, before an abrupt gesture from the full orchestra brings the curtain down.
Misha Donat

SYMPHONY NO. 5

Premiered: *Theater an der Wien, 22 December 1808*

The four notes that open Beethoven's Fifth Symphony have a claim to being the most famous musical motto ever written. 'Fate knocking at the door', is how Beethoven is reported to have described the theme to his secretary and (not entirely reliable) biographer, Anton Schindler.

It took, however, a little time for this symphony's genius to be recognised. Premiered at the infamous Theatre an der Wien concert of 1808 (see p30), one reviewer ▶

described the piece as 'large, very protracted, overlong', and in general it elicited little comment. It took an endorsement from the *Allgemein musikalische Zeitung* a year later to kickstart its popularity. An anonymous reviewer, who turned out to be the influential poet, novelist and composer ETA Hofmann, described in ecstatic language the music's effect, including 'glowing beams [that] shoot through this realm's deep night.'

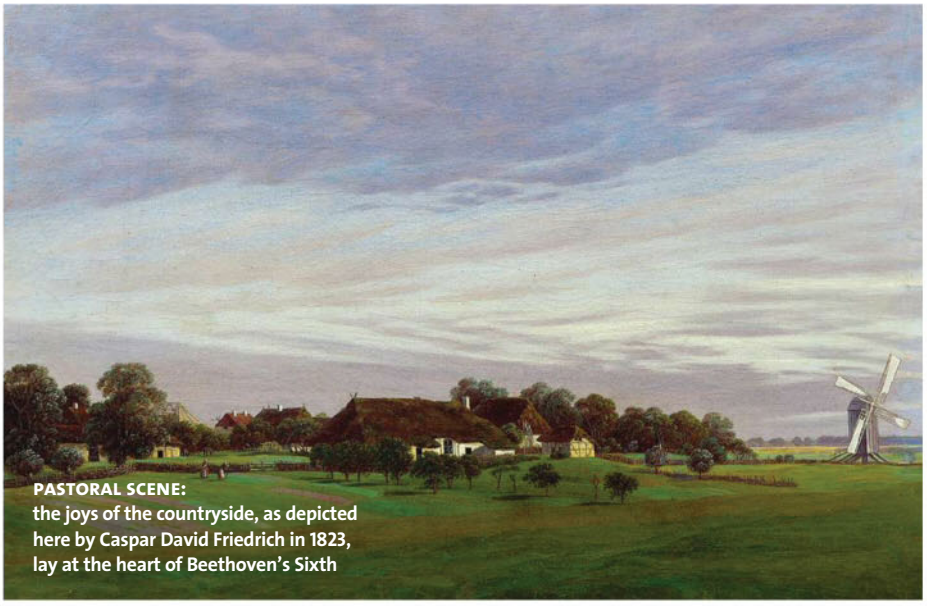
Commissioned by Count Oppersdorff, Beethoven started to sketch ideas for the Fifth in 1805 as a follow-up to the *Eroica*, but set it aside to write what became the Fourth. The bulk of the work ended up taking place in 1807-1808; it was written alongside the Sixth Symphony, with which it was premiered, and also the Fourth Piano Concerto.

That concerto opens with the same rhythmic motto, but its mood couldn't be more different. While the concerto opens in complete serenity, in G major, the Fifth is in Beethoven's turbulent key of C minor. Over its four movements, a remarkable tragedy-to-triumph trajectory is traced. Even more striking is how Beethoven uses his opening motif to construct a taut first movement in which the motto is heard in nearly every bar.

The *Andante con moto* shares something of the Sixth Symphony's sunny nature, while the *Scherzo* has a suspenseful sense of mystery. It segues into the blazing C major finale, a brilliantly-handled passage revealing Beethoven to be a master of transitions. And while it wasn't completely new to link the final two movements, Beethoven came up with the original idea of recalling the *scherzo* in the finale, with delicate strings and then assorted wind stilling, momentarily, the full force of the orchestra.

Even more influential was the extra-long coda, ending with a sequence hammering home a victorious C major. This shift of emphasis towards the end of the symphony, turning it into an overall journey, was an idea that composers played with for years to come – think of Tchaikovsky's Fourth, Brahms's First or any of Bruckner's symphonies.
Rebecca Franks

GETTY, ISTOCK



PASTORAL SCENE: the joys of the countryside, as depicted here by Caspar David Friedrich in 1823, lay at the heart of Beethoven's Sixth

SYMPHONY NO. 6

Premiered: *Theater an der Wien, 22 December 1808*

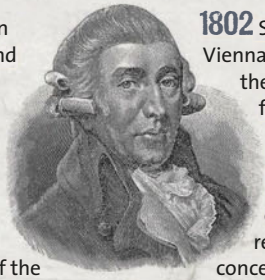
The first sketches of the *Pastoral* Symphony appeared in 1802, but Beethoven was not ready to complete it for a further six years. The most interesting aspect of the symphony is not that it has a descriptive programme – it doesn't really, apart from a few picturesque moments like the slow-movement bird calls and the storm – nor that it is in five movements (debatable, even though Beethoven suggests it). It is the way the music is put together, completely unprecedented and virtually unfollowed.

The term 'Pastoral' in music had already for 100 years implied the sleep of nature and drone of bag-pipes. Beethoven exalts the concept to that of a primordial murmur, and imitates natural repeated patterns with long passages of unchanging harmony. His music had been moving in that direction throughout his Opus 50s.

The first movement in F ('Awakening of happy feelings on arrival in the country') is followed by another long movement ('Scene by the Brook') in the subdominant B flat. This gives a hymn-like, plagal, feeling which is maintained by the return to F for the *scherzo* ('The merry making of country-folk'). Had there not been a distinct departure into F minor for 'The Storm' fourth section, the F major 'Hymn of thanksgiving' finale would not convey the sense of completion.

The storm does everything in Beethoven's power to subvert the fundamental F major, pastoral stasis, churning through every key known to man. The orchestration of the storm is also an extraordinary exercise in musical impressionism, with double basses and cellos fudging each other's lines to create a deep inchoate rumbling. Nothing like it was to be heard for another 100 years.

A BEETHOVEN SYMPHONY TIMELINE



1792 In November, Beethoven leaves his birth city of Bonn and moves to Vienna. Soon after his arrival, he begins lessons with Haydn (right).

1795 He publishes his Opus 1 set of three piano trios. Though Haydn has reservations about the third of the set, audiences prove very enthusiastic.

1800 At Vienna's Burgtheater, he conducts his **First Symphony**. His Op. 20 Septet and works by Haydn and Mozart are also performed.

1802 Spending the summer months away from Vienna in the village of Heiligenstadt, he writes the 'Heiligenstadt Testament', revealing his fears about his increasing deafness.

1803 His **Second Symphony**, Third Piano Concerto and the oratorio *Christus am Oelberge* all receive their premieres in the same concert. Beethoven himself is the soloist in the Concerto.

1804 Napoleon Bonaparte (below) proclaims himself Emperor of France. In angry response, Beethoven, who was previously an ardent admirer, rubs out the title 'Bonaparte' from the score of his Third Symphony. The work is later published as the *Eroica*.

1805 His ***Eroica* Symphony** receives its premiere. Later that year, with Napoleon's troops having occupied Vienna, Beethoven's opera *Leonore* is unenthusiastically received by a Theater an der Wien audience consisting largely of French army officers who cannot understand the German libretto.

In purely musical terms, the storm is the introduction to the finale, without which it would be another leisurely panorama, hardly distinguishable from the pace of the other movements. Indeed, since the *scherzo*, storm and finale are played without a break, there is as much justification for regarding the symphony as a three- rather than a five-movement construct.

Beethoven's Sixth is the polar opposite of the Fifth, which is a herculean construct of compressed energy, its downward plunging motto forbidding expansion. The *Pastoral*, with its infinitely extendable opening motif, is an expansive and expanding universe. Harmonic movement determines the form. Motifs are repeated for bars on end in one tonal centre, and then the whole passage is heard again a third up or down. In the process, Beethoven creates all sorts of sounds which the later Romantics took as emblematic of nature, such as the cuckoo-like motif which Mahler recalls in many of his works.

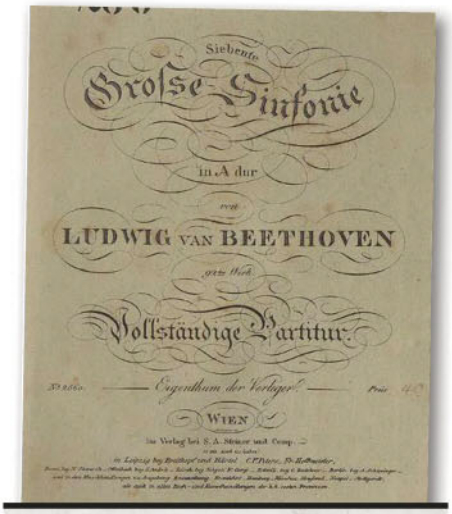
Chris de Souza

SYMPHONY NO. 7

Premiered: *Vienna, 8 December 1813*

After the titanic adventures in sound-colour, form and dramatic expression of Symphonies Nos 5 and 6, the Seventh might initially seem a return to safer, more classical ground. Except that Beethoven doesn't really do 'safer' – not by this stage in his career, anyhow.

Composed after a much-needed restorative spa holiday in 1811, Symphony No. 7 sounds like what Beethoven would later call a 'return to life'. The key of A major is often associated with light and buoyancy (Mendelssohn's *Italian*, Schubert's *Trout* Quintet), but here the sheer physical energy – expressed in dancing muscular rhythms and brilliant orchestration – can, in some performances, border on the unnerving. Confronted with one particularly obsessive chain of repetitions (possibly the spine-chilling final *crescendo*



THE EIGHTH IS THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD OF BEETHOVEN'S SYMPHONIES

in the first movement), Beethoven's younger contemporary Carl Maria von Weber pronounced him 'ripe for the madhouse'.

But there's nothing mad about the way Beethoven draws together the seemingly diverse dance rhythms in this work. Just over a minute into the substantial slow introduction, the woodwind intone a rhythmic pattern: DA de-de – in classical metric terms, a 'dactyl'. This same pattern pulses expectantly in the audacious sustained one-note transition to the *Vivace*, then springs to life in its main theme. The wonderful veiled *Allegretto* that follows is haunted by the same rhythm, the Trio of the *scherzo* repeats it like a playground game, while the finale is positively possessed by it, right up to the ferocious elation of the final bars.

Just before the end, for the first time ever in an orchestral work, Beethoven uses the marking *fff* – *fortississimo*: 'louder than as loud as possible'. There are times listening to this astonishing finale that one wonders if it wasn't here that Stravinsky got the idea for the 'Sacrificial Dance' from the *Rite of Spring* – except that it is life, not death, that triumphs.

It isn't all joyous assertion, of course. Like TS Eliot, Beethoven realised that it is darkness that 'declares the glory of light'. The voluptuous nocturnal world of the *Allegretto* opens on a minor-key wind chord which, after the glowing A major that ends the first movement, feels like the deft extinguishing of a light. Beethoven expands his tonal universe as never before in a symphony, allowing the bright A major to be continually undermined by a remote (and, in context, darker) F major – if that sounds technical, the effect in performance is fully visceral. But ultimately, the Seventh Symphony is testimony to Beethoven's enduring ability to find energy and hope amidst inner and outer desolation, and as such it's indispensible.

Stephen Johnson

SYMPHONY NO. 8

Premiered: *Redoutensaal, Vienna, 27 February 1814*

The Eighth Symphony was composed in 1812, when Beethoven was 42, and completed only six months after the Seventh, an unusually short gestation period for him. Sketches show that the original intention was for it to be a piano concerto, but as with all masterpieces it is impossible for us to imagine its being any different from the way it is. Its initial reception was cooler than that accorded to its predecessor, which is so much more evidently revolutionary.

In fact, the Eighth, which is the shortest of the symphonies, has been and still often is taken to be a lightweight work compared with the others, and mentions of its 'Haydnesque' character are common. All told, it seems the most misunderstood of the symphonies, most of the others, whatever their complexities, having an evident character. The Eighth is ▶

1808 After a private performance the previous year, the **Fourth Symphony** gets its first public outing in April. In December, the **Fifth** and **Sixth Symphonies** are premiered in the same concert.

1812 Beethoven meets Goethe (below) in Teplitz, though neither man seems impressed. In summer, he writes a love-letter to his 'Immortal Beloved', whose identity remains unknown.

1813 With his brother, Caspar Carl, seriously ill, Beethoven is appointed guardian of his nephew Karl. At two December charity concerts for soldiers injured at Hanau, his **Seventh Symphony** and *Wellington's Victory* are premiered.

1814 His **Eighth Symphony** receives its first performance, again alongside a performance of *Wellington's Victory*.

1818 He begins work on his massive *Hammerklavier* Piano Sonata which, when completed, will be dedicated to his beloved patron Archduke Rudolph.

1820 After a bitter four-year legal struggle with the boy's mother, Johanna, Beethoven finally wins custody of Karl (left).

1824 His **Ninth Symphony** is rapturously received at its premiere. The composer, now almost totally deaf, is unaware of the applause until turned to see the audience.

1827 Beethoven dies on 26 March at the age of 56. Though some later believe that he had begun work on a **Tenth Symphony**, in E flat major, the evidence for this is sketchy.

A GRAND SYMPHONIC OCCASION

The premieres of Nos 5 and 6

A MAN POSSESSED: Beethoven at the rostrum

SOME CONCERTS ARE LONG. And then there is the occasion at Theater an der Wien on 22 December 1808 that saw the premiere of not just Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but the Sixth too. And that's not all. Also on the bill was the first public outing for his Fourth Piano Concerto, played by the composer himself, who also performed a number of improvisations. Now, add to that moments from his Mass in C, his *Ah! Perfido* for soprano and orchestra and, to round things off, his specially composed Fantasy for piano, chorus and orchestra Op. 80. Lasting a full four hours, from 6.30pm till 10.30pm, the concert was further blighted by a bitterly cold hall and under-rehearsed, recalcitrant performers – as one reporter put it 'Beethoven... had found in the rehearsals and performance a lot of opposition and almost no support'. And then there was one final problem. Today, it is common knowledge that the Sixth Symphony was performed before the Fifth. However, due to an error on the printed programme, most of the Theater an der Wien audience were unaware that this was the case. In short, not a triumphant start...

wilfully deceptive literally from the opening bar, and continues throughout to play games with the listener's expectations. It manages to go on being surprising, even disconcerting, however often you listen to it.

It opens on what seems a genial note, though the first subject is abrupt and seemingly self-contained, and it soon becomes apparent that the movement is going to be full of syncopations – open any page of the score and you'll see *sforzando* marks all over it. What is more surprising is the range of possibilities that brusque opening contains, with some of Beethoven's longest and most energetic stretches of development. There are strange calm passages which get dismissed, and the overall impression is of disruptive high spirits.

There is no slow movement. The second is marked *Allegretto scherzando*, and is said to have been provoked by the recent invention of the metronome: it certainly ticks throughout, and there is a mock-innocent quality to it which leaves one feeling pleasantly bemused. The *scherzo* is followed by a minuet: another small revolution, which turns out to verge on the threatening, with a turgid string figure at odds with the horn-saturated lyricism which outweighs it. Then follows the rapid finale, the most unsettling movement of all. This was Stravinsky's favourite Beethoven symphony,

THE NINTH SYMPHONY CONTINUES TO MAKE AN UNPRECEDENTED IMPACT

and one sees why: ferocious syncopations, sudden intrusions of trumpet and drum, vehement silences, the intent to disconcert in a playful, but also almost demonic way. It has the effect of a joke which one can see is funny, but still doesn't quite understand. The other symphonies we love because they affirm what we feel are, or should be, our deepest values. This one leaves us asking if we are really sure about what they are.

Michael Tanner

MAKING BEETHOVEN TICK: (left) Schiller's words are set in Symphony No. 9; (below) a metronome inspired the Eighth

SYMPHONY NO. 9

Premiered: *Kärnthnerthor Theatre, Vienna, 7 May 1824*

The Ninth was Beethoven's first symphony for more than a decade, though at least one of its elements had originated much earlier: a letter written as far back as 1793 advised of the composer's intention to set Friedrich Schiller's 'Ode to Joy', while a tiny sketch dated to 1798 makes use of some of its words. Similar fragments of the text were worked on during 1812 in connection with a piece that would become the *Namensfeier Overture*.

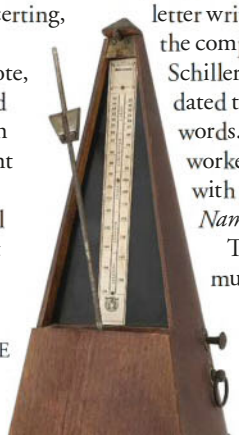
The earliest sketch containing music that would actually appear in the Ninth dates from 1815, when the opening idea of the *scherzo* occurs as a fugue subject. A commission for a new symphony from the Philharmonic Society in London in 1817 provided further impetus; pages dated to this period contain ideas that were later worked up into the first movement. More serious work was done in 1822 with a sketch outlining the melody to which the opening of Schiller's Ode would eventually be sung.

Such examples are typical of the processes by which Beethoven arrived at his completed compositions. They also make clear that the highly original conception of the Ninth – not only in terms of the surprising intervention of vocal forces to transform the finale of the work virtually into a cantata, but also in the sheer vastness of the whole, in which Beethoven expanded the time-scale of the symphony beyond that even of the *Eroica* – was arrived at only after much consideration.

If the originality of Beethoven's conception scarcely needs stressing, nor does its impact on later composers. Symphonists from Mendelssohn to Mahler, Shostakovich and Britten learned that the inclusion of a text could direct the listener's attention towards a programmatic or philosophical intention. Wagner, too, saw the combination of notes and words in the Ninth as seminal to his own conception of music drama, and for that reason celebrated the laying of the foundation stone of his new theatre at Bayreuth in 1872 with a performance of it under his own baton.

In wider and indeed the widest circles, the Ninth Symphony continues to make an unprecedented impact. To whatever extent one thinks it appropriate that the main idea of the finale has become celebrated in our day as the anthem of the European Union, or (far more dubiously) as the musical accompaniment to the marketing of a whole range of commercial products, consciousness of this fragment of Beethoven's epic creation could scarcely be more widespread. It reflects the fact that the rich and complex humanism of this symphony, and indeed of the entire Beethovenian heritage, has never been so widely valued – as well, perhaps, as so needed – as it is at the present time. ■

George Hall



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THE JAMES NAUGHTIE INTERVIEW

SEMYON BYCHKOV

As a product of the rigorous Soviet system, where art and culture were taught to the very highest level, the now London-based Russian conductor expresses his fears for the future of today's music education

PHOTOGRAPHY **RICHARD CANNON**

How do you describe the relationship between orchestra and conductor? When I speak to Semyon Bychkov the morning after a concert with the Vienna Philharmonic at the BBC Proms, he tells me a story about what had happened at the rehearsal the previous day.

They were playing Brahms's Third Symphony, a piece as familiar to players and audiences as the other work in the programme, Schmidt's Second Symphony, is not. After their morning rehearsal, one of the players spoke to him. 'They have a wonderful way in Vienna of bringing up the subject in such a subtle and unaggressive way… usually in the form of a question.'

The question was about a couple of bars in the third movement. The player suggested that perhaps it was a pity that they changed tempo at that point because the subsequent phrase became more joyful-sounding than it should. 'Well I've been conducting it like that all my life. I just flow forward with the phrase and it's true that it does sound a little bit joyful. But I thought about what he'd said during the afternoon. Maybe he was right.'

At this point in our conversation he sings the phrase, a transition in the symphony that's over in a few seconds. It was the third time they had played the symphony together in as many weeks, but Bychkov decided that resisting a modest change in tempo in that phrase might be a good idea. 'At the performance I went that way. I just did it. I kept the tempo as it was, and they followed me, of course. Two bars only.'

And what happened? 'I knew that it was right. I saw it on their faces when we played it. I didn't do it to please them; I did it because it was true. It was convincing and that's why we did it.'

It's a tiny anecdote, but telling. 'They teach me with such extraordinary gentility and consideration. They watch out for me, just as I watch out for them.' The important word for him is 'convincing': conducting is a matter of belief and commitment.

'In the end it is human chemistry, which is the foundation of everything. You must convince people to come with you. But they will only do that if they feel you will come with them too. Then it's justified. When they see that you are not married to an idea – that you are trying to find the truth, just like them – then you are together. You will be able to do what you want.'

If not, it falls apart.

'The point is to find something that sounds convincing at a given moment. With the Schmidt, you have to sell the work. It is not easy – the Vienna players say they have never had to practise so hard with anything – and of course it is hard to love something that you ▶

SEMYON BYCHKOV

MADE IN RUSSIA: Bychkov in 1986

Early years: Born on 30 November 1952 in then-Leningrad, he began learning the piano aged five and was given his first conducting lesson aged just 13.

Starting Out: He left the Soviet Union aged 22, and made his international conducting debut in Bizet's *Carmen* with the New York City Opera on 30 September 1981.

Development: Thanks to a series of last-minute cancellations at high profile institutions such as the New York Philharmonic and Berlin Philharmonic, he quickly became a household name.

Awards: He won the Rachmaninov Conducting prize aged 20, but was prevented from conducting the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra, part of the prize.

ARENA PAL

don't know so well. It takes time, and it takes leadership; a genuine faith in the piece that's being played. And they sense it immediately – they know. If you have good human contact, they trust you.

'They will be happy to try anything if they are convinced by you. Then they are incredibly happy. But there can be a moment when they say – that is not convincing. Then you have to work hard.'

Bychkov's passion is infectious. We're talking in his flat in Covent Garden ('it's wonderful that when I'm in London I'm always coming home after a concert') and there's never a moment when he slips into autopilot. He thinks all the time, and brings to bear his vast experience of music-making in Russia, across Europe and in the US where he went to live as a young man 40 years ago this summer. So we speak about his training in the Soviet Union (in Leningrad, as it was), his first visit to the other side of the Iron Curtain, six months in Rome ('*la dolce vita* was wonderful'), his decision to emigrate to the US in 1975 and his love of opera.

His conducting career has let him work with all the great orchestras. After making a splash in France when he was still in his twenties, he was quickly working in Berlin and Vienna, Amsterdam and Dresden. In the opera house he was in demand everywhere, especially in the German Romantic repertoire, and now, in his early sixties, he's recognised by musicians as one of the great conductors. Perhaps it's strange that with his range and discipline, and the sheer passion that he brings, he's not been appointed full-time to one of the orchestral posts that are usually considered to be at the top of the tree, but there's no question about where he stands: very high indeed.

We speak about his beginnings. He trained in the Glinka school in Leningrad, where students spend ten years from the age of seven. Only the most gifted children are enrolled in a class, about 20 of them, and many don't make it through; in his year, a third fell by the wayside. It was a training marked by rigour and a devotion to artistic endeavour at the highest level.

'You can't imagine the debates we would have. For example, about why Tatyana stays with her husband instead of choosing the man she loves at the end of *Eugene Onegin*. I tell you that music stands sometimes went flying. That's what it was like.'

His relationship with the Soviet Union was troubled, but his devotion to the musical tradition to which he was exposed remains absolute. 'It was remarkable in so many ways. Of course the problem was that it was so stifling in other ways, because of the politics.

GREAT ESCAPE: 'If I'd stayed in Russia, I would probably have got a one-way ticket eastwards'

But, if I had to choose, I would never choose not to have done it, in spite of everything.'

That's because he believes politics comes and goes but culture remains. 'The veneration of art, music, literature – it's still there. The locals in St Petersburg will say that it's not the way it used to be because of the new money, so to speak, which has become king. And in some ways that is true. But the intelligentsia is still there. They remember. My piano teacher is still teaching. Can you imagine?'

> 'Society has a deep inner need for culture and spirituality'

The hindrance used to be the political system; perhaps it is now the oligarchs' money. But despite it all he still senses a reverence flowing underneath. 'It will always be there, because society has a deep inner need for culture and spirituality. That need is always there, because it is inside us.'

As a young man he used to see Dmitri Shostakovich at concerts around Leningrad. 'He was always there. I would see him – as close to me as I am to you – but we never spoke. I never approached him. But think of it. How could someone like him emerge in a country that was so oppressive?

'The answer is precisely because it was so oppressive. It called for somebody like him to express what everyone felt. That's why he was a towering presence in the 20th century.'

By the mid-1970s, Bychkov himself was disillusioned and was seen by the authorities as a problem. After he won the Rachmaninov Conducting Competition he was prevented from taking part of his prize, a conducting engagement with the Leningrad Phiharmonic. 'They cancelled the concert. I can prove it because I still have the poster! And if I had stayed, I would probably have got a one-way ticket eastwards…'.

LONDON AGAIN: Bychkov with the Vienna Philharmonic at this year's BBC Proms

As it turned out, he was a beneficiary of the Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union that began in the 1970s after huge international pressure on Moscow, and the progress of detente. His citizenship was taken away when he left – 'one of the great paradoxes of the Soviet Union was that they made me pay to have my citizenship removed, to become stateless!' – and he reached New York.

'The Soviet Union was in decline and I left a very angry young man. That helped. The best medicine for nostalgia is anger.'

In the US he was helped and encouraged. He speaks of the social networks that nurtured immigrants like him, and the New York Association for New Americans became something of a family, as for so many Jewish emigrés from the Soviet Union. America became home. I ask him how it felt to go back to St Petersburg, where he was appointed principal guest conductor in 1989, 14 years after his departure.

'As you can imagine, I know my streets. They have done great work in restoring the façade, although when you get inside the buildings it's not quite the same. But it remains a gloriously beautiful city, with a harmony that I think is astonishing. There is a reason why people come from all over the world and fall in love with it.'

He can still identify the undertow of the culture he inherited. The Glinka school, still all-boys, continues its work. 'But there is a problem everywhere, as we know. Music is disappearing from the curriculum in so many places. Even in Germany. Can you believe it?

'We have to be concerned that the people who are responsible are letting musical education disappear. They obviously don't understand what it means, and they are responsible! People are being limited, denied the spirituality they need.

'Really talented children are spotted, of course. Like very good tennis players, they will always be supported. The difficulty is for people who have some talent, but who aren't going to become professional musicians. They don't have the dollar connotation to their names, but they need art too.'

> 'The orchestra is an instrument – just a multi-headed one'

He returns to his days in the Soviet Union, the country that in the end he rejected. 'It was a political decision to support music and all the arts, of course, but it did create a system in which people were connected to culture. People who could hardly read could quote Pushkin. And Tchaikovsky became for Russians what Verdi is to Italians.'

LEBRECHT

It was in that rich atmosphere, before political disillusion set in, that he knew he was going to be a conductor, 'certainly before I was ten years old.'

He was playing the piano. 'It became absolutely clear that conducting was the way I needed to express myself in music. The orchestra is an instrument, you see – it's just a multi-headed one. And I wanted to learn how to do it.'

It brings us back to the magic of the relationship. 'You learn in many ways. The vision you present of a piece of music has to be compelling and convincing, which means that you have to know it. This is not a job, it's a vocation. But think of it: it's really a simple process to describe.

'You and I might be standing on the street outside. If I study something at the top of a building really hard – look at it for a long time, think about it – people will look. They will follow my eyes. If I present a vision of a piece of music, if people see that the only object of my attention happens to be that score, and nothing else, they become captivated, and a lot of them will learn to love it too. This is how it starts, and how it will end.'

And the orchestra itself? 'The whole idea of an orchestra being happy can only come about when each artist is able to play as they want. When they have the feeling that they are allowed to do it, then they are a happy bunch. Then a conductor can do what he wants with them.'

And who, of the conductors he has watched, could do that best? 'Carlos Kleiber, without question.' The answer that so many conductors give to the same question.

We talk about London, which he loves. And, appropriately, the first opera he conducted as a young man in Leningrad, *Eugene Onegin*. He'll conduct Kaspar Holten's production at the Royal Opera House this winter with Dimitri Hvorostovsky as Onegin, Nicole Car as Tatyana and Michael Fabiano as Lensky.

He remembers the 20 performances he conducted when he was 19, in the city he would soon leave, but which he still loves. The start of a career that, more than 40 years later, still promises much more to come. ■

Bychkov conducts Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin at the Royal Opera House on 19, 22, 30 Dec and 2, 4, 7 Jan; and he conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra at London's Barbican on 12 Jan in Glanert, Haydn and Brahms.

ON SECONDARY THOUGHTS…

Following the success of *Ten Pieces* to introduce classical music to primary schoolchildren, the BBC has now lauched another scheme, this time aimed at eleven year-olds and over. ***Helen Wallace*** reports

It's Monday morning, and you're faced with 30 sceptical 13 year-olds. There's a detailed curriculum to get through in a limited time. Some of your class are already proficient on an instrument, some have been laying down tracks on GarageBand all weekend, some have never sung a note – and never intend to. Classical music is something that's piped into a station concourse to clear them out. What do you do?

Enter the film *Ten Pieces II*. This vibrant musical kaleidoscope, aimed at 11-14+ year-olds (Key Stage 3), is the second stage of the BBC's *Ten Pieces* initiative for schools. The first stage, launched last year, reached over half the primary schools in the country, and the numbers engaging with its resources continue to rise – just look at bbc.co.uk/tenpieces to see the plethora of responses, from fantastical animations to 90-strong choral performances, assembly re-enactments to full-blown music theatre. This new list, for secondary schools, includes Wagner's 'The Ride of the Valkyries', 'Habanera' from Bizet's *Carmen*, Haydn's Trumpet Concerto, Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* and 'Mambo' from Bernstein's *West Side Story,* introduced on the film by celebrities as diverse as singer Pixie Lott, TV presenter James May, Radio 1 DJ Clara Amfo and actor Christopher Eccleston.

> 'They built their own cave, wired it up and made their own trolls'

At its West End screening I ask producer Jennifer Redmond what they have taken from the first *Ten Pieces* into the next one. 'The children and their teachers came up with so many ideas we'd never dreamed of, and we've learnt from that,' she replies. 'One of my favourites was a class who had taken Grieg's 'Hall of the Mountain King' and turned it into an exploration of electricity. They'd created their own cave and wired it up, made their own trolls, and composed music to go with it – they showed us that *Ten Pieces* could be inspirational across the whole curriculum.' Anna Meredith's body percussion piece *HandsFree*, originally written for a BBC Prom by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, also proved a hit: 'I think it presented a level playing field; every child in every school could use their own body to make music.'

Secondary schools present new challenges, though, not least a packed exam-driven timetable, fewer opportunities to work across subject areas or to go out of school for screenings. They are also up against ▶

CHRIS CHRISTODOULOU

SPREADING THE WORD: the BBC Philharmonic under Alpesh Chauhan; (below right) Gabriel Prokofiev with Radio 1 presenter Clara Amfo; (below left) *Ten Pieces* ambassadors

UP WITH THE LARK: Nicola Benedetti plays Vaughan Williams

TEN PIECES SECONDARY

A quick guide to the works featured this time round

FIERCELY ROMANTIC: ***Ride of the Valkyries*** **by Arthur Rackham**

JS Bach
Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565
Perhaps the most famous piece JS Bach ever wrote, though there's still some dispute over whether it really was by him. It is presented here in the glittering opulence of Leopold Stokowski's 1920s orchestration.

Haydn *Trumpet Concerto*
Haydn's ground-breaking 1796 showpiece for the trumpet is one of his happiest creations. It was written for his good friend Anton Weidinger, who had invented the new, five-key trumpet.

Bizet *Habanera and Toreador Song from Carmen Suite No. 2*
The opera Bizet predicted would be a 'hopeless flop' has proved a hit for all times and all cultures since its premiere in 1874. Carmen's beguiling siren song is contrasted with Escamillo's dazzling signature tune.

Wagner
Ride of the Valkyries from Die Walküre
Think of the Wagner, and the music of this exhilarating charge comes to mind, depicting the Valkyries, legendary female spirits who choose who will die in battle and be brought back to Valhalla. A vivid taste of this endlessly rich music-drama.

Verdi *Dies Irae and Tuba Mirum from the Requiem Mass*
Another masterpiece from 1874, Verdi's terrifying evocation of the day of wrath never fails to make an impact, while the chilling 'last trumpet' has all the menace of one of his operas.

Gabriel Prokofiev *Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra*
Sergei's grandson has made a career as a dance, electro and hip-hop producer but returns to his roots in this dynamic concerto. Sounds created by the instruments are remixed, warped and fragmented by the soloist.

Shostakovich *Symphony No. 10 – Scherzo*
'It's about Stalin and the Stalin years,' said Shostakovich. 'The second part, the scherzo, is a musical portrait of Stalin.' Whether or not the composer was misquoted, this savage *tour de force* needs no explanation as an evocation of The Terror.

Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending*
Written by Vaughan Williams on the eve of World War I, this heart-stopping evocation

those who have decided classical music is seriously un-cool. Introducing the film, BBC director general Tony Hall proudly recalls the comment of a boy who had attended the *Ten Pieces* Prom this year: 'I realised that classical music isn't just for old people who sit in chairs all the time.'

With whizzy animations and a cornucopia of graphic styles from production company Somethin' Else, there's not a lot of sitting down in this film. Christopher Eccleston is chased down a street by holographic valkyries, comedian Vikki Stone cowers before a fiery apocalypse to the strains of the Dies Irae from Verdi's Requiem, an inky Stalin towers above Shostakovich as his Tenth Symphony thunders through, while a ripe Carmen smoulders at Escamillo in a smoky bar.

As Redmond explains, anything was up for grabs in terms of music, but each piece needed its own story and purpose. 'Children in this age group can have preconceptions about classical music, so we needed a hook, whether it was ex-footballer Dion Dublin checking out Haydn's impressive score-card and comparing rondo form to a match strategy, or James May's hands-on demonstration of how a Bach Fugue works. *Night Ferry* was chosen for composer Anna Clyne's creative process: beginning with Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, she created a vast wall frieze depicting a wave into which lines of the poem were woven, and then transformed the frieze itself into music.

Gabriel Prokofiev's Concerto for Turntables and Orchestra occupies a special place in the line-up, written as it was to bridge two worlds, as the composer himself explains to me: 'I find that those kids who haven't been involved in classical music don't question why turntables should be put on the same stage as an orchestra. It's the kids who know more who say, "I didn't know you were allowed to do that!" At its premiere in 2012, the National Youth Orchestra's players weren't sure it was going to work until they saw the virtuosity of the DJ in the cadenza and appreciated it was a real concerto, not a hip-hop pastiche or banging beats behind an orchestra.'

Prokofiev, the grandson of composer Sergei, is pleased with the way the performance has been filmed, focusing on soloist Mr Switch's perspective and his interaction with the orchestra. It's certainly one of the most dynamic, ably directed by young conductor Alpesh Chauhan, assistant conductor of the CBSO. The film presented Chauhan with a raft of new technical challenges: 'We recorded all the pieces in the studio in Salford first because it was so important to get great sound: we're not going to inspire without high-quality performance. Then we went into this warehouse to make the video – the acoustics in there would have been rubbish, but they could do all this whacky stuff with lights and cameras, which works really well on film. So I never actually heard what the orchestra sounded like in the space because I had our previous recording playing in my ear,

FERRY QUEEN: British composer Anna Clyne

of the English countryside, inspired by George Meredith's poem, bewitches each new generation with its fragile beauty.

Bernstein *'Mambo' from West Side Story*
This blistering dance-craze number from Bernstein's modern-day *Romeo and Juliet* puts the percussion section through its paces and conjures all the heat, grime and excitement of New York streets at night.

Anna Clyne *Night Ferry*
America-based British composer Anna Clyne is one of the most original and assured voices of her generation. Here she takes us on a treacherous sea-voyage inspired by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner and her own spectacular wall-frieze.

and that was what I was conducting – wow, that was difficult!'

Alpesh knows just what it is to be an ambassador for classical music. He was introduced to it at his primary school, and when he lugged home a cello his parents had no idea what it was: 'My extended family had never come across anything like this before, but now they've been to my concerts and enjoyed them, they choose to go.' He's keen to point out that there was no special choreographing of the performances: 'To be honest, if it had been set up or I had been asked to behave or move in a certain way, I wouldn't have done it. Kids always know if something is genuine, and we owe it to them to show them exactly how we work.'

Baritone Roderick Williams is an ambassador for the project, alongside trumpeter Alison Balsom, violinist Nicola Benedetti, jazz pianist Julian Joseph, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber, harpist Catrin Finch, composer Nitin Sawhney, electronica band Clean Bandit and Radio 3 presenter Suzy Klein, many of whom will be involved in future *Ten Pieces* performances and workshops with the BBC performing groups. Williams agrees the pieces form a pretty turbo-charged collection: 'Yes, there's a shock-and-awe strategy there, but I remember my son heard Orff's *Carmina Burana* once and was so taken by it, he looked for more loud music like that. It's a thrill-seeking age.' Once a teacher himself, he remembers how narrow the focus on 'set works' could get and thinks that throwing open the doors to a wider range of music can only be a good thing.

The BBC Learning division is unlocking creative possibilities, too, in its new range

> 'This generation experience their music on shuffle'

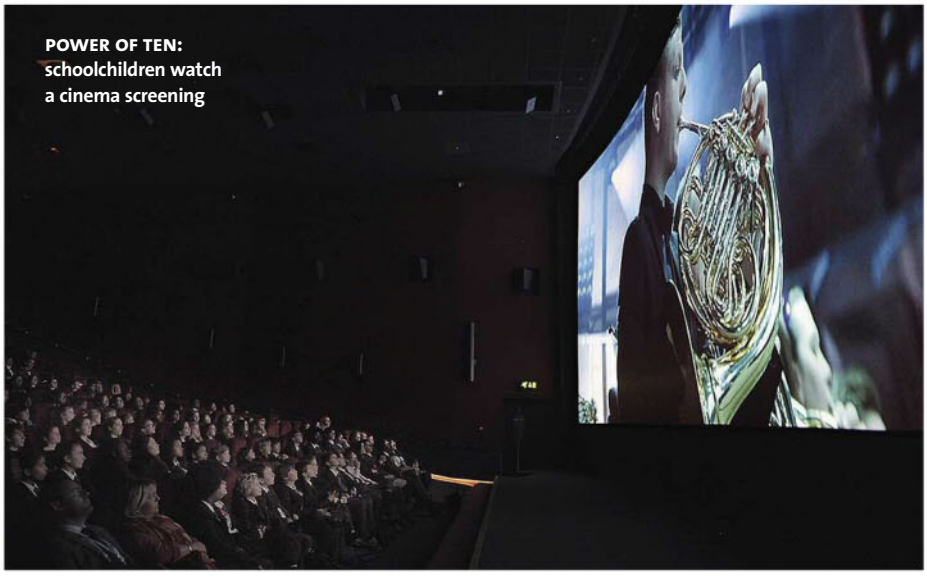
of online resources. Clever arrangements of each of the pieces are available to download, including those for complete beginners and others for an orchestra of Grade 5 and above. There's a free DVD of the film for every school, lesson plans, ten approaches to each piece (which can be applied to any music), MP3 tracks and some brilliant 'how to' films, which cover everything from stop-frame animation, to creating music via coding using a Rapsberry Pi, making a music video, writing performance poetry and – my favourite – the art of scratching. I defy anyone not to be impressed by Mr Switch taking you through baby, forward, transformer and crab scratching of LPs – who knew? I notice that all these illuminating documentaries begin with the exhortation to 'Listen very carefully.'

As the school groups spill out of the cinema at the launch, I can hear enthusiastic responses bubbling up: Bernstein's blistering 'Mambo' has been a hit and, notably, the pastoral idyll of *The Lark Ascending*, which provides an interlude of serenity in this action-packed rollercoaster. I'm not surprised: the intensity of Nicola Benedetti's performance did the work of a thousand visual stimuli. Her comments, born from long experience working with the young, rings true: 'I've never come across students after a concert who aren't excited and happy. We don't need to go about changing everything to keep young people "entertained". Equip them with as much information as possible, then let them be. They'll find their own story in the music.'

Gabriel Prokofiev is buzzing after the film. 'Even watching it has given me so many ideas,' he says. What does he want to happen? 'First, you've got to make sure everyone sees it. Then teachers need to make time and space to do the follow-up, to allow students to be creative. I'd love to see schools responding to the ethos of the film: it's not didactic.'

I confess I find it all a bit… overwhelming. 'Hey, we're in the 21st century,' he replies. 'This generation experience music on a shuffle, they're used to shuttling from one style to another.' I've been put in my place. Alpesh Chauhan sees both sides: 'You can sit a child down and tell them to listen to a Beethoven symphony. For some, they're gripped, that worked for me. But it won't work for everyone. I was very aware at my school that there were lots of people who were not being engaged; that's what this is about.' ■

To book screenings and a free DVD head to the Ten Pieces website at www.bbc.co.uk/tenpieces



POWER OF TEN: schoolchildren watch a cinema screening

MODERN WAYS: Schoenberg gives fellow composer Alban Berg some sound advice

GETTY

TEACHERS OF GENIUS

How do you teach someone to write great music? ***Stephen Johnson*** explores the various methods of those who tutored the composers themselves

'Improvement makes straight roads', wrote William Blake, 'but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of genius.' Surely that says it all. You can teach talent, improve facility, but a true creative genius is born, not made. Yet the history of Western classical music is full of accounts of outstandingly individual composers submitting themselves humbly to learn from others, often figures few would place in anything like the same artistic rank. Think of Beethoven, guided in his first efforts by the admirable but hardly stellar Christian Gottlob Neefe, or later taking lessons in vocal composition from Antonio Salieri – who, since Peter Shaffer's 1979 play *Amadeus*, has become the very symbol of envious mediocrity. Brahms may have insisted that he never learned anything from the soundly competent Eduard Marxsen (composers often say that about their teachers), but recent research indicates that without the former's help, Brahms's grasp of variation techniques, unusual rhythmic combinations and harmonic progressions might have been the poorer – or at the very least different. Think of Bruckner, giving up composing for six years to study strict harmony and counterpoint with the Viennese pedagogue Simon Sechter, a man whose idea of fun was to start each day with a fugue. Was Sechter's course simply a means of boosting Bruckner's notoriously fragile self-confidence, or did he learn something deeper along the way?

