

The Music & Vision

Classical Music Newsletter

Britten epicentre – Issue 68, 1 November 2013

COMING SOON – LIVE PERFORMANCE IN NOVEMBER



Concerts for the Benjamin Britten centenary come thick and fast this month, with the one-hundredth anniversary of Britten's birth on 22 November. The epicentre appears to be in Cambridge, UK (quite near to Britten's Aldeburgh): Mark Padmore, Stephen Bell and the Britten Sinfonia contribute *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal* and the Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings on the birthday itself; the Escher String Quartet plays Quartet No 3; Florilegium and King's College Choir with Stephen Cleobury present *Canticle II: Abraham and Isaac* and *Hymn to St Cecilia*; James Gilchrist and Anna Tilbrook perform the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, *On This Island* and folksong arrangements.

Amongst the other UK-based groups celebrating are Bene't Coldstream, Keith Maries and the Chiltern Camerata (Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings in Buckinghamshire UK); Canticum and Mark Forkgen (all-Britten

choral programme in London); Adrian Partington's *War Requiem* in Bristol, featuring joint forces from Gloucester and Bristol, and *Les Illuminations* (Swinsian Ensemble and Justin Fung, in London).

In New York City, Melodia Women's Choir contributes *A Ceremony of Carols*.

There are more events at **Britten 100**, all co-ordinated by the Britten-Pears Foundation.

Other notable live performance this month includes the National Theatre for Children, the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Grant Cooper and Sara Brodie performing Gareth Farr's *Sky Dancer* in Auckland and Christchurch.

In New York, St Luke's Chamber Ensemble presents the first New York performance of *Crossroads* by John Harbison; Experiments in Opera have programmed three contemporary operas in celebration of Halloween; Salon/Sanctuary Concerts presents *Dowland's Europe: The Winds of Change* with lutenist Hopkinson Smith and *Music for Brunelleschi's Dome* with organist Lucia Baldacci; there's Czech music from Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble conducted by James John.

In the UK, Minerva Scientifica, an ambitious project at Plymouth University featuring eminent women in science, launches with new works by Judith Bingham and Karen Wimhurst. St Albans Choral Society presents its newly commissioned work: Richard James Harvey's *Vespers*, with Orchestra Nova and George Vass. In Leominster, Herefordshire, Welsh-Argentine guitar duo Adam Khan and Luis Orias Diz present music from Argentina and Wales.



In London, soloists Mario Galeani and Yoon-Hee Kim join the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for concerts featuring Humperdinck, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky; Paul Ayres and Carol Ann Duffy's new work *The Christmas Truce* gets a first hearing from the Queldryk Choral Ensemble and the London College of Music Chamber Choir.

More listings ...

Add your concert here if it's not in our listings ...

ASTONISHING PERFORMANCE — ALL BEETHOVEN'S SONATAS IN ONE DAY



Julian Jacobson

'It is always the greatest joy to enter the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields, and be reminded of the statue in the south aisle commemorating St Martin and the beggar. Down-and-outs used to doss down in the crypt by the score. But in the upper reaches the strongest of us were to hear on 15 October 2013 all the Beethoven piano sonatas played from memory by the far mightier Julian Jacobson. It soon became clear that the pianist's mastery of Beethoven's idiom was such he could easily have improvised himself out of any momentary difficulty. Not that any such occurred.' **Robert Anderson reports ...**

Mark Berry, in his first review for *M&V*, finds English National Opera's *Madama Butterfly* rather impressive. Gerald Fenech enjoys his return visit to Slovenia's Festival Maribor. Patric Stanford discovers a generous weekend in England's William Alwyn Festival. Suzanne Torrey finds a pleasant surprise in Fauré, Britten and Franck performed in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. Maria Nockin takes a whiff of an early Shostakovich opera and loves Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, both streamed live from New York Metropolitan Opera in high definition. Giuseppe Pennisi reports on *Turandot* in Rome, contemporary music at two Italian festivals, and on Wagner and Britten in the Umbrian Hills.



Dina Kuznetsova as Cio-Cio San, Alun Rhys-Jenkins as Goro and members of the ENO Chorus in Puccini's 'Madama Butterfly' at English National Opera. Photo © 2013 Thomas Bowles

Mike Wheeler listens to orchestral music from Henning Kraggerud with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra and Stéphane Denève, Andrei Korobeinikov with the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra Moscow and Nikolay Vinokurov, to Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic, Sunkwook Kim, Mark Elder and the Hallé Orchestra, and the Derby Concert Orchestra. He also attends smaller scale concerts by Israeli pianist Ishay Shaer, and by Eloisa-Fleur Thom and Mark Austin.

Browse all this month's live concert and opera reviews ...

