

The Music & Vision

Classical Music Newsletter

Marching in the name of Music — Issue 69, 1 December 2013

'FIRE DOESN'T BURN ... IT STIMULATES OUR PASSION' - WITH KAREN HAID

'In Italy's deep south where the very toe of the boot meets the Strait of Messina, the city of Reggio Calabria awoke on 4 November, a national day of celebration recognizing the end of the First World War, to the news that their Musical Instrument Museum had been torched in the night. Who could have done such a thing? The only certainty thus far is that the fire was set by an arsonist. The direction of the modest museum, housed in the city's old 'Lido' train station, immediately responded to the act of vandalism with an appeal, not only to the good citizens of Reggio, but to the culprit(s) as well, inviting one and all to join in the initial cleanup while partaking in refreshments and the culture that the museum represented. The institution declared, "Fire doesn't burn ... it stimulates our passion." **More ...**



A guitar accepting donations, with the rubble of the Museo dello Strumento Musicale in the background.

Photo © 2013 Karen Haid

CONVERSATION AND REMINISCENCE — BELKIN, TALMA AND MEHTA



Andrew Schartmann's fascinating conversation with Canadian composer Alan Belkin touches on motivic connections and redundancy in composition:

'You can never consider one aspect of music in isolation. At the very least, you must attempt to answer the "Why now?" question. And often what is really

interesting and subtle is the way one element (say, motives) either confirms or contradicts the others. The sense of form — what to do, combined with what else, and when to do it — is perhaps the hardest thing to develop for a composer.' **More ...**

Jenna Orkin's amusing reminiscence of her former teacher, Louise Talma, touches on the French-born composer's musical beliefs:

'About what she believes in: In music, it is those harmonies and forms that provided the basis and basses of all music from circa 1600 until 1914: the Trinity of tonic, dominant and subdominant. It is probably no coincidence that she also has three suits that she has rotated for about eight months of the year for twenty years.' **More ...**

Don't miss the final installment of Ron Bierman's conversation with Nuvi Mehta, revealing how the conductor managed to join Leonard Bernstein's inner circle. **More ...**

OPERAS YOU'VE PROBABLY NEVER HEARD OF — ROTA, MASSENET & FORONI



The full court scene in Stephen Medcalf's production of Jacopo Foroni's *Cristina, regina di Svezia*, with design and costumes by Jamie Vartan.
Photo © 2013 Clive Barda

'Although the Rota runs it close (some might say bettered it), Stephen Medcalf's production with his frequent collaborator, designer Jamie Vartan, of *Cristina, regina di Svezia* (*Queen Christina*) - sung not in Swedish, but in the language of its composer, Jacopo Foroni (1825-58), another of those relatively short-lived Italian composers - is surely the big hit, and for many reasons.

'Foroni is a complete unknown. He doesn't even merit a place in *Grove Opera*, or in that musical bible, Michael Kennedy's *Oxford Dictionary of Music*. If some were inclined to compare him less favourably with Donizetti or Bellini or even Mercadante, I don't yet agree. (Verdi is something else.) While the text of

Giovanni Carlo Casanova's libretto had touches of thin or hackneyed imagery, especially in Act I, the structure of the piece is beyond complaint.'

Roderic Dunn visits **Wexford** and also writes about **Jubilee Opera's** new stage piece *A Time There Was*, performed in Aldeburgh for the Britten Centenary.

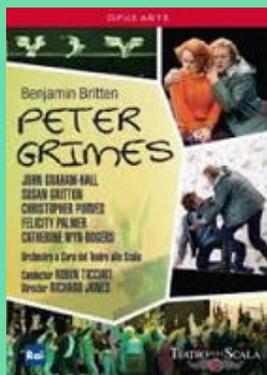
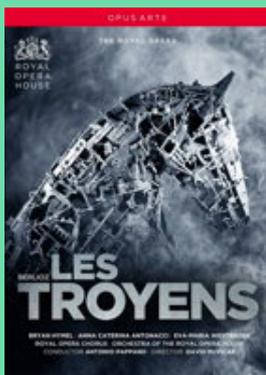
Paul Wiffen, in his first article for *M&V*, is impressed by the new soprano and piano duo TangOpera. Gregory Moomjy asks some important questions about Nico Muhly's opera *Two Boys*. Suzanne Torrey finds a lesson to be learned as the Cleveland Orchestra welcomes back its music director Franz-Welser-Möst.

Maria Nockin experiences a *Film Noir* production of Mozart's *Magic Flute* from Berlin's Komische Oper, and also listens to Verdi's *Falstaff* at Los Angeles Opera. Giuseppe Pennisi finds some brilliant ideas in a Verdi Shakespeare trilogy in Ravenna, pure enjoyment in Turin's *Simon Boccanegra* and suggests that a concert performance of *Peter Grimes* in Rome might be a kind of grand sea symphony.