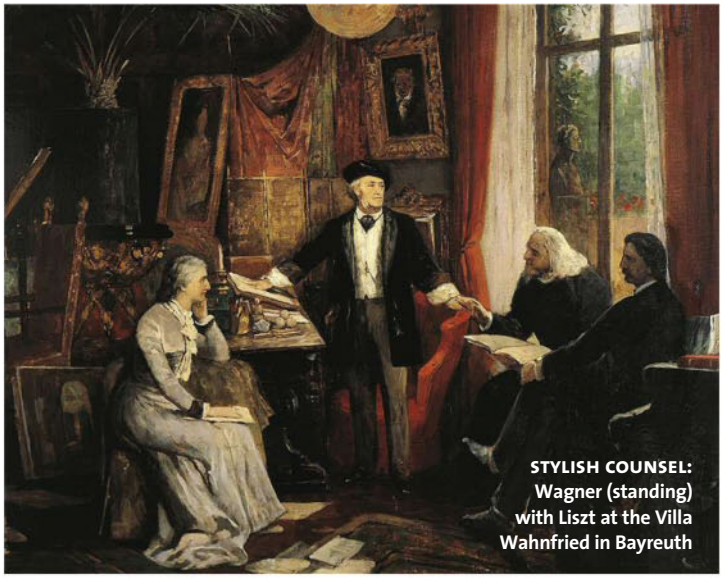
To answer a question like that, however, requires a grasp of mental processes that – even to those who've been through a course of composition lessons – can seem elusively abstract. If you're learning an instrument there are exercises to strengthen the fingers, improve hand-eye co-ordination, refine aural and sight-reading skills. Vocal exercises for singers may be more internal, physically speaking, but they still tend to run on parallel lines. But composing, calling into being music that hasn't existed before? 'There is music in the air, music all around us, the world is full

of it and you simply take as much as you require,' said Elgar. Yet, as a young man, the self-taught Elgar set himself the task of composing a symphony using the same harmonic progressions, on a bar-by-bar timescale, as Mozart's 40th, and he clearly felt he learned a lot from the experience. How is it that fettering yourself like this can ultimately be good for creativity?

Before we consider that, though, we should look at the influence of the teacher him- or herself. Often it is simply enough that the teacher stands outside, and isn't caught up in the immediate intensity of the creative process. Mark-Anthony Turnage still cherishes a remark made by his teacher John Lambert: 'If you find you're getting really moved by your own music, go and make a cup of tea.' One thing Aaron Copland was sure he learned from his teacher Nadia Boulanger was the necessity of keeping 'cool under fire'. The inexperienced young composer often finds this particularly difficult; the teacher can show how to take a step back – to see the wood as well as the trees.

Benjamin Britten remembered learning a different kind of perspective from his teacher, the composer Frank Bridge: at a time when many senior composers regarded the continental modernists (Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith) as aesthetically, even morally dangerous, Bridge showed how one could face up to 'the most advanced continental developments, and proved that an English composer of integrity could emerge from the experience not only unscathed but immeasurably enriched', as Bridge's biographer Anthony Payne puts it. Britten learned that lesson well.

Another thing a teacher can do is identify bad habits. Even profoundly original minds can develop them, and the observer doesn't have to be a genius to spot them. Though Liszt was never officially Wagner's teacher, he did the younger man a huge service by pointing out how much of *Lohengrin* was in a steady four beats to a bar – hence the later addition of King Heinrich's 3/4 aria 'Mein Herr und Gott'. Early on in their relationship, Bridge noticed that Britten was piling up complex textures without always being aware how the total effect might sound. By getting Britten to simplify until he was sure he could 'hear' what he wrote internally, he taught Britten 'the absolutely clear relationship of what was in my mind to what was on the paper'.



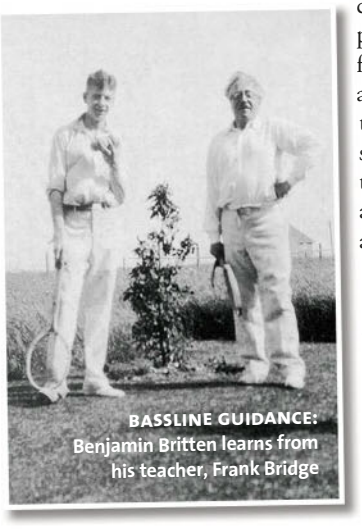
STYLISH COUNSEL: Wagner (standing) with Liszt at the Villa Wahnfried in Bayreuth

If *Testimony* – Solomon Volkov's 1979 collection of Shostakovich's memoirs – is to be believed (and there is confirmation from other sources), the Russian composer always remembered what his teacher Alexander Glazunov told him about 'excess' in orchestration. At first sight, Shostakovich's scoring often looks quite plain. For the first few minutes of the Tenth Symphony we have nothing but strings, with only a solo clarinet for contrast, yet the score is full of subtle, initially invisible details that nevertheless 'tell' in performance. Shostakovich is never guilty of writing 'eye-music' – music that looks impressive on paper, but whose ingenuity doesn't translate into sound. Glazunov also encouraged his pupils to play great orchestral works – Brahms's symphonies for example – in four-hand piano arrangements, a wonderful way of learning about composition from the inside.

> Suddenly, Schoenberg smashed the pencil into the tabletop

It would be fascinating to know what the young JS Bach learned from studying or simply making music with his father, Johann Ambrosius Bach, or from his gifted and well-travelled cousin Johann Christoph, who appears to have expanded the boy's musical horizons – often it's enough simply to lead a horse to water. But none of this seems to have made Bach himself an indulgent or liberal teacher. Pupils remembered how he used to tell them that 'The sole purpose of harmony is the glory of God; all other use is but idle jingling of Satan.' On one manuscript part that a young pupil was copying, a huge flying smear beside an evident mistake almost certainly records the moment when Bach clipped the unlucky miscreant round the ear. Yet consider how many of Bach's own sons – pupils from the cradle, you might say – went on to become distinguished composers themselves: Carl Philipp Emmanuel, Johann Christian, Wilhelm Friedemann… and each of them quite different. They were hardly 'Bach products'.

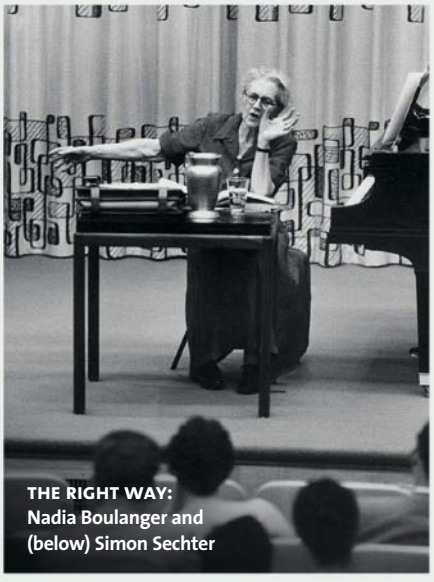
Stern discipline like that of JS Bach turns out again and again to have been a distinguishing feature of the most revered composition teachers. Many of Paul Hindemith's American pupils (the list includes Leonard Bernstein) were surprised at how rigorous and authoritarian he could be in his days at Yale and Tanglewood. Arnold Schoenberg, whose influence as a teacher was considerable in both Europe and the US, lived up in many ways to his reputation as the 'Moses the Lawgiver' of 20th-century music. Yet despite his having forged a system of composition – the 12-note technique, or 'serialism' – 'thanks to which the supremacy of German music is ensured for the next hundred years', Schoenberg was by no means always the rigid dogmatist. Theatre played a part in his lessons too. One pupil remembered turning up for a class to find Schoenberg carefully sharpening a pencil. The process went on for some minutes, tension and bafflement mounted… then, suddenly, Schoenberg smashed the pencil into the tabletop. Lesson: sometimes a good composer leads his audience to expect one thing, then does something radically different – the sudden massive *fortissimo* in the hushed start of the finale of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony, for example. For years afterwards, when things got stuck in the ▶



BASSLINE GUIDANCE: Benjamin Britten learns from his teacher, Frank Bridge

IN A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

Five top teachers who had an impact on western music



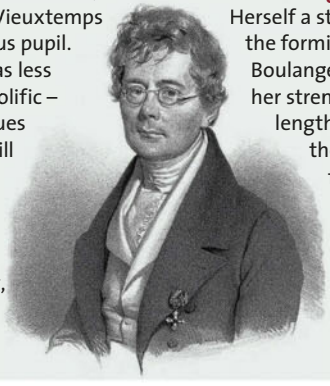
THE RIGHT WAY: Nadia Boulanger and (below) Simon Sechter

Simon Sechter *(1788-1867)*
Based in Vienna, Sechter taught a number of the leading musical figures of his era, including (briefly) Schubert, Vieuxtemps and Bruckner, his most famous pupil. As a composer himself, he was less successful. Though hugely prolific – he penned around 5,000 fugues – very few of his works are still played today.

Antonio Salieri *(1750-1825)*
By no means the hapless grump portrayed in *Amadeus*, Salieri was by all accounts very affable company and generous to a fault, teaching many of his pupils for free. That prestigious list includes Beethoven, whom he taught all matters choral for two years, as well as Schubert, Meyerbeer and the young Liszt.

Alexander Glazunov *(1865-1936)*
Appointed professor at the St Petersburg Conservatoire in 1899, Glazunov showed an admirable devotion to the welfare and education of his many students. These included Shostakovich, who Glazunov personally ensured was provided for in terms of both food and manuscript paper.

Arnold Schoenberg *(1874-1951)*
Holding posts first in Vienna and Berlin and then, after moving to the US in 1934, Boston and Los Angeles, Schoenberg's list of students was prestigious and varied. As well the like-minded Anton Webern and Alban Berg, diverse composers such as John Cage, Roberto Gerhard and the conductor Otto Klemperer also enjoyed his tutorship.



Nadia Boulanger *(1887-1979)*
Herself a student of Fauré and sister of the formidably talented composer Lili Boulanger, Nadia Boulanger decided her strength lay in teaching. The length and breadth of the list of those who came to Paris to learn from her is extraordinary: from modernists George Antheil and Elliott Carter to minimalist Philip Glass; from Nuevo tango pioneer Ástor Piazzolla to jazz's Donald Byrd...

composition process, that pupil found himself remembering 'Schoenberg's pencil'.

Looking at Schoenberg's legacy, it's tempting to propose a maxim: 'By their pupils shall ye know them'. The list of those who went through the Schoenberg schooling shows a staggering range: the warmly Mahlerian Alban Berg, the minutely particular Anton Webern, 'World Music' forerunner Lou Harrison, the cheerful absurdist John Cage, even Scott Bradley, who used 12-note rows in one of his anarchic *Tom and Jerry* scores. But Schoenberg knew his limitations. When George Gershwin approached him for lessons, Schoenberg refused: 'I would only make you a bad Schoenberg, and you're such a good Gershwin already.'

A similar paradox applies to another great 20th-century teacher, Nadia Boulanger: stern rigour produces dazzlingly diverse results. Among Boulanger's best-known alumni we find Aaron Copland, champion of the 'common man', arch-modernist Elliott Carter and jazz-blues legend Quincy Jones. As a teacher she was demanding and methodical, insisting (like Schoenberg) on old-fashioned methods like harmony and counterpoint, score reading at the piano, and strict *solfège* sight-singing. Reactions varied. Virgil Thomson grumbled about her applying 'routine recipes and bromides from standard repertory' to his original compositions. But Copland treasured the sense she gave him 'of what she called *la grande ligne* – the long line in music', and her warnings against innovation for innovation's sake: 'It's always necessary to be yourself – that is a mark of genius in itself.'

That remark about 'the long line' brings us back neatly to the question posed earlier: how can one fettering oneself to what can seem a mechanical, imaginatively restricting process like academic harmony and counterpoint (writing strict, dry fugues or quasi-Palestrina polyphony), or like Elgar's musical 'join the dots' game with Mozart's 40th, be creatively beneficial? Another John Lambert pupil, Oliver Knussen, felt that Lambert's insistence on counterpoint exercises gave his students a too firm sense of 'line' in music: 'It's the hallmark of a Lambert pupil'. But there's something else about this process of imaginative restriction. The American psychologist Carl Rogers liked to point out that the butterfly flies as well as it does because it has had to struggle to emerge from the chrysalis. Cut the chrysalis open in a misguided attempt to help the struggling butterfly and its wing muscles won't develop sufficiently. Today, one often hears talk of 'nurturing' and 'enabling' talent, but by resisting the urge to be 'cruel in order to be kind', are we in danger of cruelty through excessive kindness – as Dr Johnson put it in another context, of 'encumbering with help'?

In the end, perhaps the most valuable service a teacher can perform for a pupil might be to give him or her something to react against. Robert Saxton recalls his first encounter with his teacher, the formidable Elisabeth Lutyens: 'You haven't got much talent, have you, but we'll have to find some'. Yet very quickly, Saxton found himself fired by Lutyens's 'contagious' enthusiasm. Studying with Olivier Messiaen – a teacher revered by many – Alexander Goehr was surprised and disappointed by the plodding textbook style of Messiaen's analysis lessons, yet that very limitedness set him thinking harder about what it was that was lacking. Ralph Vaughan Williams remembered his studies with Charles Villiers Stanford as marked by dismissive criticism from the latter ('All rot, my boy') met by wilful defiance on his own part. Yet years later he was moved to write these words, which probably say as much as anything about what marks 'great' teaching, whatever the field: 'What one really gets out of lessons with a great man cannot be computed in terms of what he said to you or what you did for him, but in terms of the intangible contact with his mind and character. With Stanford I always felt I was in the presence of a lovable, powerful and enthralling mind. This helped me more than any amount of technical instruction.' ■

> 'It's always necessary to be yourself – that is a mark of genius'

GETTY

WORLD of MUSIC

Why do we reserve the term 'classical' for European music alone, while bracketing everything else under a catch-all title of 'World Music'? We're wrong to do so, says *Michael Church*, as he leads us on a musical tour around the globe

What is classical music? It's not easy to define, but we could begin with the conditions necessary for its emergence: a stable society, equipped with a quasi-priesthood of professional musicians; plenty of time – preferably hundreds of years – for rules of composition and performance to be established; the concept of a canon, and a system of music-theory. Apply this awesome yardstick globally, and you discover that the European variety is just one of many classical musics: each civilisation has its own cherished Great Tradition. Here we give vignettes of 12 of them, and nobody should be surprised to find, say, the music of Mali and Senegal on the list, as it passes the inclusion-test with ease.

This exercise in classification was prompted in part by curiosity: what might these musics have in common? The answer was much more than might have been expected, in terms of both technical strategy and theory. Most of these musics are modal, and the great majority are based on controlled improvisation: Europe's long abstinence from improvisation sets it strikingly apart, although the obverse of this – music based on notation – has permitted European composers' unparalleled achievements in musical architecture.

There's an implicit colonialism in the widely held Western assumption that these non-European musics are just folk music – or 'world music', a phrase which has no logical meaning. Set aside the fact that all classical music has folk roots, and consider the extreme sophistication of many of the musics listed here. How many European musicians could confidently divide a whole-tone into nine pitch-gradations, as Turkish players do? How many could equal Thai musicians' extraordinary feats of memory?

HIGH STANDARDS: virtuoso Chinese pipa player Wu Man

The way the world is going, some of these traditions now look seriously endangered. In Afghanistan, the Taliban have driven classical musicians into exile, and their Malian counterparts now face a similar fate; war has reduced Aleppo to rubble, yet that once-lovely Syrian city was for almost a millennium the home of Andalusian music's most venerated song-form. A classical music is a living organism, and all organisms need sustenance to survive. It's time to explore…

Thailand

Thai musicians are routinely called on to perform prodigious feats of memory and mental gymnastics. Nothing is notated: their fixed compositions are created and stored in the mind, and they're exceptionally complex. This is ensemble music, and the most common line-up – the *piphat* – consists of tuned percussion, a wind instrument, drums, and cymbals. Rather than hearing a single unifying tune, you get tunes layered over each other and going at different speeds; this results in a form of polyphony which can seem chaotic to the uninitiated, and can initially make the head swim. Although Thailand itself is now extensively Westernised, Thai classical musicians are fiercely conservative, resisting any changes to either repertoire or technology: they tune their xylophones and gong-circles by thinning or thickening a mixture of lead and wax on the keys or gongs, as their forbears have done for centuries.

Java, Indonesia

Myth has it that gamelan was originally a signalling system invented by the gods, but with its focus still in the old royal courts, it's now the musical *lingua franca* for all Indonesia. A gamelan – the word means 'hammering' or 'handling' – is one instrument played by many pairs of hands, and each one has its own personality, and a ceremonial name. Gamelan takes many forms, but the Javanese one is dominant: its set-up comprises a wide variety of loud and soft metallophones plus bamboo xylophones, a flute, a spike-fiddle and a singer. Its multiple tuning systems are of such complexity and subtlety that even players can find them hard to explain; their equally complex tempo system is best likened to the gearbox of a car. Thanks to champions like Debussy, Messiaen ▶

AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE, MING-SHEN LEE

TURKISH TONES:
'Musical Gathering' from Istanbul, c1700

and Britten, gamelan has gone global: its big attractions are its communal ethos and its wonderfully seductive sound-world.

Japan

The Japanese imported their oldest musical form – *gagaku*, literally 'elegant music' – from ancient China, together with two of their key instruments, the *shakuhachi* flute and the six-foot *koto* zither. But they used these and other musical imports to create the unique sound-worlds of two indigenous theatre forms, noh and kabuki. Noh is a refined fusion of dance and drama which evolved in the 14th century; kabuki is a popular entertainment which evolved as a reaction to the restraint of noh. Zen philosophy underlies much of Japanese music, most notably with the *shakuhachi*, once played by the 'priests of nothingness' who roamed the country with straw baskets over their heads to 'erase the self'. The koto has for a millennium been the Japanese intellectual's instrument of choice, with its own repertoire of classics. Japanese music is primarily pentatonic with microtonal elaborations. Pitch-less sounds – evoking everything from otherworldly horror to an arrow hitting its target – are a theatrical speciality.

China

The *guqin* zither is the most iconic of Chinese instruments, and with a history of nearly three millennia it's by far the oldest (*gu* = old, *qin* = instrument). Playing it was one of the four 'gentlemanly skills', the others being chess, calligraphy and painting, and Confucius was said to be a fine player. It has always been seen as an adjunct to the practice of philosophy, with its strong associations with the natural world, and its assumed ability to 'sound the cosmos'. China's new interest in its cultural roots has sparked a *guqin* craze; serious players still follow the old rules, making their instrument evoke the sound of water, birdsong, and even the dropping of tears.

In contrast, *Jingju*, China's indigenous form of opera, is now mostly for the cognoscenti and had its golden age under the Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908) who built a split-level stage for it at her Summer Palace. But thanks to Chen Kaige's celebrated film *Farewell, My Concubine*, Western cinema-goers can get a vivid picture of it. A stylised amalgam of acting, singing, acrobatics and visual art, this art-form's vocal wildness belies the labyrinthine codification of its musical rules and the intricately formalised conventions required for its costuming and staging. Soldiers climbing over a table flanked by chairs are crossing a mountain – crazy, but somehow you accept it, as you accept the unearthly shrieks of the singers.

North India

Ravi Shankar with his sitar has revealed to the whole world the formal beauty of Hindustani raga: the exploratory *alap* followed by the firm-paced *jor*, after which comes virtuoso flamboyance, before the liberating entry of the tabla. Technically, a raga is neither a scale nor a tune, but something in between, and the Sanskrit term 'raga' (pronounced 'rag' in Hindi) means 'passion'. This denotes both the mental state which the performer reaches through improvisation, and also the concept of a sacred essence existing outside the musician over whom it exerts benign control. Hindustani music bears the imprint of the Mongol invasions that led to the founding of the Mughal empire in the 16th century; thus were brought in the instruments, scales, modes and performance styles that give this music its palette of timbres and effects.

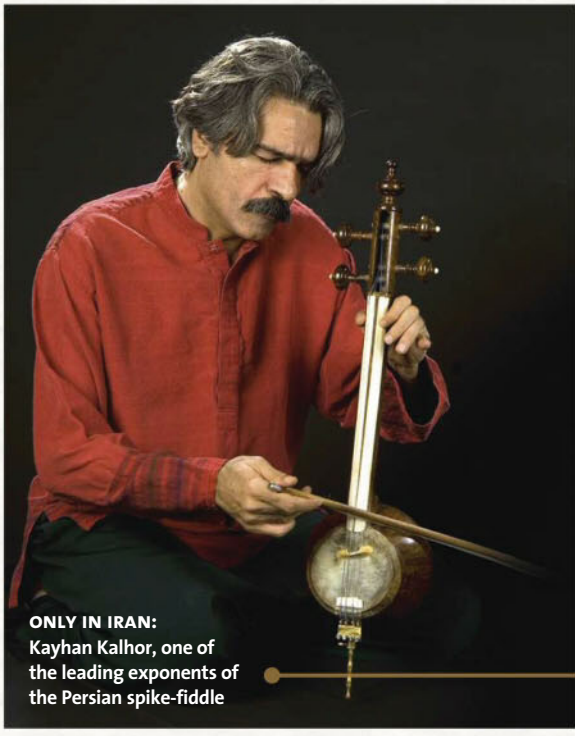
South India

Karnatak – South Indian – music differs from the Islam-influenced music of the North through its Hindu religious underpinning. Its roots lie in the temple, and its repertoire is dominated by the works of three composers known as the Trinity: Tyagaraja, Syama Shastri and Muttusvami Dikshitar, all born around the same time in the mid-18th century, and in the same town in Tamil Nadu. They composed hymn-like songs called *kriti* and, although vestigially-notated versions survive, their transmission has been thanks to a succession of disciples. Karnatak music's textures are very different from those of Hindustani music: the vocal timbres are mellower and the melodies more elaborately ornamented, to a point where the shakes and appoggiaturas are part of the line.

> A raga is neither a scale nor a tune, but something in between

Mali-Gambia

Ethnomusicologist Lucy Duran and BBC Radio 3's *World Routes* programme have ensured that if there's one form of African music which British listeners are familiar with, it's the *jaliyaa* of Mali and Gambia. Its roots go back to the 13th-century Malian empire, its conventions have been faithfully preserved by the Mande people now spread throughout six neighbouring states, and its core figure is the professional singer known as a *jali*. This person carries out many tribal functions – town-crier, historian, moralist – and his (these days also her) music follows fixed rules as to how it is structured, metred and performed, with recurring vocal cascades over an instrumental groove being the basic mode. Dominated by the *balafon* wooden xylophone, the *ngoni* lute and the *kora* harp, the instruments have irresistible charm.

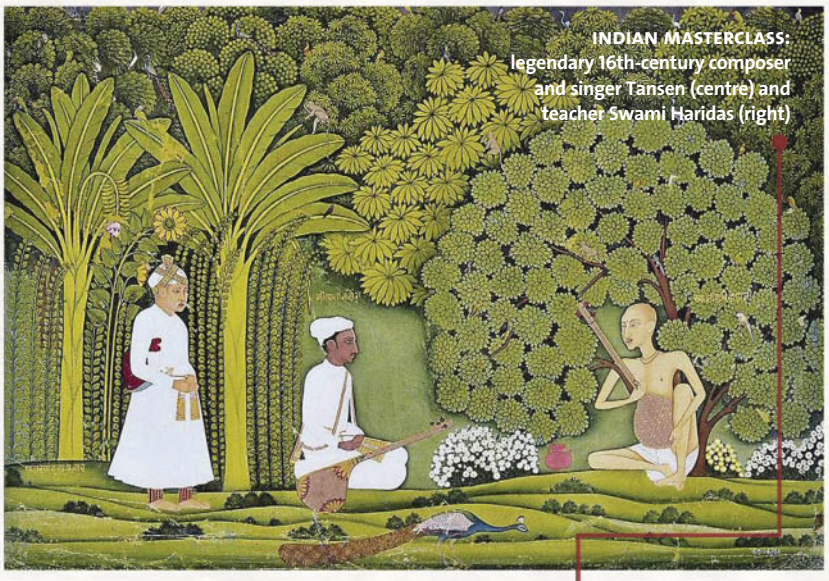


ONLY IN IRAN: Kayhan Kalhor, one of the leading exponents of the Persian spike-fiddle

HAMMER HOUSE: a musician plays the Javanese gamelan

Andalusia

'Andalusian music' evolved through the cultural interaction of Arabs, Berbers, Jews and Christians in Moorish Spain, and today it can be heard across the whole of North Africa and the Levant. Its most typical song-form, the *muwashshah*, initially focused on a singer self-accompanied on the lute, with the subject-matter being a love at once human and divine; Sufism was at its heart. Its prevailing musical form now is the suite, with a complex system of melodic modes needing to be mastered.



INDIAN MASTERCLASS: legendary 16th-century composer and singer Tansen (centre) and teacher Swami Haridas (right)

ANCIENT HERITAGE: Japanese musical drama, noh, in existence for over seven centuries

ALI BOUSTAN, KATHRYN EMERSON, NATIONAL MUSEUM/NEW DELHI, MANTSUOKA AKIYOSHI

Many ensembles are performing it today in the hope that it might recreate the atmosphere of religious tolerance in which it originated.

Eastern Arabic world

The history of Arab classical music goes back two millennia, and the Islamic courts became in effect conservatories, with performers honing vocal and instrumental styles under the supervision of scholars who imposed aesthetic and theoretical rules derived from the ancient Greeks; music was seen as a mathematical science, and a 17-tone scale was adopted, thus giving Arab music the 'extra' non-Western notes which make it so alluring to Western ears. But today's repertoire, based on chamber ensembles with lute, zither, flute, and spike-fiddle, dates from the mid-19th century; Turkish influence runs deep, but Cairo has been the power-house for music based on the modal style known as *maqam*. Forty years after her death, Umm Kulthum remains the region's most venerated singer, her style appealing both to ordinary people and the educated elite and often uniting Jews and Arabs across their military divides.

Turkey

Turkish *makam*, like Arab *maqam*, involves a labyrinthine system of rules and conventions – each whole-step has nine infinitesimally fine pitch-distinctions, which musicians fastidiously observe – and though it's music for connoisseurs, it has the strength and richness which comes from a long history. It's not polyphonic, but the controlled improvisation on which it's based creates an art of continuous variation, beautiful and subtle. The principal instruments – oud, flute, zither and spike-fiddle – relate to the register of the human voice, a quality reinforced by their defiantly low-tech refinement.

Iran

Iranian classical musicians call their art 'Persian' in recognition of its long and distinguished history, even though their fortunes have fluctuated cruelly over the centuries: Persian rulers blew hot and cold, and the Ayatollahs have done likewise, driving those musicians who can't tolerate their draconian laws – women may not perform for male audiences – into exile. But in Iran, public concerts are a modern invention: until the 20th century, Persian classical music was always a private affair – for connoisseurs, Sufi brotherhoods, circles of friends – and mastering the subtleties of the *radif* (Iran's version of *maqam*) demands monastic dedication. The principal string instruments are the spike-fiddle and the tar, whose figure-of-eight belly with its ultra-thin lamb-skin membrane creates a brilliant sonority, with the *tombak* goblet-drum providing support.

Uzbekistan-Tajikistan

The most mysterious of all these musics, the *shashmaqom* has its home in three of the world's most mysterious medieval cities – Bukhara, Samarqand and Khiva – and although it's now restricted to connoisseurs and rural traditionalists, it's competitively touted by both Uzbek and Tajik governments as their 'national' music. Its roots lay in the medieval Arabic 'science of music', it drew heavily on Persian poetry and its golden age came in the 16th-century Silk Road courts. Today's incarnation of this very austere modal music was codified in 19th-century Central-Asian city-states, and was all but extinguished as a result of Soviet efforts to Westernise it. It's now enjoying a discreet revival. ■

Michael Church's book 'The Other Classical Musics – Fifteen Great Traditions' is published by The Boydell Press and is out now.

THRILLS *of the* NORTH

From the cultural hubs of Norway, Sweden and Finland to remote areas of Russia and North America, the world above 60 degrees north has given us music that is as fascinating as it is distinctive, explains ***Michael Scott Rohan***

North isn't just a direction – it's a concept. Even the ancient Greeks and Romans were dimly aware of Hyperborea, the land beyond the north wind, the blessed realm of the sun god Apollo, who shone there 24 hours a day (nobody told them about the winter). And Apollo was also the god of music. Even today, northern Europe still suggests a unique culture, somehow compounded of Viking hardihood and clean-cut, rational modernity, with a vital artistic identity, highlit by the joint centenaries of musical giants Sibelius and Nielsen. But is there really something special about the music of the North?

Undoubtedly it's been shaped by its isolation. For nearly 2,000 years, European culture still focused on the old Roman empire, leaving the peoples beyond the Rhine to develop in their own ways. Vikings overflowed into Europe and founded Russia, but kept their own homelands; Finns were still developing agriculture as Europe approached the Renaissance, and Lapps remain nomadic herders even today. Christianity reached the north via Britain, Germany and Orthodox Greece rather than direct from Rome, creating a distinct choral tradition, and it was to Germany that educated Scandinavians looked.

Many of the Nordic countries' first composers were in fact German or German-influenced: in Norway, Georg von Bertouch (1668-1743) and the Berlin family; in Finland, Fredrik Pacius (1809-91), composer of the country's national anthem and first opera *Kung Karls jakt* (The Hunt of King Charles); and in Sweden, Johan Helmich Roman (1694-1758), who studied with Handel in London. Among common folk, music-making remained largely domestic and amateur, with few foreign influences: Swedish ballads, many from Viking times, with instruments like the *nyckelharpa* or hurdy-gurdy; Norwegian dance music, with the famous Hardanger fiddle; Finnish *runolaulu*, rune-singing, epic ballads chanted to the psaltery-like *kantele*; and, towards the Arctic, haunting Lapp *joik* singing. In 18th-century Sweden, folk and classical song blended in the moody, satirical songs of Carl Michael Bellman

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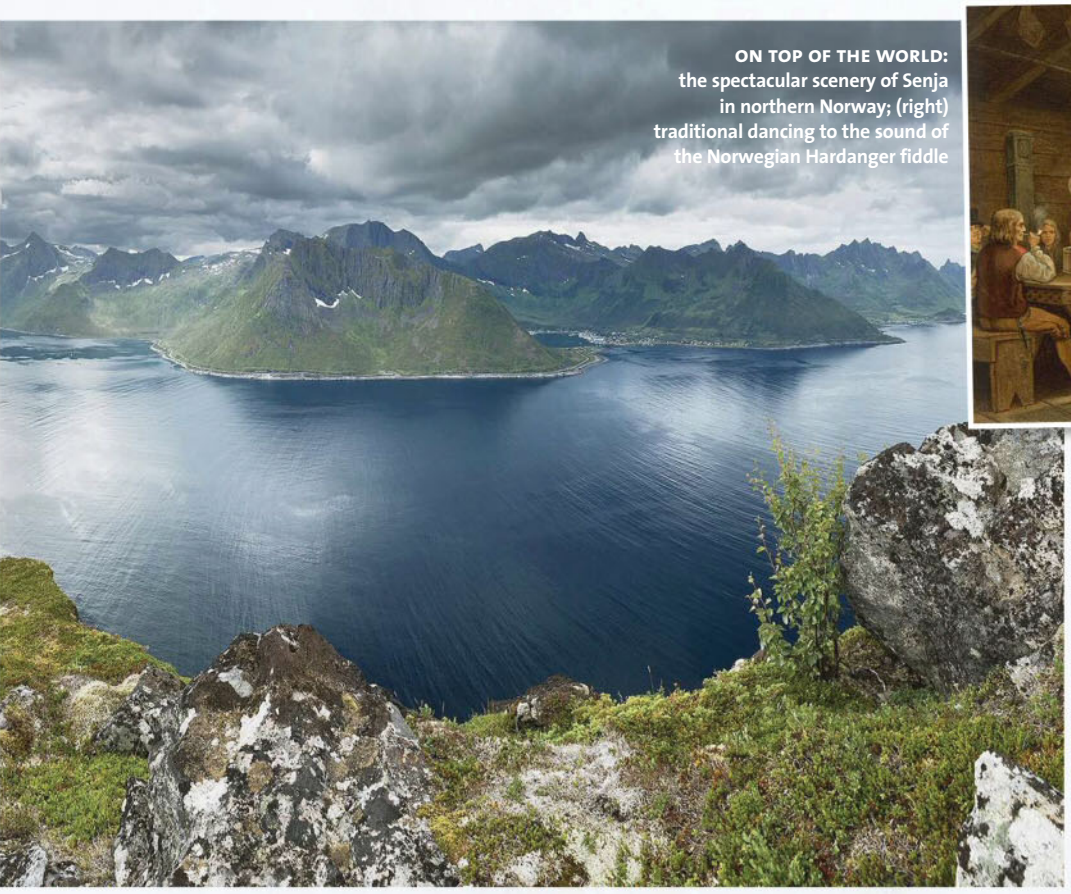
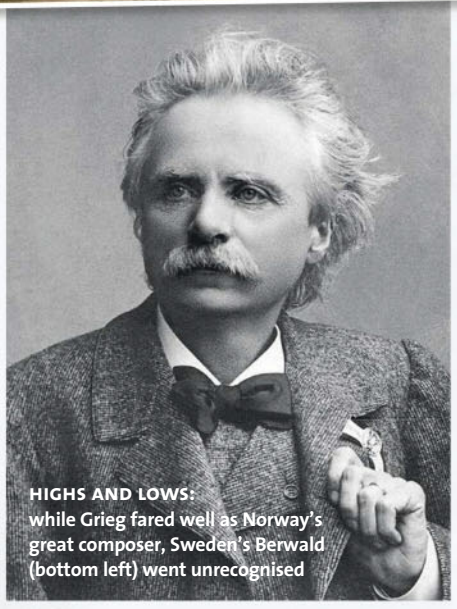


ON TOP OF THE WORLD: the spectacular scenery of Senja in northern Norway; (right) traditional dancing to the sound of the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle



HIGHS AND LOWS: while Grieg fared well as Norway's great composer, Sweden's Berwald (bottom left) went unrecognised

(1740-95), but even its first great 19th-century symphonist, Franz Berwald, remained a largely unheard amateur.

By the time of Berwald's death, though, a sense of national identity was developing self-confidence. Northerners looked not to over-used classical traditions, but to their own languages and literature; they drew imagery not from Roman legends but their own ancestral myths and heroes, wilder and more vigorous. Great international performers like soprano Jenny Lind and Norwegian violinist Ole Bull appeared to inspire native composers, among them Edvard Grieg and his friend Johan Svendsen. Finland's first music academy was founded just in time to attract a young law student whose subsequent career could be succinctly summed up as 'Finland Awakes!', the original title of Sibelius's famous *Finlandia*.

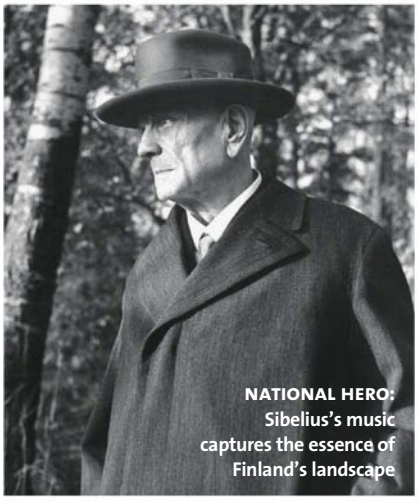
Sibelius and his fellows still went abroad to Leipzig, Paris or Vienna, but they didn't write the music of these countries. Instead they looked homeward for inspiration, often collecting folksongs themselves, and drawing on local musicians and choirs, like the university groups for whom Sibelius in particular wrote a lot of music. This blending of mainstream classical and popular styles characterises many archetypally northern works, from Grieg's bouncing dance rhythms in works like *Wedding Day at Troldhaugen* and Hugo Alfvén's three *Swedish Rhapsodies,* to the brooding, epic atmosphere of Sibelius's breakthrough *Kullervo* symphony. Early Danish composers, just below the crucial 60° line running through southern Norway, Sweden and (just) Finland, looked at first to Germany, but JPE Hartmann (1805-1900) turned increasingly northwards with his ballets *The Valkyrie* and *Thrymskvida* and the epic cantata *Vølvens Spådom* (Words of the Wise-Woman). And after him Carl Nielsen embodied this union of traditions, growing from barefoot peasant drummer boy to a creator of symphonies and quintessentially Northern tone-poems like *Saga-Drøm*.

Is there something special about the music of the North?

Just as influential, though, may be the quality of life at these latitudes, the Northern experience: landscapes ground by storm and glacier; the craggy mountains and fjords; the clear air; the relentless space and energy of the sea in all its moods; the incredible aurora borealis; the sudden, exuberant flourishing of the Northern spring; the blazing, nightless summer and the far longer, daunting winter darkness. Small wonder aspiring northern composers eagerly responded to Wagner's innovative depictions of nature imagery. It may be a cliché to find a crisp Norwegian dawn in Grieg's famous 'Morning' – it's set in *Peer Gynt*'s Egypt, after all – but some clichés remain true. The sudden blaze that concludes Sibelius's *Night Ride and Sunrise* has a similarly radiant quality, as does Nielsen's Third Symphony (the 'Espansiva') with its soaring vocalises, and his *Helios* overture. Sibelius's *Tapiola* radiates the storm-swept power of Finland's unending forests, while works by Toivo Kuula and Aarre Merikanto's opera *Juha* depict its northern plains. Hugo Alfvén's Fourth Symphony ('From the Outermost Skerries'), breathes the restless flow of Swedish coastal waters, mingled with lyrical eroticism in his tone poem *A Legend of the Skerries*. Passages in Sibelius's Third Symphony were apparently inspired by drifting North Sea fog banks, while his Fourth is undoubtedly rooted in Finland's Mount Koli region. Of course, it's possible to read too much into the music. Commentators ▶

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Radio 3's polar-facing season



NATIONAL HERO: Sibelius's music captures the essence of Finland's landscape

BBC RADIO 3 FROM 5 DECEMBER to 26 December, Radio 3's three-week *Northern Lights* season will be focusing on music from around the 60° parallel and above. Suitably northern works will feature throughout, plus selected programme highlights are as follows:

Composer of the Week

Sibelius (above, from 7 Dec), the Composers of Iceland (from 14 Dec) and Berwald (from 21 Dec) will be the subjects of Donald Macleod's daily programme.

CD Review

As well as a special run-down of new Nordic releases (5 Dec), *Building a Library* will focus on Sibelius's Symphony No. 1 (12 Dec) and Nielsen's Symphony No. 6 (19 Dec).

Music Matters

In a Sibelius Special (5 Dec), Tom Service leads an exploration of the great Finn.

Lunchtime Concert

Broadcasts include concerts from Orkney's St Magnus Festival (8-11 Dec) and Nielsen's String Quartet cycle from the Danish String Quartet (22-25 Dec).

For complete listings of Radio 3's Northern Lights season, turn to p96

POLAR SOUNDS: Rautavaara's *Cantus Arcticus* (below) uses recordings of Arctic wildlife

have rhapsodised about the northernness of Sibelius's Symphony, when in fact it was largely written in and inspired by sunlit Italy. But even the great body of Northern song, while it reflects familiar concerns like love, longing and loss, tends to set these against natural backgrounds.

A new generation of northern composers explored new styles, but often along very similar themes – take, for example, the Finns Uuno Klami (1900-61), with his *Kalevala Suite* and *Sea Pictures*, and Joonas Kokkonen (1921-96), whose opera *The Last Temptations* draws on Lutheran chorale. The Norwegian Geirr Tveitt (1908-81) looked to French and German developments, but made a definitive collection of Hardanger folk music. Swedes like the symphonist Kurt Atterberg, with his *Dollar Symphony*, and the harmonically adventurous Ture Rangström were entirely cosmopolitan, yet their music still retains the northern Romantic directness. Throughout these countries, but perhaps especially in Finland, the tradition remains just as vital today. Many composers tempted by serialism have reverted to more accessible, less formal styles, among them Aulis Sallinen, whose dour *Mauermusik* has been followed by interesting symphonies and operas. And then there is the prolific and highly accessible Einojuhani Rautavaara (above), increasingly concerned with lyrical, mystical imagery of angels and birds, such as in his *Isle of Bliss*, his Symphony ('Angel of Light') and his gently melancholy 'concerto for bird calls and orchestra', *Cantus Arcticus* – the work I myself would probably select to represent modern music in the North.

Beyond Scandinavia and the Baltic, though, other lands extend beyond the 60th parallel. Russia's vast northland Siberia stretches from grassy steppes and featureless *taiga* forests to the terrible Arctic Kolyma peninsula – site of the worst *gulag* penal colonies, and an area so freezing people leave trails in the ice-crystal air as they walk. Here, the story of music hardly seems to have begun. Just as in Scandinavia, peasant folksongs evolved – and, further north, shamanic chants among the Evenki and other nomadic tribes – but no composers of note appeared to adopt these. The reason isn't hard to find: this bleak land was never settled enough to let them develop. Siberian-born composers gravitated to Moscow or St Petersburg, and they seldom looked back, except perhaps in fear. Nationalist composers like Rimsky-Korsakov and his circle turned largely eastwards to Russia's oriental connections. As a result, and because it was politically sensitive, depictions of Siberia in Russian music are scarce. Perhaps the best-known is the final scene of Shostakovich's controversial opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, portraying brutal convict life – a fate the composer narrowly escaped. More recently, Boris Tchaikovsky's (1925-96) tone poem *Sibirsky veter* (Siberian Winds) is a coldly lyrical landscape piece punctuated with metallic sounds which may reflect Stalin's murderous Siberian industrial ambitions.