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER — NUVI MEHTA TALKS TO RON BIERMAN



Nuvi Mehta with orchestra members.
Photo © 2013 Ron Bierman

'I've been enjoying the pre-concert talks of Nuvi Mehta for several years, and the audience for them has grown every season. Half of San Diego Symphony concert goers now arrive an hour early to hear what he has to say about the evening's program. How does the first cousin once removed of conductor Zubin Mehta manage to entertain and educate with such seeming ease? I took advantage of a chance encounter at a Pops concert to ask if he would agree to an interview. He said yes. After a few emails, we met for over an hour on the patio of a café near the Jacobs Music Center. The Juilliard-trained musician and I covered a lot of ground.' **More ...**

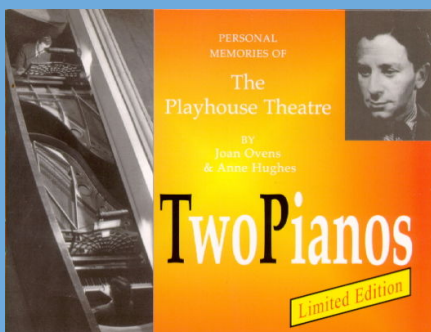
MIXED REVIEWS — GREGORY MOOMJY ON SOME TABOO SUBJECTS

'Despite being at death's door, New York City Opera can claim a major contribution to the current opera season. It brought Mark-Anthony Turnage's brash new opera *Anna Nicole* to the Brooklyn Academy of Music for its US premiere. Unfortunately, the reviews for this groundbreaking work have been mixed. As a critic, I understand the importance of negative reviews as it's a critic's duty to express a negative opinion if the occasion warrants it. I am not arguing that the reviews are wrong, simply that they are harping on about insignificant details of text and subject matter, where what really matters is how the text and music treat Anna.' **More ...**



Anna Nicole Smith

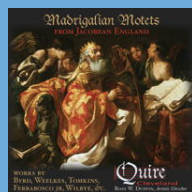
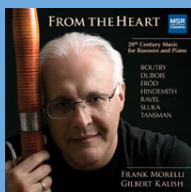
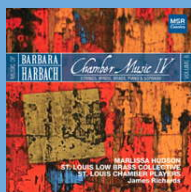
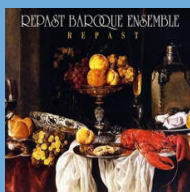
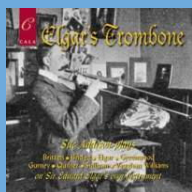
A NOSTALGIC READ — RONALD SETTLE IN LIVERPOOL

