

The Music & Vision

Classical Music Newsletter

Requiem for the Living – Issue 70, 1 January 2014

As years end and begin, and many of us have free time to think, it's easy for the mind to wander in the direction of our progress (or lack of it) over time-spans of a year, a decade, of our life so far, or even longer. Personal progress can be assessed relative to the goals we've set ourselves, and given a positive or negative slant as we decide. Assessing the progress of music (or society as a whole) can be more tricky. We're all aware of change, of various kinds, and whether we accept that as positive or negative can often depend on our age and the perceived advantage to ourselves of that change.

My view is that, as time flies forward, the gains and losses somehow balance. Technological and medical advances save us time, extend our reach, prolong our lives and keep us healthy, but at the same time increasing internationalisation, population and information growth, speed and monetisation of life all mean that we often need to compete much harder to make progress. This is true whether we're seeking a job, performing, organising concerts, writing music, teaching others, promoting artists, seeking to change public opinion or whatever.

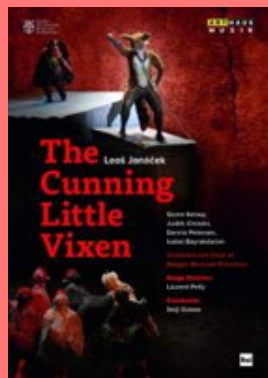
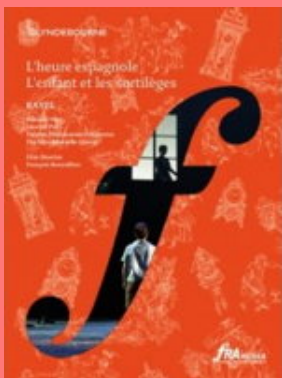
Our complex lives can also bring struggles of meaning when old frames of reference lose their relevance and we're confronted with ever increasing permutations of choice for even the simplest of decisions.

Life was never meant to be easy, but challenges and difficulty should inspire us to work hard, think creatively, and organise our ever more complex lives in ways that create meaning out of chaos.

Let's all try to do our best in 2014, for our own sake, for those around us, and for our shared future.

Keith Bramich

IMAGINATION, WIT AND HUMANITY - A SELECTION OF OPERAS ON DVD



We sample recordings of stage works by Ravel (*L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *L'heure espagnole* on FRA Musica), Janáček (*The Cunning Little Vixen* on

Arthaus), Mozart (*The Magic Flute* on C Major Entertainment) and Korngold (*Die Tote Stadt*, Opus Arte), each review laced with representative audio and video clips.

'While *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* shares with that opera a child's-eye view of a sometimes threatening world, *L'Heure Espagnole* is a thoroughly adult confection. Pelly addresses Ravel's very different operas with imagination, wit and — when required — humanity.' — Howard Smith

'I cannot claim to have been much gripped by the lengthy scene of love-making between the vixen and a fox. But the result is a glorious crowd of little foxes that are pure enchantment. There are plans for a further brood, but these are interrupted by the appearance of the gamekeeper ... I certainly cannot feel that man and beast are reconciled. The staging has been sensitive throughout, and the orchestra under Seiji Ozawa has dispensed much bewitching music with panache and style.' — Robert Anderson

'The Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Prague chorus capture the enduring spirit so magically found in Mozart's greatest creations. I doubt whether a production within the last two and a quarter centuries rivals Pountney's out-of-doors spectacle for this year's Bregenz Festival.' — Howard Smith

'With his vast orchestral apparatus, Korngold concentrates on the obsessive grief for his dead wife Marie of the still youthful Paul (Klaus Florian Vogt). She still shares his bed, or at least her spirit does.' — Robert Anderson

[Browse our latest illustrated DVD reviews ...](#)

SPONSORSHIP

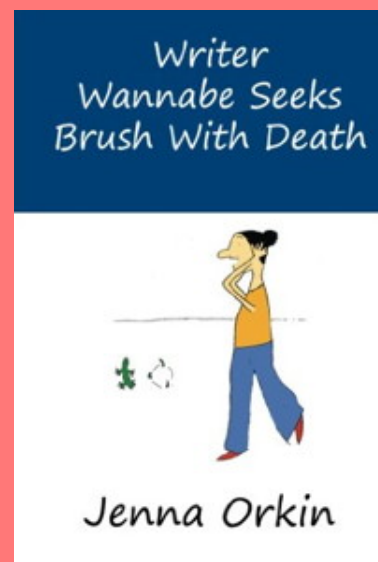
Music & Vision has received a new article sponsorship for Jenna Orkin's article **Letter to Louise Talma (Never Sent)** which was published here in November 2013 and can now be read in its entirety by non-subscribers.