Across the Bering straits, the situation in northern America is curiously similar. Canada has enjoyed a lively musical life, from haunting *voyageur* folksongs to today's rock scene, and produces

LAVA FLOW: Jón Leifs used tuned volcanic rocks in his *Saga Symphony* (right)

GETTY

many world-class performers, but as yet no major classical composers. Again, they seem to have drifted southwards to the US, and often its film industry, whose best-known Canadian-born name is Howard Shore, famous for his *The Lord of the Rings* score – a very Northern subject. American Alaska also went straight from native and immigrant folksongs to pop and rock, but in 2014 the Pulitzer composition prize was won by the Alaskan 'naturalist' John Luther Adams who, though he employs computers, until recently lived and worked in a log cabin. Hopefully he'll inspire others.

Beyond Canada, ice-bound Greenland has recently attracted composers from abroad – the Dane Poul Rovsing Olsen and a splendidly individualist Briton called Adrian Vernon Fish, who delights in playing for Inuit audiences. To find a truly native name, though, we must cross to Iceland, which until the 1930s had little music beyond semi-medieval vocal tradition. Its first major composer, Jon Thorliefsson, aka Jón Leifs (1899-1968), again had to work in Germany, co-opted as a 'noble Nordic' until the Nazis discovered his wife was Jewish. Leifs's music is determinedly Northern, often as craggy as Iceland's volcanic landscape, often drawing on Old Norse poems and sagas. His *Saga Symphony* even uses tuned lava blocks as percussion, and his *Geysir* is a slowly gathering orchestral uprush. After World War II he helped establish classical music in Iceland, which enjoys an active, eclectic scene headed by the Iceland Symphony Orchestra.

With such different histories around the world, can we really say there's some common character or sound to the music beyond the north wind? Or is it simply shaped by cultural opportunity? Nurture or nature? Nurture is undoubtedly part of it, especially since most great northern composers have been contemporary enough to know and influence one another. But there does seem to be more to it, a Northern sound almost independent of where composers actually live. Even Kaija Saariaho, who rebelled against the conservative Sibelius Academy and now lives in Paris, produces sonorities as translucent and cleanly hued as Finnish glass. The Baltic states, especially Estonia and Lithuania, lie just below the 60th parallel but look north, and produce distinctly northern styles, including the spare minimalism of Arvo Pärt and cool choral pieces by Veljo Tormis, Pēteris Vasks and others. And one doesn't even have to be northern born. When Lancashire-born Peter Maxwell Davies moved to the Orkneys, north of the Scottish coast and only a smidgen below the 60° line, he became a consummate Northern composer in pieces like *The Martyrdom of St Magnus, An Orkney Wedding with Sunrise* and the popular *Farewell to Stromness.* Even composers who have seldom or never been near the north or its music depict it in remarkably similar ways – Janáček's Siberian bleakness, for example, in his opera *From the House of the Dead*, or Delius in his tone poem *Eventyr,* based on Asbjørnsen's Norse folk-tales.

> Leifs's music is often as craggy as Iceland's volcanic landscape

So, while there's probably no absolute answer, I choose to believe that the Northlands' musical character really does lie in the pervasive northern ambiance. If, as I have, you trudge over the Arctic pack-ice, and see sky and sea merge into a grey horizon above the Pole, an infinity of sterile cold, it's hard to imagine another side to the world beyond. It could be that the freshness and vitality of northern music reflects the need both to challenge and to channel this ultimate negative, affirming and celebrating life – something music has always helped us to do. ■

A VISIT TO THE HOME OF BACH

Thuringia: Germany

Oliver Condy journeys around central Germany as he and his fellow JS Bach fanatics enjoy a world-class festival devoted to the genius of their favourite composer

WRAPPED UP IN BACH: Michele Godard plays the serpent at the Altes Heizwerk in Erfurt; (right) Dornheim's Bartholomew Church, where Bach tied the knot

In 1703, the 18-year-old JS Bach was summoned to the New Church in the town of Arnstadt, with its stunning white, wooden interior, ornate galleries and barrel roof. He was asked to test the new organ, but the town clerks were so impressed with him, they not only paid him well – from the town's beer-tax fund – but offered him the job of organist on the spot. It was his first post (he was later sacked for bad behaviour), marking the start of a career that would see him spend most of his life living where Goethe and Schiller later flourished – in Germany's cultural heart, Thuringia.

Bach's lack of wanderlust has proved convenient for the Thüringer Bachwochen, or Thuringia Bach Festival. Initially launched in 1992 shortly after German reunification, the festival was given a fresh lease of life in 2005. Now it's one of Germany's most important musical events, a three-week long, 70-concert celebration of the great man taking place in over 50 venues across the towns and cities where JS lived and worked, from Arnstadt itself to Mühlhausen, Weimar, Ohrdruf, Eisenach and many more, all within an easy drive.

The Bachwochen is the ultimate Bach pilgrimage, a fact twigged by top-flight musicians from around the world, who queue up to perform in such hallowed spaces. 'No one else can offer this experience,' says festival director Christoph Drescher. 'To perform in the same church where Bach played and composed is so moving.' This year alone, singers James Gilchrist, Dietrich Henschel and Christoph Prégardien descended on Arnstadt for the *St Matthew Passion*, as did Phantasm with a viol arrangement of *The Art of Fugue*; Jeremy Denk romped through the *Goldbergs* in Weimar; Christian Poltéra played the solo cello suites in the Dornheim church where Bach was married; and, perhaps *the* experience for Bach pilgrims, a star-studded B Minor Mass in Eisenach's Georgenkirche, where he was baptised. Although not a great deal is left of the original church, the font where Bach was dunked survives and is displayed prominently in front of the steps to the choir area.

> 'To perform in the same church where Bach played is so moving'

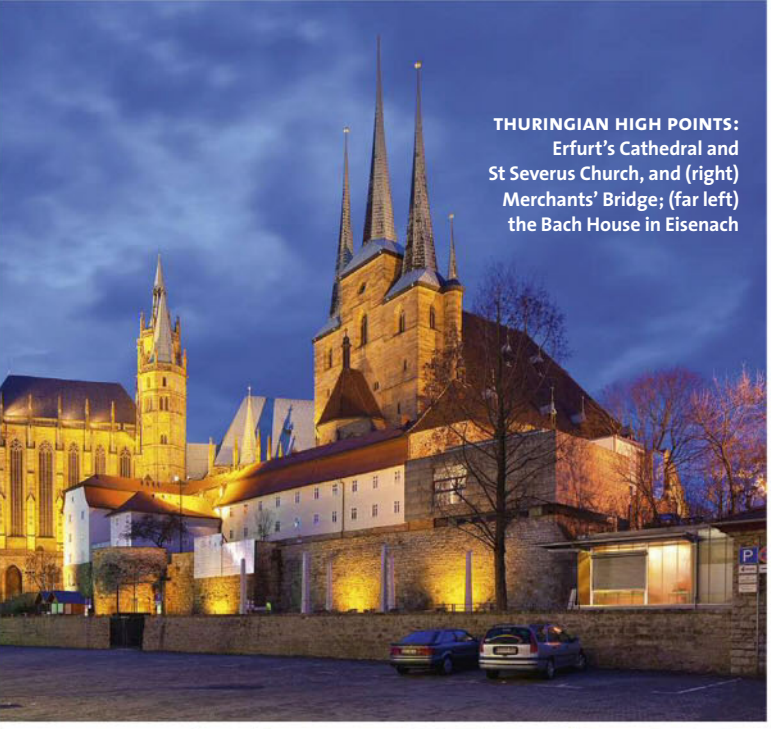
Just over the road is the Bach House, a fascinating museum located on the spot where JS is said to have been born (although it's now thought he actually came into the world a few hundred yards away). You won't find any earth-shattering Bach manuscripts or instruments, but the museum does give a terrific overview of his life and music.

Many of the concerts also take place in the stunningly restored city of Erfurt, once home to Martin Luther as well as the dozens of Bach family members who monopolised the city's music scene during the 17th and 18th centuries – documents from the time even suggest the words 'Bach' and 'musician' were interchangeable, such was the family's hold. But even without those connections, Erfurt

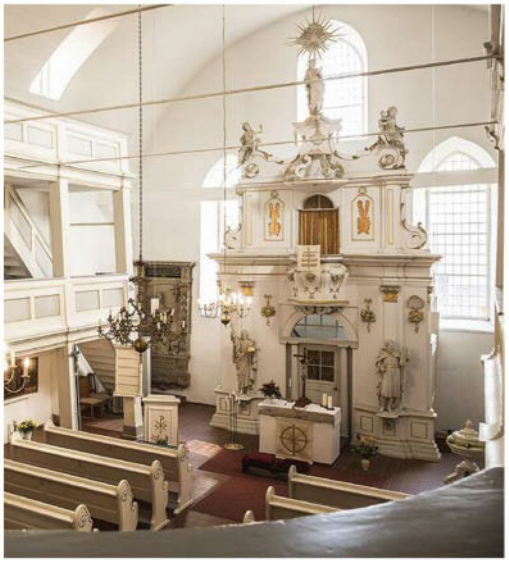
LOCAL HERO

JS Bach

The list of composers who were born in, or worked in, Thuringia is eye-popping, among them Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Reger, CPE Bach and, of course, the big JS, who had a huge influence on them all. Born in Eisenach in 1685, Bach lived in his home town for several years before spending his time as a teenager in Ohrdruf, followed by Arnstadt, then Mühlhausen where he was city organist, Weimar, and Cöthen where he wrote the *Brandenburg Concertos* and the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Finally, in 1723, he headed over the state border to Saxony for his glory years at the Thomaskirche in Leipzig.



THURINGIAN HIGH POINTS: Erfurt's Cathedral and St Severus Church, and (right) Merchants' Bridge; (far left) the Bach House in Eisenach



would be worth a visit, with its imposing Gothic cathedral, the 120m-long Merchants' Bridge boasting the longest row of inhabited buildings on any bridge in Europe, and any number of centuries-old guilds, inns and shops lining charming cobbled streets.

The Bachwochen, though, isn't just serious Bach in serious spaces. Many of the concerts have contemporary music or unusual arrangements, and it's perhaps the festival's traditional opening event that sets the spirit – the 'Long Night of Hausmusik' sees over 120 Thuringian families throw open their homes to festival-goers for concerts of Bach, performed by amateurs and professionals. 'Each home has a flag with Bach's signature on it in the window, so you can easily find them, and go to five or six concerts in one night,' says Drescher. Thuringia's most famous son, it appears, has a place as much in the home as in the concert hall. ■

MARCO BORGGREVE, ISTOCK

THÜRINGER BACHWOCHEN 2016 5 HIGHLIGHTS

20 March, Weimar
In the city's Schloss Belvedere, Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja (above) performs, among works by Vivaldi and CPE Bach, the famous Chaconne from JS Bach's Partita No. 2, with an intriguing promise of accompanying improvisations.

26 March, Schmalkalden
Singers including Joanne Lunn, Julien Prégardien and Peter Harvey unite with Concerto Copenhagen for the *St John Passion*.

31 March, Erfurt
One of the more imaginative concerts of the season brings cellist Nicolas Altstaedt together with percussionist Johannes Fischer for Bach cello suites followed by music by Vivier, Feldman and Fischer himself.

9 April, Meiningen
Brilliant young pianist Kit Armstrong heads to town's theatre to perform Liszt's B minor Sonata and Bach's *Goldberg Variations*.

10 April, Arnstadt
Trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger and pianist Uri Caine join the Swedish Chamber Orchestra for unique takes on Bach's *Brandenburg*s.

thueringer-bachwochen.de

FRANZ SCHUBERT

A composer in the shadows?

While he admired and undoubtedly felt the influence of the mighty Beethoven, Schubert nonetheless managed to forge his own distinctive path, says ***Chris de Souza***

In 1828, on the first anniversary of Beethoven's death, Schubert gave a benefit concert in Vienna, supported by his friend Joseph von Spaun. Many understood it to be a personal tribute to the German composer, at whose funeral Schubert had been one of the torch-bearers. Careful listeners at the concert would have spotted in the song 'Auf dem Strom' a subtle allusion to the opening motif of the funeral march from Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony, 'composed to celebrate the memory of a great man' as the original publication declared. Schubert clearly acknowledged Beethoven's stature: 'But who can do anything now after Beethoven?' he remarked to a friend.

Schubert lived his whole life in the shadow of Beethoven. Beethoven was already living in Vienna, where he would remain for the rest of his life, when Schubert was born, and by a cruel twist of fate, Schubert was only to outlive him by a year. It says everything about him that he developed into such a distinctive artist in Beethoven's massive shadow.

Schubert's father was a schoolmaster; his home, which can still be seen, was the schoolroom. It was a poor family, but cultured and full of music. When he was seven, Schubert came to the attention of Mozart's supposed nemesis, Antonio Salieri, who continued to teach him well into his teens. In 1808 he became a member of the Court Chapel Choir, now the Vienna Boys Choir, and received the best education available. He learnt his craft playing the works of Haydn, Mozart and early Beethoven, in the school orchestra which he led, and playing viola in his family quartet. He began to compose for them. A top pupil in the top school in the city where 'it was at', he was no bumpkin.

Schubert's mature music, like Mozart's, is an amalgam of the Italian style he loved, and the German. As a boy he thought that Austrian music should get rid of German influence, and at first he was critical of what, in an 1819 diary entry, he called Beethoven's 'bizarreries', but his own language evolved under the influence of the great man.

Schubert was excited by Beethoven. With his school-friends he played through and sang Beethoven's songs, and began to compose his own, often using the same texts. In his setting of Goethe's 'Kennst du das Land?', there is a clear echo of Beethoven's. Can we hear the echoes of Beethoven's *Coriolan* in Schubert's 'Tragic' Fourth Symphony? Although it is in a Beethovenian C minor it is remarkable for being otherwise un-Beethovenian, but the repeat of the second theme in the minor is a technique he employed many times. Apparently it was Beethoven's Second Symphony which appealed to Schubert most, and it continued to echo in his works right up to the C major Grand Duo (1824).

After the choir school, Schubert trained as a schoolmaster, and joined his father in the crowded home. He was emotionally unsuited to the task, and gave it up as soon as he could. Another friend, Franz von Schober, invited Schubert to live with him at his mother's house. For a time, he tried giving music lessons, but soon gave them up and became a full-time composer.

Schober funded the supply of manuscript paper, and also introduced Schubert to the singer Johann Michael Vogl who took Schubert under his capacious wing – he was nearly two feet taller. Vogl promoted him everywhere he went, and took Schubert on several holidays, on one of which he composed the *Trout* Quintet. It was commissioned by the local doctor, who specifically asked for the song 'Die Forelle' to be included.

After a short spell working with ▶

SCHUBERT'S STYLE

Harmony

Schubert wrote some of the most famous melodies of all time – some have achieved the status of folk-song. Folk melody was indeed his starting point, but it is often the harmony which makes them memorable. His chords were not new in themselves, but his characteristic progressions, and sudden shifts from one key to a distantly related key, produce heart-stopping moments.

Keyboard style

A good but not brilliant pianist, Schubert wrote in a style which did not make huge technical challenges. His piano music is highly original, with some of the finest pieces in the piano duet repertoire. Masterpieces like the F minor Fantasy and Grand Duo display a new soundworld, with frequent ringing high-octave doubling.

Alienation

Schubert's terminal illness distanced him from others. Passages of the 'Unfinished' Symphony express despair, and alien elements often intrude – such as the violent interruptions in the slow movement of G major Quartet (D887) and the hysterical outburst in the slow movement of the A major Sonata (D959). Parts of his song cycle *Die Winterreise* are as nihilistic as it is possible to imagine.

Music without Schubert?

The Germanic line from Beethoven through Mendelssohn and Schumann was tempered when the lyrical and pastoral influence of Schubert was brought to play on Brahms, Bruch, Bruckner and Dvořák (right) – to all of these he showed how to use the long lines of song in symphonic argument.

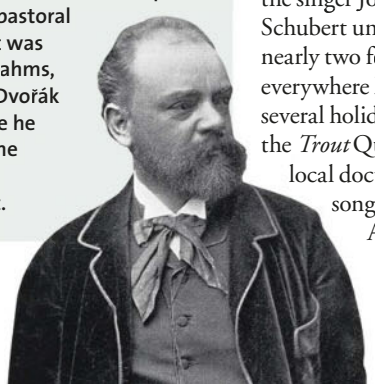


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ILLUSTRATION: RISKO

his father again at a new school, Schubert turned once again to the life of a composer – virtually the first great composer in history to set up without an official position – but on a temporary basis he spent the summer of 1818 as a music teacher to the family of Count Esterházy in Zselíz. His large body of piano-duet works were sparked by the two Esterházy daughters he taught, with one of whom, Caroline, he seems to have fallen in love. He dedicated to her the F minor Fantasy, and his famous *Marche militaire* also dates from then.

Schubert's ambition was to conquer the operatic stage, but that was never to be. Ironically, it was the public passion for Rossini that delayed the performance of one of his operas. Schubert himself so admired Rossini that he composed two overtures in the Italian style. His one-act comedy *Die Verschworenen* (The Conspirators) is occasionally staged today, but was banned in his lifetime, when any suggestion of conspiracy troubled the repressive post-Napoleonic regime.

Schubert's instincts were thoroughly classical – as, for example, were those of Spohr,

> Schubert's ambition to conquer the operatic stage wasn't to be

who thought Beethoven's Seventh Symphony was the work of a madman. Grounded in Haydn and Mozart, Schubert found Beethoven's brusque contrasts and extremes difficult to take – in his own later works, such emotional and textual shocks are handled much more subtly. Moving around town, he saw Beethoven from afar in the coffee shops, the music shops and the theatre, but never, it appears, plucked up the courage to talk to him. On the one occasion when they are supposed to have met, Schubert was tongue-tied by nerves.

Schubert is often considered as a bumbling amateur at worst, self-taught at least. But that is mistaken. His circle was enlightened and serious about culture. He thought deeply about musical matters, hardly less so than Beethoven, and music for them both was an avenue to the sublime. That he also had no doubt about his inherent greatness is clear from a friend's recollections of an outburst with some innocent musicians who asked him to write for them.

For almost a century after his death, many regarded Schubert as an unfulfilled talent who failed to be another Beethoven. As late as 1947, the composer Ernst Krenek publicly voiced this misconception: Schubert was famous as a song-writer, small-scale, unable to deal with

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LIFE&TIMES

A quick guide to the main events in the life of ***Franz Schubert***

THE LIFE 1797 THE TIMES

1797
Schubert is born on 31 Jan in the Viennese suburb of HIMMELPFORTGRUND. The 12th of 14 children, he is taught piano and violin by his father.

1797
After amassing a fortune in Russia, where he painted portraits of Catherine the Great among many others, Austrian artist Johann Baptist Lampi returns to Vienna.

1804
German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose influential works include the GROUNDWORK OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS and the *Critique of Pure Reason*, dies in Königsberg.

1808
He wins a place as a chorister at Vienna's Imperial Chapel choir, where his teachers include the court Kapellmeister ANTONIO SALIERI.

1809
An emphatic defeat against Napoleon's forces at the battle of Wagram leads to the Austrian Empire ceding a significant amount of territory and agreeing to reduce the size of its army.

1814
At the age of 17, he composes his vibrant Second Symphony and the Goethe-inspired *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, later considered a masterpiece of the Lieder tradition.

1815
At the Battle of Tolentino, the Austrian Empire defeats the Kingdom of Naples. JOACHIM MURAT, the ruler of Naples, flees to Corsica and is later executed.

1819
In reaction to the assassination of conservative playwright August von Kotzebue, Austrian foreign minister Prince Metternich issues the Carslbad Decrees, cracking down on Germany's liberal press.

1820
Along with four friends, he is arrested on suspicion of revolutionary activities. One of those friends, the poet Johann Senn, is imprisoned for a year.

1822
His opera *Alfonso und Estrella*, written with librettist FRANZ VON SCHOBER, is rejected by theatres across Austria and Germany – just one of a string of operatic failures.

1823
In his poem the *Marienbad Elegy*, a 73-year-old Johann Wolfgang von Goethe expresses his sorrow at being rejected by ULRIKE VON LEVETZOW, a woman 55 years his junior.

1825
Enjoying a spell of good health and prosperity, he embarks on a holiday with singer Johann Michael Vogl and begins work on his 'Great C Major' Symphony.

1828
Hungarian scientist and Benedictine priest Ányos Jedlik displays his lightning-magnetic self-rotor, the world's first electric motor.

1828
He dies 19 Nov, seemingly from syphilis and mercury poisoning. He is buried next to Beethoven in Währing Cemetery, Vienna.

MUSIC FOR PLEASURE:
Schubert, at the piano, entertains with singer Johann Michael Vogl; (bottom) Beethoven by Leon Bakst

the larger forms of sonata and symphony; his form was rambling, and he lacked harmonic cogency. The critics' favourite gripe was about his habit of starting the recapitulation of a sonata or symphony in the subdominant key, so that the second subject would automatically recur in the home tonality. They claimed he did this to save himself the trouble of having to compose a new transition – as if one could accuse of laziness the man who, in a career lasting less than 20 years, had created a larger output than most composers twice his age! In fact, it is a brilliant idea, and speaks of Schubert's acute grasp of harmonic direction.

In his increasingly hectic last years when he knew he was condemned by syphilis to an early death, Schubert gives all the appearance of a man in a feverish hurry to say what he needs to say, and desperate to find the right way of saying it. That's one reason for the extraordinary number of incomplete works. Many of these works show in some way Schubert trying to find out 'how to do it' – how to extend melodic ideas symphonically, and to hold together the expanded forms that would enable him to do this dramatically. It is the profound and far-reaching development of his mature style – from, say, the C minor Quartet movement (D703, written in c1822) onwards – in the last six years of his life that is astounding.

But in spite of his occasional nods in the direction of Beethoven, he had an instinctive sense of where he wanted to go, and in the last works he gets there. He devised a completely new kind of musical development, very similar to that of the middle-period Beethoven, where a primal rhythm is maintained for all or large parts of a movement (like the slow movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony), as in the first movement of the A minor Piano Sonata (D784), the late C minor Sonata (D958), and his final String Quartet (D887), and he has a new way of extrapolating his musical argument from a lyrical theme by breaking it down into its constituent motifs.

The way he breaks up the main theme of the *Unfinished* Eighth Symphony is a wonderful example of how he unpacks a melody, and the main theme of the *Great* C major Ninth is similarly treated. The last piano sonatas and chamber works all contain moments of the dark profundity, and moments of an alienation that finds its most acute expression in the 'Organ Grinder' of *Winterreise*, a song-cycle which traces the hopeless journey of a young man, cheated of love, through a cold landscape to death. Schubert better than anyone has portrayed emotional numbness.

There is always a sniff of Beethoven when Schubert gets into C minor. And yet, while being the most Beethovenian of his late works, the D958 Sonata – the first of his three final sonatas composed within weeks of each other and deliberately recalling Beethoven's final three – is still completely individual. The second movement, like the slow movement of Symphony No. 4, could easily be a homage to the slow movement of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata (itself a homage to the one in Mozart's C minor Sonata).

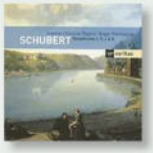
On his deathbed, Schubert asked for Beethoven's C sharp minor Quartet (Op. 131) to be played. Was he taken with the otherworldly opening fugue? Was Beethoven's renewed interest in fugal form in his last works what spurred Schubert to approach Simon Sechter for counterpoint lessons in the weeks before his death? The sketches of Schubert's last symphony, another one in D major, are full of contrapuntal tests of the melodic material. Had he lived, would the new style that this symphony displays include a more overt use of the polyphonic techniques that Beethoven had pointed to, and that the later Romantics – Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms – were all to latch on to? When Schubert's music was rediscovered in the decades after his death, it proved to be ahead even of the music of the later time. ■

BBC RADIO 3 *Composer of the Week is broadcast on Radio 3 at 12pm, Mon to Fri, repeated at 6.30pm.*

Upcoming programmes are:
30 Nov – 4 Dec *Anton Rubinstein*
7-11 December *Sibelius*
14-18 December *Iceland*
21-25 December *Berwald*
28 Dec – 1 Jan *Jean Coulthard*

FRANZ SCHUBERT

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS



Symphony No. 8
London Classical Players/ Roger Norrington
Virgin 562 2272
A refined, stately performance of Schubert's penultimate symphony.

Piano Sonata in A D959
Alfred Brendel (piano)
Decca 438 7032
Brendel plays the first of Schubert's last three miraculous sonatas with gravitas and grace.

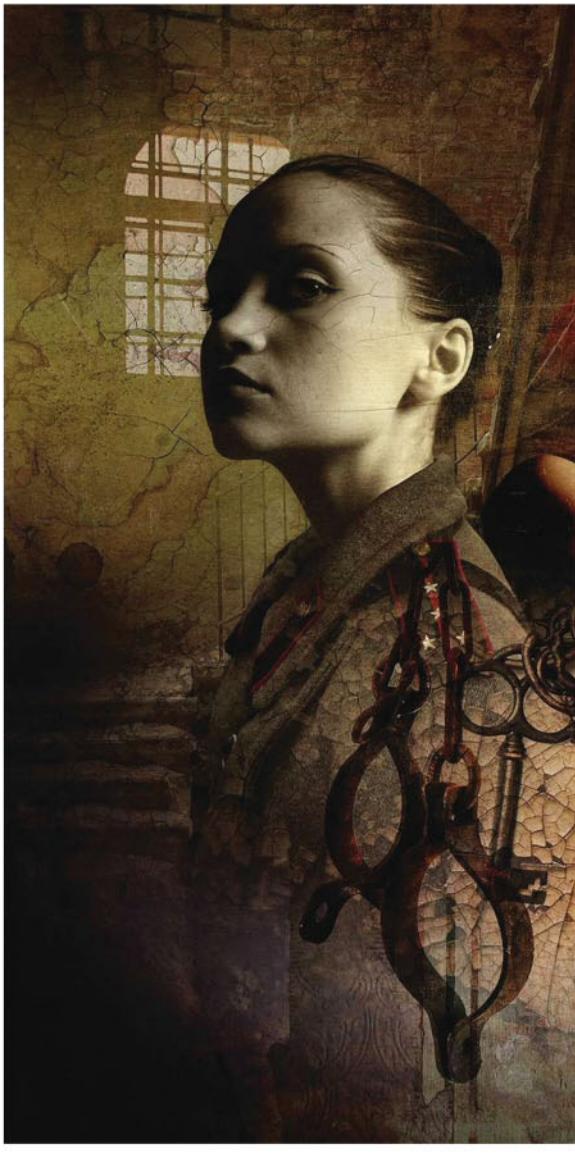
Winterreise
Ian Bostridge (tenor), Leif Ove Andsnes (piano)
Warner Classics 2564620418
Ian Bostridge and Leif Ove Andsnes conjure up a fine balance of beauty and coldness in this excellent recent release.

String Quartet No. 15
Cuarteto Casals
Harmonia Mundi HMC902121
The drive and drama of Schubert's nervous quartet is captured here with an abundance of energy by Cuarteto Casals.

FIDELIO

Ludwig van Beethoven

From the darkest recesses of his record collection, ***George Hall*** emerges blinking into the light as he names the best version of Beethoven's sole opera



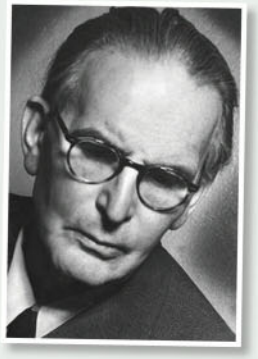
Though a number of projects engaged his interest during his career, Beethoven wrote just one opera; his deafness probably discouraged further involvement with this most collaborative of art forms. But his single example is a true masterpiece, even if it took him a great deal of trouble and three attempts (1805, 1806 and 1814) to get it right. A *Singspiel* (or opera with spoken dialogue), its theme is borrowed from one of the 'rescue' plots popular with the post-French Revolutionary composers whose works Beethoven admired – in short, the heroine Leonore disguises herself as a prison guard called Fidelio to rescue her husband Florestan, a political prisoner kept in the dark and gradually starved. We call the opera *Fidelio*, but Beethoven preferred the title *Leonore* now attached to its earlier versions and to three of the four overtures he composed for it at various times. It is the final (and shorter) *Fidelio* overture that prefaces modern performances, while the *Leonore* overtures are usually encountered in the concert hall.

BBC MUSIC CHOICE

Otto Klemperer (conductor)
Christa Ludwig, Jon Vickers, Walter Berry, Gottlob Frick; Philharmonia (1962)
EMI 966 7032

THE BEST RECORDING OTTO KLEMPERER

FROM 1954 ONWARDs, the veteran Otto Klemperer was closely associated with the Philharmonia Orchestra – then generally considered the best in the UK – becoming the ensemble's chief conductor in 1959. Together they made a series of recordings that quickly earned classic status, including many of Beethoven's major works. Klemperer also created an unforgettable impression at Covent Garden in February 1961, directing as well as conducting a new production of *Fidelio* with a cast including tenor Jon Vickers's heart-stopping Florestan and the flawed humanity of bass Gottlob Frick's rich-toned Rocco. Taped in February 1962, the subsequent EMI set brings Vickers and Frick together with Klemperer's orchestra and adds to them Christa Ludwig's magisterial Leonore (a rare but not unique excursion into soprano territory for the German mezzo), her then husband baritone Walter Berry's psychologically insecure Pizarro, and the vitally characterful Marzelline and Jaquino of Ingeborg Hallstein and Gerhard Unger respectively. With his long and diverse career rewardingly renewed due to his special relationship with the Philharmonia, at this period Klemperer was regarded as a grand old man with unique insights into the German repertoire, and especially Beethoven; such a view is vindicated by this impeccably cast set, in which conductor, orchestra and cast members are all at their best.



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BBC RADIO 3 90–93FM

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in employing smaller orchestral forces than was usual at the time, giving its soundworld an almost historically informed facet. Surprising, too, is the casting as Florestan of Ernst Haefliger, who specialised in Bach and lyric roles rather than the heroic repertoire to which Beethoven's hero has generally been assigned: yet the decision pays dividends in the Swiss tenor's musical distinction and dramatic sensibility. Fischer-Dieskau makes an indelible impression as Pizarro, while Frick is again a superb Rocco. Leonie Rysanek's Leonore will divide listeners: though she's exciting, she's frequently out of tune.

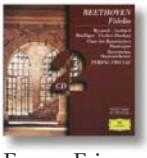
Herbert von Karajan (conductor)
Dernesch, Vickers, Kélémen, Ridderbusch; Berlin Phil (1970) *Warner 948 1722*

Recorded in Berlin in 1970, Karajan's studio account is founded on outstanding playing from the Berlin Philharmonic, who provide a characteristically rich underlay. Jon Vickers offers another great interpretation of Florestan alongside his version for Klemperer. With some dubious intonation, Helga Dernesch is less even as Leonore, though her impassioned manner and the grand scale of her reading are admirable. A favourite Karajan collaborator at this period, the Hungarian bass-baritone Zoltán Kélémen makes a vehement if gritty Pizarro, while Karl Ridderbusch's human, full-toned Rocco offers distinguished musicianship and the Marzelline (Helen Donath) and Jaquino (Horst Laubenthal) are a distinctively memorable second couple. The acoustic of the Jesus-Christus-Kirche is a touch over-resonant.

THREE MORE GREAT RECORDINGS

Leonard Bernstein (conductor)
Janowitz, Kollo, Sotin, Jungwirth; Vienna Phil (1978) *DG E474 4202*

Fidelio's humanitarian appeal held the deepest resonances for Bernstein. In 1970 he led a powerful production at the Vienna State Opera, conducting a revival in January 1978, shortly before making this thrilling recording with an identical cast. Including the *Leonore* No. 3 overture before the final scene and dovetailing the close of the previous duet into its opening chord remains controversial (Bernstein called it 'the best idea I ever had!'), and René Kollo's Florestan and Hans Sotin's Pizarro both suffer from vocal flaws. Yet this recording feels right: Gundula Janowitz's expressive Leonore, the human frailty of Manfred Jungwirth's Rocco, a near ideal Marzelline and Jaquino from Lucia Popp and Adolf Dallapozza respectively, and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's noble Don Fernando.



Ferenc Fricsay (conductor)
Rysanek, Haefliger, Fischer-Dieskau, Frick; Berlin Phil (1957) *DG E453 1062*

Gifted Hungarian conductor Ferenc Fricsay died in 1963 at the age of just 48, cutting short an important career. Made in the summer of 1957, his *Fidelio* is notable

AND ONE TO AVOID…

Some of the casting decisions on Rattle's 2003 live concert performance from the Berlin Philharmonie didn't quite work out. Angela Denoke's effortful Leonore feels overstretched, while Alan Held's lightweight Pizarro is at times wide of the note. Jon Villars's Florestan lacks substance, and there's not enough variety to his tone. László Polgár's Rocco, though, is genuinely lyrical. The orchestral playing is consistently impressive, though the whole could do with more theatrical drive.

If you enjoy Beethoven's ***Fidelio*** **and would like to try out similar works, see overleaf…**

SO, WHERE NEXT…?

We suggest works to explore after Beethoven's *Fidelio*

A FRIVOLOUS PAIR: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Salzburg, 1962

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Paer Leonora

Beethoven is known to have owned a score of *Leonora* by the Italian composer Ferdinando Paer, which, like his own *Fidelio*, was based on the story by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly. That, though, is pretty much where the similarities end. Paer's version is infinitely more frivolous and fun than Beethoven's, focusing instead on the comic potential of Leonora's cross-dressing. The character of Paer's score is also more in the Mozartian tradition – wonderfully lyrical, with some daring orchestration and thematic development, particularly in the overture.

Recommended recording: Ursula Koszut, Siegfried Jerusalem etc; Bayerisches Symphonieorchester/Peter Maag
Australian Eloquence ELQ4804859

Mayr L'amor conjugale

Bouilly's *Leonore* was also the inspiration for Johannes Simon Mayr. His *L'amor conjugale* was premiered in 1805, the same year that the first version of *Fidelio* was heard. But there's no evidence that Beethoven knew Mayr's *farsa sentimentale*, as the work is described in the manuscript. Set in Italian with the action relocated to Poland, Mayr turns his back on the political themes of *Fidelio* and instead offers a lighter look at Leonora, here renamed Zeliska. It's an engaging, deft score that points to Rossini, who regarded the Bavarian-born Mayr as a great rival, and even Mozart. In fact, Mayr claimed in his memoirs that he had helped introduce German harmony and instrumentation into Italian opera.

Recommended recording: Cinzia Rizzone, Francescantonio Bille etc; Württemberg Philharmonic/Christopher Franklin
Naxos 8.660198-99

Cherubini Les deux journées

Writing in the wake of the French Revolution, Bouilly in fact did very nicely out of the fad for 'rescue operas', in which central characters escape from awkward situations, often aided by those from different social classes. His libretto for Cherubini's *Les deux journées* – in which a water carrier, Mikeli, offers help to two displaced nobles who are being pursued by the troops of Cardinal Mazarin – places the action in the 1640s. Beethoven, who held Cherubini in high regard, reputedly had a copy of this opera on his desk while writing *Fidelio*. Appealing and inventive, its charms include catchy chanson tunes and some imaginative orchestration.

Recommended recording: Thilo Dahlmann, Yann Beuron etc; Das Neue Orchester/Christoph Spering *Naïve 30306*

Grétry Richard Coeur-de-Lion

This 1784 rescue opera by Belgian composer André Grétry tells the story of Richard the Lionheart's page, Blondel, on a quest to rescue his master from imprisonment. Blondel masquerades as a blind troubadour in order to infiltrate the castle, allying with English exiles Sir Williams and Laurette along the way. The opera's main chorus was banned during the French Revolution after becoming a popular Royalist anthem, but the work found favour again once Napoleon declared himself Emperor. And interestingly, Tchaikovsky would later quote Laurette's aria 'Je crains de lui parler la nuit' in his *The Queen of Spades*.

Recommended recording: Nicolai Gedda, Mady Mesplé etc/Louis de Froment
EMI 575 2662

Rossini Torvaldo e Dorliska

In Rossini's 1815 rescue opera, the knight Torvaldo is the one wearing disguise, as he makes his way into the castle of the vile Duke of Ordow to rescue his wife Dorliska, whom the duke fancies for himself. Things take a turn for the worst when Dorliska unwittingly gives the game away but, hurrah, the Duke's hideousness brings its inevitable outcome – as his own staff turn against him, the day is saved. Serious in tone but with comic touches, Rossini's opera is rarely heard today. Undeservedly so, as within its engaging plot lurk delightful moments such as Torvaldo's aria 'Fra un istante a te vicino', complete with frisky clarinet accompaniment.

Recommended recording: Michele Pertusi, Darina Takova etc/Víctor Pablo Pérez
Dynamic CDS528

Mozart Così fan tutte

A comic tale of human fallibility, *Così* makes a fascinating counterweight to *Fidelio* – the wearing of disguise is central to both plots, but Leonore's idealistic sense of purpose is in stark contrast to *Così*'s female protagonists, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, who are anything but steadfast whilst their lovers are 'absent'. Beethoven believed such frivolous subject matter degraded the 'sacred' Art of Music, and yet there is evidence of *Così*'s musical influences on *Fidelio* – not least in Leonora's 'Komm, Hoffnung' and Fiordiligi's 'Per pietà' arias which, in the same key, have similar scoring, including the unusual *obbligato* horn accompaniment.

Recommended recording: Margaret Price, Yvonne Minton etc; New Philharmonia Orchestra/Otto Klemperer
EMI 559 8522

Next month:
Vaughan Williams's Sinfonia Antartica

CONTENTS

BBC MUSIC

REVIEWS

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Recording of the Month

Violinist Alina Ibragimova, Arcangelo and its conductor Jonathan Cohen make their mark on JS Bach's violin concertos, with distinctive and daring performances, p62

PERIOD STYLE: Alina Ibragimova impresses with Bach

You wait ages for one…

The proverbial rule about buses seems to apply to recordings as well. This month's postbag made me wonder if there is any rhyme or reason as to what makes a piece popular with recording artists. There are anniversaries, of course – evidently the motivation for two new Sibelius symphony sets from the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic, p64 and p68. But what explains the sudden vogue for Biber's *Rosary Sonatas*? We review three new excellent recordings this month on p84 and there's news just in of a fourth from violinist Anne Schumann. And next issue features a Vivaldi bonanza, with no fewer than five new recordings of Vivaldi's clearly ever-popular *Four Seasons*. **Rebecca Franks** *Reviews Editor*

EVA VERMANDEL

Our Recording of the Month features in one of the **BBC Music Magazine podcasts** free from iTunes or **www.classical-music.com**

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

SUBTLE SOUNDS: Alina Ibragimova's Bach is thoughtful

Fresh and fearless Bach

Alina Ibragimova and Arcangelo make a dream team, says *George Pratt*

JS BACH

Violin Concertos, BWV 1041, 1042, 1052, 1055 & 1056
Alina Ibragimova (violin); Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen
Hyperion CDA68068 69:02 mins

Bach's violin concertos boast a recording history of over 80 years. Yehudi Menuhin's classic 1932-6 recordings are still available, superbly remastered, from Naxos. Since then, most distinguished violinists have thrown their hats into the ring with the fastest, leanest, jauntiest… Among these benchmarks, Alina Ibragimova makes a strikingly distinctive contribution, albeit subtle and restrained.

In the opening of the A minor BWV 1041, she introduces minute expressive emphases and nuances into her solo line, sustaining the hypnotic motoric pulse but relieving it of any relentless 'sewing-machine' quality. In contrast, in the E major's opening movement, her solo line flows uninterrupted by the orchestra, quietly working the opening rising notes into their accompaniment.

Alina Ibragimova's Bach concertos are strikingly distinctive

Jonathan Cohen's choice of lute as well as harpsichord among the continuo forces invites another distinctive feature. In slow movements, the lutenist (Thomas Dunford) gently animates the underlying slow, meditative orchestral blocks which frame the solo episodes. In BWV 1042, the combination of persistent repeated bass, lute, almost inaudible violin entry, and quietly pulsing middle orchestral strings, add up to a quite breathtaking effect.

Final movements are spectacular. In Bach's 'very fast' gigue ending to BWV 1041, Arcangelo strings and Ibragimova are fearless, she is consumed with manic energy as her solo builds the tension around a ringing, dissonant E string – Bach at his wildest. BWV 1042's finale is an exuberant dance, almost weightless between the forceful first-beats.

The violin repertoire has been enriched over the years by the realisation that other concertos were almost certainly derived from lost

EVA VERMANDEL

FURTHER LISTENING

Alina Ibragimova

MENDELSSOHN

Violin Concerto in E minor; The Hebrides; Violin Concerto in D minor
Alina Ibragimova (violin); OAE/Vladimir Jurowski
Hyperion CDA67795 56:22 mins

'Ibragimova's sensitive playing wins the day, with some superlative quiet moments and at all times a loyal adherence to the composer's markings and a sure sense of the music's phrasing and architecture.' *November 2012*

RAVEL

Violin Sonatas Nos 1 & 2; Tzigane; Berceuse sur le nom de Gabriel Fauré

LEKEU

Violin Sonata in G
Alina Ibragimova (violin), Cédric Tiberghien
Hyperion CDA 67820 79:01 mins

'Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien are utterly convincing advocates of Lekeu's sonata, matching the ebb and flow of this work's intense and slow-burning passion.' *October 2011*

BACH

Sonatas & Partitas for solo violin
Alina Ibragimova (violin)
Hyperion CDA 67691-2 139:08 mins

'In the partitas she's supremely alert to the idiomatic nuances of each dance, while in the sonatas the fugues are always contrapuntally clear and purposeful.' *November 2009*

violin originals. In the *Largo* of BWV 1056 Ibragimova ornaments the solo line with Bach's oboe version, simpler and more pensive than his keyboard arrangement – and very beautiful.

BWV 1055 in A began life as an *oboe d'amore* concerto, reflected in the generally lower pitch of the solo line – at the start, Ibragimova produces a fine 'd'amore'-sounding crunch on the violin's bottom string. The slow movement is perfectly balanced between soloist and accompanying strings, both in tone and in spatial positioning, the violin's gentle arabesques pirouetting over the unfolding harmony below.