Mike Wheeler listens to Britten centenary celebrations from Paul Daniel and the BBC Philharmonic, Opera North, Sinfonia Chorale, the Derwent Singers, Dan Miller and Richard Hodges, Derby Choral Union, and also to pianist Clare Hammond, the Heath Quartet, Janey Miller and Susie Summers. Malcolm Miller drops in to London's Vortex Jazz Club to hear Evan Parker and friends, and Keith Bramich enjoys the intimate and moving sound of J S Bach from Ex Cathedra.

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

COLLAPSING TROY – BERLIOZ IN LONDON AND BRITTEN IN ROME



'The destruction of Troy haunted both the ancient and mediaeval worlds. If Aeneas fled the flaming city with his father on his back only to cause havoc in Carthage, the gods insisted he should persevere towards the foundation of Rome. But that was not the end of the story. A tradition persisted at least until the time of Caxton that a grandson of Aeneas called Brutus had wandered even further to take control of England. Many inhabitants of this island have shown themselves Trojans in spirit, but there may be more to it than that.'

— Robert Anderson investigates

'This Benjamin Britten performance is a welcome centenary release', says Howard Smith. 'Anglo-Italian conductor Richard Ticciati is a protégé of Sir Simon Rattle and the late Sir Colin Davis. Since 2007 he has been associated with Glyndebourne Opera and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In the early 1980s theatre and opera director Richard Jones (born 1953) switched from years as a jazz musician to Scottish Opera and the Citizens Theatre.'

'Ticciati elicits a performance combining unpretentious conviction and passion from the latin Scala Theatre Orchestra while highlighting the essential catastrophe at the heart of Britten's masterpiece.' **More ...**

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CD REVIEWS

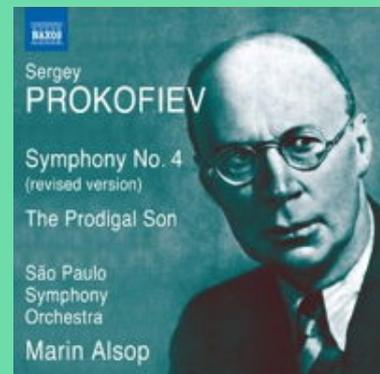
Gerald Fenech finds great sensitivity in the São Paulo Symphony's response to Prokofiev's Symphony No 4 and *The Prodigal Son* (Naxos 8.573186, with Marin Alsop), and tonal beauty in Rachel Barton Pine's Mendelssohn and Schumann violin concerto recordings (Cedille CDR 90000 144).

Andrew Schartmann discovers a resounding success in Hyperion's Richard Strauss disc - *Don Quixote* and *Till Eulenspiegel* (CDA67960) and admirable performances of Rachmaninov's Symphony No 3 and Symphonic Dances from Leonard Slatkin and the Detroit Symphony (Naxos 8.573051, and also puts Beethoven, Chopin and Liszt from Viktor Bijelovic (8 88174 10502 4) under the spotlight.

Robert Anderson listens to music by Imogen Holst and Benjamin Britten (harmonia mundi HMU 907576), and to J S Bach motets from Rheinische Kantorei under Hermann Max (cpo 777 807-2).

Patric Standford presents the sure craftsmanship of Marga Richter's selected works for orchestra (Ravello RR7867) and Howard Smith samples Fredrick Kaufman's *Guernica Piano Concerto* (Navona NV5924).

Browse our latest CD reviews ...

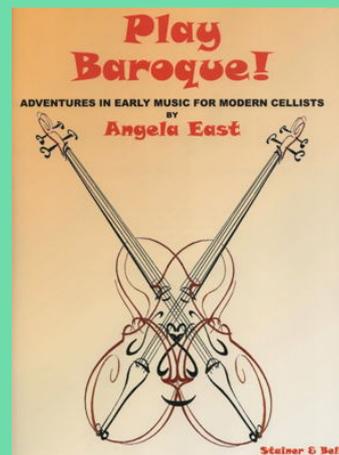


ASK ALICE — ASPECTS OF BAROQUE

'Angela East's *Play Baroque! Adventures in Early Music for Modern Cellists* [Stainer and Bell H479, ISMN 979-0-2202-2381-5] is the mini-masterpiece one would expect of the extravert, powerful music character who is the cellist of Red Priest.

'Although some of the works (Dido's Lament, for example) have finessed their way into other collections for cello, this is a historically informed version, complete with short essays (not a word wasted) on performance practice and early instruments, with an eminently approachable summing-up in one entitled *Improvisation, Ornamentation and Interpretation*.'

Alice McVeigh's other topics include Pinchas Zukermann's view of the early music movement, *La Forza del Destino*, Peter Maxwell Davies' recent article in *The Telegraph*, and Alma Deutscher and exploited talent.



[Read more ...](#)

[Do you have a classical music-related question? Ask Alice here ...](#)

IN THE NEWS



We mark the passing of John Tavener, Bernard Roberts and Rudolf Kehrler.

The Harold Rosenbaum Choral Conducting Institute Workshop has been announced, and will take place in August 2014 in Buffalo, New York, USA. [Read this news in detail ...](#)

COMING SOON — LIVE PERFORMANCE IN DECEMBER

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