The article is taken from Orkin's book **Writer Wannabe Seeks Brush With Death**, published in September 2013 by *CreateSpace*, ISBN 978-1449511272.

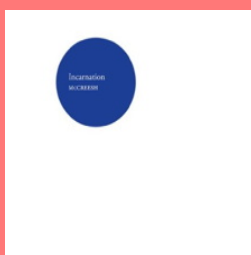
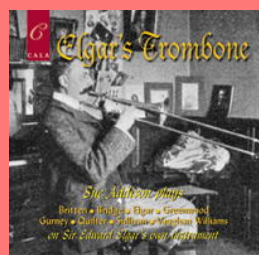
Please visit the *Music & Vision* homepage to see a list of all our sponsored articles.

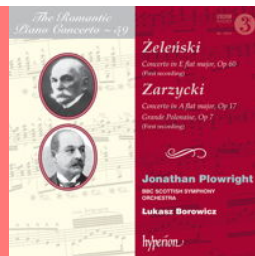
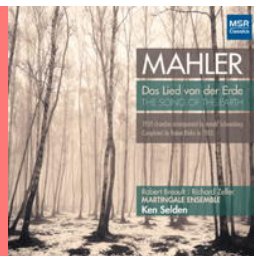
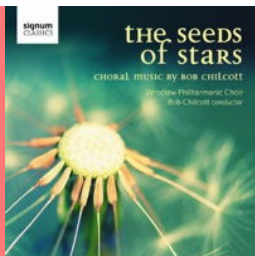
If you'd like to sponsor an *M&V* article, please refer to our **Sponsorship page** for full details. We'll be increasing the price of article sponsorship to GBP 120 from 1 February 2014, so if you'd like to sponsor at the current rate (GBP 100), please do so this month.

We're also making a small increase to the price of an *M&V* subscription from 1 February 2014. The one year rate will rise from GBP 21 to GBP 24. Renew this month for up to three years to take advantage of the old rates. These are the first increases to our rates in several years, and are due to increased postage costs sending books, CDs and DVDs to our writers.



CD REVIEWS





'Given the talented ensembles that have tackled the Shostakovich quartets over the years, it would be unseemly to crown a victor. If one were to go down that path, however, there is no doubt that the Pacifica Quartet would be a serious contender. Throughout the disc, the ensemble complements Mitya's extraordinary compositional gift with musical gifts of their own. And so this recording is a go-to in the making — a must have for anyone even mildly interested in these seminal works.'

String Quartets by Shostakovich and Weinberg on Cedille (*CDR 90000 138*) impress Andrew Schartmann, as does Evan Hirsch's performance of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards* on MSR Classics (*MS 1433*) and Bob Chilcott's choral music (Signum Classics *SIGCD311*). He also investigates Zina Schiff's performances of violin music by Sibelius, Barber and Ben-Haim (MSR Classics *MS 1459*).

Stephen Francis Vasta finds power, fluency and dynamic control in Jonathan Plowright's performances of Zelenski and Zarzycki piano concertos (Hyperion *CDA67985*. Robert Anderson finds Gilbert Rowland's Handel harpsichord suites exciting and eloquent throughout (divine art *dda21220*). Howard Smith listens to Sue Addison playing *Elgar's Trombone* on Cala (*CACD77016*) and finds breathtaking clarity in Voces 8's Christmas disc on Signum Classics (*SIGCD291*). Gerald Fenech discovers an unusual interpretation of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (MSR Classics *MS 1406*) and Keith Bramich listens to high quality British Christmas music from Paul McCreech on Signum Classics (*SIGCD346*).