The D minor violin restoration from the surviving keyboard BWV 1052 is the most hypnotic of all. After the severe Vivaldian unison opening, Ibragimova's flashing figurations, six bars on a single harmony, create a ferment of excitement sustained throughout the opening movement.

The scale of the period instrument forces is ideal: orchestral violins in threes making for a warm and perfectly tuned contrast to the soloist. Outstanding.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ON THE PODCAST
Hear excerpts and a discussion of this recording on the **BBC Music Magazine podcast**, available free on iTunes or at ***www.classical-music.com***

Q&A

JONATHAN COHEN

Arcangelo's director tells **REBECCA FRANKS** *about bringing the spirit of chamber music to Bach's concertos*

I believe you've worked with Alina for many years. How would you describe your respective approaches to music?
I have a theory that almost all music before 1800 is chamber music. That's the way I try to do it with Arcangelo and it's quite a small group for this recording. If you think of concertos as being with a big symphonic orchestra and a conductor, that's not the way these violin concertos were conceived. This was like a large string quartet: we had a small body of strings, a lute player, I was on harpsichord and Alina on violin. We tried to embrace the chamber spirit in this group. That's how I like to make music.

Why did you decide to include a lute in the continuo group?
I often try to incorporate lute into Bach's music as it gives an extra energy and in the slow movements it brings a beautiful, gentle quality. The job of the lute and harpsichord is to fill out the harmony, which in Bach is quite complex and dense. We did an interesting project recently which included Bach's version of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*. Bach recomposed the inside parts, giving much more prominence to the viola, and really writing in four-part harmony. It was much more common in the time before Bach to have a texture of a trio sonata. Part of Bach's style is this development of very individualistic lines, and lute and harpsichord underline the harmonic complexities.

Only two of the pieces on this disc can be straightforwardly called violin concertos, while the others have more complicated backstories. How well do they work for violin?
Bach's music is architecturally so brilliant that it doesn't matter what the material is. It was common in the Baroque era to rearrange music for other instruments, and there's quite a strong theory that some of the concertos where we don't have the originals were actually violin concertos. Perhaps the odd one out is the big D minor concerto, which in my view is clearly a keyboard concerto. But when you have Alina, who can play anything, I thought we should have a shot at it.

THIS MONTH'S CRITICS

Our critics number many of the top music specialists whose knowledge and enthusiasm are second to none

Hilary Finch *critic, broadcaster*
Hilary Finch read English and Music at Exeter and Cambridge, and started reviewing and feature-writing for *The Times* in the early 1980s. She broadcasts regularly on BBC Radio 3, and has a particular interest in the human voice and song, and in the music, literature and art of the Nordic countries.

John Allison *editor, Opera; critic, Sunday Telegraph*
Nicholas Anderson *Baroque specialist*
Terry Blain *writer*
Kate Bolton-Porciatti *lecturer, New York University, Florence*
Garry Booth *jazz writer & critic*
Geoff Brown *critic, The Times*
Michael Church *writer, critic The Independent*
Christopher Cook *broadcaster, critic*
Martin Cotton *producer*
Christopher Dingle *Professor of Music, Birmingham Conservatoire*
Misha Donat *producer, writer*
Jessica Duchen *critic, novelist*
George Hall *writer, editor, translator*
Malcolm Hayes *biographer, composer*
Julian Haylock *writer, editor*
Ivan Hewett *broadcaster, critic*
Daniel Jaffé *writer, critic*
Erica Jeal *critic, The Guardian; deputy editor, Opera*
Stephen Johnson *writer, BBC Radio 3 broadcaster*
Berta Joncus *senior lecturer, Goldsmiths, University of London*
Erik Levi *professor, University of London*
Max Loppert *critic, Opera*
Jon Lusk *world music journalist*
Andrew McGregor *presenter, BBC Radio 3's CD Review*
David Nice *writer, biographer*
Roger Nichols *French music specialist*
Bayan Northcott *writer, composer*
Tim Parry *writer, editor*
Anna Picard *writer, critic*
George Pratt *emeritus professor of music, University of Huddersfield*
Anthony Pryer *lecturer, Goldsmiths, University of London*
Paul Riley *journalist*
Michael Scott Rohan *author, editor*
Nick Shave *journalist*
Jeremy Siepmann *biographer, editor*
Jan Smaczny *professor of music, Queen's, Belfast*
Geoffrey Smith *presenter, Radio 3*
Michael Tanner *critic, The Spectator*
Roger Thomas *critic*
Kate Wakeling *writer, researcher*
Helen Wallace *consultant editor, BBC Music*
Barry Witherden *critic*

Key to symbols Star ratings are provided for both the performance itself and either the recording's sound quality or a DVD's presentation

Outstanding ★★★★★
Excellent ★★★★
Good ★★★
Disappointing ★★
Poor ★

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www.classical-music/album-reviews

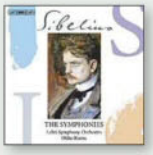
ORCHESTRAL

Robin Ticciati brings out the gentle side of Haydn; *Valery Gergiev* emphasises the beauty of Rachmaninov's Third Symphony; plus music forbidden in World War II is explored

BBC MUSIC ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Elusive and exhilarating

David Nice applauds the Lahti Symphony Orchestra's Sibelius symphonies



SIBELIUS

Symphonies Nos 1-7
Lahti Symphony Orchestra/Okko Kamu
BIS BIS-2076 (hybrid CD/SACD)
240:13 mins

It was Osmo Vänskä who created the identity of 'the Sibelius orchestra' in the 1990s with his BIS recordings of symphonies and rarities. Now the 'other' LSO has the beautiful wooden Sibelius Hall that's been rightly regarded for the past 15 years as one of the world's best. BIS's latest triumph of engineering, albeit with strings and wind slightly closer than you'd get from a prime seat, seems faithful to the spirit of the silences,

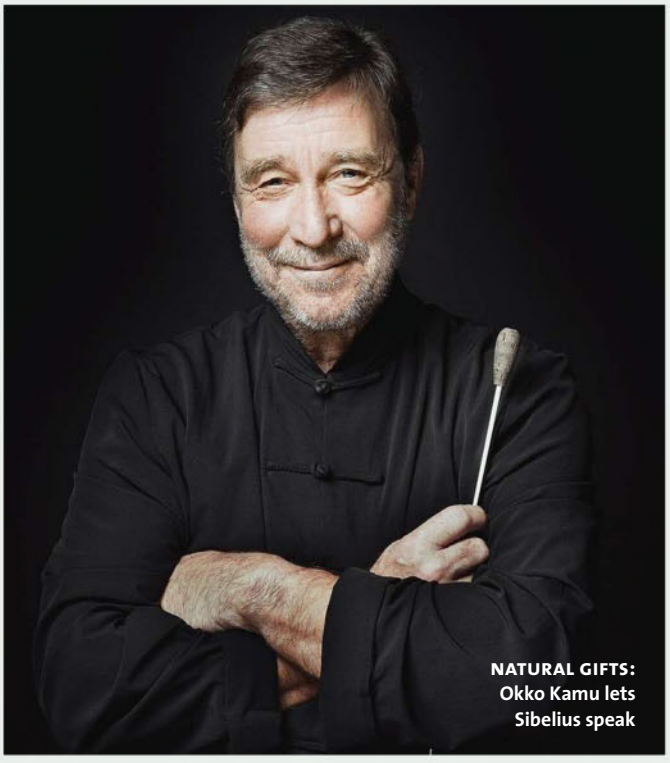
Okko Kamu offers intense quiet dynamics and clarity

the capturing of bright upper frequencies and lower resonances.

All this informs unostentatiously enlightening performances by Okko Kamu, the Lahti Symphony's current chief conductor, who filled in the gaps of Herbert von Karajan's Sibelius in the 1960s. These interpretations are certainly fresher and more questing than any I've heard recently, putting Kamu in the position of a rather more precise and polished Robert Kajanus, Sibelius's favourite conductor, to Rattle's Karajanesque tendency to over-interpret (review, p68).

Kamu offers an easier sense of movement, the same intense quiet dynamics and clarity in perfect equilibrium with atmosphere. There's plenty of excitement, too: the *scherzo* of the Second is truly *vivacissimo*, with a return from the oboe's central reverie which made me jump, and the careful observation of Sibelius's *Molto moderato* marking in the first half of the Fifth's opening hybrid makes the *scherzo*'s gradual acceleration terrifically exhilarating. Kamu's unmarked slowing down for the Fourth's devastating denouement doesn't work for me. At least the dance is vivid and well sprung, and this slow movement outdoes in terms of deep despair and sense of direction Vänskä's memorable Lahti record-breaker for length. There's just space to observe that Three, Seven and above all Six are just perfect, with all the naturalness I want in these elusive masterpieces. Andrew Barnett's notes in slimline presentation are just as clear and as much of the essence.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



NATURAL GIFTS: Okko Kamu lets Sibelius speak

MARKUS HENTTONEN, RETO KLAR

ON THE WEBSITE
Hear extracts from this recording and a 'First Listen' podcast about the disc on the BBC Music Magazine website
www.classical-music.com

BRAHMS • SCHOENBERG

Brahms: Piano Quartet No. 1 (orch. Schoenberg); Schoenberg: Accompaniment to a cinematographic scene
Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra/ Marc Albrecht
PentaTone PTC 5186398 (hybrid CD/SACD)
51:04 mins

JS BACH • BRAHMS

Brahms: Piano Quartet No. 1 (orch. Schoenberg); JS Bach: Prelude and Fugue in E flat (orch. Schoenberg)
Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra/ Jacek Kaspszyk
Warner 2564607517 59:33 mins

Like London buses, first none come, then two at once. Schoenberg claimed that his orchestration of the Piano Quartet in G minor – or 'Brahms's Fifth Symphony' as he jokingly dubbed the result – was provoked by the fact that the original was rarely played, and usually in a badly balanced way. Of course, he was a far more volatile spirit than Brahms, and the ever-shifting colours of his orchestration, complete with tambourine, glockenspiel and xylophone, surely exceed anything that the older composer might have used, even had he lived into the 20th century, as Schoenberg speculated. Yet the scoring does bring out the symphonic sweep latent in the chamber original – of which, fortuitously, a new recording also appears this month, reviewed on p82.

Of the two new versions, Marc Albrecht and the Netherlands Philharmonic are a tad deliberate in Brahms's opening *Allegro* and the Warsaw Philharmonic under Jacek Kaspszyk better capture the turbulent ebb and flow of its elaborate structure. Odds are more even in the plaintive *scherzo* in which Schoenberg's orchestration most nearly reconstitutes the Brahms sound. But the Netherlanders are

more ardent in the songful slow movement, more upbeat in its central march, and far more exciting in the headlong Hungarian gypsy finale. In the more ample tempos of the Warsaw reading, these movements tend a little to lose cohesion.

The choice is also complicated by the recordings. The Pentatone sound is slightly recessed but with clarity and depth. The Warsaw acoustic is more reverberant, tending to add an edge to the more brazen tuttis; and in the rather plodding fill-up account of Schoenberg's intricate scoring of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in E flat 'St Anne', some of the more delicate detail gets lost. The Netherlanders add Schoenberg's *Accompaniment to a cinematographic scene* – a 12-tone tissue of expressionistic frissons and frights. But it makes for a rather short-measure CD. *Bayan Northcott*

NETHERLANDS PHILHARMONIC
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

WARSAW PHILHARMONIC
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

BRUCKNER

Symphony No. 5
Hamburg Philharmonic/Simone Young
Oehms OC 689 (hybrid CD/SACD)
73:23 mins

The number of fresh releases of Bruckner symphonies verges on the incredible. Here is what many people, including me until recently, regard as his most recalcitrant work in its fourth or fifth new recording this year. When you finally 'get' the Fifth, as I think I have, it is so overwhelming that any adequate account of it has you reaching for superlatives. But I think this new one, in Simone Young's complete series, is probably the finest new performance (it's a live performance, though there are no extraneous sounds) I've heard for a long time.

Anyone who still talks nonsense about Bruckner writing the same symphony nine times should listen to this. The first movement, taking Bruckner's stop-go procedures to their limits, is startlingly original, and was never repeated. Young manages the rare feat of honouring all Bruckner's changes of gear and tempo while keeping a powerful forward flow, so that at last I am convinced that the movement is a complete success. The middle

GREAT BRUCKNER: Simone Young's symphony triumphs

two movements are comparatively straightforward – the sound of the Hamburg Philharmonic, with its long distinguished record of Bruckner performing, is notably lean in the slow movement, and convincingly so, while the last, which Furtwängler described as the most monumental in symphonic literature, is as always exhausting but elating too. With its multiple themes, its two fugues, one on a single theme, the other a double fugue, and its blazing chorales, it's tempting to listen to it separately. No doubt I shall listen to other accounts which are as fine, but for the moment I find that hard to believe. *Michael Tanner*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

CHAPLIN

Modern Times
NDR Radiophilharmonie/Timothy Brock
CPO CPO 777 286-2 79:49 mins

It's fascinating to listen to Chaplin's score for his 1936 film satire *Modern Times* without the aid of pictures. The quirks of its idiosyncratic, unschooled composer are easily audible: little sustained development of themes, much repetition of short motifs, a fondness for what you might call musical doggerel, along with a bittersweet tang. Yet the music's kaleidoscopic jumble, each fragment timed to match a specific image and mood, carries its own overwhelming personality, while the tunes themselves are obstinately memorable, especially the heart-tugging melody later turned into the popular song 'Smile'.

Conductor and scholar Timothy Brock's restoration of the complete score, in its original orchestration by Edward Powell and David Raksin, is most skilfully done. And the NDR Radiophilharmonie displays plenty of comic and sentimental panache of its own as Charlie's tramp, in our mind's eye, gets caught in the factory machine's cogs or enjoys a tender moment with Paulette Goddard's gamine. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

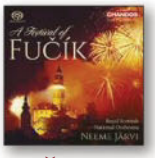
CARL DAVIS

Loitering Without Intent: Music for Chaplin's Films, 1916-1917
The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra/Carl Davis; The Wihan Quartet/Carl Davis
Carl Davis Collection CDC027 77:02 mins

Linked to the recent DVD/Blu-ray release in restored prints of Chaplin's early comedies made for the Mutual film company, this album offers 33 cues from the soundtracks newly composed by the master of silent film pastiche, Carl Davis. Unlike the symphonic palette heard in *Modern Times*, Davis's instrumental forces match those of a small orchestra in a theatre pit – suitable for the earthy slapstick of classic films like *The Immigrant*, *The Rink*, or *The Cure*.

The cues proceed smoothly, ringing with echoes of the popular dance forms of Chaplin's time and, at one point Gilbert and Sullivan. But though it aims to be 'Chaplinesque', puckish one moment, wistfully melodic the next, the music lacks that individual character so abundant in Chaplin's own music. *The Immigrant* and *The Adventurer* feature the liveliest cues, and the Prague musicians play with a will, though there's a lustre shortage in the recording. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★



FUČIK

Entry of the Gladiators; Under the Admirals Flag; Mississippi River; Die Regimentskinder; Der alte Brummbär; Winterstürme; Florentiner; Marinarella; Donausagen; Hercegovac; Uncle Teddy; Miramare
David Hubbard (bassoon); Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Neeme Järvi
Chandos CHSA5158 (hybrid CD/SACD)
79:56 mins

Dvořák's composition pupils were a varied bunch: at the more exalted end are Novák and Suk, but there were also a number who made their name in the world of operetta and popular music, among them Oskar Nedbal, Rudolf Friml and Julius Fučik. Superbly educated musically with enormous technical resources, Fučik moved with ease in the idiom of his fellow Czechs, Dvořák and Smetana. But there are a number of other influences contributing to his engaging musical style, not least French ballet, the Viennese waltz and, unsurprisingly for a virtuoso march composer, Sousa. Alongside the razzmatazz – glaringly evident in the big-top favourite, *Entry of the Gladiators* – Fučik's ear for fine orchestral colour and distinctive melody is a constant delight notably in the concert overtures, *Marinarella* and *Miramare*, and the *Little Ballerinas* waltz.

Neeme Järvi and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra deliver this excellently recorded anthology with great enthusiasm, throwing themselves into these brightly coloured scores without a hint of condescension or irony. David Hubbard supplies the cadenza and *obbligato* solo for bassoon – Fučik's own instrument – in the comic polka *The Old Grumbler* with verve. All in all, this is a highly enjoyable reminder of the delights of Romanticism's popular side. *Jan Smaczny*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

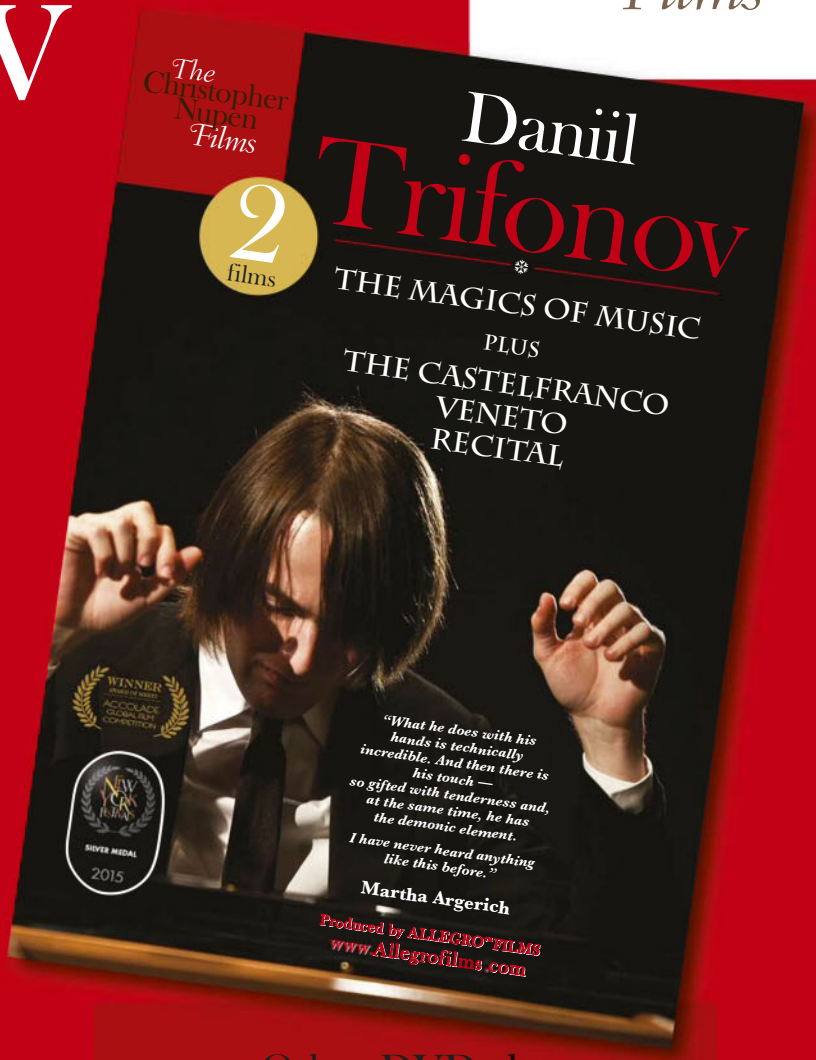
Daniil Trifonov

THE MAGICS OF MUSIC

PLUS

THE CASTELFRANCO VENETO RECITAL

The Christopher Nupen Films



This DVD contains both a portrait film and an associated performance film; an effective combination which Christopher Nupen has given us so successfully before. The films offer an intimate view of the artist and his hardly-believable gifts which are currently astonishing the world.

"A fabulously filmed celebration of a genuinely special artist, focusing on its subject, not some "celebrity" presenter, and with plenty of music.

There is a certain poetic justice to the fact that Christopher Nupen, who captured the likes of Jacqueline du Pré and Daniel Barenboim on film in the 1960s, is still around to document the talent of Daniil Trifonov. This mesmerising documentary captures the poetic fire of the young Russian pianist, who talks about "boiling" himself in the music."

Jessica Duchen

"Nupen is the David Attenborough of the musical Jungle. He feasts with the big beasts and is unafraid of snakes."

Norman Lebrecht

"The most gifted music documentarian of our age."

Classic FM Magazine

Other DVDs by CHRISTOPHER NUPEN

Catalogue number: A 19CN D Running time: 103 mins. All regions Subtitles: DE/ES/FR/IT/ 日本語, 繁體中文 Picture format: 16:9 Sound: Dolby Digital 2.0 stereo **www.Allegrofilms.com**

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GÓRECKI

Symphony No. 4
London Philharmonic Orchestra/ Andrey Boreyko
Nonesuch 7559795034 35:45 mins

Though Górecki wrote his Third Symphony in 1976, it was not until the 1992 London Sinfonietta/David Zinman release that it became a phenomenal success. Eighteen years later the Fourth was scheduled for unveiling in London, but the premiere was postponed because of Górecki's ill-health. He left only a piano score at his death in November 2010. The piece was completed by his son, Mikolaj, following orchestration notes the composer made on the score, and finally premiered in London last year. It's that performance that is chronicled on this release.

Many critics condemned the Third as sentimental and populist. The Fourth, a return to a more-or-less Modernist stance, is likely to horrify listeners who only know the Third and *Totus Tuus*. Using letters from the name of Polish composer Alexandre Tansman, it opens with brutal, relentless chords, disconcerting pauses and Kancheli-like violent dynamic contrasts. There's a degree of relief in gentle passages in intervening movements but the finale's folk-influenced dance-music is expelled by a return of the dark, discordant, forbidding material. Under Andrey Boreyko's sober control the LPO negotiates these contrasts with aplomb. *Barry Witherden*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

LIVELY PRECISION: conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya

HAYDN

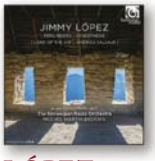
Symphonies Nos 31, 70 &101
SCO/Robin Ticciati
Linn CKD 500 (hybrid CD/SACD) 77:12 mins

Following their much-praised Schumann symphonies, Robin Ticciati and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra turn rewardingly to three of Haydn's. A programme all in D major, even by Haydn, could be too much of a good thing; but since these three symphonies exemplify contrasting eras of his inexhaustible inventiveness with the form, the disc proves an enriching experience alike as a whole and in parts. We have the early No. 31, an exhilarating symphony-divertimento; the middle-period No. 70, at once tautly economical and endlessly surprising; and the grand yet radiantly genial London-period *Clock*, No. 101.

The performances, though on modern instruments, pay attention to matters of period style – every repeat observed, careful balance between parts, and in No. 31 a fortepiano adds to the *Adagio*'s beguilingly intertwined solo voices. The SCO is everywhere on wonderfully characterful form; its close rapport with the conductor produces music-making so appealingly fresh that such minor idiosyncrasies as Ticciati's habitual slowing for trios in *Scherzo* movements make complete sense in the moment.

More vigorously dramatised recordings of all three works can be found: for instance, the more zestful No. 31 by Adám Fischer and the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra, and the Haydn of Ticciati's two great mentors, Simon Rattle (No. 70) and Colin Davis (No. 101). All three capture the feeling of Haydn's boundary-enlarging that I miss here. But taken on its own relaxed terms, this disc gives continuous pleasure, and its booklet contains, unusually, three admirably complementary long essays. *Max Loppert*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



LÓPEZ

Perú Negro; Synesthésie; Lord of the Air; América Salvaje
Jesús Castro-Balbi (cello); Norwegian Radio Orchestra/Miguel Harth-Bedoya
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907628 66:59 mins

Peruvian Jimmy López's years at the Helsinki Academy seem to have given him a cool perspective on his native musical world (see 'Background to'). This programme suggests an individual language, which expresses Latin potency via highly-accomplished orchestration. What depths lie below the polished surface might emerge more clearly in his first opera, *Bel Canto*, opening at Chicago Lyric Opera this December.

América Salvaje (2006) opens with the extraordinary *pututo*, an Andean ceremonial instrument, whose sound hovers between siren and conch shell. López gradually generates energy from within the orchestra as Peruvian modes and Western tonality converge: but there's a sense of marking time.

Six years on, *Perú Negro* is tighter, a tribute to conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya, who conducts the Norwegian Radio Orchestra with vivacious precision throughout. This martial proclamation has an obsessive dynamism, interspersed with some haunting brass writing. More interesting still is *Synesthésie*, which evokes the senses via five kaleidoscopic miniatures, each placing orchestral sections under a microscope to reveal teeming life.

The entertaining Cello Concerto *Lord of the Air* opens with soloist as rugged scrambler in a theatre of percussive exclamation, a slow movement of swooning, musical-saw-like harmonics and a *moto perpetuo* of rising pizzicato scales which culminates in a blaze of pyrotechnical display. Fiercely spirited Jesús Castro-Balbi is first to rise to its challenge, and surely won't be the last. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

RACHMANINOV

Symphony No. 3

BALAKIREV

Russia
LSO/Valery Gergiev
LSO Live LSO0779 56:30 mins

Composed in the mid-1930s, Rachmaninov's Third Symphony is the Cinderella of his mature orchestral works, having neither the pithiness of the First nor the clear dramatic trajectory of the Second. It doesn't help, either, that the lush orchestration can make it sound, in insensitive hands, like a generic Hollywood-style wallow. This is not the case here. Valery Gergiev and the LSO capture the score's expressive beauty, and also the sense of its transience as chill winter encroaches.

Gifted with the LSO's responsive, richly expressive yet precise playing, Gergiev presents the Symphony's drama without his usual tendency to enliven music with break-neck tempos. On the contrary, there is a genuine distinction between the unhurried *Allegro moderato* of the first movement's exposition, then the *Allegro* of the development section. More importantly, Gergiev characterises the various distinctive

BACKGROUND TO...

RICHARD RODRIGUEZ

Jimmy López *(b.1978)*

The Peruvian composer Jimmy López began his musical studies in Lima, before heading to Helsinki and California to further them. One of today's leading South American composers, orchestral pieces, concertos and chamber music make up the bulk of López's oeuvre to date. But this December sees the premiere of his opera *Bel canto*, based on Ann Patchett's best-selling novel of the same name. Commissioned by the Lyric Opera of Chicago, after Renée Fleming heard his music, the production stars soprano Danielle de Niese and is conducted by Sir Andrew Davis.

REISSUES

Reviewed by ***Erik Levi***

SCHUMANN

Symphonies Nos 1-4
Orchestre des Champs-Élysées/Philippe Herreweghe
Harmonia Mundi HMG 508190.91 (1996) 130:23 mins (2 discs)

Muscular and fiery period instrument performances of the *Rhenish* and Fourth Symphonies. The *Spring* Symphony is not quite so engaging, the finale in particular lacking vitality and exuberance.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BRAHMS

Symphony No. 2; Haydn Variations
Vienna Phil; LSO/Pierre Monteux
Eloquence 480 8913 (1971) 61:04 mins

Typically warm-hearted performances from both orchestras. Monteux is especially impressive in keeping up momentum in the Symphony's expansive first movement.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BRAHMS

Symphony No. 4

TCHAIKOVSKY

Symphony No. 5
Leningrad Phil/Yevgeny Mravinsky
Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 350 111 (1961, 1982) 79:22 mins

A fearsomely exciting account of Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 5 from Mravinsky and his marvellous orchestra. The Brahms is equally compelling.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

BARTÓK

Music for strings, percussion & celesta

HONEGGER

Symphony No. 3

STRAVINSKY

Agon
Leningrad Phil/Yevgeny Mravinsky
Praga Digitals PRD/DSD 350 087 (1965-68) 78:29 mins

Searingly intense Bartók, although the Honegger is occasionally too strident. *Agon* benefits from the distinctly Russian timbres of the Leningrad Phil.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

GETTY

themes, allowing the LSO to heed Rachmaninov's detailed expressive marks, and never appears at a loss how to hold his listeners' attention, even through the fugue which suddenly appears in the finale. And in the central *Adagio ma non troppo* movement the wintry transition between the lively *scherzo* section and the return of the slower tempo is truly magical.

The makeweight, Balakirev's *Russia*, originally composed in 1864, heard here in its final revised form of 1907, is an apt coupling with its similarly tender lyricism and sensitive use of orchestral colour. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

SIBELIUS

Swanwhite
Riko Eklundh (narrator); Turku Philharmonic Orchestra/Leif Segerstam
Naxos 8.573341 63:34 mins

Sibelius plus Strindberg sounds like a recipe for unmitigated Nordic gloom, but in fact the play *Svanevit* (Swanwhite) is a Symbolist fairy tale, relatively sunlit and delicate, the playwright's response to Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, for which Sibelius had provided memorable music. Apparently Strindberg's ex-wife Harriet Bosse, who played both Melisande and Swanwhite, suggested Sibelius should again write the incidental music.

Sibelius, enthralled by Strindberg's earlier work, created a score very much in his *Pelléas* vein to accompany the story of the neglected princess Swanwhite, but brighter and more magical, especially the pieces associated with her guardian Swanmother. The finale rises to a quasi-religious chorale as Swanwhite restores her lover to life. Segerstam conducts with the measured, grave pace and detail that characterises the rest of this series, enhanced by the Turku players. The seven-movement orchestrated suite, which contains most of the actual music, has been frequently recorded, but this is welcome as the only original stage version except for Osmo Vänskä's, slightly warmer but available only on an expensive BIS box set.

Coupled here are the briefer string ensemble score for *Odlan* (The Lizard), a sinister Symbolist drama in which good and evil women battle for a man's soul, and two melodrama

DETAILED NOTES: Valery Gergiev grips with Rachmaninov

monologues, the delicate Countess's Portrait and the bleak *Lonely Ski-Trail*, perhaps less involving for English-speaking audiences but very atmospheric. *Michael Scott Rohan*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

SIBELIUS

Symphonies Nos 1-7
Berlin Philharmonic/Simon Rattle
Berliner Philharmoniker BPHR 150071 226.11 mins (4 discs + 1 Pure audio blu-ray + 1 video blu-ray)

Simon Rattle has undoubtedly prepared his Berlin Philharmonic to the highest level for this Sibelius project, and the results are rarely less than impressive. But the great this month is the enemy of the very good: with Okko Kamu and the Lahti Symphony Orchestra (see p64) I learn more about Sibelius; here, I feel the conductor's always nudging me and saying 'doesn't the orchestra sound glorious'?

It certainly does, and there's no implication that the First Symphony is more superficial than the rest if I say that it's the unqualified success here for that reason. The youthful impetus behind the wealth of ideas is always felt; the dewy-eyed beauty of so much of the instrumentation can be breathtaking, above all in that magical slow-movement transition to A flat and the horn melody against violins and harp. The harpist, wonderful Marie-Pierre Langlamet, has just the right degree of recorded spotlight in the finale, and graces the only other symphony in which she has a role, the Sixth, which flows beguilingly but is bracketed by string hymns which feel just a little bit stiff.

Smudges creep in during the later stages of slow movement and finale in the Second – though the 'Don Juan and Stone Guest' atmosphere of the former is certainly evocative. There's something too deliberate about the introduction of the noble peroration in the Third's finale, and too little rhythmic lift in its counterpart at the end of a beautifully phrased but, for me, unmoving Fourth; the dance needs to be livelier to make the denouement truly shocking. Rattle is at his best in the grandeurs of the Fifth's outer movement and the Seventh, which gleams in the superb Philharmonie recording and registers every one of Sibelius's subtle dynamics – though as throughout, every 'little bit faster' or 'little bit slower' feels not quite organic. Handsome presentation, awkward for storage, features a fine painting by Jorma Puranen on the cover, booklet essays that are a little self-regarding, Blu-ray sound and vision, including an interview where, as often, the conductor is perceptive but unspontaneous. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Concerto for Two Pianos; A London Symphony (1920 version)
Leon McCawley, John Lenehan (piano); RSNO/Martin Yates
Dutton Epoch CDLX 7322 (hybrid CD / SACD) 75:24 mins

Did Vaughan Williams help his bracing Piano Concerto, finished in

1931, by prompting a later overhaul, splitting its single piano part into two? Contrary evidence is given by this spirited account of the 1946 two-piano version, initially prepared (by Joseph Cooper, with the composer's aid) for the popular duettists Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick. At times we miss the focused punch of one piano's combat with the orchestra, for all Leon McCawley and John Lenehan's dexterity. Yet 20 fingers certainly bring a heightened percussive charge in the final section's 'fuga chromatica'. Either way, it remains an idiosyncratic and fruitful work, completed on Symphony No. 4's turbulent doorstep, though with a beautifully becalmed central romanza.

Martin Yates and the Scottish National Orchestra sound equally at home in the atmospheric panorama of *A London Symphony*. In 2001 Richard Hickox famously recorded the original 1913 score, just over an hour long; here we have the first digital account of the shorter edition published in 1920, before the composer snipped out even more bars in the mid 1930s. The hushed and quivering *lento* bars Bernard Herrmann famously grieved over are back in place. The epilogue, too, has an extra shot of poetry, though mitigated by the orchestra's usual Glasgow acoustic – strong on horizontal expanse, rather weak on depth and warmth. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

FORBIDDEN MUSIC IN WORLD WAR II

Works by Bosmans, Delden, Flothuis, Gokkes, Kattenburg, etc
Various artists including Netherlands Radio Chamber Orchestra & Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and conductors Bernard Haitink, Eugen Jochum and George Szell
Etcetera KTC 1530 665:74 mins (10 discs)

Following the Nazi occupation of Holland in May 1940, native musicians were coerced into collaborating with the invading forces who sought to impose an ideologically tainted cultural policy on the country. Although many of Holland's prized musical institutions swiftly succumbed to Nazi influence, a number of individuals refused to cooperate with the authorities and went underground, trying desperately to save the lives of Jews, most of whom were rounded up and sent to the gas chambers. This 10-CD set, released 70 years after the end of the Second World War, celebrates the courage and heroism of these people, but also mourns the terrible loss inflicted on Dutch musical life as a result of Nazi persecution. Flautist Eleonore Pameijer has done a sterling job both in assembling such a fascinating collection of recordings, and in bringing to light a number of works from the first half of the 20th century that deserve far wider dissemination.

As one might expect from a country nestled between France and Germany, the majority of the 19 composers featured here drew their musical inspiration from the different traditions of these two nations, whether it be perfumed impressionism, acerbic neo-classicism, full-blooded late-Romanticism or anguished expressionism. Some, however, draw upon these influences in a very individual and striking manner. I was most taken by the enormously fluent and inventive musical style of Leo Smit (1900-1943). The disc focusing on Smit, which includes the Cello Concertino (with Pieter Wispelwey as the committed soloist), the masterly Viola Concerto (with Daniel Raiskin), a wonderfully scored orchestral piece entitled *Schemselnihar* and an exquisite performance of the Flute Sonata from Pameijer and Frans van Ruth, provides one of the most vivid musical experiences here. No less attractive is the melodious jazz-inflected work of Dick Kattenburg (1919-1944) who somehow managed to write positive music under the most unbelievably terrible circumstances. Other pieces that made a strong impression include Ignace Lilien's collection of songs for voice and piano; Henriëtte Bosmans' propulsive neo-classical *Concert Piece* for flute and orchestra, and Concertino for Piano and Orchestra; and a very atmospheric Trio from 1927 by Jan van Gilse.

Inevitably, recording quality in a set that draws its material from so many different sources is variable, ranging from the rather scrawny sound of a 1954 live performance of the Royal Concertgebouw under Rafael Kubelík performing Sem Dresden's *Dansflitsen* to the generally excellent engineering for the works by Smit, Van Gilse and Bosmans. It's a pity, however, that the accompanying documentation is so slight, focusing almost exclusively on the lives of the featured composers and providing relatively little information on the music itself. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

CONCERTO

Philippe Graffin gives a masterful account of Britten's Violin Concerto; plus the formidable team of cellist ***Gautier Capuçon*** and conductor ***Valery Gergiev*** perform Shostakovich's Cello Concerts

BBC MUSIC CONCERTO CHOICE

Tales from the City

Paul Riley welcomes a spirited album of concertos by Sally Beamish

BEAMISH BOY: Håkan Hardenberger plays the jazzy Concerto

BEAMISH

The Singing; A Cage of Doves; Under the Wing of the Rock; Reckless; Trumpet Concerto

James Crabb (accordion), Håkan Hardenberger (trumpet), Branford Marsalis (saxophone); Royal Scottish National Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Scotland/Martyn Brabbins

BIS BIS 2156 (hybrid CD/SACD) 73:56 mins

She might have been born in London, but whether in the Pibroch-inspired opening of the second movement of her accordion concerto *The Singing*, (a meditation on the Highland Clearances), Branford Marsalis's lament-infused saxophone in *Under the Wing of the Rock*, or the more urban, jazz-inflected sense of alienation that informs the Trumpet Concerto, Sally Beamish has the Gaelic art of keening down to a fine art.

Scotland is her adopted home, and its history and culture course through music that so often finds its starting point in something extra-musical – yet transcends the creative straightjacket of a 'programme'. Thus the anguish of displacement stalks *The Singing* – executed with effortless fluency and contagious flair by its dedicatee James Crabb. And, having given the premiere in 2003, Håkan Hardenberger revisits the Trumpet Concerto with streetwise regard for its haunted cityscapes – the finale incorporating percussion derived from abandoned cars and scaffolding poles. The National Youth Orchestra of Scotland dons accompanying hard hats with aplomb, while the remainder of the disc falls to the RSNO which rises attentively to Martyn Brabbins's illuminating and incisive direction. Only the *jeu d'esprit* of 2012 *Reckless*, cautious and constrained, fails to live up to its name. Handsomely recorded, BIS's ever-expanding Beamish discography notches up another milestone.

The finale incorporates percussion derived from abandoned cars

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE
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BIRTWISTLE

Antiphonies; Slow Frieze*; Panic; Crowd†**

**Marcus Weiss (saxophone), **Christian Dierstein (percussion), †Antonia Schreiber (harp), Nicolas Hodges (piano); WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln/Stefan Asbury; *Birmingham Contemporary Music Group/Martyn Brabbins; **Windkraft Tirol/Kasper de Roo

Metronome MET CD 1079 77:39 mins

A timely reminder that Birtwistle is no mere local hero: WDR Symphony Orchestra tackles the complexities of *Antiphonies*, while Windkraft Tirol deliver *Panic* with tremendous panache. Though the latter caused such outrage at the Last Night of the Proms in 1995, here it sounds cheerfully, anarchically jazzy, with its rock drum riffs and raucously lyric saxophone (Marcus Weiss and Christian Dierstein are convincingly abandoned soloists), even calling to mind works of Turnage, an unlikely bedfellow, but at that moment grappling with similar sonic materials.

Even Birtwistle's most ardent fans found his piano concerto *Antiphonies* a hard nut to crack: this 2005 revision may be structurally more streamlined, yet its jolting energies, impulsive gestural language and brooding, kaleidoscopic textures remain intimidating. The heavy artillery clears for some striking intervals of reflective beauty, and bursts of high-speed dynamism from the virtuosic Nicolas Hodges. While soloist and orchestra reach agreement in *Antiphonies*, they move in solemn processional worlds apart in *Slow Frieze*, a superb premiere recording by the BCMG, again with Hodges.

Crowd (2005), Birtwistle's only work for solo harp, is a *tour de force* of fearless questioning in an atmosphere of aqueous luminescence. Antonia Schreiber masterfully dramatises its enigmatic discourse. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

MARCO BORGGREVE

BRITTEN* • DELIUS

Violin Concertos

MILFORD

The Darkling Thrush

Philippe Graffin (violin); Royal Scottish National Orchestra/David Lloyd-Jones; *Philharmonia Orchestra/Nicholas Collon

Dutton Epoch CDLX 7320 68:46 mins

Brittle and brooding, Britten's Violin Concerto has been coupled on CD with Berg, Szymanowski, Beethoven and Walton – and now Delius, a composer he appreciated in his youth, though very different in style. The conjunction is nonetheless effective. We begin in Delius's lovely Paradise Garden, with long-legged melodies sweetly decorated by Philippe Graffin's silvery violin in an engaging performance partly reflecting the historical evidence of early printed sources and Albert Sammons's own marked manuscript of the solo line.

Textures start to thin out in Robin Milford's *The Darkling Thrush*, written in 1928, inspired by a Thomas Hardy poem. Winter's 'bleak twigs' and 'growing gloom' can't hold back a thrush that has obviously taken singing lessons with Vaughan Williams's lark. Apart from an awkward clump of folk jollity nine minutes in, Milford sustains the mood of this winter pastorale very well. It's a welcome first recording.

BACKGROUND TO...

Robin Milford (1903-59)

Milford studied composition at the Royal College of Music under Vaughan Williams and Holst. He became friends with Gerald Finzi, whose music had a particular influence on his own. After an apparently charmed start in his compositional career, tragedy struck when Milford's son, Barnaby, died days before his sixth birthday when a tradesman's van crashed into his bicycle. Milford subsequently suffered a breakdown. His depression intensified with the deaths of Finzi and Vaughan Williams, and his music increasingly anguished.

Then the wind of change hits. We're in Europe, under dark clouds scudding in from the Spanish Civil War. Britten's music is wiry and nervous, dotted with a timpani tattoo. Recorded at Abbey Road in sound warmer and subtler than the acoustic available at the RSNO's Glasgow sessions, Graffin gives a very strong reading, fully reflecting the music's jitters. Nicholas Collon and the Philharmonia excel too, especially in pensive stretches like the first movement's hushed conclusion, so magical here. A masterful account, this, of a masterful work. *Geoff Brown*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

DVOŘÁK • LALO

Cello Concertos

Johannes Moser (cello); PKF-Prague Philharmonia/Jakub Hrůša

Pentatone PTC 5186 488 (hybrid CD/SACD) 65:33 mins

Though still in his thirties, Johannes Moser has clocked up no fewer than 15 major repertoire recordings, mainly on Hänssler Classics. For this Dvořák Concerto he's teamed up with, appropriately, the Prague Philharmonic under Jakub Hrůša. Despite the latter's rather sluggish tempo for the opening, Moser gives us an exciting, high-tension ride with an impressive sense of structure. He's a musician of alacrity, power and style: virtuosic passages benefit from his fleet effortlessness.