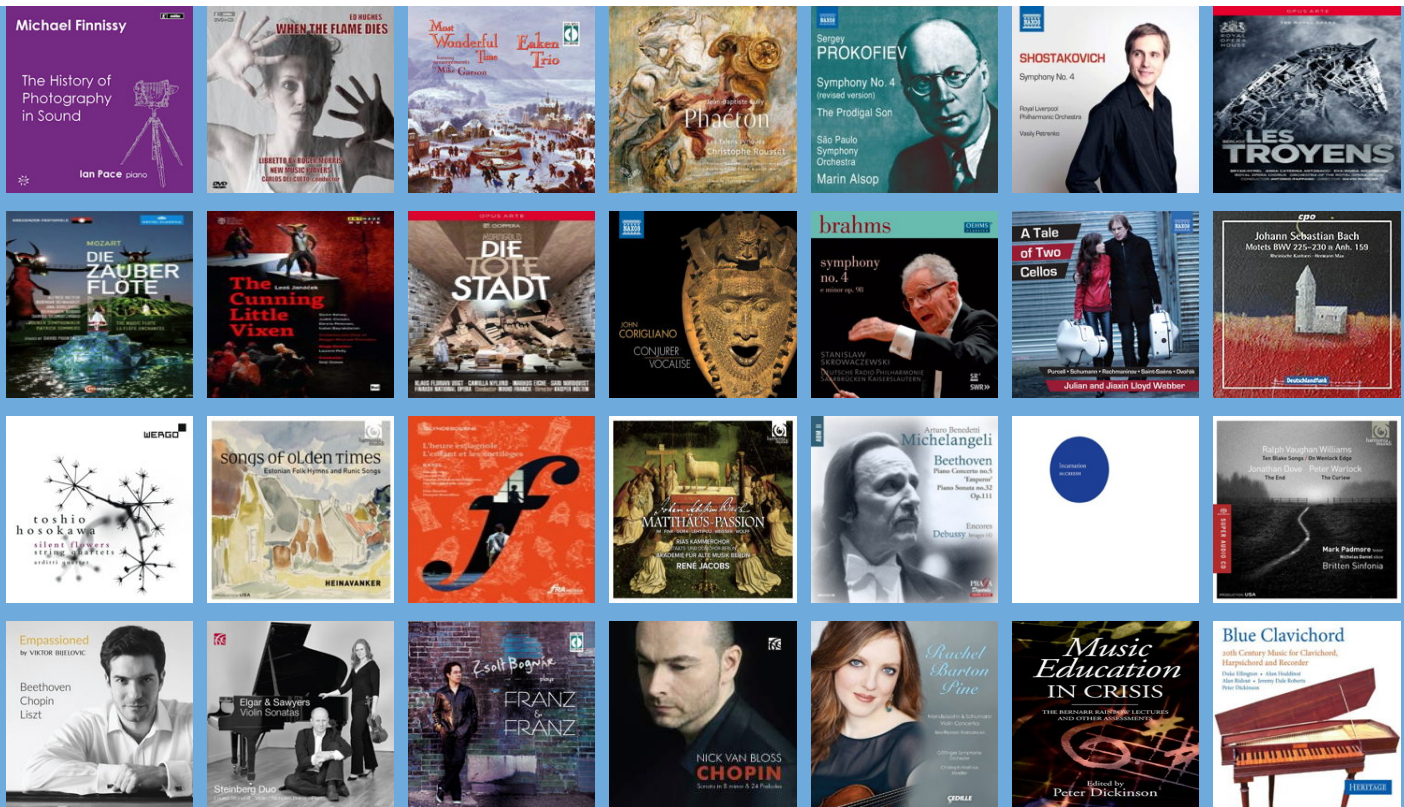


'This cute little booklet attempts to rekindle memories of what once was — the Playhouse Theatre in Liverpool, the brainchild of Ronald Settle who passed away in 1998 although the theatre had long since closed its doors way back in 1971.

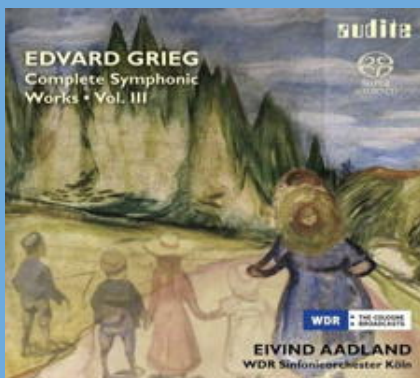
"'Ronnie" as he was affectionately known was a musical giant in Merseyside circles and singlehandedly made the theatre one of the most important fixtures in Liverpool entertainment over a quarter of a century (1945-71).' **Gerald Fenech investigates ...**

SELECTED NEW RELEASES





COLOGNE BROADCASTS — EDVARD GRIEG'S SYMPHONIC MUSIC



'The orchestral suite *Sigurd Jorsalfar*, Op 56 (first performed in Christiania, 1872) celebrates Norwegian King Sigurd I Magnusson or The Crusader (1090-1130). Grieg compiled the suite from incidental music to a play by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. It was premiered in Oslo on 5 November 1892.

'Nine parts in all, they're more usually whittled down to three — the only purely instrumental numbers. The first is titled 'In the King's Hall', a prelude with three segments and at the outset a bassoon and clarinet play against plucked strings. The musical material of the exterior sections comes from the trio of a gavotte for piano penned in 1867 and left unpublished.'

Howard Smith argues that with this (audite 92.669) and several other recordings that we're spoilt for choice. **Read more ...** He also recommends Wendy Warner's recording of Haydn and Mysliveček (Cedille CDR 90000 142).

Patric Standford finds the Jinny Shaw and George Vass disc of British music for oboe and strings (Guild GMCD 7383) a particularly valuable contribution to the catalogue, and listens to the appealing choral textures of Margaret Rizza (Naxos 8.573039), but he's less impressed with orchestral music of Emma Lou Diemer (navona NV5898).

Andrew Schartmann finds Ian Bostridge's account of Britten songs deeply affecting (EMI Classics 5099943343027), and is impressed by James Brawn's masterfully controlled Beethoven Odyssey (MSR Classics MS 1465) but finds navona records' compilation of works for string orchestra, *Dimensions* (NV5895), an awkward mix.

Browse our latest CD reviews ...



IN THE NEWS — RCO RADIO LEGACY AND NAXOS ADVENT CALENDAR



The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra releases a 152 CD set of Dutch public broadcasting network archive recordings. Naxos launches a new Advent Calendar App. Early Music America magazine editor Benjamin Dunham is due to retire after the magazine's Fall 2014 issue.



We mark the passing of British-born Australian conductor and administrator John Hopkins. **Read the news in detail ...**

ASK ALICE — THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

'When I saw the title ('How long should a student practise a piece?') my immediate reaction was derisory and could be best expressed by this: how long is a piece of string?

Well, it depends upon the purpose for which the string is meant to be used: for a rescue-tennis-shoe perhaps twelve inches, for an *ad-hoc* curtain measurer quite a lot longer!!!!

Then I began to take the question more seriously, recalling how I'd been so worried about a pupil's audition (for a scholarship, for a big cello exam, for a conservatory place) that I'd failed to consider exactly how jaded X might be with the *Rococo*, or Y with the Haydn C major.



Alice McVeigh

Read more ...

Got a classical music problem? Ask Alice your question here ...

This newsletter, edited by Keith Bramich, is a monthly taster for Basil Ramsey's high quality and colourful online classical music magazine, published every day since January 1999.

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