Browse our latest CD reviews ...

VERGING ON TRUCULENCE



Samson Tsoy

'Derby Chamber Music's fruitful relationship with the Haverhill Sinfonia Soloist Competition has given rise to some memorable concerts in the past. This time (Multi-Faith Centre, Derby University, Derby, UK, 6 December 2013), we heard Kazakhstan-born Samson Tsoy, runner-up in the 2012 (and, sadly, final) competition.

'His all-Beethoven first half began with the Fantasy in G minor, Op 77, a piece so improvisatory that it could easily be left to fall apart. Tsoy's grip on the music's progress gave the start of the variations that make up the second half a real sense of arrival.'

Mike Wheeler listens to Kazakhstan-born pianist **Samson Tsoy** and to Britten, Finzi and Holst, and to Schubert, Mozart, Weber and Mendelssohn from Sinfonia Viva with Nicholas Kok, to Markus Stenz and the Hallé Orchestra, and also attends many Christmas concerts in the UK's Derby and Nottingham areas.

Suzanne Torrey listens to Barber, Schumann and Copland from David Fray, Marin Alsop and the Cleveland Orchestra, and also attends the orchestra's Christmas concert.

Maria Nockin visits the cinema in Arizona for Verdi's Falstaff in HD, live from New York.

Giuseppe Pennisi writes about comic operas in Berlin, Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*, Verdi's *La traviata* at the start of La Scala's new season and Verdi's *Ernani* in Rome.

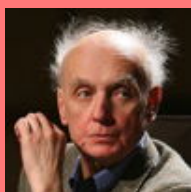
Browse all this month's live concert and opera reviews ...

MODULATION AS A RATE OF CHANGE

Igor Stravinsky's balletic masterwork *Petrouchka* is replete with brilliant orchestration, innovative settings of Russian folk tunes, and stunning harmonic effects. With respect to the latter, the composer's manifold ways of modulating between different pitch collections (eg diatonic, octatonic, whole-tone) provide fascinating material for discussion. Today we focus on one especially salient modulation from Tableau IV: *The Shrovetide Fair (Toward Evening)*. **More ...**



IN THE NEWS



We mark the passing of Wojciech Kilar, Zbigniew Karkowski, Sándor Szokolay, Tom Krause, Robert Allman, Toshiaki Tsushima, Oralia Domínguez, Elke Neidhardt, Bernard Parmegiani and Conrad Susa.

The choir of Hereford Cathedral returns to the Royal Military Chapel in London for a special advent service. **Read this news in detail ...**

COMING SOON — LIVE PERFORMANCE IN JANUARY

New Year music in Viennese style is performed around the world, including the Vienna Philharmonic's traditional New Year's day concert with Daniel Barenboim, the Taiwan National Symphony Orchestra's *Shall We Dance*, and a series of concerts in various UK cities by the London Gala Orchestra.

The Somerset Chamber Choir is set to produce *Light out of darkness* at King's College Chapel, Taunton, UK - a feast of music for Christmas, New Year, Epiphany and Candlemas.

Karl Jenkins' seventieth birthday is honoured in New York, with a celebration at Carnegie Hall featuring Jenkins' *Stabat Mater*, the *Benedictus* from *The Armed Man* and the first US performance of *The Bards of Wales*. The same group - Distinguished Concerts Orchestra and Distinguished Concerts Singers International - is also performing music by Mark Hayes, Dan Forrest (the first New York performance of *Requiem for the Living*) and Randall Thompson.

The Sauk Rapids-Rice High School Choir appears in Rome, singing Scarlatti, Grossi da Viadana, Aguiar and Praetorius.

George Vass' Bushey Symphony Orchestra plays Mendelssohn, Vaughan Williams, Tchaikovsky and Strauss in Hertfordshire, UK, and in London Clara Rodriguez plays Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata at St Martin-in-the-Fields and Inga Liukaityte, prizewinner at the recent BPSE Senior Intercollegiate Piano Competition, plays Messiaen, Beethoven and Scriabin at St James Piccadilly.

View our listings ...

Add your concert here if not listed ...

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.

Read us at www.mvdaily.com

Get in touch