What's missing in the first cadenza and second movement, though, is that penetrating tenderness and almost visionary inwardness one finds in the very greatest performances – thinking of Truls Mørk, Yo-Yo Ma and of Mstislav Rostropovich at his best. The airy delicacy and sweetness we have here doesn't quite find the emotional undertow. Moser is not helped in the slow movement by some very loud, congested orchestral sound, though I love the feisty horn timbre. It's only after a lively, rhythmically exacting finale that he achieves luminous transcendence in Dvořák's masterly coda. That extraordinary long cello note that presages the end really does feel endless, opening a window onto radiance; beautifully choreographed, too, by Hrůša.

Moser grasps Lalo's somewhat lily-livered Concerto by the scruff, delivering a performance of enormous flair and effervescence. His impatience in the volatile first movement is effective, and the final *Allegro vivace* is dispatched with crisp buoyancy. Outstanding is the lovely Intermezzo, where he makes a fine contrast between its introverted, gritty slow music and episodes of whirling, airborne dance. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

J HAYDN • M HAYDN • MOZART

Horn Concertos

Felix Klieser (horn); Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn/Ruben Gazarian

Berlin Classics 0300647BC 60:19 mins

Simply listening to this recording, one would never guess that the young German soloist Felix Klieser was born without arms and plays the valves of his horn with the toes of his left foot while operating a muting device, where required, with his right. His tone is resonant and robust and his command of long-breathed phrasing and agile passage work equally impressive. The Württemberg Chamber Orchestra of Heilbronn under Ruben Gazarian accompanies with exactitude and attack in a cleanly recorded small hall ambience.

None of the works are masterpieces. Haydn's early No. 1, composed for the virtuoso Joseph Leutgeb, who later worked with both Michael Haydn and Mozart – the latter teased him unmercifully – still retains elements of the Baroque, though its slow movement strikingly contrasts the horn's high and low registers. No. 2, though equally energetic, may not be by Joseph at all, though the conjectural alternative attribution to Michael seems stylistically unlikely on the basis of the more relaxed, serenade-like charm of the genuine Michael Haydn Concertino heard here.

The Mozart Concerto is actually a 'reconstruction' – presumably by the Mozart scholar Robert Levin – of two incomplete movements written in 1780. The rondo second movement has quite a catchy opening idea, but the music is not really up to the level of the four canonical concertos Mozart wrote later for Leutgeb. *Bayan Northcott*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

REISSUES

Reviewed by Julian Haylock

RAVEL

Piano Concertos; Tzigane*

*Ruggiero Ricci (violin); Jacqueline Blancard (piano); L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/Ernest Ansermet

Eloquence 480 0070 (1953/59) 53:01 mins

Ricci's 1959 account of *Tzigane* has plenty of gypsy swagger and bravado, and although the OSR is less than technically immaculate in places, Blancard's gentle playing is consistently beguiling.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★

COPLAND • MENOTTI

Copland: Piano Concerto; Menotti: Piano Concerto

Earl Wild (piano); Symphony of the Air/Jorge Mester

Vanguard OVC 4029 (1962) 49:21 mins

Dazzling performances from Wild at his early 1960s peak – the Menotti is brought thrillingly to life – in first-rate digital transfers that surpass what one would have thought possible from vinyl pressings.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

RACHMANINOV

Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 4

Sequeira Costa (piano); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Christopher Seaman

Claudio CB 6027-2 (1993) 60:23 mins

Gloriously unhurried, early 1990s performances, originally on the RPO's own label and stunningly engineered by Brian Culverhouse, that capture the music's lyrical soul to heart-warming effect.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

RACHMANINOV

Piano Concerto No. 3 & Suite No. 1 (Fantasie-Tableaux)

Sequeira Costa (piano); RPO/Christopher Seaman

Claudio CB6028-2 (1993) 70:43 mins

The RPO give their all for Seaman, providing a glowing backdrop for Costa, whose winning performance of the suite is almost certainly with Artur Pizarro, although the latter is uncredited.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

NIELSEN

Violin Concerto; Flute Concerto; Clarinet Concerto
Nikolaj Znaider (violin), Robert Langevin (flute), Anthony McGill (clarinet); New York Philharmonic/Alan Gilbert
Dacapo 6.220556 (hybrid CD/SACD) 77:16 mins

This disc – also available as part of a four-disc set with the symphonies – contains all three of Nielsen's concertos. There's that for his own instrument, the violin (1911/12), and those for flute (1926) and clarinet (1928), all he achieved of a project to write concertos for all the members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet, portraying their personalities and the characters of their instruments.

In the Violin Concerto Nikolaj Znaider, sweet and slender in tone, is equal to all the work's ferocious technical demands. He treats the first movement's Bach-inspired cadenzas with convincing spontaneity, and dances his way delightfully through the Rondo finale. It's an exemplary performance, enhanced by wonderfully expressive oboe playing in the central slow movement. Indeed, the quality of the New York Philharmonic's woodwind principals is evident throughout the disc. Robert Langevin is nimble and elegant in the Flute Concerto, seeing off the challenge of the clumsy trombone in the finale with aplomb. Anthony McGill is brilliantly virtuosic in the Clarinet Concerto, similarly riding out the persistent interventions of the side-drum; but he's a little too mellifluous, underplaying the many fierce accents with which Nielsen characterised the original soloist as irascible and hot-tempered. *Anthony Burton*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

PIERNÉ

Orchestral works, Vol. 2
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano); BBC Philharmonic/Juanjo Mena
Chandos CHAN 10871 72:58 mins

Half a decade separates the first and second volumes of Pierné's orchestral works from Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic, but it is worth the wait. Once again, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet plays a leading role, this time in a trio of concertante piano works from relatively early in Pierné's career, with a couple of charming solo pieces as encores. The spirit of his teachers Saint-Saëns and Franck is to the fore, with a healthy dose of Liszt also in the mix. Bavouzet is a convincing and enthusiastic advocate, sparkling in the *Scherzo-Caprice*, calmly noble at the opening of the *Poème symphonique* and negotiating the abrupt turns of mood in the *Fantaisie-Ballet* with ease.

Of the purely orchestral works, *Les cathédrales* is an impassioned outpouring from relatively early in the First World War. The highlight and revelation of the disc, though, is the suite *Paysages franciscains* from 1919. With atmospheric use of colour and light, as well a freer harmonic approach, this masterpiece could easily be mistaken for Debussy or Ravel and is worth the price of the disc alone. The solo Nocturne is sublime in Bavouzet's hands and the *Etude de concert* makes an enjoyably virtuosic conclusion. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JULIEN MIGNOT

INSIGHTFUL: Gautier Capuçon is passionate and incisive in Shostakovich

SHOSTAKOVICH

Cello Concertos Nos 1 & 2
Gautier Capuçon (cello); Mariinsky Orchestra/Valery Gergiev
Erato 2564606973 68 mins

It's almost impossible to disentangle Shostakovich's Cello Concertos from Rostropovich's larger-than-life interpretations. Yet any prospective interpreter can so easily be trapped into cloning the distinctive performing nuances long established in the great cellist's recordings of these masterpieces, rather than finding new and equally valid things to say about the music. Fortunately, Gautier Capuçon is too consummate a musician to opt for pale imitations. Working hand in glove with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra, he delivers passionate and rhythmically incisive accounts of the outer movements of the First Concerto. More unusual, however, is the brooding account of the second movement *Moderato*. The tempo adopted here is very expansive indeed, but somehow there is enough ebb and flow in the musical line to avoid any impression of dragging. Capuçon and Gergiev draw particularly striking connections between the eerie return of the main theme in cello harmonics and the chilling image of the night conjured up during the first movement of Violin Concerto No. 1.

Capuçon's insightful interpretation of this movement also points forward to the claustrophobic levels of musical expression that are explored in the Second Concerto. It's something of a challenge to draw the listener into such dark and emotionally forbidding music, and I'm not fully convinced that Capuçon and Gergiev manage to mesmerise the listener to the same extent as does Pieter Wispelwey on Channel Classics. Nevertheless, there is also much to admire here, particularly in the way both soloist and orchestra ratchet up the emotional temperature throughout the course of the second movement, and in the patient way they unfold the epic drama through the long and occasionally discursive Finale. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

WARTIME CONSOLATIONS

Violin works by Hartmann, Weinberg and Shostakovich
Linus Roth (violin), José Gallardo (piano); Württemberg Chamber Orchestra Heilbronn/Ruben Gazarian
Challenge Classics CC 72680 (hybrid CD/SACD) 55:28 mins

All right, so these aren't all 'wartime' works: the two Weinberg pieces were composed in 1948. But as this was the year when the First Soviet Composers' Union Congress took it upon itself to denounce 'cosmopolitanism' – ie Jewishness – in music, any notion of peace from Weinberg's perspective must have looked partial, to say the least. Several of the 'Moldavian' themes in the Rhapsody, Op. 47 No. 3, are obviously Jewish in provenance, but Weinberg wisely decided not to make an issue of that. It is energetic and very enjoyable, but the more delicate Concertino steals the show in Linus Roth's elegant and tender performance. The opening melody is a lyrical gift from God – and there aren't many of those in 1940s classical music.

Hartmann's *Concerto funèbre*, begun just as the Nazi war machine was cranking itself into gear, is a masterpiece, with moments of dignity and exquisite sadness amongst the frenzy and violence. Roth and Ruben Gazarian make more of the flickers of hope than any previous performance I've heard, but the ending still feels poised on an existential knife-edge. A couple of important solo details are swamped; otherwise the recording sounds powerfully immediate. As for Shostakovich's unfinished Violin Sonata, begun just after the fall of Berlin in 1945, for me this has the feeling of a miniature that got out of hand then lost its sense of direction, while the second theme sounds like a preliminary sketch for the equivalent theme in the first movement of the Tenth Symphony. It's played with winning conviction, though, and recorded well if slightly dryly. *Stephen Johnson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

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X15PB

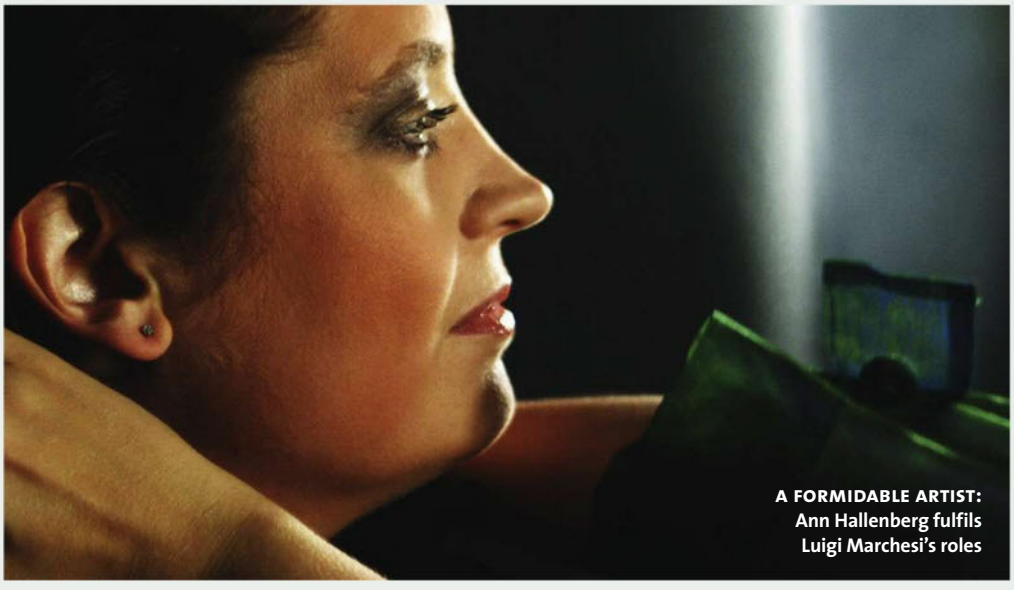
OPERA

Laurence Cummings in two lively recordings this month – a live account of Handel's *Agrippina*, and a striking disc of Scarlatti with soprano ***Elizabeth Watts***; plus ***Seiji Ozawa*** conducts Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*

BBC MUSIC OPERA CHOICE

Matching the last great castrato

Berta Joncus hails the voice and artistry of Ann Hallenberg



A FORMIDABLE ARTIST: Ann Hallenberg fulfils Luigi Marchesi's roles

ARIAS FOR LUIGI MARCHESI: *The great castrato of the Napoleonic era*

Works by Bianchini, Cherubini, Cimarosa, Mayr, Myslivečck, Pugnani, Sarti and Zingarelli
Ann Hallenberg (mezzo-soprano), Francesca Cassinari (soprano); Stile Galante/Stefano Aresi
Glossa GCD 923505 71:45 mins

Luigi Marchesi (1755-1829) was the last great castrato of the 18th century. Boldness was his hallmark: he loved jumping across two octaves, visiting bizarre harmonic terrain in his cadenzas, and extravagantly decorating humble recitatives. Technically he was matchless – and to prove it, he wrote out extemporisations bursting with his signature moves.

This recording pays tribute to Marchesi's creative mind and his luscious voice through a programme of his most celebrated arias with his own embellishments. There

Ann Hallenberg's subtle vocal infection reveals emotional depths

is perhaps no singer better able to meet this challenge than Swedish mezzo-soprano Ann Hallenberg: her rich timbre, the evenness of her register and the precision of her intonation evoke Marchesi's vocal qualities convincingly. She delivers cadenzas and diminutions with careless ease. Most importantly she embraces Marchesi's dramatic characters, whose enactment might confound a lesser singer. They are almost always heroes, who tend to either gloat or moan. Hallenberg moves beyond such formulae to probe – often through the subtlest vocal inflection – emotional depths hidden under the *fioratura*. Most of the arias here are world-premiere recordings, and many are gems, such as those by Giuseppe Sarti and Gaetano Puganini. Complementing Hallenberg is the conducting of Stefano Aresi, who makes the band subtly shadow her words.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE
Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website
www.classical-music.com

BELLINI

I Capuleti e i Montecchi
Vivica Genaux, Valentina Farcas, Davide Giusti, Fabrizio Beggi, Ugo Guagliardo; Bel Canto Chorus; Europa Galante/ Fabio Biondi
Glossa GCD 923404 119:42 mins (2 discs)

In recent decades the sixth of Bellini's ten completed operas has moved from rarity status to repertory and recording-catalogue standard. Easy to understand why: it's a compact *bel canto* music-drama irradiated at its peaks by lyrical poetry that is immediate, potent and captivating. A Romeo and Juliet opera focused almost unwaveringly on the lovers themselves, its opera-house impact depends crucially on their casting.

Glossa's set, however, recorded in parallel with a 2014 Rieti Festival concert performance, purveys a different approach. Its conductor is the musicologically rigorous Fabio Biondi (whose programme essay is full of historically fine-tuned insights into *bel canto* performing style). His insistence on intimacy is underpinned by an alert period band – with fortepiano added to the ensemble – and smallish chorus. Instrumentally the reading constantly refreshes listening ears, imbuing Bellini's famously spare orchestration with tender Romanticism, drawing the pacing out of the notes rather than imposing it on the drama. There are beautiful close-up contributions by Europa Galante's horn, harp and clarinet.

For me, though, further involvement is ruled out by Glossa's cast, especially in comparison with those on existent sets conducted by Riccardo Muti, Roberto Abbado, Bruno Campanella and Donald Runnicles. The youthful-sounding David Giusti (Tebaldo), Fabrizio Beggi (Lorenzo) and Ugo Guagliardo (Capellio) display limited characterising skills; the Romanian Valentina Farcas's Juliet is deftly portrayed, in a soprano well-schooled but monochromatic. The biggest obstacle to my listening enjoyment is, alas, the single well-known soloist, Vivica Genaux, a singer stylistically attuned to Bellini who unfortunately delivers Romeo in tones alternately fluttery and pantomime-dame chesty. This *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, I would say, is one to borrow from the library. *Max Loppert*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

HANDEL

Agrippina
Ulrike Schneider, João Fernandes, Christopher Ainslie, Jake Arditti, Ida Falk Winland; Festspiel Orchester Göttingen/Laurence Cummings
Accent ACC 26404 216 mins (3 discs)

The sleaze and ambiguities of *Agrippina*'s plot, cocooned in some of Handel's most sensual music, make it a sure-fire winner with audiences. This recording from the 2015 Göttingen Handel Festspiel compares favourably with top-drawer rivals such as those conducted by René Jacobs and Jean-Claude Malgoire. Making a virtue of necessity, Lawrence Cummings focuses on the excitement of live production: with furious tempos, eloquent silences and spurts to the finish line, he and the band are dramatic from first measure to last. Cummings also inspires intense interpretations from his singers: the full-throated Ulrike Schneider as the scheming, toxic Agrippina, Ida Falk Winland slinking her way through melodies to peg Poppea's sex-kitten character, and Jake Arditti as Nerone building to a blistering execution of his celebrated final aria, 'Come nube che fugge dal vento'.

There are problems, though, with uneven casting and inferior sound production. Bass João Fernandes as Claudio is more convincing dramatically than he is vocally, lagging behind the band due in part to oversinging. Countertenor Christopher Ainslie lacks the vocal robustness – in his top register particularly – needed to convey Ottone's simmering passions. Other cast members appear to tire by Act III. These quality gaps among the vocalists are heightened by poor microphone placement: recitatives fade away and entries fuzz as cast members move in and out of optimal microphone range. The clatter and thumps of stage business are additional distractions. *Berta Joncus*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★

HINDEMITH

The Long Christmas Dinner
Camille Zamora, Sara Murphy, Jarrett Ott, Josh Quinn, Glenn Seven Allen, Catherine Martin, Kathryn Guthrie, Scott Murphree; American Symphony Orchestra/Leon Botstein
Bridge 9449 48:49 mins

At last, a recording of Hindemith's final opera as he originally conceived it – in English, with a poignant libretto by no less a playwright than Thornton Wilder. Hindemith's 1962 operatic adaptation of the Wilder play is a 50-minute one-acter full of the deep melancholy that characterises his late music, and Wilder's meditation on the unending cycles of birth and death – condensing 90 years of Christmas dinners in the life of a comfortable Midwestern family – is well suited to musical forms. Though the opera was ultimately premiered in German (Hindemith's own translation of the libretto must also count as 'authentic'), it's good to hear it sung by an American cast, who capture the essential Americanness of a piece that was Hindemith's nostalgic tribute to his American years.

Alas, this is not quite the recording we have been waiting for. Although the American Symphony Orchestra plays warmly under Leon Botstein's baton, the performance sounds a little laboured compared with that on the only other recording, Marek Janowski's more idiomatically-attuned version (in German) for Wergo's Hindemith Edition. Even the celebrated serenading sextet sounds a little earthbound, though that may have something to do with a slightly close, bass-heavy recording of a live event. Botstein has assembled a fine group of singers who blend well, several (above all the mezzo Sara Murphy) relishing the beauty of the words and the musical lines.

As expected of a Botstein enterprise, there are insightful notes. While worth having, this release won't show newcomers what makes the opera such a special piece. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

LANG

The Difficulty of Crossing a Field
Beverly O'Regan Thiele, Laquita Mitchell, Nicole Mitchell, Isaiah Robinson, Cree Carrico, Jay O Sanders, Daniel Zippi, Christopher Burchett; Harlem String Quartet/Douglas Kinney Frost
Cantaloupe CA 21107 75:30 mins

Has there ever been a more American-sounding work than this? Gospel, blue grass, rock music all infuse this setting for string quartet and 13 voices of a one-page story by Ambrose Bierce, written in 1888, which tells of how a slave owner in pre-Civil War American South suddenly vanished as he crossed a field near Selma, Alabama, in 1854. With arias, narration and choruses, the music drama unfolds as neighbours and family offer their conflicting version of events; the African American slaves Mr Williamson 'owns' are not considered competent to testify. Like the slaves, then, Williamson is an invisible man, both alive and dead: 'Is you is, or is you ain't?' as Mac Wellman frames it, with pleasing ambiguity in his libretto.

This is the first recording of David Lang's work, premiered in 2002 with the Kronos Quartet in San Francisco, and it's long overdue. Lang's melancholic, sparse motifs are wonderfully haunting and the Harlem Quartet's dirge-like strings, circling the witnesses' testimony, heighten the all-pervasive sense of dark mystery. The film-trailer-deep voice of the presiding magistrate (actor Jay O Saunders), punctuated by gospel-infused chorus, makes for clear and compelling storytelling. Elsewhere, the hyped-up delivery of the high-pitched Williamson Girl (Cree Carrico) won't be to everyone's taste, but it does reflect the spirited commitment of these singers. *Nick Shave*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...

PETER SERLING

David Lang *(b1957)*

The American composer is perhaps most widely known for *The Little Matchgirl Passion*, written for Paul Hillier's Theatre of Voices, which won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize. Lang was also responsible for writing the string quartet arrangements performed by the Kronos Quartet in the film *Requiem for a Dream*. Born in Los Angeles, his most significant training was at the University of Iowa, which he attended 1978-80 specifically to study under the composer Donald Martin Jenni (1937-2006). His music is influenced equally by minimalism, modernism and rock.

REISSUES

Reviewed by George Hall

MONTEVERDI

L'Orfeo
La Capella Reial de Catalunya; Le Concert des Nations/Jordi Savall
Alia Vox AVSA9911 (hybrid CD/SACD) (2002) 114.09 mins (2 discs)

Mixed vocal values diminish the appeal of Savall's live Monteverdi, though there's a good deal of spirit to the period-instrument orchestral performance, with its colourful continuo section.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

MOZART

Arias for bass
Fernando Corena (bass); Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia/Alberto Erede; L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/Peter Maag; Royal Opera House/Argeo Quadri
Eloquence 482 0288 (1960) 57:59 mins

Recordings made by the Swiss bass in 1952 and 1960 are brought together here, his communicative warmth and buffo skills to the fore but the quality limitaions of his capacious voice are also evident.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

CAVALLI

La Calisto
Concerto Vocale/René Jacobs
Harmonia Mundi HMY 2921515.17 (1995) 165:44 mins (3 discs)

René Jacobs expands lavishly on the instrumental forces actually available to Cavalli as a Venetian opera composer of the 1650s, also interpolating additional orchestral movements; but the result is lively and his cast excellent.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

HANDEL

Siroe
Cappella Coloniensis/Andreas Spering
Harmonia Mundi 2921826.27 (2004) 150:05 mins (2 discs)

This opera remains one of Handel's least-known but as this recording with one of the world's oldest period-instrument orchestras plus a generally strong cast and capable conductor shows, it has considerable merits.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

PUCCINI

DVD Manon Lescaut
Kristine Opolais, Jonas Kaufmann, Christopher Maltman, Maurizio Muraro, Benjamin Hulett; Royal Opera House/Antonio Pappano; dir. Jonathan Kent (London, 2014)
Sony Classical 88875105199 131+5 mins

In 2014 the earliest of Puccini's repertory operas returned to Covent Garden in this staging by Jonathan Kent, conducted by Antonio Pappano and headlining one of today's leading tenors as Des Grieux and also a major star in the title role.

Jonas Kaufmann and Kristine Opolais more or less divide the opera up between them, surrounded as they are by secondary characters, all of them finely done, notably Christopher Maltman's Jack-the-Lad Lescaut, Maurizio Muraro's prosperous Geronte and Benjamin Hulett's slightly nerdy Edmondo.

The original 18th-century setting, however – familiar not only from Puccini's 1893 opera and Massenet's slightly earlier (1884) setting, but also from the 1731 Prévost novel that inspired them both – is dropped in favour of a much darker and more sinister presentation centring on the contemporary sex trade. Manon is shown as one of innumerable sex-workers, whereas Puccini and his anonymous librettists present her as something a good deal more nuanced and complex: the result is a coarsening of the opera's emotional territory that becomes physically ever vaguer and more abstract as the show goes on; by Acts 3 and 4, it's not at all clear where we are.

Yet both individually and in their relationship to one another, the singing and acting of the two principals possess enough technical accomplishment and intensity to carry the piece along. Jonas Kaufmann is a gloriously ardent Des Grieux, recklessly embarking upon an emotional journey almost as distressing as that of the heroine herself. Kristine Opolais matches him in a performance that combines tenderness with wilfulness and a kind of doomed personal integrity exemplified in her vocal line. And Pappano brings his customary sense of style to the music. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★

LENA KERN

MOZART'S BARITONE: Matthew Rose reprises roles created by Benucci

RAVEL

L'enfant et les sortilèges; Alborada del gracioso; Shéhérazade
Isabel Leonard, Susan Graham, Anna Christy, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt; Saito Kinen Orchestra/Seiji Ozawa
Decca 478 6760 69:09 mins

Casting The Child in Ravel's opera today is not easy, as the light, slightly acidic French sopranos Ravel knew are no longer produced. Here, Isabel Leonard's voice is really too richly feminine. The best singing comes from Anna Christy as Fire, Princess and Nightingale, and from the very experienced Jean-Paul Fouchécourt as Teapot, Frog, and a splendid Arithmetic. Not surprisingly in a concert performance of this very tricky score, not everything is in place; also there's a clumsy loss of atmosphere in the silent bar before the wonderul, slow horn solo in Part 2, and at one intimate moment shortly afterwards an unwanted bell suddenly rings.

Seiji Ozawa's tempo for the outer sections of *Alborada* is slightly ponderous, and in the central climaxes the brass overpower the strings, while the bassoon solo is curiously unconvincing. *Shéhérazade* is much better. Susan Graham has absolutely the right voice for this music and knows it well. Her French is fine and I'm delighted she respects Ravel's carefully notated vocal slides. Again, Ozawa might occasionally have obeyed Strauss's injunction never to look encouragingly at the brass, though their wide 'hairpin' on 'immense oiseau de nuit' is a stirring moment. But at the end of the last song – I can't believe I'm typing this – in the B/C sharp/D sharp on flute and clarinet, the C sharp is simply missing… *Roger Nichols*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

A SCARLATTI

Arias from operas and cantatas
Elizabeth Watts (soprano); The English Concert/Laurence Cummings
Harmonia Mundi HMU 807574 (hybrid CD/SACD) 72:08 mins

This remarkable recital of largely unfamiliar music by Alessandro Scarlatti, superbly programmed by Elizabeth Watts and Laurence Cummings, proves a fierce and sometimes wayward showcase for this rising soprano. Even as a student, Watts demonstrated great candour in her singing. As her career has progressed, she hasn't lost the ability to get to the heart of an aria and peel back the layers. But there are points in this recital where a little less honesty and a little more art would have been welcome.

There's scintillating playing from The English Concert, including a dashing *obbligato* solo by violinist Huw Daniel in 'Esci omai' (from *Mitridate Eupatore*) matched in dynamism by the orchestra. Yet, arresting as the duel between Watts and trumpeter Mark Bennett is in 'Se geloso è il mio core' (*Endimione e Cintia*), there are as many smudges as there are wows – a pattern repeated at lower volume in 'Sussurrando il venticello' (*Tigrane*).

Watts is extravagantly expressive even at her quietest (in 'Ombre opache' from *Correa nel seno amato*). There's a sparkling carnivalesque miniature with trumpet and tambourine for noisy light relief; but her finest singing is in the eroticised lilt of 'Mentre io godo in dolce oblio' (*La Santissima Vergine del Rosario*) and over the tangy viola-rich textures of 'A questo nuovo affanno' (*Eraclea*). *Anna Picard*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ARIAS FOR BENUCCI

Arias by Mozart, Salieri, Paisiello, Soler and Sarti
Matthew Rose (bass-baritone); Katherine Watson, Anna Devin (soprano); Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen
Hyperion CDA 68078 77:06 mins

Hyperion and Jonathan Cohen have been collaborating on a rewarding series of historically themed CDs featuring a single present-day British soloist. Already out are the Mozart tenor arias disc devised for Jeremy Ovenden, the Handel bass arias for Christopher Purves, and Guadagni-inspired disc for Iestyn Davies.

Here an enlightening and consistently enjoyable spotlight is trained on the bass-baritone Matthew Rose and on Francesco Benucci, whose career peak (1783-95) occurred in Vienna. There he undertook several historically significant 'firsts' – most notably the title role of Mozart's *Figaro* and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. The disc's fare – expertly varied, if for my taste rather illogically ordered – allots most space to Mozart, including also *Don Giovanni* (which when it came to Vienna from Prague had Benucci as Leporello). But samples of Sarti, Martín y Soler and especially Salieri show that he could be darkly serious as well as exuberantly comic.

Matthew Rose's protean instrument may lack the full-bodied glamour of, say, Ildebrando D'Arcangelo's, and his Italian, albeit extremely proficient, sports a noticeable English accent. Happily, his artistry, informed alike by musical and dramatic flair, is every bit the programme's equal, and the playing by Arcangelo is unfailingly fresh, lively and stylish. *Max Loppert*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

CHORAL & SONG

The ***Dufay Collective*** devises ingenious accompaniments for medieval English song; baritone ***Christian Immler*** champions little-known Franz alongside Schumann and Liszt Lieder; and orchestrated salon songs by well-loved opera composers are showcased by ***Rolando Villazón***

BBC MUSIC CHORAL & SONG CHOICE

Beethoven's soul in song

Hilary Finch applauds Werner Güra's illuminating recital

A SENSE OF WONDER: Werner Güra reaches the heart of Beethoven's songs

BEETHOVEN

An die ferne Geliebte, and other Lieder; Bagatelles Op. 126
Werner Güra (tenor), Christopher Berner (fortepiano)
Harmonia Mundi HMC 902217
63:13 mins

Werner Güra and Christoph Berner take us beguilingly into the very heart and mind of Beethoven. Their programme has threefold strength: it is framed, illuminatingly, by Beethoven's early and late settings of *An die Hoffnung*; it places the unique and pioneering *An die ferne Geliebte* centrally, in the context of his individual Lieder; and it interleaves the songs with the Op. 126 Bagatelles, Beethoven's final piano pieces, to revelatory effect. Güra's noble and beautifully enunciated tenor recreates the sheer energy and spiritual struggle within the microcosm of Beethoven's songs. He brings real stature to Goethe's *Wonne der Wehmut,* and finds a dignity of pacing for *An die ferne Geliebte* which infuses the work with a rare sense of wonder. Güra, like Beethoven, seems to be standing on holy ground as he whispers a phrase such as, 'Would I were there!', and as song and longing become shared at the climax of the song-cycle.

Werner Güra recreates Beethoven's energy and spiritual struggle

Berner's 1847 Streicher fortepiano captures well the clarity and the tonal depths of Beethoven's keyboard writing. And the artfully placed Bagatelles, fearlessly played, become both responses to and a spiritual fine-tuning for our reception of the songs. When the third follows *An die ferne Geliebte*, it seems both a natural extension of its musical journey, and a meditation upon it.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE
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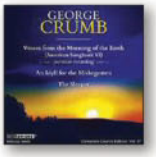
MARCO BORGGREVE, GETTY



CRUMB

Voices from the Morning of the Earth (American Songbook VI); An Idyll for the Misbegotten; The Sleeper
Ann Crumb (soprano), Randall Scarlata (baritone), Rachel Rudich (flute), Marcantonio Barone (piano); Orchestra 2001/James Freeman
Bridge 9445 66:29 mins

This latest volume of the Complete Crumb Edition, No. 17, retraces a few years earlier, and more, before the period covered in the previous volume, which was devoted to two recent song collections including *American Songbook VII*. *Songbook VI* (2008) featured here offers similar ingredients: apparently straightforward renderings of folk or quasi-folk songs, with predictably off-key accompaniments on prepared piano and a variety of percussion instruments. George Crumb's over-fondness for vibraphone and augmented fourth harmonies rather unfortunately recalls the 1970s musical style of low-budget Amicus horror films; yet there are also inventive or ear-catching sonorities, such as the unexpected touch of steel drum at the start of Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind*; and Crumb's setting of Pete Seeger's *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* is all the more poignant for its restraint.

Two makeweight works from the 1980s provide vintage Crumb: *An Idyll for the Misbegotten* starts like a reimagining of Berlioz's 'Scène aux champs', with solo flute in dialogue with balefully rumbling drums. *The Sleeper*, a setting of Edgar Allan Poe for soprano (originally Jan DeGaetani) and prepared piano, superbly performed by Ann Crumb and Marcantonio Barone, is rich with eerie sounds and whisperings, conjuring a world that is uniquely Crumb's. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

MESSIAEN

Poèmes pour Mi; Vocalise-Etude; Chants de terre et de ciel
Hetna Regitze Bruun (soprano), Kristoffer Hyldig (piano)
Naxos 8.573247 56:02 mins

Two song cycles of the 1930s here give an insight into Messiaen the man. Both were inspired by his impassioned love for Claire Delbos, his first wife, and the 'Mi' of *Poèmes pour Mi*. The first cycle from 1936 is an idiosyncratic, sacramental celebration of their marriage, while their year-old son Pascal also features in *Chants de terre et de ciel* from 1938. Though profoundly lyrical songs, their intensity of emotion and Messiaen's unabashed blend of the autobiographical and theological makes for a heady brew not usually associated with the *mélodie*.

His ideal voice was not that of a fragile Melisande, but of the Wagnerian Marcelle Bunlet, who sang Kundry and Isolde at Bayreuth. Hetna Regitze Bruun may not have sung those roles, but her beauty of tone is matched by the richness and power needed for these remarkable works. Bruun floats effortlessly in the melismatic alleluias of 'Action de graces' from *Poèmes pour Mi* or the wordless *Vocalise-etude* tucked between the two cycles, yet brings searing radiance to the closing 'Resurrection' of *Chants de terre et de ciel*. Some words are a little lost in the excitement, and some moments, such as the opening of 'Les deux guerriers' could be even more extreme. These are small caveats, though, given the magical stillness of 'Antienne du Silence' and, as with their earlier Messiaen disc, Kristoffer Hyldig's real understanding, poetry and virtuosity in the piano parts. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

SCHUMANN

Liederkreis, Opp. 24, 39 & 48
James Gilchrist (tenor), Anna Tilbrook (piano)
Linn CKD 474 76:51 mins

A single disc encompassing the Op. 24 and Op. 39 *Liederkreis* settings and *Dichterliebe* could feel over-stuffed. It doesn't here. Tenor James Gilchrist and pianist Anna Tilbrook allow each cycle to unfold naturally, minutely adjusting the spaces between certain songs to allow the ear to absorb what it has just heard. These performances are nothing if not scrupulously imagined, sometimes risking ugliness in the service of the text. For those who have collected Ian Bostridge, Mark Padmore and Werner Güra's Schumann discs, this has something of each: impetuosity, literary spark and elegance.

Tilbrook's navigation of the playouts, those final bars in which it seems that Schumann is communicating something too profound for mere words, is unfailingly lovely, her accompaniments clearly articulated and self-effacing. Gilchrist has a churchy voice, glaringly bright under pressure, but he's fearlessly expressive. In the first Op. 24 song he is startlingly close – a trick he repeats in 'Lieb' Liebchen'. It is in the slow gleam of 'Ich wandelte unter den Baümen' and, in Op. 39, 'Mondnacht', that he excels. The hoarse utterance at the end of 'Auf einer Burg' is well handled too. If Gilchrist and Tilbrook have waited a long time to record these works, their perspective on *Dichterliebe*, poignant, reflective and weather-worn, has only deepened. *Anna Picard*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

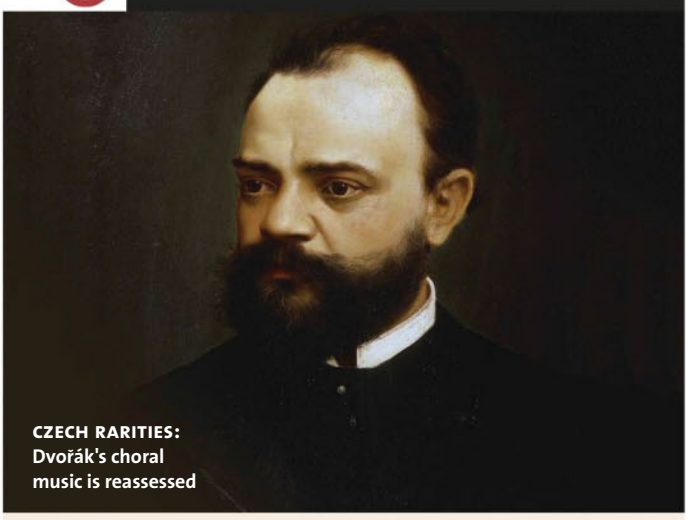
ZEITLIN

Yiddish Songs, chamber music and Declamations
Rachel Calloway (mezzo-soprano), Guenko Guechev (baritone), Daniella Rabbani (speaker); Musicians of the Pittsburgh Jewish Musical Festival
Toccata Classics TOCC 0294 62:28 mins

Before his emigration to New York in 1923, the Russian-born composer Leo Zeitlin (1884-1930) was one of the leading figures in the short-lived Society for Jewish Folk Music in St Petersburg which existed from 1908 to around 1919. Although highly venerated by his contemporaries, Zeitlin was quickly forgotten after his premature death, and the few compositions that have survived were only recently discovered thanks to the efforts of the musicologist, Paula Eisenstein Baker.

This enterprising and comprehensively documented CD

BBC RADIO 3 **REISSUES SPECIAL**



CZECH RARITIES: Dvořák's choral music is reassessed

The lesser-known Dvořák

CD Review's ***Andrew McGregor*** *explores the sacred music and cantatas by the popular Czech composer*

If we rarely think of Dvořák as a choral composer, that's not the case back home. Every Good Friday a crowd gathers in Prague for a performance of Dvořák's *Stabat Mater*, and that's where this Czech set of Dvořák's *Sacred Works and Cantatas* begins (Supraphon SU 4187-2; 8 CDs). It's a work born of personal tragedy – the deaths of three of Dvořák's children – in light of which the radiance at the first movement's heart might come as a surprise. In Jiří Bělohlávek's 1997 Prague recording it glows where it should, yet retains a sense of tragedy, and the Czech soloists plus the recording quality lift this above Supraphon's classic 1952 Talich recording.

Dvořák's cantata *The Spectre's Bride* was a hit in Birmingham

The *Stabat Mater* opened doors for Dvořák in England. He conducted it in London in 1883, and was immediately commissioned by the Birmingham Music Festival. His cantata *The Spectre's Bride* (a Czech ghost story) was a hit at its Birmingham premiere but its impact is harder to understand today, with Victorian formality stifling Dvořák's invention. But this is the recording to have: Bělohlávek and superb soprano Eva Urbanová, with bass Ivan Kusnjer in fine form as the Narrator.

The Leeds Music Festival meanwhile commissioned the oratorio *Saint Ludmila*, which the critics found too long, too derivative and too Czech – which hasn't prevented *Ludmila* from being embraced in Bohemia. Bělohlávek's fine 2004 Prague Spring Festival recording is elsewhere; Supraphon gives us a classic account instead: Václav Smetáček in 1963, dated sound but a colourful and atmospheric performance.

Dvořák's Requiem was also for Birmingham, and we're offered Wolfgang Sawallisch's 1984 Prague recording, which despite a fine solo quartet and good recording feels a little bland compared to the intensity of Karel Ančerl's 1959 recording, but then most others do too.

The other sacred works are less essential. Texts and translations are provided as digital files on the last CD, and while some performances here might be bettered elsewhere, the sense of Czech tradition and the authentic accents make this an invaluable way of exploring beyond the familiar Dvořák top ten.

REISSUES

Reviewed by ***George Pratt***

JS BACH

St Matthew Passion
Schlick, Jacobs, Crook, Blochwitz, Kooy; La Chapelle Royale, Collegium Vocale Gent/Philippe Herreweghe
Harmonia Mundi HMY 2921155-57 (1985) 170:56 mins (3 discs)

Herreweghe's notes explain many details of musical rhetoric in Bach. Applied by these modest-scaled forces and superb soloists, the result is outstanding.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

JS BACH

St Matthew Passion
Peter Pears; Boys of Hampstead Parish Choir; Philharmonia Orchestra/ Otto Klemperer
Warner 2435675382 (1962) 223:14 mins (3 discs)

Peter Pears's inimitable Evangelist, the finest *obbligato* wind, large intense choir, create a deeply moving, nostalgic account with weighty meditative tempos.

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

HANDEL

Saul
Joshua, Bell, Zazzo, Ovenden, Slattery; RIAS Kammerchor; Concerto Köln/ René Jacobs
Harmonia Mundi HMY 2921877-78 (2005) 150:00 mins (2 discs)

Handel's most lavishly-scored oratorio, including harp, trumpets, trombones, mighty drums and carillon, still thrills 20 years on. Characterful soloists, through rather foggy chorus.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

MOZART

Mass in C minor; Masonic Funeral Music
Oelze, Larmore, Weir, Kooy; La Chapelle Royal, Collegium Vocale Gent; Orchestre des Champs-Élysées/Herreweghe
Harmonia Mundi HMG 501393 (1992) 60:19 mins

Light, transparent singing matched by crystalline period instruments. Contrasting sopranos clarify their duetting counterpoint though the soloists form a warmly-blended ensemble.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

features a judicious mixture of his chamber works, Yiddish song arrangements and declamations with piano. Zeitlin's writing for strings in particular is extremely resourceful and imaginative in colouring the various different settings. However, devoting a whole disc to music that focuses almost exclusively on the minor-key mode and communicates a message of unremitting despair and suffering seems to be self-defeating. Ideally, it would have been better to offer more emotional contrast than the brief if upbeat arrangement of Kreisler's *Wiener Volkslied* for string quartet.

Nevertheless, mezzo-soprano Rachel Calloway projects the music with real passion and commitment, and the string players provide expressive support, even though they are not helped by a rather dry, unatmospheric recording. Another slight concern, which is particularly evident in the *Declamations* for speaker and piano, is the rather out-of-tune state of the middle register of the piano. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

I HAVE SET MY HERT SO HY: *Love & Devotion in Medieval England*

Songs of Love and Devotion from Medieval England
The Dufay Collective & Voice/ William Lyons
Avie AV 2286 76:12 mins

The Dufay Collective specialises in the slightly rough-hewn, folksy aspects of medieval music. But that does not prevent it from providing impressively skilful, resourceful and engaging versions of these 15th-century pieces.

