

The Music & Vision

Classical Music Newsletter

Near Perfect — Issue 75, 1 June 2014



A scene from Act II of *La Cenerentola* at New York Metropolitan Opera, in which Juan Diego Flórez as Prince Ramiro ties the whole cast up with a silver cord. Photo © 2012 Ken Howard

'Designer Maurizio Balò's costumes were amusing and appropriate. Cesare Lievi's production is getting old and the edges of its scenery are becoming worn. Things show up on the cinema screen that would never be seen from a front orchestra seat, however, Gigi Saccomandi's atmospheric lighting designs covered most of the problems. Stage director Eric Einhorn and choreographer Daniela Schiavone know how to make opera funny and the result was hysterical when Prince Ramiro literally tied the cast up with a long cord.' — Maria Nockin experiences a near perfect performance of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, and Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, both transmitted live in high definition from New York to her local cinema in Arizona.

Roderic Dunnett enjoys Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* at Kentish Opera and the mesmerising power of Julian Anderson's new opera *Thebans* at English National Opera. Giuseppe Pennisi features twentieth century operas and Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* in Rome, a new Italian production of Don Giovanni, and is impressed by the metaphysical realm of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Malcolm Miller listens to piano music by Busoni/Bach, Beethoven and Liszt from Diederick Potgieter. Mike Wheeler listens to Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov and Britten from Natalie Clein, the Moscow Philharmonic and Yuri Simonov, and to Sibelius, Rachmaninov and Tchaikovsky from the Philharmonia Orchestra. Keith Bramich visits the UK's North Downs to hear orchestral music by Voříšek, Eric Coates, Vivaldi and Bizet.

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

ALEXANDER IVASHKIN

Howard Smith reviews the career of **Alexander Ivashkin**, who died in January 2014.

San Diego Opera has raised enough funds to mount a reduced 2015 season. The Takács String Quartet is awarded the Wigmore Hall Medal. Concerto Caledonia uncovers Captain Tobias Hume's musical treasure trove.

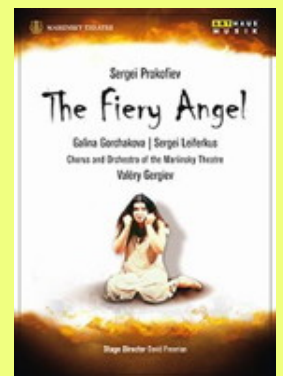
We mark the passing of Malcolm MacDonald, David Weiss, Anand Modak, Uña Ramos, Franz-Paul Decker, Nicola Ghiuselev, George Christie and Antony Hopkins.

[Read this news in detail ...](#)

FORCEFUL AND COMPELLING - PROKOFIEV'S 'THE FIERY ANGEL' ON DVD

'This demon-haunted work was written in the neighbourhood of the glorious Bavarian monastery at Ettal, in the grounds of which I have wandered many a contemplative hour. Prokofiev was also within easy reach of Oberammergau, where he saw the Passion Play. Some of the music was ready to hand in a 'white quartet' he had started but abandoned, suitable for what remained of Renata's sanity and for the nuns assembling in all innocence within the convent.

'In a Cologne not yet adorned with its magnificent cathedral and all too neighbourly railway, the commanding Ruprecht of Sergei Leiferkus has heard the demented ravings of Galina Gorchakova as Renata. Well might she rave, as the stage director David Freeman has filled the background with a host of near-naked skinhead devils, omnipresent and always ready to take a sinister part in the action. Renata explains her vision of a fiery angel whom she will eventually love in human form.' — Robert Anderson finds this Mariinsky Theatre performance under Valéry Gergiev forceful and compelling — a magnificent tribute to dedicated teamwork. **More ...**



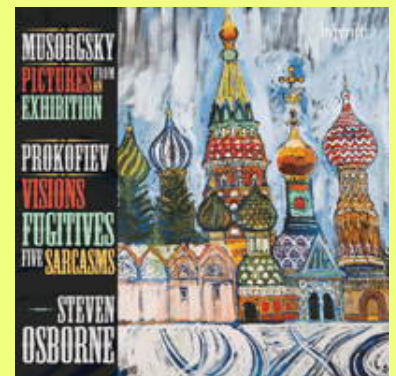
Gerald Fenech is impressed by the sweeping drama of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* from La Scala Milan. Both DVDs are on the Arthaus Musik label.

[Browse our recent DVD reviews ...](#)

SUBTLE NUANCE - STEVEN OSBORNE PLAYS MUSORGSKY AND PROKOFIEV

'When hearing previous recordings of the piano version of *Pictures*, I've missed the colors and dynamics of Ravel's orchestration. Steven Osborne's performance is so persuasive, that while listening I never even think of Ravel. And now, the orchestral version sounds a bit clumsy and bloated unless the performance is exceptional. Osborne even holds his own in the bombastic finale where an orchestra might seem to have an overwhelming advantage.' — Ron Bierman recommends Steven Osborne's Hyperion release of Musorgsky and Prokofiev.

Howard Smith listens to music for seafarers (*Convivium*) and to Brahms chamber music (MSR Classics).



Andrew Schartmann praises two more releases in James Brawn's exceptional *Beethoven Odyssey* series on MSR Classics, listens to Beethoven and Romberg from Peter Sheppard Skærved and Aaron Shorr (*Métier*) and discovers the expressive potential of music by English composer Robert Hanson (*Cala*).

Robert Anderson delights in Ana-Marija Markovina's complete C P E Bach solo piano music (Hänssler Classic) but has some reservations about the same composer's music for solo voice and clavichord (Toccata Classics). On Navona Records he appreciates Richard Stoltzman's playing of the very practical Hindemith.

Gerald Fenech is entertained by orchestral music of Knecht and Philidor (Naxos), finds Thomas Dausgaard's Schubert symphonies 'performances of unwavering focus' (BIS) and finds Buxtehude from Magdalen College Oxford 'consistently refreshing and spontaneous' (Opus Arte).

Browse our latest CD reviews ...

ASK ALICE - BBC YOUNG MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR

'I practically corpsed listening to Nicola normally-more-honest-than-this Benedetti and Alison "pretty clueless" Balsom fret and fret about how the judges — poor pets!!! — could cope with such a difficult decision.

'Listen, I not only dislike the Rachmaninov (pretentious and portentous) variations for piano and orchestra, I actively loathe them. Rachmaninov at his worst.

'But so stunning was Martin James Bartlett's delicacy, touch, humour, and panache that I actually enjoyed the silly piece. *That's* how great he already is — at seventeen.' — Alice McVeigh on the BBC's recent competition.



She also comments on musical training increasing blood flow to the brain, and on playing cello to the very sick. **More ...**

Any classical music-related questions? Ask Alice here ...

COMING SOON — LIVE PERFORMANCE IN JUNE 2014

Coming soon — live performance in June 2014

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.

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