The group is most at home in those items it choses to perform purely instrumentally (even when there are surviving words), as we see in their ecstatic, playful repetitions of the phrases of *Ye have so longe kepe schepe* (the manuscript gives no clear indication of where repetitions should occur). Also, they have been ingenious in providing new accompaniments for fragmentary works – though their 'harmonisation' of *Bryd One Brere* (*Bird on a Briar*) makes the piece begin firmly in a minor mode on D and end in a major mode on C, which seems unlikely. A more convincing version of this piece by St George's Canzona keeps it in

IRRESISTIBLE: Camilla Tilling sings sensuous Stenhammar

the major mode throughout. A trio of female singers provides characterful versions of the songs and carols in something akin to Chaucerian English. They are robust and slick in *Nowell, Owt of Youre Slepe Aryse*; moving in *I Syng of a Mayden*; and the soloist in the Corpus Christi Carol captures perfectly the ethereality and fluency of its music. *Anthony Pryer*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

IM SCHÖNEN STROME: *Heine Lieder*

Songs by Schumann, Liszt and Franz
Christian Immler (baritone), Georges Starobinski (piano)
BIS BIS-2143 (hybrid CD/SACD) 67:35 mins

Though a neglected figure today, Robert Franz (1815-92) was a prolific song composer who rarely stepped outside his specialisation. Not as generously gifted nor as imaginative as the contemporaries linked with him on this disc, he was nevertheless admired by both: in 1843 Schumann arranged for the publication of Franz's first set of songs, while Liszt later made piano transcriptions of a number of them, and even wrote a book about him. And with good reason: there's a fluency and skill to his writing, and occasionally a surprising depth to works that are in almost all cases miniatures.

This disc collects together, almost as if in cycles, songs by Franz based on poems by Heinrich Heine, settings of whom account for about one quarter of his output. They stand up well in comparison with Schumann's Op. 24 *Liederkreis* (also setting Heine) and a clutch of Liszt songs (ditto): Franz himself seems to have had little interest in the song-cycle as such.

The attractive light baritone of Christian Immler is nicely offset by the clean textures and musical sensitivity of pianist Georges Starobinski, both finely balanced and captured in lucid sonics; the collection as a whole might identify the difference between the talent of Franz and the genius of Liszt and Schumann, but the performers devote the same careful attention to the achievements of all three. *George Hall*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

NORDIC SONGS

Songs by Alfvén, Grieg, Sibelius and Stenhammar
Camilla Tilling (soprano), Paul Rivinius (piano)
BIS BIS 2154 (hybrid CD/SACD) 66:21 mins

Camilla Tilling uses her light lyric soprano to trace the echoes and glints of folksong in the melodic shape and harmonic underpinning of many of these songs of the North. Minimal vibrato, and long lines of pure and focused cantabile singing bring high-latitude light to Sibelius's setting of his beloved poet Runeberg, and give voice to both his far from mute swans in *Norden*, and those of Grieg and Ibsen in *En svane*.

For Sibelius and Grieg these are rare examples here of their non German-language songs, and this is a pity. Few quibbles about performance, either that of Tilling or of her excellent accompanist, Paul Rivinius. But, as this sells itself as a progamme of Nordic song, to show so little of Grieg's Norwegian and Sibelius's Finnish and Swedish settings (let alone anything from the huge and largely untapped sources of Icelandic song) seems a missed opportunity.

But Tilling irresistibly sells six (of some 100) songs by her still underexplored compatriot Wilhelm Stenhammar. She makes a strong case for his sensuous *The Tryst* (written eight years before Sibelius's more erotically charged setting), and catches to perfection the petal-wing movement and drooping chromatic melancholy of *Butterfly Orchid*. Her final midsummer night's dream of a performance of Hugo Alfvén's 1908 *The Forest Sleeps* makes one long for more from this composer, too. *Hilary Finch*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

PABLO NERUDA: *The Poet Sings*

Works by Ratcliff, Kirchner and Grantham
Conspirare; Conspirare Chamber Players/Craig Hella Johnson
Harmonia Mundi HMU 807637 (hybrid CD/SACD) 73:55 mins

Which work for choir mentions scissors, thimbles, salt shakers and a pair of pliers? The answer is Cary Ratcliff's *Ode to Common Things*, the first movement of which sets Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's apostrophisation of everyday objects. There's a kind of musical onomatopoeia at work here, as the clack and hiss of consonants in the text is complemented by a burbling piano and busy percussion section.

The teeming variousness of Neruda's litany is fluidly communicated in Conspirare's alert performance. Elsewhere in the cycle the vibrant contributions of soprano Lauren Snouffer are particularly impressive, as is the sense of pregnant reverie distilled by conductor Craig Hella Johnson in the central 'Ode to the guitar'.

The three other works on the program also use poetry by Neruda. Shawn Kirchner's two sonnet settings are sweet lyrical interludes between Ratcliff's ambitious 47-minute opus, and Donald Grantham's intense rendering of *La canción desesperada*, where the solo violin of Stephen Redfield adds a now sad, now agitated commentary to Neruda's meditation on love lost but not forgotten. Soprano Lauren Snouffer's soaring interjections, as the solo baritone's estranged lover, are again specially notable. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

TREASURES OF BEL CANTO

Songs by Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini and Verdi
Rolando Villazón (tenor), Ceclia Bartoli (mezzo-soprano); Orchestra del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino/Marco Armiliato
DG 479 4959 64:29 mins

Why quarrel when intimate songs intended for the keyboard are orchestrated? Composers and singers have always looked beyond the drawing room and the recital room to the concert hall. But these intimate songs sometimes drown in these new orchestral depths. And then there's also the question of the orchestrator, or arrangers as they are described on Rolando Villazón's new recording of songs by Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi.

Robert Sadin has a sharp ear for Bellini's orchestra in 'Torna, vezzosa Fillide', notably the woodwind, and there are no tears when he ventriloquises early Verdi. But the four songs by Donizetti are disappointing, particularly 'Il Sospiro' as reconceived by Carlo Guaita which sounds as if it had fox-trotted into a 1950s Palais de Danse, and Villazón coarsens his voice to match.

Elsewhere, this most mercurial of tenors is in good voice. There's elegant tone and line in Verdi's 'Il mistero' and the vocal flamboyance you expect from an Italian-style tenor in 'Torna, vezzosa Fillide'. For many the appearance of Cecilia Bartoli as a duetting guest in Rossini's seductive 'Les amants de Séville' will be a welcome bonus, if a tad mean at one song only.

Marco Armiliato and the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino Orchestra are supportive partners, but it's not an entirely successful trip to the concert hall. *Christopher Cook*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

CHAMBER

Violinist ***Itzhak Perlman*** and pianist ***Emanuel Ax*** join forces for their first duo disc together; the ***Belcea Quartet*** return to Britten with profoundly moving results; three very different violinists make their mark on Biber's *Rosary Sonatas*; plus Finnish tango from ***Mr McFall's Chamber***

BBC MUSIC CHAMBER CHOICE

From joy to despair

Erik Levi applauds the Emerson Quartet's exploration of Berg

BERG

Lyric Suite

WELLESZ

Sonette der Elisabeth Barrett Browning

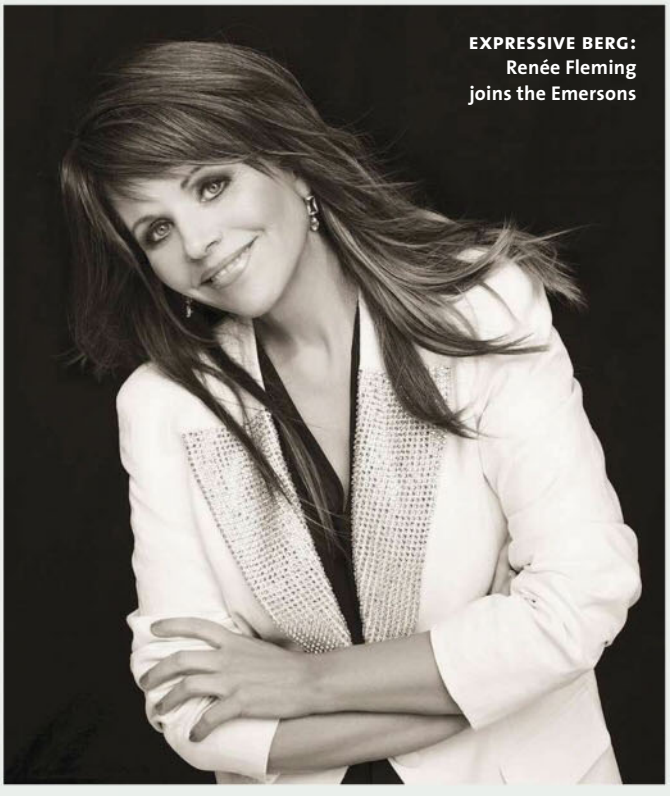
Renée Fleming (soprano); Emerson String Quartet

Decca 478 8399 56:28 mins

Although composed nearly 90 years ago, Berg's *Lyric Suite* still sounds like an astonishingly modern score with a capacity to startle even those who are perfectly attuned to the more avant-garde sonorities of the later 20th century. Yet any complexity in Berg's harmonic idiom remains subservient to the directness of his emotional message, in this particular case, one that charts the trials and tribulations of his secret love affair with Hanna Fuchs-Robettin.

This is an outstanding performance of Berg's *Lyric Suite*

The almost operatic narrative, moving from joy and ecstasy to torpor and despair in the final *Largo desolato*, is projected here with tremendous urgency by the Emerson Quartet. Particularly admirable is their brilliance and accuracy in the formidable semiquaver passagework that opens the third movement, and their careful balancing of the musical line in the more intricate textures of the ensuing *Adagio appassionato*.



EXPRESSIVE BERG: Renée Fleming joins the Emersons

ANDREW ECCLES, RONALD KNAPP

The Emersons supplement their outstanding *Lyric Suite* with a sensitive account of the last movement in an arrangement for voice and string quartet. It's a setting of a poem by Baudelaire which was inscribed in a copy of the published score that the composer sent to his mistress in order to explain the hidden programmatic subtext of the work. As the vocal line is embedded in the pre-existing string parts, Renée Fleming delivers the evocative text in a deliberately subdued manner. In contrast, she opens up a much greater range of colours and emotions in Wellesz's *Sonette der Elisabeth Barrett Browning*. This fascinating cycle, dating from 1934, is imbued with a similar level of expressionist angst as the Berg, but Wellesz does not go as far as his contemporary in repudiating conventional tonality.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE

Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the **BBC Music Magazine website** ***www.classical-music.com***

BRAHMS

Piano Quartet in G minor, Op. 25

MAHLER

Quartet in A Minor

SCHUMANN

Piano Quartet in E flat, Op. 47

Daniel Hope (violin), Paul Neubauer (viola), David Finckel (cello), Wu Han (piano)

Deutsche Grammophon 479 4609 77:26 mins

Mozart more or less invented the piano quartet genre and Schumann revived it – albeit with a Beethovenian tinge to his first movement – in the Piano Quartet, Op. 47; somewhat overshadowed by his great Piano Quintet, yet no less inventive and lovable. But it was the 28-year old Brahms who expanded the genre into a quasi-symphonic panoply of some 40 minutes in his Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor – an achievement the student Mahler duly set out to emulate, though he got no further than completing its accomplished, if, as yet, less than wholly characteristic first movement. Later, Schoenberg would actually orchestrate the Brahms – as reviewed this month on p65.

Recorded live in New York's Alice Tully Hall, Daniel Hope and his colleagues turn in well-paced readings of all three scores – their expressive intensity heightened by the almost gypsy-style vibrato favoured by Hope himself: highly appropriate to the riotous Hungarian finale of the Brahms and imparting an almost Klezmer-like feeling to the violin flourish near the end of the Mahler.

A pity that the recording has a slightly matt, constricted quality, as though some of the upper frequencies had been filtered out – compared with, say, the luminous spaciousness of the classic recording of the Brahms by Domus on Virgin. Surely Wu Han's piano tone cannot

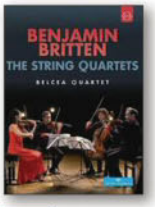
have sounded quite so neutral, nor the strings quite so grainy in the hall itself? The inventive richness of the works and the sweep of the performances come over nonetheless.
Bayan Northcott
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

BRAHMS
String Quartets Nos 1 & 3
Artemis Quartet
Erato 2564612663 68:24 mins

From Brahms's expression markings you'd probably suspect this was a composer with an allergy to extremes. This is especially true of the chamber music. Dynamics louder than *forte* are rare, restraining *non troppos* or *un pocos* fairly common. And yet when the Artemis Quartet plunge into the first movement of Quartet Op. 51 No. 1 as though it were a truly Beethovenian tragic *allegro* it doesn't feel that they're straining the issue or in any other way distorting the essence. It's tremendously exciting to start with, but part of that excitement derives from the players' strong grasp of each movement as a whole structure. In other words, Brahms the so-called 'Classical Romantic' may feel more Romantic in each passing moment, but in the background classical objectivity still holds.

The emotional palette is broad: surging intensity is balanced emotionally by tenderness, delicate sensitivity, and in Quartet No. 3 Op. 67 even by touches of humour. But the balance is architectural too. It may be a slightly partial view of Brahms, but it's hard to deny that the cap fits, that performances in which this music speaks so effectively and so consistently are infrequent, and that questions of whether either work represents 'real' quartet writing have rarely seemed less relevant. Ultimately I think the Artemis Quartet's *Sturm und Drang* approach suits the First String Quartet better than the lighter more playful Third, but it's still striking how compelling and enjoyable the latter is – especially the rhythmic games in the first movement. The recording is suitably immediate without loss of overall sound perspective – well suited to the playing in fact.
Stephen Johnson
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

INTENSE FOCUS: The Belceas grip with Britten



DVD BRITTEN
String Quartets Nos 1-3
Belcea Quartet
EuroArts 2072768 90 mins

The Belcea Quartet recorded Britten's quartets in 2005 to great acclaim. Since then the works have become a staple of their repertoire, and this DVD captures a gripping live cycle from Paris's Studio Davout. While one might miss the pristine finesse of their previous set, this timbrally grainier recording offers an altogether grander, wilder conception, and an opportunity to watch the intense exchange between four remarkable string-players.

The viola's leadership role emerges in the first quartet: Krzysztof Chorzelski's commanding dark line is the expressive thread sustaining an unusually powerful first movement. The *allegro con slancio*, a *scherzo*, is more diabolic than enthusiastic, and the finale ferociously percussive. The Purcellian-inspired second quartet is one of Britten's most stark, uncompromising instrumental works. In the Belcea's hands its *moto perpetuo Vivace* movement has a thrilling, Bartókian brutality: no room for English slapstick here; this feels like music running for its life. Similarly, the Chacony unfolds into a vast, sustained outpouring of energy.

The third, and greatest, quartet, may not here be the most tonally radiant, but it's so majestically structured that the emotional impact is huge. They bring out the spare, strangeness of Duets, which feels startlingly modern. The Ostinato and Burlesque are exercises in extreme sports, attacked with aggression. Its exotic pizzicato and *col legno* have a Shostakovichian satirical edge, providing a burst of fiery colour before the devastation of the final movement, tenderly introduced by cellist Antoine Lederlin against the spine-tingling purity of Corinna Belcea's line. Each voice raises its poignant question over and over as the quartet limps into silence. There are no documentary extras here; just three exceptional performances.
Helen Wallace
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★

FAURÉ
Violin Sonata No. 1
STRAUSS
Violin Sonata in E flat
Itzhak Perlman (violin), Emanuel Ax (piano)
DG 4811774 53:52 mins

Aged 70 and 66 respectively, Itzhak Perlman and Emanuel Ax have been playing as a duo in concert for many years, yet remarkably this is their first official recording together, the first time Perlman has recorded these particular works and his first sonata recording since he re-recorded the Beethoven *Kreutzer* and Franck sonatas in 1998 with Martha Argerich. Although on paper Fauré's tantalising understatement and Strauss's swaggering machismo may

REISSUES
Reviewed by ***Helen Wallace***

SCHUBERT • MOZART
String Quintet in C* • Divertimento in D
Aeolian Quartet; Bruno Schrecker (cello)*
Alto ALC 1278 (1966/7) 70:26 mins

This magisterial Schubert String Quintet may not have the cleanest sound, but it exudes orchestral depth and scope. An *Adagio* of glacial stillness proves a *tour de force*, while the Mozart *Presto* catches virtuosic fire.
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★

SPOHR
Octet; Clarinet Concerto No. 1; Nonet
Vienna Octet; Gervase de Peyer* (clarinet); LSO/Colin Davis*; Fine Arts Quartet; New York Wind Quintet
Alto ALC 1266 (1958-61) 75:31 mins

Melting sophistication from the Vienna Octet in Spohr's delightful work; De Peyer is a vivacious concerto soloist, though the LSO winds might sound reedy to modern ears. An affable, if clumsy, Nonet completes the set.
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

TCHAIKOVSKY
String Quartet No. 2; Souvenir de Florence Sextet
Borodin Quartet
Alto ALC 1295 (1965) 69:07 mins

The Borodin's reading of Quartet No. 2 is lavishly lyrical, saturated in colour and structurally articulate, delivered with impressively tight ensemble. Boundless generosity and intense life make this Sextet a 'benchmark'.
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

VILLA-LOBOS
Bachianas Brasileiras Nos. 2, 5, 6 & 9
Victoria de los Angeles (soprano); Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française/Villa-Lobos
Warner Classics 2435669122 (1957-59) 64:29 mins

Cello ensembles may have more finesse today, but has anyone ever sung *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 with the seductive allure and expressive ardour of De los Angeles? Nos 1, 2 & 9 are characterful, but swampy.
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★

Baroque violin splendours

Nicholas Anderson explores three contrasting Biber Rosary Sonata sets

'VIVID DRAMA': Lina Tur Bonet brings theatre to Biber

PABLO F. JUAREZ

BIBER

Rosary Sonatas

MUFFAT

Sonata No. 1; Passacaglia

Ariadne Daskalakis (violin); Ensemble Vintage Köln

BIS BIS2096 (hybrid/SACD) 132:30 mins (2 discs)

BIBER

Rosary Sonatas

Rachel Podger (violin), David Miller (theorbo, archlute), Marcin Swiątkiewicz (harpsichord, organ), Jonathan Manson (cello, viola da gamba)

Channel Classics CCS SA 37315 (hybrid/SACD) 134:57 mins (2 CDs)

BIBER

Rosary Sonatas

Lina Tur Bonet (violin); Musica Alchemica

Pan Classics PC 10329 124:52 mins (2 discs)

Biber's *Rosary* or *Mystery* Sonatas are enjoying ever increasing popularity among violinists, with three new recordings out just this year. Biber's manuscript lacks a title as do the 15 Sonatas and concluding Passacaglia; but the music, scored for violin and continuo, is linked to a number of copper-plate engravings which illustrate the five joyful, five sorrowful and five glorious events in the life of the Virgin, the unaccompanied Passacaglia providing a meditative conclusion. Only the opening Sonata and the Passacaglia call for standard violin string tuning. Elsewhere Biber requires *scordatura* or retuning of the strings, enabling the performer to realise subtly varied colours as well as to facilitate some fingerings.

Ariadne Daskalakis is a compelling advocate. On the one hand she enlivens Biber's illustrative palette with bold, extrovert gestures, on the other she projects expressive tenderness as, for instance in the *Adagio* of the *Nativity* Sonata (No. 3). Her rhythmic suppleness is a constant delight and her restrained, apposite ornamentation, as in the Aria of the *Crucifixus* commendable. Once only did I sense a moment's tonal insecurity in the first movement of No. 3. This is a technically accomplished and thoughtful performance. Ensemble Vintage Köln provide discreet and stylish support while Daskalakis herself contributes a first-rate accompanying essay. Recorded sound is excellent.

As Biber's cycle progresses we realise increasingly that we are in the presence of a colourful and expressively intense spiritual fresco, an instrumental counterpart to the great vocal and choral settings of the Passion Story. *Rachel Podger*'s response to this subtly depictive music is more meditative, even at times, perhaps introspective, than most of her rivals. Her gestures are restrained – not for her the often extreme flamboyance of southern German Baroque church architecture and furnishings – and her playing is both tenderly expressed and affectingly poignant. Nothing is overstated or overblown but instead she reveals a fine sense of proportion, unhurried, restrained but also passionate where the subject and music demand it. Her ornaments are tasteful and imaginative and her articulation cogent and communicative, and she is supported by a responsive continuo group. It's worth nothing that her eloquently sustained Passacaglia has been translated from an earlier recording. Amid all this excellence I am sorry to have to alert readers to the absence of any movement titles in the booklet. They are important signposts in respect both of form and character. Come along Channel Classics!

Violinist *Lina Tur Bonet* and Musica Alchemica's recording is among the most colourful available. The meditative atmosphere of Rachel Podger's recording here gives way to an altogether more theatrical approach. Bonet's vivid sense of drama provides the listener with a sequence of dazzlingly colourful images in which maximum expressive contrast is sought. Such is the case in the seventh sonata, *The Scourging*, where savage bow strokes yield to passages of beguiling tenderness in the final sarabande.

Biber's movements are of many types with arias, chaconnes and variations as well as established dance forms such as allemande, courante and gigue.

Bonet and her continuo group deliver everything with aplomb. The Aria and its 29 variations (Sonata 14) are radiant and joyful though occasionally the colours in the continuo seemed fanciful. The Aria *Tubicinum* proclaiming the Ascension (No. 12) is stirringly projected but I felt every so often that the gestures were a little overstated. This is a lively representation, though, which might be considered as the other side of the Podger coin.

DASKALAKIS
PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

PODGER
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BONET
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

appear opposed, these are relatively early works that find both composers flexing their creative muscles. Neither is especially demanding violinistically, although the piano writing is quite hazardous in places.

If there is an increasing tendency nowadays among the younger generation to semantically re-evaluate the classics of the past, Perlman and Ax exalt in the music's *cantabile* trajectory with an *espressivo* warmth and youthful sensitivity to emotional narrative that recalls their 1970s prime. Far from imposing a misty-eyed, old-world maturity on this glorious music, they sound as though they are discovering the music's special qualities for the first time. Magic moments abound, including a classic Perlman 'how does he do that?' exquisite micro-portamento near the start of the Fauré *scherzo*'s middle section, where he takes the high C sharp of a repeated phrase on the A string!

Yet the revelation here is a performance of the Strauss Sonata's central *Andante*, which creates the impression of two old chums improvising (magically) without a care in the world. Forget the meagre playing time, this alone is worth the price of admission. *Julian Haylock*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

MENDELSSOHN

String Quartets Nos 2 & 3; Scherzo in A minor, Op. 81 No. 2; Andante (Tema con Variazioni) in E

Escher String Quartet

BIS BIS 1990 (hybrid CD/SACD) 71.51 mins

The Escher Quartet continues their Mendelssohn collection in the fashion of the initial disc, programming together very different works from various points of their composer's short life. The A minor Quartet, though numbered two, was his first 'official' effort in the genre, written when he was 18 and quoting from his own song *Frage* (question), while drawing on the influence of his passion for Beethoven's late quartets. The D major quartet is likewise out of sequence – the last of the Op. 44 set to be written, but placed first in the publication possibly because its composer was so happy with it. As for the Four Pieces Op. 81, each was originally a stand-alone work; they date from disparate years, but were brought together for publication after

Mendelssohn's death. The works nevertheless share Mendelssohn's unmistakable fizz of nervous energy, magical moments of elfin lightness and mystery and a clear-cut flow that sounds deceptively effortless.

The Eschers offer eloquent, full-blooded playing, with spacious tempos, earthy rhythms and rich, dug-in sound. Nothing is rushed or skittered over – and this is notably rewarding in music where an over-precious surface can risk missing the point. Mendelssohn wasn't inspired by Beethoven for nothing. The four players offer a beautiful blend of individuality and accord, and BIS's famous SACD sound quality lets them gleam and glow.

Jessica Duchen

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

RICHTER

From Sleep

Max Richter (piano, organ, electronics); Grace Davidson (soprano); American Contemporary Music Ensemble

Deutsche Grammophon 479 5257 59 mins

It's easy to hear how Max Richter's *From Sleep* has topped the classical album charts in recent weeks: billed as a lullaby for our frenetic age, it feeds in generous portions the modern-day appetite for music to relax to. In its original incarnation, the piece, scored for piano, strings, electronics and wordless vocals, is eight hours long, and listeners at its premiere at the Wellcome Collection, London, last month were given mattresses, not chairs. This CD, of seven excerpts lasting one hour, is intended less for dozing to, than for active listening – though some may still find it conducive to a nap.

From the repeating melancholic piano chords and tolling bell-like tones of the opening *Dream 3*, to the gently cascading suspensions of *Space 11*, Richter's ambient sounds make minimal demands – as if Pärt's tintinnabuli style had been remixed for the spa. Elsewhere, such as in *Dream 13*, where the deep sighing cello sounds like slow exhalations, the circular, interlocking patterns vividly suggest the physical and mental activity of sleep itself – Richter apparently consulted a neuroscientist as part of his research. Its titles recall the *Dreams* of 1960s minimalist La Monte Young, and the durations of its live performance suggest Cage, yet there is little here – from the plainchant-meets-TV-thriller vocals of *Path 5* to their return on keyboard in *Path 19* – that suggests the anarchic experimentalism of that era. The sound, deep and expansive in *Space 21*, is as polished throughout as the performance, though some may find the chapel acoustic stifling, like being wrapped tightly in a duvet with no means of escape. *Nick Shave*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

SOLITUDES: *Baltic Reflections*

Chamber works by Mustonen, Bruzaite, Sallinen, Tüür, Aho, Vask, Pärt, Sibelius & Mononen

Mr McFall's Chamber

Delphian DCD34156 65:29 mins

Scottish ensemble Mr McFall's Chamber is justly celebrated for its keen sense of musical adventure. *Solitudes: Baltic Reflections* presents a fascinating collection of chamber works for strings and piano, leading the listener through the Eastern Baltic seaboard. The central thrust of the disc is an exploration of Finnish tango: a perhaps unexpected musical tradition, sparked by the arrival of Argentinian tango musicians in Finland in the early 20th century. The genre developed its own distinct flavour, blending the rhythmic fizz of Argentine tango with the elegance of Finnish and Russian waltzes. A range of 1950s and contemporary tangos are here featured, including Unto Mononen's irresistible *Satumaa* ('The Fairy-Tale Land') and Aulis Sallinen's *Introduction and Tango Overture*.

Other newer works featured are more mixed. One highpoint is an outstanding performance of Kalevi Aho's spellbinding *Lamento* for two violas, but Zita Bružaitė's *Bangos* (Waves) for solo piano is somewhat anodyne and sentimental.

The disc closes with Sibelius, that great luminary of Finnish composition. His music is rendered here with uncanny wit and grace: firstly with a gossamer and deeply affecting performance of the simple *Einsames Lied* arranged for piano sextet and lastly, almost unfathomably but, it turns out, entirely delightfully, the *Finlandia* hymn played by piano quintet and bowed saw. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

INSTRUMENTAL

Stephen Cleobury plays a Liszt classic on the organ of King's College, Cambridge; plus newcomer *Mark Viner* shows his mastery in piano music by Liszt's great rival, Thalberg

BBC MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE

Virtuosic variations

Erik Levi relishes Daniil Trifonov's first recording of Rachmaninov

RACHMANINOV

Variations on a Theme of Chopin; Variations on a Theme of Corelli; Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

TRIFONOV

Rachmaniana

Daniil Trifonov (piano); Philadelphia Orchestra/Yannick Nézet-Séguin

DG 479 4970 79:36 mins

RUSSO-PHILLY ALLIANCE: Nézet-Séguin (left) and Daniil Trifonov echo a legendary partnership

Daniil Trifonov's first recording of Rachmaninov, a composer to whom he feels particularly close, is for the most part a compelling experience. I particularly like the idea of bringing together the three major sets of variations onto one disc, something which as far as I know has not been previously done, with Trifonov's own *Rachmaniana* an attractive if hardly original foil. It's also apt that

The Philadelphians give sterling support for Trifonov's pyrotechnics

Trifonov has recorded the *Paganini Rhapsody* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the ensemble that accompanied Rachmaninov in the world premiere performance under Stokowski over 80 years ago.

The Philadelphians under Yannick Nézet-Séguin provide sterling support for Trifonov's stunning pyrotechnics. There are also moments of magical repose, Trifonov achieving astonishing beauty of tone and atmosphere in the almost impressionistic harmonies of Variations 11 and 17. It's not clear from the booklet whether the recording derives from a live concert, but this may explain the momentary lapse of ensemble between the violins and the rest of the orchestra at the beginning of Variation 19. Nevertheless, this is clearly an outstanding version in an already overcrowded field.

Trifonov's range of colour and imagination in the *Corelli Variations* is mesmerising. The somewhat earlier *Chopin Variations* are also projected with brilliance, staggering clarity of fingerwork and lightness of timbre. Yet I'm not totally convinced by Trifonov's interventionist approach to the work's structure. True, the composer sanctioned cutting a few variations for the sake of reducing its already considerable duration, but Trifonov's excisions involve a not very convincing change of key between two variations that are not adjacent to each other. Even less justified is his idea, possibly culled from Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, of recapitulating Chopin's Prelude at the end of the work.

PERFORMANCE
(CHOPIN VARIATIONS) ★★★★
(THE REST) ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE
Hear extracts from this recording and the rest of this month's choices on the BBC Music Magazine website
www.classical-music.com

JESSICA GRIFFIN

BEETHOVEN

Piano Sonatas: No. 8 (Pathétique); No. 21 (Waldstein); No. 32, Op. 111

Boris Giltburg (piano)

Naxos 8.573400 69:10 mins

Is it a good idea to have an entire programme in C major or minor? Still, there is much to enjoy in Boris Giltburg's performances here. He is a musical and thoughtful player, and his account of Beethoven's last sonata, Op.111, in particular is highly accomplished, the opening movement delivered with all the drama and intensity it calls for, and the valedictory variation finale conveying an air of luminous warmth.

Giltburg is scarcely less compelling in the *Pathétique* Sonata, but his *Waldstein* raises a few issues. Its finale, as Beethoven's pupil Carl Czerny pointed out, is heavily dependent on the use of the pedal. It's true that on a modern piano Beethoven's generous pedal markings for the main rondo theme need to be treated with caution, but we can be sure he wanted a degree of harmonic blurring. Giltburg makes the changes in harmony sound too neat and tidy, and takes the pedal off again far too soon in the Sonata's closing bars, with their resonating fanfares. He also ignores the repeat in the first movement. *Misha Donat*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

S HARRISON

Solos and Duos for strings and piano

Peter Sheppard-Skærved, Mihailo Trandafilovski (violin), Diana Mathews (viola), Roderick Chadwick (piano)

Toccata TOCC 0304 72:15 mins

This collection of works by Sadie Harrison is a vivid exploration of

the miniature. No single movement exceeds four minutes and the shortest is just 24 seconds, yet these five magnetic works explore colour and form with a dazzling intensity. Many of the compositions are ekphrastic in nature: *Hidden Ceremonies* 'fragments' in sound the huge canvasses of contemporary artist Brian Graham in nine arresting movements for solo piano; while *Gallery (Rooms 1 and 2)* is by turns meditative and skittish, exploring the paintings and drawings of artist and violinist Peter Sheppard-Skærved who also performs the work (and writes the disc's engaging liner notes). The collection closely reflects the composer's interest in antiquity (Harrison is also an archaeologist) with further works for solo violin and viola inspired by Greco-Roman culture, including the *Three Dances For Diana Nemorensis* performed with great spirit (and virtuoso foot stamps) by Diana Mathews.

The disc ends with the mesmerising *…under the circle of the moon…* for violin duo. Its seven short movements take as their prompt sources ranging from Dürer to gemstones to human skin to Hindu cosmology, and are performed with tremendous artistry by Sheppard-Skærved joined by Mihailo Trandafilovski, bringing this beautiful and intriguing disc to a powerful close. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

HOLST

The Planets (arr. Sykes); St Paul's Suite (arr. Johnson)
Simon Johnson (organ)
Priory PRCD 1144 64:41 mins

Although *The Planets* is a famously brilliant showpiece for large orchestra, transcriptions can be illuminating. Peter Sykes's organ arrangement, rather like Holst's two-piano version, effectively highlights the work's dissonant harmonies. As performed by Simon Johnson on the Grand Organ of St Paul's Cathedral, with its generous acoustic, 'Mars' sounds exceptionally ferocious. Almost as impressive are 'Saturn', its climax even more inexorable than the orchestral original and all the more horrifying; and 'Uranus', sounding especially sinister for its combination of musical hall japes – including mechanical organ allusions – with menacing diablery. Yet much of the work does not fall naturally into the organ's style, or suffers from poor approximation of particular instrumental colours. The organ's 'dweeby'-sounding flutes reduce 'Venus' to tawdry sentimentality. 'Jupiter' loses much of its colour and – given the inevitable limitations of a solo organist – much of its bubbling textures, and so sounds clumsily written and vulgar.

The *St Paul's Suite*, transcribed by Johnson, is a similarly mixed bag – effective when the music is playfully contrapuntal, less successful in translating string tuttis. *Daniel Jaffé*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

COOL CLARITY: Stanislav Khristenko champions Krenek

KRENEK • SCHUBERT

Krenek: Piano Sonata No. 4, Op. 114; George Washington's Variations, Op. 120; Prelude, Wo087; Schubert: Piano Sonata No. 15 in C, D840 (completed by Krenek)
Stanislav Khristenko (piano)
Toccata Classics TOCC 0298 76:14 mins

To be born in Vienna in 1900 would signal an interesting life path for any composer. Such was the lot of Ernst Krenek. Influenced first by the aesthetic of his main teacher, Schreker, and later by his peer group while studying in Berlin, notably the pianist Eduard Erdmann, Krenek absorbed references that at various points encompassed the serialism of Schoenberg, the bite and irony of the alternative worlds of 1920s Berlin, and the poetic imagination of bygone times, especially that of Schubert.

When the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938, Krenek left Europe for the US; he eventually settled in Palm Springs, California. Much of the music on this CD dates from his American years.

Khristenko's playing offers suitably cool clarity; he articulates lines for melodic eloquence even when that melodic quality is not obvious, and maintains an admirable lightness of touch. The Fourth Piano Sonata (1948) proves chewy, yet translucent. The *George Washington Variations* (1950) is an enjoyable set based on a ballroom favourite from 1796, traversing many of Krenek's influences from 12-tone music to jazz.

The completion of the Schubert C major Sonata is earlier, from Krenek's Berlin years; while it perhaps remains a stubborn imitation of Schubert with an extra layer of irony, rather than convincing us that it could be by the man himself, it is faithful and attentive nonetheless. Less attentive is the CD's printing, which declares its contents to be Krenek's 'Paino music'. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

LISZT • MENDELSSOHN REUBKE

Liszt: Fantasy and Fugue on 'Ad Nos, Ad Salutarem Undam'; Reubke: Organ Sonata on the 94th Psalm; Mendelssohn: Organ Sonata No. 6, Op. 65/6
Stephen Cleobury (organ)
King's College KGS 0010 (hybrid CD/SACD) 69:16 mins

In the days of LP, Liszt's extended meditation on a theme from Meyerbeer's *Le prophète*, and Reubke's Sonata on the 94th Psalm (composed seven years later under *Ad Nos*'s capacious shadow), were an almost 'Cav and Pag' coupling. With the extra playing time of the CD, Stephen Cleobury's first organ release on King's College's own label astutely adds another work with a religious subtext: Mendelssohn's chorale-indebted Sixth Sonata.

On the plus side the Mendelssohn injects a welcome palate-cleansing classicism between the hyper-charged Liszt and Reubke, especially given Cleobury's lucid and refreshingly unsentimental account. Its D minor tonality, however, affords little respite from the two towering C minor doorstops of the 19th-century organ literature that bookend it. They, inevitably, are the headline works, and Cleobury's technical command makes light of their fearsome virtuosic challenges. He might not always exact the last ounce of dramatic frisson, but the Reubke's first movement *Allegro* is played with assertive truculence, and he shapes the opening of Liszt's fugal finale with granite-like muscular determination ahead of a blazing coda. The Chapel's acoustic, however, coupled with the organ's fulsomely rounded sound conspire to undermine clarity when textures thicken. *Paul Riley*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

D SCARLATTI

Keyboard Sonatas
Virginia Black (piano)
CRD CRD 3533 58:18 mins

Virginia Black's long immersion in the music of Domenico Scarlatti is everywhere apparent in these assured, fluent accounts of 12 of his keyboard sonatas – single-movement works which the performer has artfully arranged in groups of four.

Though Black's previous recordings of Scarlatti are on the harpsichord, here she returns to her roots as a pianist, playing a Yamaha grand in the silvery acoustic of Forde Abbey, Somerset. Comparing the different versions is like comparing a fresco with an oil painting: the former, light and diaphanous; the latter, rich and luminescent. With the delicate action of the harpsichord, Scarlatti's fiddly embellishments are neater and more decorous, while on the piano they are weightier and occasionally

REISSUES

Reviewed by ***Julian Haylock***

ROBERT DE VISÉE

Complete works for guitar
Rafael Andia (guitar)
Harmonia Mundi HMY 2928464-65 (1986) 144:02 mins (2 discs)

An exemplary reissue from the mid-1980s in which Rafael Andia turns the Baroque guitar into the ear-tweaking purveyor of no less than 107 dances, each one brought foot-tappingly to life.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

JOHANN KASPAR MERTZ

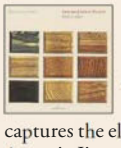
Works for Guitar, including Harmonie du Soir, La Romantique, Tarantelle, Introduction et Rondeau Brillant etc
Raphaëlla Smits (guitar)
Accent ACC 24303 (1988) 78:54 mins

Employing a range of original and modern instruments (including authentic guitars with more than six strings) Raphaëlla Smits uncovers in Mertz's music a haunting strain of deep melancholy.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

MANJÓN

Works for Guitar, including Aire vasco, Romanza No. 3, Noveletta I & II, A orillas del arroyo etc
Raphaëlla Smits (guitar)
Glossa Cabinet GCDC 80017 (1999) 58:56 mins



Playing a glorious, larger-than normal 1899 Vicente Arias instrument, Raphaëlla Smits captures the elusive mood of Antonio Jimenez Manjón's dream-like inspiration with captivating insight and imagination.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

JUAN MARTÍN: *The Early Years*

Works for Flamenco Guitar
Juan Martín (guitar)
Flamenco Vision CD FV14 (1974/76) 58:56 mins

Those of us old enough to have experienced the 1970s at first hand (ahem!) will recall the popular emergence of flamenco and the magnetic artistry of Juan Martín, captured here in his 1974 prime.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

cumbersome. Rapid passagework is rather muddier on the piano, and some of Scarlatti's repeated chords are dense here where they are delicate in earlier recordings. The brighter timbre of the harpsichord works well for the sunny, Hispanic sonatas, and the instrument's plectrum mechanism vividly evokes the twangling guitars and clicking castanets that so inspired the composer. The piano, on the other hand, is more suited to Scarlatti's lyrical, romantically expressive works, and Black exploits its resonance and its palette of colours to sustain lingering melodies and to paint exotic harmonies. Her bouyant rhythms convey what Ralph Kirkpatrick described as 'the wiry tension of Spanish dance', and, throughout, her passion for this music shines through. *Kate Bolton-Porciatti*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

SILVESTROV

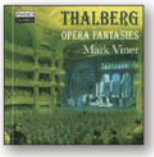
Piano Sonatas Nos 1-3; Classical Sonata; Children's Music 1; Nostalghia
Simon Smith (piano)
Delphian DCD 34151 78:09 mins

There's a magical quality to Valentin Silvestrov's work that is almost unique in contemporary music. Particularly mesmerising is his piano music, which focuses on the more intimate aspects of his musical outlook. It's an intimacy that is reflected most obviously through Silvestrov's predilection for creating a velvet carpet of sound. The piano writing is characterised by a subtle employment of the *una corda* and sustaining pedals, and there are allusions to a wide variety of different idioms ranging from Ukrainian folk music to liturgical chant.

Simon Smith's engagingly performed and atmospherically recorded recital offers a fascinating insight into the composer's development from the 1960s through to the 1980s, with the hypnotic *Nostalghia* of 2001 providing a haunting postlude. Smith places the three piano sonatas as the centrepiece of the programme, juxtaposing these substantial works with the more modestly conceived first set of *Children's Music* and the witty homage to 18th-century styles that makes up the *Classical Sonata*.

From the listener's perspective, the Second Sonata (1976), with its angular melodic leaps and strange percussive hammering of the bass strings, is the most challenging of the three. Yet the trajectory of the work, moving from initial turbulence to the calm reflection of the final section, is most satisfying. In contrast, the First and Third Sonatas appear to be more traditional in outlook offering intriguing references to Bach peppered with some piano sonorities that are encountered in the work of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



THALBERG

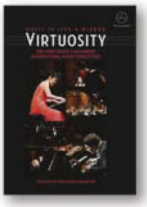
Opera Fantasies
Mark Viner (piano)
Piano Classics PCL 0092 66:46 mins

Sigismond Thalberg is famous as the man who threatened Liszt's pianistic supremacy in 1830s Paris, leading to a virtuoso 'duel' in 1837. Known almost exclusively for his operatic piano fantasies, Thalberg's writing may not encompass the imaginative range and originality of Liszt, but his best works demonstrate that he was clearly a superlative pianist, and knew how to dress a good tune.

Good tunes and elaborate dressing abound here. The young British pianist Mark Viner is superbly adept in this repertoire, especially at subordinating and shaping decorative passagework, although at times he could be even bolder in sustaining and projecting the melodic line. While the warm, soft-edged sound suits the clarity and refinement of Viner's playing, it can overly mollify waves of full-throated, lavishly ornamented melody – as in the famous three-hand effect towards the end of the *Fantasia on Moise*.

Neither the attractive fantasy after Mozart's *Don Giovanni* nor the elaborately over-written Act II sextet from *Lucia di Lammermoor* rival Liszt's examples, but the Grand Caprice on Bellini's *La Sonnambula* is a more subtly wrought piece. The best track comes last – the Grande Fantaisie on Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* is one of Thalberg's finest works, made (relatively) famous by Earl Wild's 1964 recording. Wild revels more fully in the grand rhetorical style, but it is a measure of Viner's superb performance that he isn't outclassed. Very promising. *Tim Parry*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★



DVD VIRTUOSITY: *Music is like a Mirror*

The 14th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition
dir. Christopher Wilkinson
EuroArts DVD: 2061288; Blu-ray: 2061284 90 mins

The most telling comment in this documentary comes from the nonagenarian juror Menahem Pressler. 'Is it anything to do with art?' he says. 'Of course not. Art is love – love for the music.' It would have been nice to hear more from him – and the other jurors – while surveying the roller-coaster 2014 Cliburn, the Texan piano olympics.

The film nevertheless captures, with excellent camera work and sound, the agony and ecstasy of competition existence. You start to care about the young pianists as if they are your friends: the young woman who says her dog leaves the room if she's not playing well; one who's reduced to tears by negative remarks on a website; a contestant who emerges more famed for pulling faces while playing than for the playing itself; and Vadym Kholodenko – the winner – who meets his father for the first time in 23 years after tracking him down on Facebook.

Virtuosity may be the focus – but music takes a back seat. Indeed there's little, if any, comment from anybody about their approach to any masterworks beyond 'Who's your favourite composer?' 'Bach and Schumann,' says silver medallist Beatrice Rana; cue film of her playing Ravel. And certain people in Warsaw, Moscow, Brussels and Leeds might take issue with the film's assertion that the Cliburn isn't just any competition, but 'the one'.

The bonuses are vital. 'Six months on' shows Kholodenko reflecting on the shock effect the prize has had on his life, and there's longer footage of superb playing from some of the others – notably Claire Huangci – though several terrific pieces of contemporary repertoire infuriatingly remain unidentified. Finally the top three winners are shown in full performances… of one short piece each. *Jessica Duchen*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★
PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★
EXTRAS ★★★★

BRIEF NOTES

Your quick listening guide to more new releases, including Koželuch's soulful piano music, and Rachmaninov Preludes from Lukas Geniušas

Beck Symphonies, Op. 2
Thirteen Strings Chamber Orchestra/Kevin Mallon *Naxos 8.573323*

An almost exact contemporary of Haydn's, the German-born Franz Ignaz Beck published four sets of symphonies, of which the attractive and imaginative second collection is skilfully performed here. (GH) ★★★★

Chopin 24 Preludes
Maxence Pilchen (piano)
Paraty PARATY 115131

A debut CD for this award-winning young French-Belgian pianist. Fleet-fingered, alert playing, with a good feel for colour, though it's perhaps more of a calling-card disc than a definitive version of the oft-recorded Preludes. (JD) ★★★

Hahn Orchestral and chamber works Ensemble Initium; Orchestre des Pays de Savoie/Nicolas Chalvin
Timpani 1C 1231

There's a good deal of pastiche in these lightweight pieces by Reynaldo Hahn for small orchestral or chamber ensemble, recorded in performances that accentuate their charm. (GH) ★★★★★

Ippolitov-Ivanov Symphony No. 1; Turkish Fragments; Turkish March
Singapore Symphony/Choo Hoey
Naxos 8.573508

A useful reminder that there is more to Ippolitov-Ivanov than his popular *Caucasian Sketches*. Glazunov fans will adore the symphony's nationalistic, St Petersburg-style colour and zeal. (JH) ★★★

Koželuch Piano Sonatas, Vol. 5: Nos 17-20 Kemp English (piano)
Grand Piano GP 646

World premiere recordings of sonatas by a composer who in his day some considered better than Mozart. The music proves vivacious and soulful, and English's playing is always engaging, often brilliant and sometimes electrifying. (JD) ★★★★★

CAPTIVATING: Anna Christensson champions Mankell

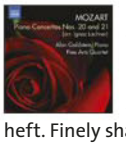
Mankell Piano Concerto Nystroem Concerto Ricercante
Anna Christensson (piano); Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz/Roberto Paternostro *Capriccio C 5240*

Anna Christensson captivates in the Grieg-influenced Mankell (her disc of his solo piano music is also worthwhile) and captures Nystroem's quick-fire stylistic chameleonisms with alacrity. (JH) ★★★★★

Mendelson Symphony No. 2; Chamber Symphony; Oboe Quintet; Violin Sonata
Polish Radio Symphony/Bruns
EDA EDA 40

Little is known of Joachim Mendelson (he perished in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943), but his well-crafted, highly inventive music displays a Mahlerian delight in inspired musical juxtapositions. (JH) ★★★★

Mozart (arr. Lachner) Piano Concertos Nos 20 & 21
Alon Goldstein (piano); Fine Arts Quartet *Naxos 8.573398*



Mozart himself allowed chamber versions of his piano concertos, and Lachner adds double bass for extra heft. Finely shaded contributions from the strings underpin Goldstein's fastidious advocacy. (PR) ★★★★

Mozart Symphonies Nos 35, 36 & 41 (arr. Hummel)
Uwe Grodd (flute), Friedemann Eichhorn (violin), Martin Rummel (cello), Roland Krüger (piano)
Naxos 8.572842

Three late symphonies are given in Hummel's piano-driven arrangements with a breezy and robust vigour that occasionally marginalises finesse. (PR) ★★★

Purcell • Godfrey Finger Devotional songs & anthems
La Rêveuse *Mirare MIR 283*

Instrumental items by his splendidly-named Moravian contemporary are woven around enrapt, often anguished sacred music by Purcell in a recording at once intimate, supple, and eminently 'felt'. (PR) ★★★★

Rachmaninov Complete Preludes
Lukas Geniušas (piano)
Piano Classics PCL 0078

Rising star Lukas Geniušas here performs live in the Moscow Conservatory. It's rich-toned playing, with deep-perspective voicing and deliciously cushioned atmosphere, always alive to the drama within these more-than Preludes. Hugely enjoyable. (JD) ★★★★

Schumann • Madsen • Mozart Works for four horns and orchestra German Hornsound; Bamberg Symphony/Michael Sanderling *Genuin GEN 15370*

Razor-sharp ensemble, rhythmic tally-ho and imitation shotguns ensure Mozart's *Hunt* Symphony goes with a bang, and Schumann's exuberant hornfest glows with burnished ardour; but the Madsen feels like ballast. (PR) ★★★★

Sibelius Piano works, Vol. 1
Joseph Tong (piano) *Quartz QTZ 2111*

The lesser-known, intimate Sibelius, as inspired by nature as his symphonies and tone poems were, proves lyrical and frequently fascinating. Try the *Five Esquisses* Op.114, one of his last works. Tong does them proud. (JD) ★★★★

Kurland Sounds Works by Vasks, Ešenvalds, Smidbergs
Liepāja Symphony Orchestra/Atvars Lakstigala *Odradek ODRCD 319*

A bracing selection of contemporary Latvian music combining Eastern colour and Western sonorities in dazzling combinations with an operatic intensity that will leave you breathless. (JH) ★★★★

Salvator Mundi: The Purcell Legacy Works by Humfrey, Blow, Purcell, Clarke, Handel, Greene, Boyce and Jackson
St Salvator's Chapel Choir; Fitzwilliam String Quartet/Tom Wilkinson
Sanctiandree SAND 001

Sung with diligent attention to both notes and words, this finely chosen selection of English church music covers the richly rewarding period from the Restoration through to the late 18th century. (GH) ★★★★

Sweet Rapture and Heartache Opera Arias by Bellini, Donizetti, Gounod, Mozart, Offenbach etc
Marjukka Tepponen (soprano); Kuopio Symphony Orchestra/Alberto Hold-Garrido *Alba ABCD 377 (hybrid CD/SACD)*

This portrait disc by the Finnish light-to-lyric soprano offers a mainly operatic selection of music ranging from Mozart through to songs by Richard Strauss, her tone not always perfectly stable but her delivery appealing. (GH) ★★★

Reviewers: Jessica Duchen (JD), George Hall (GH), Julian Haylock (JH), Paul Riley (PR)

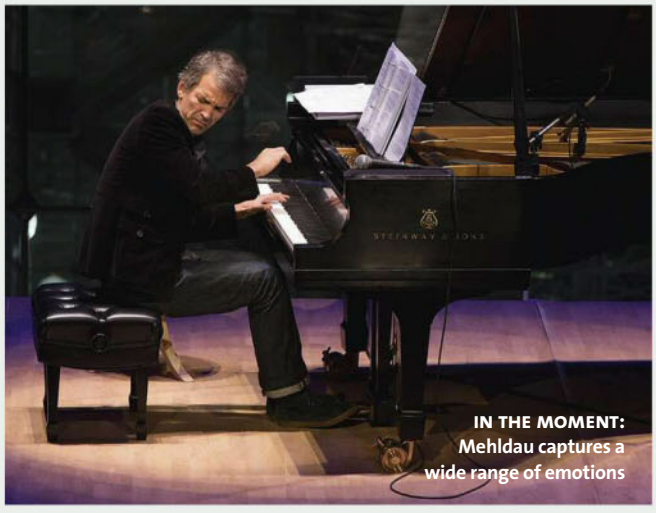
JAZZ

Matthew Halsall blends jazz and poetry; an improvisatory showcase from drummer *Barry Altschul*; plus an all-star tribute to bassist *Eberhard Weber*

BBC MUSIC JAZZ CHOICE

Solo flight

Garry Booth enjoys a selection of the best live solo recordings by pianist Brad Mehldau



IN THE MOMENT: Mehldau captures a wide range of emotions

ELIZABETH LEITZELL, GETTY

BRAD MEHLDAU

10 Years Solo Live
Brad Mehldau (piano)
Nonesuch 0075597950755 306 mins (4 discs)

Twenty years on from the release of *Introducing Brad Mehldau*, the pianist's first as leader, comes an account of a decade's worth of extraordinary solo live performance. Eight LPs (or four CDs) capture Mehldau playing concert halls across Europe, the selections made by the man himself. Divided into themes – Dark/Light, The Concert, Intermezzo/Rückblick, and E Minor/E Major – the pieces are sequenced as they might arrive in a single concert. But it's a condensation of 19 shows that produces a powerful picture of a renaissance artist at the height of his powers, with influences from Brahms to Nirvana feeding into frequently torrential improvisation. Where Keith Jarrett, another divine player steeped in jazz and classical music, achieves and transmits a creative ecstasy in his blank sheet solo playing, Mehldau is focused on exploring, even celebrating, the human condition in its most troubled forms, including regret, loss and loneliness – and it has a strangely purging effect.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Hear an excerpt of this recording at ***www.classical-music.com***

MATTHEW HALSALL & THE GONDWANA ORCHESTRA

Into Forever
Matthew Halsall (trumpet), Lisa Mallett (flute), Rachael Gladwin (harp) etc
Gondwana Records GONDCD013 40 mins

The Manchester-based composer and trumpeter Matthew Halsall has been at the forefront of the city's jazz scene, running his own label, Gondwana Records, and propelling local artists into the national limelight. *Into Forever* comes from a creative pairing with poet/singer Josephine Oniyama, which had its origins in a 2013 commission for Radio 3's *The Verb*. With a crystal-clear delivery she explores themes such as motherhood and her soulful style blends seamlessly with Halsall's regular band, the Gondwana Orchestra. Aside from its vocal strengths, the disc is packed with intriguing instrumentals. Lisa Mallett's flute lends an otherwordly edge to 'The Land Of' and Rachael Gladwin's harp, a more unusual jazz instrument, brings a shimmering quality, offset by a resonant bass. This formula has worked for Halsall before and his own soaring, breezy trumpet solo on 'Daan Park', re-affirms his wide appeal. *Neil McKim*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BARRY ALTSCHUL'S 3DOM FACTOR

Tales Of The Unforeseen
Barry Altschul (drums), Jon Irabagon (saxophone), Joe Fonda (double bass)
Tum TUM CD 044 58 mins

This trio's first album was one of my favourite releases of 2012. *Tales* will, without doubt, be one of the most memorable of 2015 for me. That first album re-examined compositions that Altschul had written since the 1960s, whereas this focuses on spontaneous improvisation, the inclusion of Thelonious Monk's 'Ask Me Now' and Annette Peacock's 'Miracles' notwithstanding.

The first track, occupying almost half the CD's duration, is a continuous collective improvisation, but with players as talented and intelligent as these, there is a strong impression of structure. Irabagon produces skeins of ever-fresh ideas, rarely obviously lyrical but always profoundly melodic. Altschul, too, is on great form. One of the most musical and fluid of drummers, he produces (sorry to torture the metaphor) streams, cascades, fountains and even reflective pools of supple rhythm. Fonda helps tie everything together with his strong patterns and full tone. *Barry Witherden*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

HOMMAGE À EBERHARD WEBER

Pat Metheny (guitar), Jan Garbarek, Paul McCandless (saxophones), Gary Burton (vibraphone) etc, SWR Big Band/Michael Gibbs & Helge Sunde
ECM 473 2342 70 mins

One might well approach this album with trepidation: a (mainly) big band programme, recorded live, with a bass player represented by a set of filmed and recorded extracts from previous pieces. These are knitted into new arrangements, an improvisation and one large-scale new work, all created by six different people. What could possibly go wrong?

The answer, of course, is everything. In reality, despite the unorthodox production process created to allow the now *hors-de-combat* Weber's participation, the resulting music is some of the best I've heard on CD this year. Powerful, mellifluous and sophisticated, this set is a fine tribute to its subject. Central to the project is Pat Metheny's suite, which roams assuredly across jazz into other areas including what may be the first ever example of big-band folk music. The mix is a bit odd in places and a DVD would have been nice, but who's complaining? *Roger Thomas*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★

BBC RADIO 3

JAZZ STARTER COLLECTION

CREATIVE FLAIR: Erroll Garner, on joyous form in 1952

No. 186 Erroll Garner II

Geoffrey Smith, presenter of *Geoffrey Smith's Jazz*, on a best-selling jazz pianist who deserves rediscovery

For jazz fans of a certain age, it's astonishing and somewhat upsetting to realise that Erroll Garner has largely slipped from view. In the 1950s and '60s, indeed right up to his death in 1977, the diminutive pianist had a huge following, not just in jazz but the world of popular entertainment, a status he earned by a unique blend of musical quality and joyous communication. Even people otherwise indifferent to jazz adored his exuberant invention, irresistible swing and the sense that playing was a delight he and his audience equally shared.

That spontaneous flow of natural happiness came through both live and on record, and made his *Concert by the Sea* both the best-selling jazz piano album ever and the first Garner *Jazz Starter* (No. 94, Oct 2008). Recorded 60 years ago this September, it's been re-released in a gala three-CD set from Sony with new tracks, which may help restore the pianist's reputation. But for me, the wonder that was Garner deserves greater attention, and an excellent place to start is Fremeaux's *Quintessence* compilation of his work from 1948-62.

Its vintage treats range from cooking versions of standards with his trio, such as 'Caravan', the romantic debut recording of his evergreen original 'Misty', his wry self-portrait 'Afternoon of an Elf', and such extended solo escapades as 'You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To', with its typically gleeful, free-form introduction, pulsating theme and rhapsodic climax. And there are three tracks from *Concert by the Sea* as well.

It all conjures the special Garner experience – the impish figure who turned concert halls into jazz clubs, bouncing on stage with the telephone directory that gave him added inches at the piano bench, and launching into a torrent of ingenious melody and swing, never saying a word, except the grunting counterpoint that accompanied his creative flights.

Joy was what he did. He still makes you feel that jazz is one of the best things that ever happened to music, and Erroll Garner one of the best things that ever happened to jazz.

CD CHOICE

Erroll Garner
The Quintessence Vol. 2
Fremeaux & Associes FA 3063

BOOKS

A history of the crucible that produced Birtwistle and Maxwell Davies; plus ***Christian Thielemann*** on his lifelong love affair with Wagner

BBC MUSIC BOOKS CHOICE

Eavesdropping on Handel

Nicholas Anderson relishes the chance to read candid documents

RIVAL QUEENS: Francesca Cuzzoni (left) and Faustina Bordoni feature in this enlivening and entertaining collection

GETTY

HANDEL: *Collected Documents, Vol. 2 1725-1734*

Ed. Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe & Anthony Hicks
Cambridge University Press
ISBN 978-1-107-01954-6 857pp (hb)

As with Volume 1, these documents, presented chronologically and, where necessary, translated into English, make for gripping reading. Volume 2 covers the decade between 1725, which saw the premieres of the operas *Alessandro* and *Scipione*, and 1734 which witnessed revivals of earlier stage works. Not all entries are of comparable interest, but for the most part they provide, as well as a wealth of information about Handel's music, a fascinating conspectus of cultivated society, mainly in London but also in the regions. These freshly

Some newly discovered documents shed light on Handel and his work

examined and in some instances newly discovered documents shed light, often entertainingly, not only on Handel but also on his colleagues, collaborators and contemporaries. The librettist Paolo Rolli, writing to the Duke of Modena's representative in Britain, remarks that in the first performances of *Lotario* (1729) 'there is a Roman girl called Bertolli who plays male roles … when you see her perspiring under her helmet, I am sure you will desire her in your most Modenese way, oh how lovely she is!'

There are colourful accounts, too, of the Rival Queen sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni, and some interesting observations by Handel's German friend and contemporary Johann Mattheson, one of them a direct appeal to Bach, Handel, Telemann and others to settle the matter concerning the relative merits of church music in a theatrical versified manner as against older forms. This entry, unaccountably, is missing from an otherwise painstakingly prepared index. Still, this is in all a splendid achievement to be cherished by all lovers and practitioners of Baroque music. ★★★★★

BRITISH MUSICAL MODERNISM: *The Manchester Group and their Contemporaries*

Philip Rupprecht
Cambridge University Press
ISBN 978-0-521-84448-2 492pp (hb)

This substantial, formidably well-documented (and, alas, formidably expensive) tome is the first comprehensive attempt to survey the ethos and early achievements of an entire generation of composers who were felt at the time of their emergence around 1960 to represent a newly advanced spirit in British music.

They were not quite the first British modernists: Elisabeth Lutyens had already been inspired by Webern, and Humphrey Searle had actually studied with him. But the 'Manchester Group' composers – Alexander Goehr (b1932), Harrison Birtwistle and Peter Maxwell Davies (b1934) – together with their contemporaries Thea Musgrave (b1928), Nicholas Maw (b1935), Richard Rodney Bennett (b1936) and Gordon Crosse (b1937) were the first British generation to take the latest international developments as a starting point. All, for a time, submitted to the rigours of post-war serialism and were duly hailed as the first true British avant-garde.

In the event, none of them cleaved to the post-Webern diktats of Darmstadt for long. Goehr's Schoenbergian respect for the Classical past reasserted itself, Maxwell Davies, Birtwistle and Crosse were soon exploring English medieval techniques in a Stravinskian spirit, Maw revolted into a post-Straussian luxuriance, and so on. Philip Rupprecht offers a mass of historical and biographical detail, dissects the ideological and aesthetic issues of the time with care and intersperses technical analyses of some 40 key works up to the early 1970s, by which time the composers had gone their separate ways.

It is a pity he has little to say about opera, and his long final chapter on the involvements of David Bedford (b1937) and Tim Souster (b1943) in Pop seems a bit anomalous. Nevertheless, this is a book from which students of the period will take their bearings for some time to come. *Bayan Northcott* ★★★★

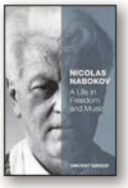
CHRISTIAN THIELEMANN: *My Life with Wagner*

Christian Thielemann
Orion Books
ISBN: 978-0-297-60855-4 267pp (hb)

This is the result of conversations between Christian Thielemann, one of today's most eminent Wagner conductors, and a friend. Though it takes the form of a continuous discursive book, it is presumably ghosted, at least in part. That may account for the impossibility of deciding what its target audience is. We start with a narrative about Thielemann's childhood, his Wagnerian parents and his intensely musical upbringing, and how by the time he was 21 he was repetiteur for Karajan's *Parsifal* recording. He received a thorough training in all aspects of operatic life, and conceived a passion for the great traditional German conductors of Wagner, especially Wilhelm Furtwängler, whose 1953 Rome recording of the *Ring* he considers the greatest, and Hans Knappertsbusch, in his live recordings from Bayreuth.

The first half of the book ranges widely, with some elementary information about Wagner and his works, about singers and conductors, about stagecraft and the peculiar difficulties of conducting at Bayreuth, where thanks to the hidden orchestral pit the players can't hear the singers, and vice-versa. Some of this is fascinating for a geek like me, some of it is purely introductory – and there is an irritating amount of misinformation, wrong statistics, wrong years of production, and so on, as well as careless proof-reading.

The second half takes us through all Wagner's stage works, sketching in the background to each, giving a plot summary so brief that I can't imagine it helping anyone, very detailed accounts of the orchestration of each opera, selective recommendations of the desirable recordings of the operas and some general reflections about what it might mean, with Thielemann usually concluding that it's best not to press that question too hard. Thielemann manages to convey his own almost boundless enthusiasm for the oeuvre, but little else. *Michael Tanner* ★★



NICOLAS NABOKOV: *A Life in Freedom and Music*

Vincent Giroud
Oxford University Press
ISBN 978-0-19-939989-5 562pp (hb)

Nicolas Nabokov, first cousin of the novelist, considered himself primarily a composer. Today he is remembered more as author of vivid, often waspish anecdotes about several of his colleagues including Prokofiev, and for publicly humiliating Shostakovich during the Soviet composer's sole visit to America in 1949. Yet Stravinsky and Prokofiev both highly rated his music (as did Isaiah Berlin, who regarded Nabokov as his closest friend) – which, to judge from the little that has been recorded, including what Nabokov himself called 'the first American ballet', *Union Pacific*, fully deserves revival.

Born in 1903 into an aristocratic Russian family, the teenage Nabokov showed his intellectual mettle and independence, after the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty had ended Russia's participation in World War I, by befriending a literature-loving German officer. So started his liberal and moral education. Nabokov's mastery of languages and knack of charming artists and intellectuals ultimately gained him access to elite circles in Paris and New York. Elliott Carter, George Balanchine and WH Auden were just three whom he worked closely with and impressed.

Nabokov's fifth wife (he was impulsive when it came to affairs of the heart) gave biographer Vincent Giroud unprecedented access to personal papers and correspondence. Thus equipped, Giroud patiently untangles several facts as presented in Nabokov's readable though unreliable memoirs; he also unpicks many of the hostile insinuations levelled against Nabokov's role as secretary general of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a Cold War-era organisation funded by the CIA.

Giroud's wealth of information, though, sometimes rather clogs the narrative; for instance, Giroud lists every work programmed in concerts involving a Nabokov premiere – detail which would have been best relegated to footnotes. And given the huge number of people Nabokov associated and worked with, an appendix of thumbnail biographies would have been helpful. *Daniel Jaffé* ★★★

AUDIO

Our audio expert ***Michael Brook*** takes a look at the best new audio and video equipment to help you get the most out of recorded classical music

BBC MUSIC CHOICE

CUT ABOVE THE REST:
the T8iE earphones compete with high-end headphones

STUDIO-QUALITY EARPHONES

Astell&Kern AK T8iE £799

Astell&Kern appeared from nowhere a few years back, heralding the arrival of high-definition audio and offering a range of fantastically expensive – and genuinely incredible – portable music players. For the first time since the iPhone stole a march on its one-trick iPod cousin, it was worth owning a dedicated portable music player. With hi-resolution music trickling out from specialised retailers, here was a player that could do it justice. I, for one, rejoiced. Sadly the rejoicing was short-lived as I am not and will likely never be in possession of the necessary £2,500 required to buy one. But I did get to spend a lot of time getting accustomed to high-resolution music, which was good. And also I realised that there aren't many headphones or earphones out there that are actually up to the job of listening to high-resolution music files.

So, alongside the eye-watering price tag for a high-resolution music player, you need to put aside a hefty budget for a set of studio-quality headphones. All in all, an expensive hobby.

Unaware of the asking price of Astell's latest set of earphones, the T8iEs (left), I fell in love with the sweet high frequencies and deep, deep lows. They are superb earphones – some of the best around, in fact – but it is certainly difficult to justify £800 for a set of earphones, especially a set that offers no in-line remote for smartphone use.

And yet despite that, I can't help but recommend the T8iEs. They are horribly expensive, but they are also a cut above the norm sonically and are one of the few earphones (as distinct to headphones) out there that make even the most high-res of high-resolution files sing. **astellnkern.com** ★★★★★

SOFT FOCUS:
Bang & Olufsen score highly for style and sound

ONE-STOP MUSIC SYSTEM

B&O BeoPlay A6 £799

Designed by the renowned Danish draftsman Jakob Wagner, the Bang & Olufsen BeoPlay A6 (above) was conceived as a one-stop music system for your living room, or wherever else you care to place it.

The BeoPlay A6 looks amazing, too. A partnership with stylish upholsterer Kvadrat means that fine wool-blend fabrics are used for the front of the music system and you have a choice of four different colours (light grey, dusty blue, dark rose and dark grey).

So, the B&O BeoPlay A6 will look at home in any room, no matter how elegant the room happens to be, but does it place form above function? Not at all. The BeoPlay A6's generous dimensions (it measures 536mm x 298mm) mean that there's plenty of space for bringing out the best performance from the five individual speakers. There's a breadth and depth to the sound that's unusual for a music system like this, and while that's undoubtedly due in part to the sheer size of the BeoPlay A6, it's by no means the full story. **beoplay.com** ★★★★★

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER

Pure Voca £90

Pure's Voca Bluetooth speaker is the latest in an increasingly long line of non-DAB radio products from Pure.

It's a well thought out, well put together speaker that's easy on the eye. It eschews virtual, less tactile controls for proper buttons that are straightforward to use. There are three general operational buttons (power, hands-free and Bluetooth) and three volume controls (for up, down and mute).

The bass is plentiful, albeit sometimes overwhelming depending on the style of music you're listening to. Bass-heavy genres are probably not best articulated by the Voca, but most styles do benefit from a clear, bright sound and an uplift of low frequencies. For the best audio performance it is essential to get the Voca positioned at a decent height (Don't just plonk it on the floor and expect it to perform).

Overall, the Voca is an accomplished portable wireless speaker. Although it's not as refined as some others, it is competitively priced. **pure.com** ★★★★

ALL-IN-ONE MUSIC SYSTEM

Ruark Audio R4 Mk3 £650

Ruark's R4 all-in-one music systems have been a benchmark for around seven years. This updated R4 Mk3 model (below) adds Bluetooth to its already considerable arsenal of features as well as an improved, multi-format CD player.

As we've come to expect, the Ruark Audio R4 has plenty of power. It's not a particularly compact unit (140mm x 440mm) but the sheer power it produces still belies its size. The treble, mid and bass frequencies are sumptuously separated, delivering an overall sound that you might expect from a 'proper' separates system, but certainly not from an all-in-one system like this.

Factor in the luxurious finish – the R4 is available in soft black, soft white and walnut – and the sleeker looks, due in part to the lack of an iPod dock, and you have a device that has style and substance in spades.

So, the award-winning R4 is back with some appealing new features and, if you've got one already, Bluetooth is a tempting addition. If you haven't, you now have absolutely no excuse. **ruarkaudio.com** ★★★★★

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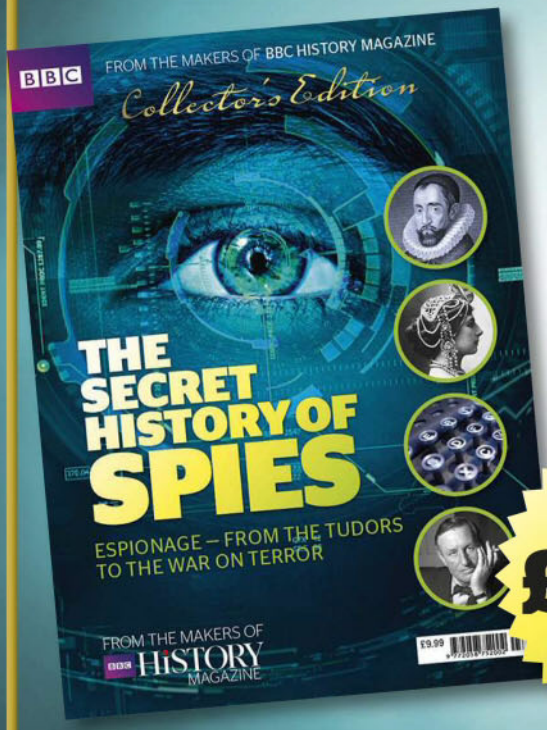

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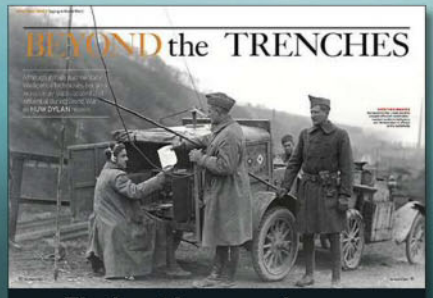

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RADIO & TV LISTINGS

Each issue we provide full listings for BBC Radio 3 introduced by the station's controller Alan Davey, plus highlights of classical music programmes on television

VIVA VERDI!:
Rigoletto **gets a Las Vegas makeover**

DIRECTOR'S CHOICE

Alan Davey, the controller of Radio 3, picks out three great moments to tune into in December

NORTHERN LIGHTS

For three weeks Radio 3 is exploring music from the world's most northerly places and the dramatic landscapes that have inspired it (see p48). As his 150th year draws to a close, Sibelius, the great Finnish composer, comes under the spotlight in *Composer of the Week* while this summer's *Kullervo* Prom (with Sakari Oramo conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra), gets another outing. Sibelius is also the subject of a new *Drama on 3* about his life entitled *Finlandia* (6 Dec). Meanwhile, in *In Tune*, composer Emily Hall is presenting three pieces in which she uses the everyday sounds of the Shetland island of Unst (19 Dec). As well as live performances on *Afternoon on 3*, a live highlight will be *In Concert* (9 Dec) with the London Philharmonic, including a world premiere of Finnish composer Magnus Lindberg's Violin Concerto No. 2 (9 Dec) with soloist Frank Peter Zimmermann.
Northern Lights; 5-26 December

CAROL COMPETITION

Radio 3's carol competition reaches its final stages, with entrants having set the words of a poem – Roger McGough's 'Comes the Light' – to music. This month, a shortlist of six finalists will be selected by an expert panel, including composer Judith Weir and David Hill, chief conductor of the BBC Singers, before being thrown open for listener votes. The six will have their carols performed by the BBC Singers on *Breakfast* (15 Dec) and, after votes are in, the winning piece will be broadcast a week later (23 Dec) and on Christmas Day.
Breakfast; 15 & 23 December, 6.30-9am

VERDI'S RIGOLETTO

With its intriguing central plot, revolving around a jester (and his daughter) who become the victims of his humour when it offends his superiors, Verdi's dark 1851 opera is heading up Radio 3's coverage from New York's Met. Transported to Las Vegas (above) in the 1960s, the production features baritone Simon Keenlyside as the comedian who falls foul of his boss, the Duke. Verdi's reprise of the Duke's aria 'La donna è mobile' is a masterstroke at the opera's chilling climax.
Opera on 3; 12 December, 6pm

DECEMBER'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

BBC RADIO 3 90 – 93 FM

Schedules may be subject to alteration; for up-to-date listings see *Radio Times*

1 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Royal Festival Hall, London. Beethoven *Overture – Namensfeier*, Bartók *Piano Concerto No. 2*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 2*. Lang Lang (piano), Philharmonia/Esa-Pekka Salonen
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

2 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong from Peterborough Cathedral
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Symphony Hall, Birmingham. Rimsky-Korsakov *Capriccio espagnol*, Scriabin *Piano Concerto*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 3 'Eroica'*. Yevgeny Sudbin (piano), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Michael Seal
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

3 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Glasgow City Halls. BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra 80th birthday concert. Matthias Pintscher *Idyll*, Mozart *Oboe Concerto*, Mahler *Das Lied von der Erde*. François Leleux (oboe), Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), Andrew Staples (tenor), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Matthias Pintscher
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

4 FRIDAY

6.30-1pm
As Tuesday 1 December
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Anton Rubinstein (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Dvořák *Overture – 'Carnival'*, Britten *Violin Concerto*, Adès *America – A Prophecy*, Brahms *Symphony No. 3 in F, Op. 90*. James Ehnes (violin), Susan Bickley (mezzo), BBC Philharmonic/Juanjo Mena
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay

5 SATURDAY

MUSIC CHOICE
NORTHERN LIGHTS
A three-week season exploring music and drama from the world's most northerly places
7-9am Breakfast with Martin Handley, including a short piece with a Northern Lights theme, for the duration of the season
9am-12.15pm CD Review – Building a Library Schubert *Mass No. 6 in E flat, D950*, reviewed by Jeremy Summerly
12.15-1pm Music Matters
1-3pm Saturday Classics
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6.30pm Jazz Line-Up
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from the Royal Opera House, London. Haas *Morgen und Abend*. Klaus Maria Brandauer (Olai), Christoph Pohl (Johannes), Sarah Wegener (Signe/Midwife) etc. Orchestra of the Royal Opera House/Michael Boder
10pm-12 midnight Hear and Now – from Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. George Lewis *Afterword*
12 midnight-1am Geoffrey Smith's Jazz

6 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast with Martin Handley
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions. Northern Lights. Sara Wheeler, polar travel writer
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt from Wigmore Hall, 30 November). Janáček *String Quartet No. 1 'Kreutzer Sonata'*, Brahms *String Quartet in C minor Op. 51, No. 1*. Artemis Quartet
2-3pm The Early Music Show Fiona Talkington visits Sweden to look at music in the Düben Collection at Uppsala University. Originally collected by composer Gustaf Düben, it includes many of the only surviving copies of Buxtehude manuscripts.
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5.30pm The Choir
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature Northern Lights. 60 Degrees North – a poetic circumnavigation
7.30-9pm Radio 3 In Concert. Northern Lights. Proms 2015 (rpt) Sibelius *En saga*, *Kullervo*. Johanna Rusanen-Kartano (soprano), Waltteri Torikka (baritone), Polytech Choir, BBC Symphony Chorus (men's voices), BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sakari Oramo
MUSIC CHOICE
9-10.30pm Drama on 3 Northern Lights. *Finlandia* by Stephen Wyatt. A play about Sibelius, starring Tim Piggott-Smith as the composer with Barbara Flynn as his wife, Aino
10.30pm-11.30pm Early Music Late

7 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Sibelius
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert from Wigmore Hall, London. Debussy *Cello Sonata*, Birtwistle *Variations for cello and piano*, Chopin *Cello Sonata in G minor, Op. 65*. Adrian Brendel (cello), Aleksandar Madžar (piano)
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3 Northern Lights. A live performance by the Ulster Orchestra, including works by Gade, Stenhammar, Nielsen and Sibelius
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Northern Lights. Tales from the North – a ten-part series of readings from classic Nordic folk tales and myths, including the Finnish *Kalevala* and the Icelandic *Eddas*
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Sibelius (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Mendelssohn *Overture – The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave)*, Schumann *Piano Concerto*, Brahms *Symphony No. 2*. Lars Vogt (piano), Hallé Orchestra/Louis Langrée
10-10.45pm Music Matters
10.45-11pm The Essay Northern Lights. Cornerstones – this week writers explore the rock formations of the northern latitudes
11pm-12.30am Jazz on 3

8 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Sibelius
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. From St Magnus International Festival, Orkney
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3 Northern Lights. Including a live performance by the BBC Symphony Orchestra of works by Wennäkoski, Wirén and Hallgrímsson
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Tales from the North
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Sibelius (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from St David's Hall, Cardiff. Handel *Messiah, HWV 56*. Mary Bevan (soprano), Iestyn Davies (countertenor), Robert Murray (tenor), Brindley Sherratt (bass). BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Laurence Equilbey
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

9 WEDNESDAY

6.30-1pm
As Monday 7 December
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. From St Magnus International Festival, Orkney
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3 Northern Lights. Including a live performance by the BBC Philharmonic, with works by Sibelius, Saariaho and Rautavaara
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong from Gloucester Cathedral
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Tales from the North
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Sibelius (rpt)
MUSIC CHOICE
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from the Royal Festival Hall, London. Northern Lights. Johan Wagenaar *Overture – Cyrano de Bergerac*, Magnus Lindberg *Violin Concerto No. 2* (world premiere), Beethoven *Symphony No. 7*. Frank Peter Zimmermann (violin), London Philharmonic/Jaap van Zweden
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

10 THURSDAY

6.30-1pm
As Monday 7 December
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. From St Magnus International Festival, Orkney
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Sibelius (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from Christ Church, Spitalfields. Spitalfields Winter Music Festival. Charpentier *Cantata Nativitatem Domine Nostri H414*, Stradella *Ah! Troppo e ver*. The English Concert/Harry Bicket (director, organ)
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

11 FRIDAY

6.30-1pm
As Monday 7 December
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. From St Magnus International Festival, Orkney
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Sibelius (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from The Barbican, London. Hovhaness *Symphony No. 2 'Mysterious Mountain'*, Andrew Norman *Switch* (BBC co-commission, UK premiere), Richard Strauss *An Alpine Symphony*. Colin Currie (percussion), BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sakari Oramo
10-10.45pm The Verb

STEFAN DEUBER

BRIGHT IDEA: Matthias Pintscher conducts his light-inspired *Idyll* (3 December)

10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-1am World on 3 Northern Lights. The first performance of Canadian Inuit singer Tanya Tagaq's soundtrack to the 1922 silent movie *Nanook of the North*

12 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast with Martin Handley
9am-12.15pm CD Review – Building A Library Sibelius *Symphony No. 1*, reviewed by Gillian Moore
12.15-1pm Music Matters
1-3pm Saturday Classics
3-4pm Sound of Cinema Northern Lights. A focus on Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm Jazz Line-Up
MUSIC CHOICE
6-10pm Opera on 3 live from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Verdi *Rigoletto*. Željko Lučić (Rigoletto), Nadine Sierra (Gilda), Piotr Beczała (Duke of Mantua), Nancy Fabiola Herrera (Maddalena) etc. Metropolitan Orchestra & Chorus/ Roberto Abbado
10pm-12 midnight Hear and Now – British Composer Awards
12 midnight-1am Geoffrey Smith's Jazz

13 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast Northern Lights. Live from Sweden, to celebrate St Lucy's Day
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions Akram Khan, dancer
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt, from Wigmore Hall, 7 December)
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5.30pm The Choir
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature Northern Lights. The idea of North – a look at whether there is a shared culture across the North of Europe
7.30-9pm Radio 3 In Concert from European Broadcasting Union
9-10.30pm Drama on 3 Nordic Lights – three 30-minute plays from Jonas Gardell (Sweden), Anna Bro (Denmark) and Jon Atli Jonasson (Iceland)
10.30pm-11.30pm Early Music Late

14 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert from Wigmore Hall, London. Biber *Mystery Sonatas Nos 1-11*, *Passacaglia in G minor*. Rachel Podger (violin), Marcin Swiątkiewicz (harpsichord, organ), David Miller (flute)
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Tales from the North
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert from Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh. Three Pärts Bach. Pärt *Fratres*, JS Bach *Violin Concerto in A minor, BWV 1041*, *Chorale: Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein (from Art of Fugue, BWV 1080)*, Gubaidulina *Meditation über der Bach Chorale: Vor deinen Thron tret ich hier mit*, JS Bach *Concerto for Two Violins in D minor, BWV 1043*, Pärt *Collage über Bach – Toccata*, JS Bach *Contrapunctus XIX (from Art of Fugue, BWV 1080)*, Pärt *Summa*, JS Bach *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*. Scottish Chamber Ensemble/Matthew Truscott (director/violin, below)
10-10.45pm Music Matters (rpt)
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Jazz on 3

15 TUESDAY

MUSIC CHOICE
6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill, including the shortlist of six entries for the Radio 3 Christmas Carol Competition 2015
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert National Orchestra of Wales (tbc)
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Late Junction

16 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong from Chester Cathedral
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Tales from the North
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert Northern Lights. A live performance by the BBC Philharmonic, with works by Maxwell Davies, Gade, Nørgård, Nielsen and Sibelius
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Late Junction

17 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.45pm In Tune
6.45-7.45pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
7.45-10pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Queen's Hall, Edinburgh. CPE Bach *Symphony in E Flat, Wq183/2*, Mozart *Violin Concerto No. 1 in B flat, K207*, *Rondo Concertante in B flat, K269*, Beethoven *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor*. Llŷr Williams (piano), Scottish Chamber Orchestra/ Alexander Janiczek
10-10.45pm Free Thinking
10.45-11pm The Essay

18 FRIDAY

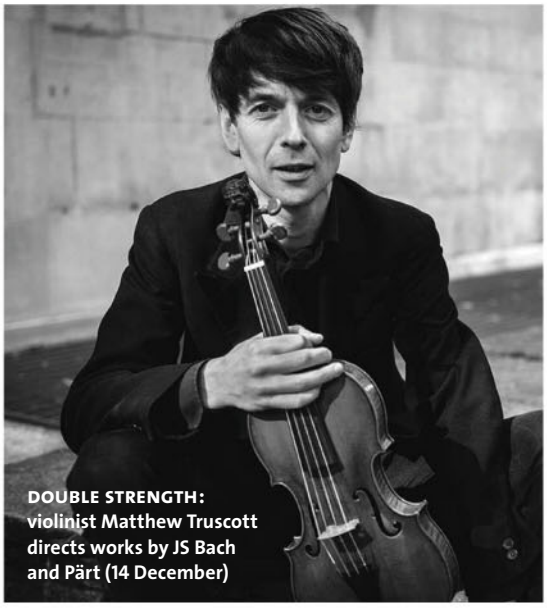
6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. Live from Temple Church, London – organ masterpieces from Nordic Europe
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune Christmas Special – a special live performance from the Radio Theatre at Broadcasting House, hosted by Sean Rafferty, with performances by violinist Nigel Kennedy and double bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Iceland (rpt)
7.30-10pm Radio 3 In Concert Temple Winter Festival. Live from Temple Church, London. Greg Morris (organ), (works tbc)
10-10.45pm The Verb
10.45-11pm The Essay
11pm-12.30am Late Junction

19 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast with Martin Handley
9am-12.15pm CD Review – Building a Library Nielsen *Symphony No. 6*, reviewed by Stephen Johnson
12.15-1pm Music Matters
1-3pm Saturday Classics
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm Jazz Line-Up
6-10pm Opera on 3 live from the Metropolitan Opera, New York. Rossini *La donna del lago*. Joyce DiDonato (Elena), Daniela Barcellona (Malcolm Groeme), Lawrence Brownlee (Giacomo V), John Osborn (Rodrigo di Dhu) etc, Met Opera Orchestra & Chorus/Michele Mariotti
MUSIC CHOICE
10pm-12 midnight Hear and Now Northern Lights. Featuring a commission by composer Emily Hall, inspired by a visit to the Shetland Island of Unst
12 midnight-1am Geoffrey Smith's Jazz

20 SUNDAY

European Broadcasting Union
CHRISTMAS MUSIC DAY
7-9am Breakfast with Martin Handley
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning



DOUBLE STRENGTH: violinist Matthew Truscott directs works by JS Bach and Pärt (14 December)

BBC RADIO 3 PRIVATE PASSIONS

Each week *Michael Berkeley* talks to a guest about their favourite music, one of whose choices are below

JANCIS ROBINSON
Wine writer & broadcaster

MOZART *'Finch'han dal vino' from Don Giovanni*
Thomas Allen (bass), London Philharmonic Orchestra/Bernard Haitink
'A lot of English opera lovers have a very soft spot for Glyndebourne. There was a wonderful London wine merchant, Otto Loeb, who played a very important part in furnishing the Glyndebourne cellar. In this song Don Giovanni clinches one of wine's greatest attributes, in that it makes you feel pretty nice and relaxed.'

MOZART *Horn Concerto No. 1 in D, K412 (1st mov: Allegro)*
Dennis Brain (French horn), Philharmonia/Karajan
'My love of this dates back to childhood. We had a few records and this was one that I very much grew up with. Dennis Brain was an absolute genius. Here is complete virtuosity without any exhibitionism. He demonstrates amazing competence and flair.'

HANDEL *'Con rauco mormorio' from Rodelinda*
Andreas Scholl (countertenor), Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Roger Norrington
'I hadn't come across this until, in 1980, I met my husband at a wine tasting. We agreed to meet at a hotel in San Jose... but we were checked in to different rooms. A rather good classical music station was playing *Rodelinda* in my room when we realised what had happened. A lot of this opera is about spouses looking for each other, believing the other one's lost.'

Cherry Tree Carol (arr. David Willcocks)
King's College Cambridge Choir/Philip Ledger
'I love carols and particularly some of the more obscure ones. Good old King's College, Cambridge: they remind us every year of their speciality, and it means Christmas is coming! You just have to hear this carol and you feel transported to the middle of winter and the good things about that time.'

Private Passions is on Radio 3 every Sunday at 12 noon and is also available to download as a podcast.

BBC MUSIC TV HIGHLIGHTS

CHORAL GLORY: the King's College Choir on Christmas Eve

CAROLS FROM KING'S

For millions of TV viewers Christmas begins with the annual BBC broadcast of The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from the 500-year-old King's College Chapel. In time-honoured tradition, the candlelit service starts with a solo chorister singing *Once In Royal David's City* and includes a new composer commission – Thea Musgrave and Peter Maxwell Davies are among past contributors.

In many people's minds will be the recent death, of David Willcocks (see p19 & p21), who held a long-standing connection with King's College and, as director of music (1957-74), helped the choir secure its world-class status. (We take an in-depth look at his legacy in the next issue of *BBC Music*.)

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols will also be broadcast on Radio 4 (at 3pm) on Christmas Eve and on Radio 3 (at 2pm) on Christmas Day.

BBC Two; Carol's from King's; Thursday 24 December; time tbc

MASSENET'S CENDRILLON

Christmas is a time for fairy tales and Massenet's opera, based on the Cinderella story, gets a picture-book revamp in Laurent Pelly's production at the Royal Opera House. Mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Alice Coote play the lead and trouser-role Prince.

Sky Arts 2; time and date tbc

RICHARD CANNON

12 noon-1pm Private Passions – with Alan Bennett, writer, playwright and broadcaster
1-3pm European Broadcasting Union Christmas Music
2-3pm The Early Music Show
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-8.15pm European Broadcasting Union Christmas Music
8.15-9pm Sunday Feature Northern Lights. Free: Thaw – cultural geographer Hayden Lorimer explores ice as a metaphor, with the help of poets, glaciologists and music played on ice instruments
9-11pm Drama on 3 *Brand* by Henrik Ibsen
11pm-12 midnight Early Music Late

21 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Northern Lights: Berwald
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert from Wigmore Hall, London.
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Berwald (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay Northern Lights. From paganism to Christianity, this week's programmes take a look at religions in the north
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

22 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Northern Lights: Berwald
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. (1/4) Nielsen string quartets cycle. Danish String Quartet and New Generation Artists
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Berwald (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

23 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Northern Lights: Berwald
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. (2/4) Nielsen string quartets cycle. Danish String Quartet and New Generation Artists
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Berwald (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

24 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Northern Lights: Berwald
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. (3/4) Nielsen string quartets cycle. Danish String Quartet and New Generation Artists
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Berwald (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

25 FRIDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Petroc Trelawny
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Northern Lights: Berwald
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert Northern Lights. (4/4) Nielsen string quartets cycle. Danish String Quartet and New Generation Artists
2-3.40pm A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge
3.40-4.40pm Afternoon on Three
4.30-6pm In Tune
6-7pm Composer of the Week Berwald (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

WEEKLY TV AND RADIO HIGHLIGHTS

On our website each week we pick the best of the classical music programmes on radio, TV and iPlayer. So to plan your weekly listening and viewing, head to the website or sign up to our weekly newsletter to be sent information about the week's classical programmes directly to your inbox.

26 SATURDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12.15pm CD Review – Building A Library Poulenc *Organ Concerto*, reviewed by Oliver Condy
12.15-1pm Music Matters
1-3pm Saturday Classics
3-4pm Sound of Cinema
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6.30pm Jazz Line-Up
6.30-10pm Opera on 3 from English National Orchestra. Verdi *The Force of Destiny*. Gwyn Hughes Jones (Don Alvaro), Tamara Wilson (Donna Leonora di Vargas), Anthony Michaels-Moore (Don Carlo di Vargas), Rinat Shaham (Preziosilla), English National Chorus and Orchestra/Mark Wigglesworth
10pm-12 midnight Hear and Now from Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.
12 midnight-1am Geoffrey Smith's Jazz

27 SUNDAY

7-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Sunday Morning
12 noon-1pm Private Passions
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert (rpt from Wigmore Hall, 21 December)
2-3pm The Early Music Show Lucie Skeaping talks to musicologist Armand D'Angour (from Jesus College, Oxford) about his research into the music of ancient Greece
3-4pm Choral Evensong (rpt)
4-5.30pm The Choir
5.30-6.45pm Words and Music
6.45-7.30pm Sunday Feature
7.30-9pm BBC Proms 2015 (rpt)
9-10.30pm Drama on 3
10.30pm-11.30pm Early Music Late

28 MONDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

29 TUESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

30 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast with Clemency Burton-Hill
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-3.30pm Afternoon on 3
3.30-4.30pm Choral Evensong – St Gabriel's Church, Pimlico. The Rodolfus Choir
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt)

31 THURSDAY

6.30-9am Breakfast
9am-12 noon Essential Classics
12 noon-1pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard
1-2pm Lunchtime Concert
2-4.30pm Afternoon on 3
4.30-6.30pm In Tune
6.30-7.30pm Composer of the Week Jean Coulthard (rpt)
7.30-10pm Proms 2015 (rpt)
8.30-9.15pm The Essay
9.15-10.30pm Proms 2015 (rpt). Last Night of the Proms.

QUIZ ANSWERS from p108

1. *The Pirates of Penzance*
2. *Britten's Peter Grimes*
3. a) *Elgar*; b) *Peter Warlock*; c) *Peter Maxwell Davies*
4. *Inspector Morse*
5. *Baron Scarpia*
6. *Beethoven*
7. *Satie*
8. *Dame Ethel Smyth*
9. *Mascagni*
10. *Salvo Montalbano*

LIVE CHOICE

20 UNMISSABLE EVENTS FOR DECEMBER 2015

BBC Music Magazine's choice of December concerts and operas, plus a guide to a Lutosławski's *Concerto for Orchestra*

For detailed concert listings visit www.classical-music.com/whats-on

1 BRITTEN SINFONIA

West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge, 1 December
Tel: +44 (0)1223 357851
Web: www.brittensinfonia.com
Reconfiguring itself as a trio for horn, cello and piano, the Britten Sinfonia premieres *Lifesize Gods* by OPUS2015 composing competition winner Edward Nesbit. This follows Huw Watkins's 2008 Horn Trio (with the composer at the piano). There are two Brahms pieces, including his recently rediscovered piano piece, *Albumblatt*, from 1853. This has a theme that resurfaces 12 years later in Brahms's Horn Trio.

2 BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AT 80

City Halls, Glasgow, 3 December
Tel: +44 (0)141 353 8000
Web: www.glasgowconcerthalls.com
As the Royal Scottish National Orchestra celebrates its 125th anniversary, its younger sibling – the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra – is not to be left out. Almost 80 years to the day since its formation, the orchestra's artist-in-association Matthias Pintscher conducts a celebration that includes the UK premiere of his own *Idyll*, alongside Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*. The soloists are mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly and tenor Andrew Staples.

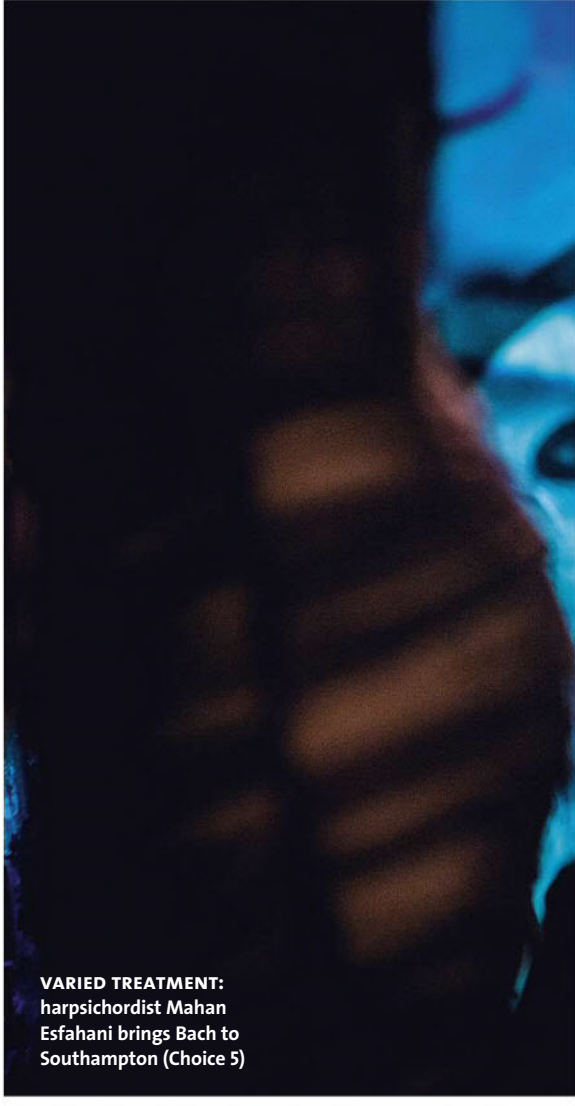
3 ORCHESTRA OF OPERA NORTH

Town Hall, Huddersfield, 3 December
Tel: +44 (0)1484 222444
Web: www.operanorth.co.uk
Opera North's music director Richard Farnes hasn't conducted any of the company's three autumn productions, but he more than compensates with a concert (repeated in Leeds on 5 December) which pairs two works that showcase his crack orchestra to perfection: Mahler's Symphony No. 1 with its eerie funeral march and Lutosławski's irrepressible *Concerto for Orchestra* (see box, p102).

4 CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA & PAGLIACCI

Royal Opera House, London, from 3 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7304 4000
Web: www.roh.org.uk
Cavalleria rusticana, Mascagni's slice of Sicilian life, has long been joined at the hip with Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (as 'Cav & Pag'), and the two are united again as director Damiano Michieletto returns to Covent Garden after this summer's controversial production of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Revisiting a role she recently performed at the New York's Metropolitan Opera, soprano Eva-Maria Westbroek sings Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana*, while tenor Aleksandrs Antonenko appears in both operas. Sir Antonio Pappano conducts.

BACK IN CHARACTER: Dutch soprano Eva-Maria Westbroek returns to the role of Santuzza in Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*



VARIED TREATMENT: harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani brings Bach to Southampton (Choice 5)

5 MAHAN ESFAHANI

Turner Sims Hall, Southampton, 3 December
Tel: +44 (0)23 8059 5151
Web: www.turnersims.co.uk
Mahan Esfahani (above) makes no secret of his love of JS Bach. Between his Prague Rudolfinum debut and three concerts in the Czech Republic as part of a 'Bach marathon', the harpsichordist flies back to the UK for a performance of the work with which, in 2011, he introduced the solo harpsichord to the BBC Proms: the *Goldberg Variations*.

6 BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP

CBSO Centre, Birmingham, 4 December
Tel: +44 (0)121 345 0600
Web: www.thsh.co.uk
Repeated the following night at Wigmore Hall, there's something of a family feel to Birmingham Contemporary Music Groups's last concerts of 2015. The world premiere of Skempton's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* renews a partnership going back to 2010;

STEFAN HODERATH, CORY WEAVER

and alongside a new setting of AE Housman, baritone Roderick Williams performs songs commissioned from Dominic Muldowney.

7 BBC PHILHARMONIC
Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, 4 December
Tel: +44 (0)161 907 9000
Web: www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk
Conducted by Juanjo Mena, the Old World meets the New as the BBC Philharmonic's Bernstein-inspired 'American Adventures' series continues. Framed by Dvořák's *Carnival* Overture and Brahms's Symphony No. 3, James Ehnes plays the Violin Concerto that Britten composed in New York on the cusp of World War II. There's also Thomas Adès's prescient *America – A Prophecy*: a New York Philharmonic millennium commission.

8 LONDON SINFONIETTA
Royal Festival Hall, London, 5 December
Tel: 0844 875 0073 (UK only)
Web: www.southbankcentre.co.uk
With its Queen Elizabeth Hall home of nearly half a century under refurbishment, the London Sinfonietta is out and about for the time being. But it doesn't have far to go for this 90th-birthday tribute to composer Pierre Boulez. Violinist Clio Gould is the soloist in the electronically enriched *Anthèmes 2*, while 'Region III' from Stockhausen's *Hymnen* ends this concert conducted by Wolfgang Lischke.

9 THE ENGLISH CONCERT
Sam Wanamaker Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, London, 6 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7401 9919
Web: www.shakespearesglobe.com
Next February, The English Concert embarks on an international tour of Handel's opera *Orlando* and limbers up by following in the footsteps of a formidable 18th-century musical tourist: the composer-historian Charles Burney. Tenor Mark Padmore joins slimmed-down forces under Harry Bicket for a journey that samples Biber violin sonatas, Dowland and Purcell songs, and Telemann's cello music.

10 QUATUOR EBÈNE & MITSUKO UCHIDA
Wigmore Hall, London, 6 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7935 2141
Web: www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Its live recording of the Ravel String Quartet bagged Quatuor Ebène the BBC Music Magazine Award for 'Newcomer of the Year' in 2009, and the piece sits snugly alongside the second of Haydn's groundbreaking Op. 20 quartets when the Ebènes return to the Wigmore Hall. Just as tantalising is the second half, where Mitsuko Uchida joins in for Schumann's E flat Piano Quintet.

11 SCOTTISH ENSEMBLE
Caird Hall, Dundee, 7 December
Tel: +44 (0)1382 434940
Web: www.scottishensemble.co.uk
Starting in Dundee and winding up in Perth, the Scottish Ensemble's traditional December candlelit tour has a title of Three Pärts Bach. This wraps Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, *Summa* and *Collage über Bach* around concertos by Johann Sebastian and Sofia Gubaidulina's *Meditation on the Bach Chorale 'Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit'*.

12 HANDEL'S MESSIAH
St David's Hall, Cardiff, 8 December
Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 8444
Web: www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk
Christmas is coming early to Cardiff. Laurence Equilbey, the founder and director of distinguished French chamber choir Accentus, conducts the BBC National Chorus and Orchestra of Wales in a seasonal performance of Handel's *Messiah*. She has a tempting line-up of soloists at her disposal, including soprano Mary Bevan, countertenor Iestyn Davies and tenor Robert Murray.

13 ADRIAN BRENDEL & TIM HORTON
The Venue, Leeds, 8 December
Tel: +44 (0)113 222 3434
Web: www.lcm.ac.uk
Adrian Brendel might share a surname with his father, but the cello-playing artistic director of the Plush Festival has also inherited a skill for apposite programming. He is reunited with pianist Tim Horton for a concert that blends traditional sonatas by Bach and Brahms with three 20th-century works. This includes Crumb's Sonata for Solo Cello, Boulez's Piano Sonata No. 2 and the remaining sketch of Webern's 1914 Sonata for Cello and Piano.

14 HELSINKI PHILHARMONIC
Symphony Hall, Birmingham, 10 December
Tel: +44 (0)121 345 0600
Web: www.thsh.co.uk
The Helsinki Philharmonic and Sibelius go back a long way. Direct from a concert in their home city celebrating the composer's 150th birthday, the orchestra crowns Birmingham's celebrations with a programme that spans from the early tone poem *En Saga* to the Seventh Symphony. Playing the Violin Concerto will be the winner (decided on 3 December) of the 2015 International Sibelius Violin Competition. ▶

QUICK GUIDE TO…

LUTOSŁAWSKI'S CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA

Five essential facts about a work being performed this month

FOLK HERO: Lutosławski scores a hit in 1954

Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra was composed between 1950-54, after a commission from Witold Rowicki, the artistic director of the newly created Warsaw Philharmonic. The work was dedicated to him and it remains one of Lutosławski's most popular pieces.

In Stalin-influenced Poland, Lutosławski's First Symphony (1948) was banned for being too 'formalist' – only accessible to an elite. Although he continued to explore modern 12-note pitch techniques in private, he devoted his public output to educational music, blending Polish folk music from the Kurpie region with adventurous harmonies. He drew on his pre-war experience of writing small folkloric works, making the Concerto for Orchestra an immediate success.

The work has three movements and lasts about 30 minutes. The first two act as a prelude to the third, with the second's conclusion featuring ominous drums and double basses. The last movement has two sections, including a *Passacaglia*, based on a Polish folk song. Here, the brooding theme begins in the double basses, before being developed in every section of the orchestra.

The *Passacaglia* is the first example of what Lutosławski described as his 'chain technique', referring to the way the music is constructed from contrasting strands which overlap like links of a chain. In the mid-1980s, he composed three pieces called *Łańcuch* ('Chain'), which took this idea further.

The Concerto for Orchestra helped establish Lutosławski as the leading composer of his generation in his homeland, especially since his contemporary, Andrzej Panufnik, defected to the West in 1954.

GETTY

15 SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, 10 December
Tel: +44 (0)131 668 2019
Web: www.sco.org.uk
Two generations of the Bach family and Mozart's Symphony No. 40 detain conductor John Butt as he swaps the period instruments of his Dunedin Consort for the modern ones of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. A Sinfonia in D minor by WF Bach and CPE Bach's A minor Bassoon Concerto are preceded by 'Papa' Bach's ebullient Orchestral Suite No. 4.

16 SHOSTAKOVICH DAY

Milton Court Theatre, London, 13 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7638 8891
Web: www.barbican.org.uk
Curated by composer Gerard McBurney and drawing on the Casals Quartet and pianist Alexander Melnikov, the 40th anniversary of Shostakovich's death is remembered in three concerts illuminated by readings from the composer's letters. The complete piano preludes and fugues are threaded through five middle-period quartets – culminating in the Piano Quintet in G minor and the String Quartet No. 8 in C minor.

17 ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS

Cadogan Hall, London, 13 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7730 4500
Web: www.cadoganhall.com
The Academy of St Martin in the Fields turns to the Big Apple twice over as the New York Philharmonic's music director Alan Gilbert makes his Academy debut with Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn* and Haydn's Symphony No. 90. In between, Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 features Israeli pianist Inon Barnatan, the New York Philharmonic's first artist-in-association.

18 HESPÈRION XXI

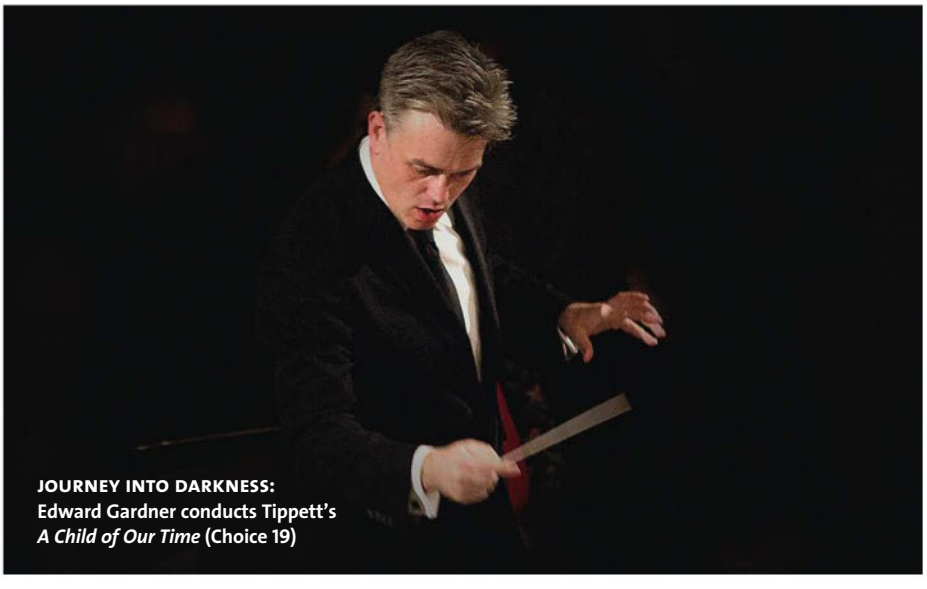
St George's Bristol, 14 December
Tel: 0845 4024001 (UK only)
Web: www.stgeorgesbristol.co.uk
Jordi Savall's intrepid period instrument ensemble is demolishing musical borders as it surveys a century of European dance-derived music spanning 1550-1650. The English consort tradition of Dowland and Gibbons vies with music written for the French Court of Louis XIII, Venetian Renaissance dances, the German splendours of Scheidt and, from the Iberian peninsular, Ortiz, Cabanilles and Luys de Milà.

19 BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORUS

Barbican, London, 17 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7638 8891
Web: www.barbican.org.uk
There's nothing festive about Tippett's wartime oratorio *A Child of Our Time*; its powerful message – dealing with themes of oppression and reconciliation – stands outside any season. Conductor Edward Gardner (below) spearheads a compelling solo team, including soprano Sarah Tynan, and after Oliver Knussen's glittering *The Way to Castle Yonder*, Radio 3 New Generation Artist Louis Schwizgebel is the soloist in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4.

20 FRETWORK

Kings Place, London, 18 December
Tel: +44 (0)20 7520 1490
Web: www.kingsplace.co.uk
Terry Riley's *In C* wraps up Kings Place's 2015 'Minimalism Unwrapped' odyssey on 20 December; but, echoing December programmes by The Sixteen and the Platinum Consort, the viols of Fretwork fuse ancient and modern in the company of countertenor Iestyn Davies and oboist Nicholas Daniel. Works by Johns Taverner and Tavener include the latter's *Nipson* and *The Hidden Face*.



JOURNEY INTO DARKNESS: Edward Gardner conducts Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* (Choice 19)

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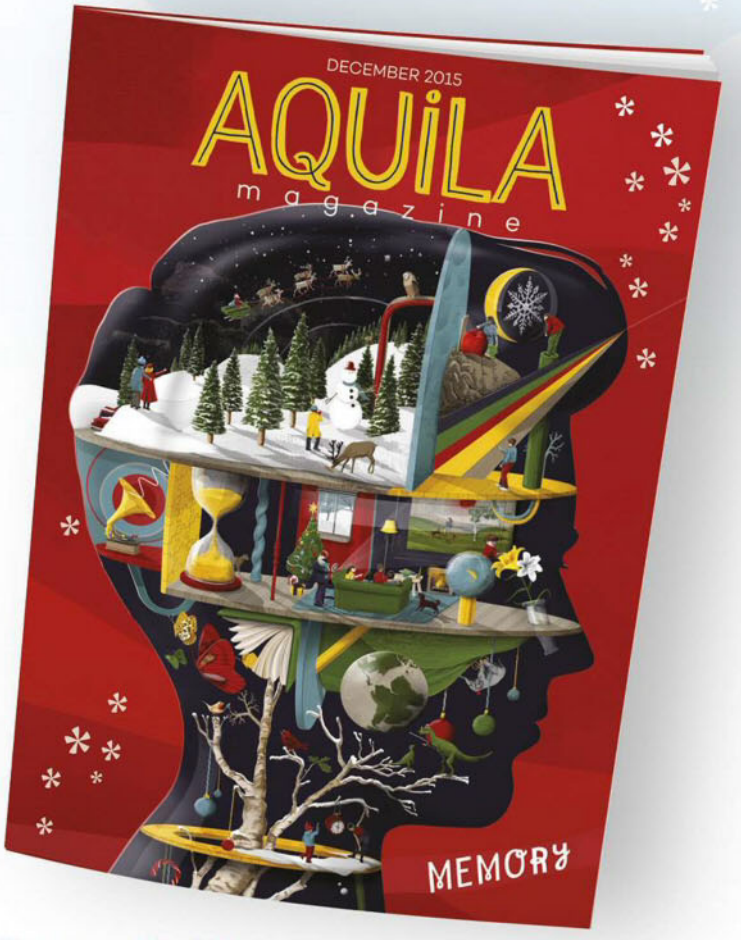

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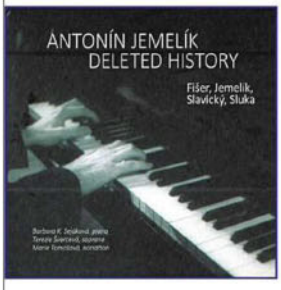

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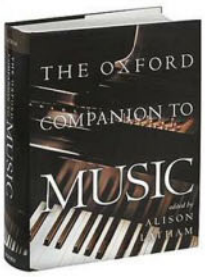
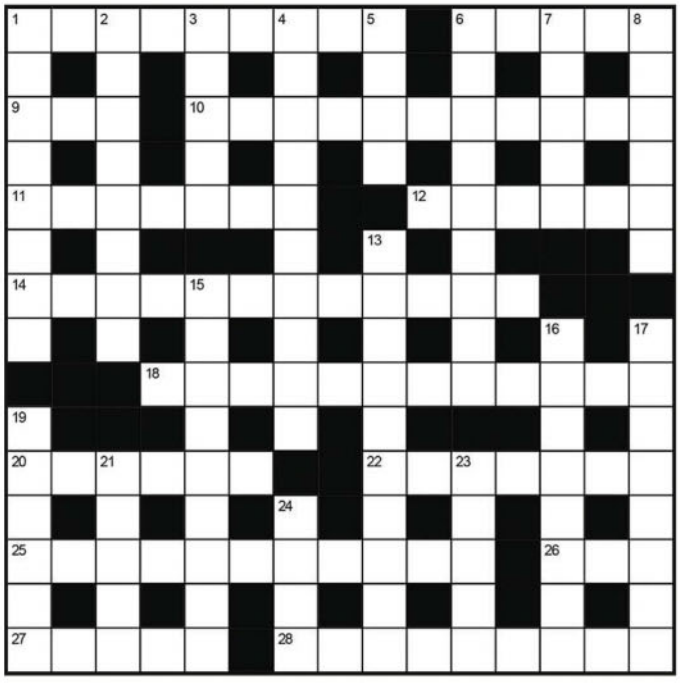


December prize crossword No. 288

The first correct solution of our monthly crossword to be picked at random will win a copy of ***The Oxford Companion to Music*** worth £40 (available at bookstores or www.oup.co.uk). Send your answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 288, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 18 November (solution in our February 2016 issue). *Crossword set by Paul Henderson*



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ACROSS

1 Kept piano quiet (9)
6 Ballet heroine in church, very lacking in passion (5)
9 French composer featuring in exam yearly (3)
10 New composition of Ravel – *Nimrod*? (As sung by 14, perhaps) (3,3,5)
11 Positioned with choir – second associate of 14? (7)
12 That woman's doubled in energy after start of clamorous ovation? (6)
14 Centenarian singer, genuine variety of artisan (5,7)
18 See 24 down
20 Very nearly nothing in charitable donation given to tenor (6)
22 List includes old provider of intrusive aubade? (7)
25 Nasty French article on women falling short after securing openings for recorder players? (11)
26 Major composition capturing inspiration for Howard Shore? (3)
27 Poet making racket, audibly (5)
28 Note associated with vibration – note in e.g. vibrating pipe ultimately (9)

DOWN

1 Behave as expected and take drumsticks to strongbox? (4,4)
2 Saint-Saens concerto, say – finally, finally, keyboard mostly accommodates end of it (8)
3 Contralto in aspiration setting up significant period (5)
4 Visual presentation vied with radio broadcast before end of day (5,5)
5 14's mate, contributing to escapade anytime (4)
6 One draws representation of orchestra (4-5)
7/8 Reveal noise possibly coming from song from another centenarian (2,3,2,4)
13 Note G&S part possibly featuring this? (6-4)
15 Place to look for backing to bring in new organ features (4-5)
16 Six tours arranged involving old soloist (8)
17 Enter clumsily around performance of Intermezzo (8)
19 Holst movement getting South African performance (6)
21 14's song depicting unknown women in spring month (2,3)
23 Main role for 14 (5)
24/18a Jazzy opening – re-enter with entire cast belting, say, song from another centenarian (2,2,8,4)

SEPTEMBER SOLUTION NO. 285

SEPTEMBER WINNER

K Merry, *Fife*

THE BBC MUSIC QUIZ

You'll need to stay within the law for this month's quiz…

1. In which Gilbert and Sullivan operetta do the police sergeant and his sorry force remind us that 'A policeman's lot is not a happy one'?

2. The opening scene of which 1945 opera sees the title character being questioned by the local coroner over the death of his apprentice?

3. Name the British composers who: a) signed up as a special constable at Hampstead Police Station (1914); b) was arrested for being drunk and disorderly in Cadogan St (1927); c) received a police visit for having cooked a swan (2005)?

4. Which literary and TV detective investigates the murders of a *Magic Flute* chorus member in 'Masonic Mysteries' and the opera diva Gwladys Probert in 'Twilight of the Gods'?

PICTURE THIS

5. This thoroughly unlovable chief of police (below) invites Tosca to dinner in Puccini's so-named 1900 opera. Who is he?

6. Who, in 1820, was picked up by police in Baden after local residents reported him wandering around the streets, looking dishevelled and peering in through people's windows?

7. And which disgruntled composer was jailed for eight days in 1918 for having written a series of libellous postcards to the Parisian music critic Jean Poueigh?

8. Which composer, imprisoned in 1912 for throwing stones at a politician's window, later conducted the Metropolitan Police band in a performance of her *The March of the Women*?

9. On a tour of the US in 1902, which Italian opera composer was detained by police in his Boston hotel room on suspicion of embezzlement?

10. Actress Katharina Böhm, granddaughter of conductor Karl Böhm, is best known for playing the part of Livia Burlando, the girlfriend of which Italian literary and TV detective?

See p99 for answers

IMMEDIATE MEDIA Co

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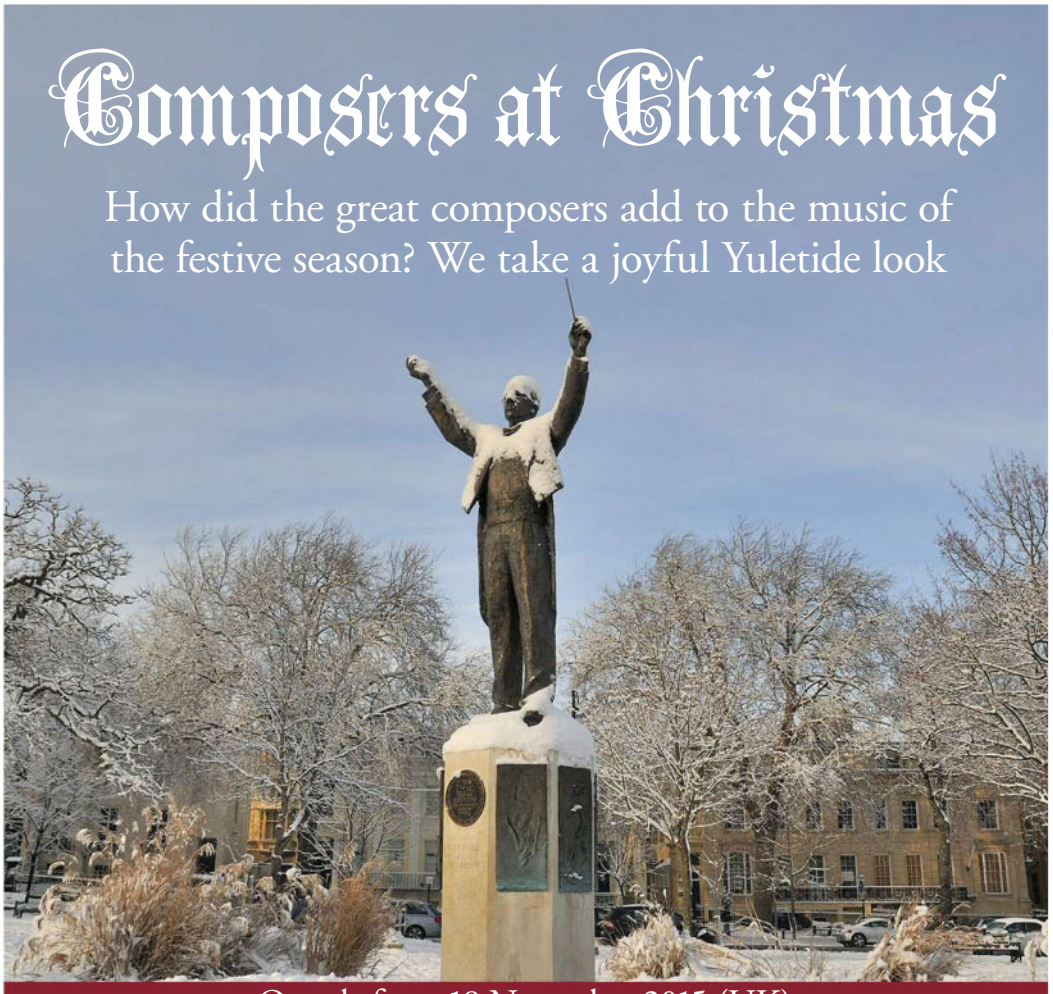

Composers at Christmas

How did the great composers add to the music of the festive season? We take a joyful Yuletide look

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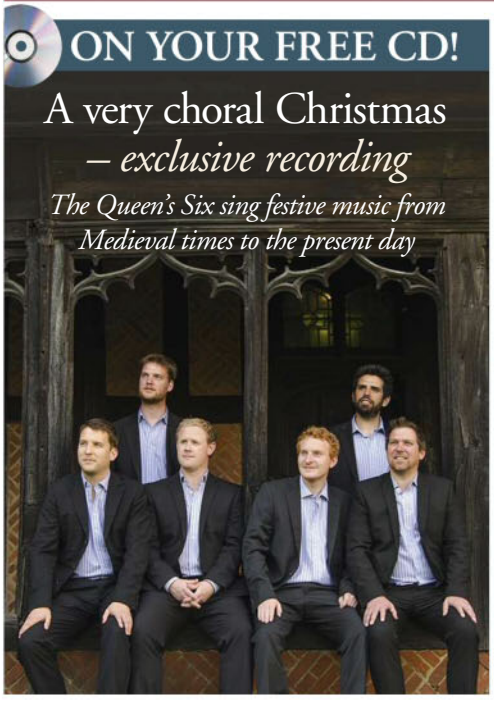

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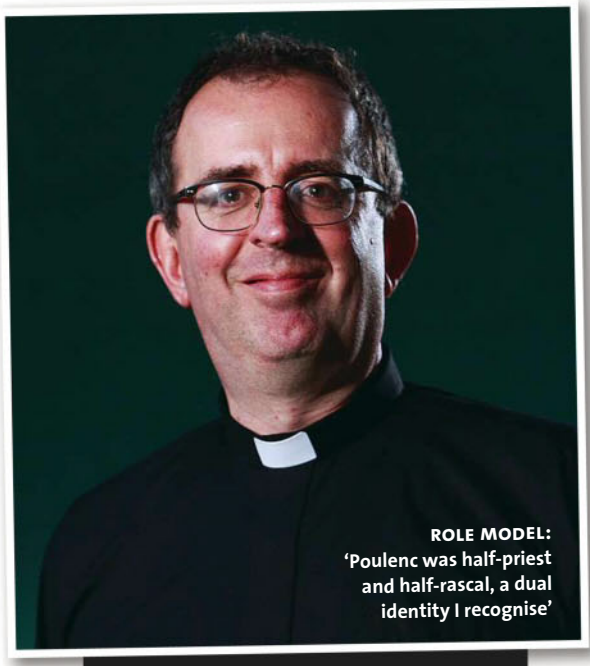
Richard Coles *vicar and radio presenter*



ROLE MODEL: 'Poulenc was half-priest and half-rascal, a dual identity I recognise'

ALAMY

My grandfather was a pianist, a seriously frivolous one, who enjoyed playing Stanley Holloway tunes to his own scandalous words, but my parents were tone deaf – standing next to them in church was torture. But Dad loved music. He took me to a concert in the Royal Albert Hall when I was about eight to hear Charles Mackerras conducting Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. I was absolutely captivated, and stood on my chair trying to conduct it. I'd always had an incredibly intense response to music: I longed to be a professional violinist and wrote to Benjamin Britten telling him so. He kindly replied, applauding my ambition but reminding me of the importance of practice.

Violin practice did prove rather onerous; luckily, I'd got far enough on the piano to keep going. I loved being a chorister at Wellingborough School and was ruthless in my pursuit of a solo. My first was MAURICE GREENE's lovely, simple anthem 'Thou visitest the earth': it seems to express the Anglicanism closest to my heart; it has a soul-piercing poignancy, benign and joyful.

At puberty I discovered all sorts of things like cigarettes, Bolshevism and being gay. I ran away to London at 18, met Jimmy Somerville, and joined his group BRONSKI BEAT. We later formed The Communards. Jimmy's voice was rather like that of a choirboy trespassing into 1970s disco and protest songs, although there the resemblance broke down. 'Smalltown Boy' expressed for my generation the reality of being a young gay man in a hostile environment. Jimmy was a spectacularly distinctive singer; I was a more workaday musician who had got lucky. I don't think I was a great songwriter: the fact that two of our three hits were covers speaks for itself.

Having a lot of money and no obligations is dangerous, and I made a terrible mess of it and crashed out of pop music in the late 1980s. I met the writer and critic Adam Mars-Jones and we became piano duet partners. We used to go to a rehearsal studio in Mayfair to practise. I remember on one occasion we were playing POULENC's Sonata for Two Pianos and Sviatoslav Richter was practising next door… how embarrassing! I love Poulenc: he said he was half-priest and half-rascal, a dual identity I recognise. I love his nod to the past, the combination of the boulevard and the cloister, and there's something tortured underneath.

When I first got to London I saw VERDI's *Rigoletto* in Jonathan Miller's amazing production. It opened up a whole new world for me. Rigoletto the jester becomes the victim of his own taunts – that resonated with me. My favourite part is the quartet: it's so beautifully conceived and so dynamic in the way the music moves four different storylines forward.

I had an idea that I would hold WAGNER in reserve until I was middle-aged, but I succumbed in my mid-30s when I saw *The Ring* at Covent Garden. *Die Meistersinger* remains my favourite of his operas: it's such a rich, beautiful evocation of civic life. I was making a BBC programme about Wagner and flew to Vienna to interview Daniel Barenboim, who was with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. I arrived on 11 September, 2001. Watching the twin towers collapse was traumatic, especially for the orchestra. That night I went to their concert. Barenboim turned to the audience and said he wouldn't make a speech. He just conducted the Prelude to Act III of *Meistersinger*. The endlessness of human folly – it's all there, alongside infinite sympathy. It reminded me why music is so important: it offers us a way of reflecting on human experience that lies beyond words. ■

Interview by Helen Wallace

THE REVEREND Richard Coles is vicar of St Mary's Church in Finedon, Northamptonshire, and presenter of BBC Radio 4's *Saturday Live*. He was formerly a member of Bronski Beat and The Communards with singer Jimmy Somerville, before being ordained. Initially, a priest in the Roman Catholic church, he converted to Anglicanism in 2001. He has been chaplain of the Royal Academy of Music, and was an inspiration for the character of the Reverend Adam Smallbone on the BBC TV series *Rev*.

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