

The Music & Vision

Classical Music Newsletter

JUDITH WEIR – Issue 76, 1 July 2014



Judith Weir. Photo © Chris Christodoulou

It was announced on 29 June 2014 that Judith Weir would become the UK's next (and first ever female) Master of the Queen's Music.

British composer Judith Weir was born in Cambridge to Scottish parents on 11 May 1954, studying a little with John Tavener whilst she was still at school, and playing oboe with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. At Cambridge she studied music with Robin Holloway, and also attended the Tanglewood Summer School for studies with Gunther Schuller.

Weir's musical language is conservative, and she has the knack (similar to Benjamin Britten) of making simple ideas appear mysterious. She's best known for her operatic and theatre work, often inspired by medieval history and Scottish traditional culture, but is also known for orchestral, chamber and more recently choral music.

She has held positions as artistic director of the Spitalfields Festival (1995-2000) and composer in association with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (1995-98), and has also written music for the Boston Symphony, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra. In 2008 she was the subject of a BBC composer weekend at London's Barbican Centre. She has also taught as a visiting professor at Cardiff, Harvard and Princeton.

In 1997 she received the Lincoln Center's Stoeger Prize and in 2001 the South Bank Show music award. In 2007 she received the Queen's Medal for Music.

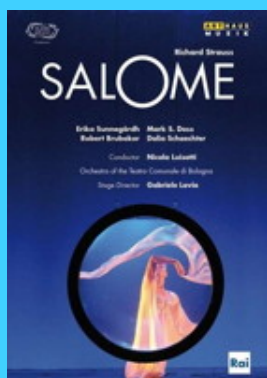
In her new appointment, Weir succeeds a long line of historical British composers, beginning with Nicholas Lanier in 1626, but also including William Boyce, Edward Elgar, Walford Davies, Arnold Bax and Arthur Bliss. The post was traditionally held for life - the longest serving being John Eccles, who served four monarchs - but with the appointment of Peter Maxwell Davies in 2004, the post became a ten-year appointment, and Maxwell Davies completed his duties in March 2014.

Elsewhere, Roland Dyens and ten other tutors will give masterclasses at the 2014 Livorno Festival. The Alice and Eleonore Schoenfeld International String Competition is to take place in Harbin, China, from 18-25 August.

We mark the passing of Julius Rudel, Mary Rodgers, Denise Shepherd, Lee Hyla, Pierre D'Archaubeau, Gerd Zacher, Ivo Vinco, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos and Elodie Lauten.

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

EMOTIONALLY SAPPING - RICHARD STRAUSS' *SALOME* ON DVD



'Nicola Luisotti keeps events moving briskly, and while he creates a brooding effect the Comunale Orchestra responds with an austere grandeur that brushes aside the score's huge technical demands. Costumes, lighting and choreography are first rate. A fine and emotionally sapping *Salome* that should not be missed.' - Gerald Fenech, writing about Arthaus Musik's recording from Bologna.

'Of course the Bavarian singers and players do their stuff for the conductor Kent Nagano, and there is a fine team to take the main parts in the opera. But there is no visual counterpart at all to the clangour of the Kremlin bells, or any sense of the

brooding thoughts that exercise Orthodox monks in the semi-darkness of their cells. Boris is a tragic figure of extraordinary stature that attracted such towering musicians of the past as Chalyapin and Cristoff. Alexander Tsymbalyuk is no mean successor; yet he is hamstrung by having to pretend that the Tsar's words and actions take place in quite the wrong context and century. I was surprised how quickly my patience ran out.' - Robert Anderson, disturbed by Kent Nagano and Bayerische Staatsoper's *Boris Godunov* on Bel Air Classiques.



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

SPONSORED FEATURES - JAMES BRAWN'S *BEETHOVEN ODYSSEY*



'... a profound — almost spiritual — connection to the music ...' Two more of Andrew Schartmann's reviews of James Brawn's *Beethoven Odyssey* CDs on MSR Classics have received sponsorships. There are, so far, three discs in Brawn's series. Reviews of all three CDs now have sponsors, which means that Andrew's very positive reviews are all available to non-subscribers, and are also featured at the top of the *Sponsored Features* box on the *M&V* homepage.



ENSEMBLE - MORE POWERFUL - *CARMEN* IN BIZET'S ORIGINAL VERSION



A scene from Bizet's 'Carmen' at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Photo © 2014 Luciano Romano

'Musically, the production includes orchestral accompaniments for the recitatives composed by the well-known but rather modest musician Ernest Giraud for the 1875 Vienna performances; it is fair to remember that in the contract with Vienna Opera, Bizet had endeavored to compose music for the recitatives but died before writing them. The Giraud version is generally performed and it is a must when dealing with an international cast not fully mastering French. The Rome production does away with the softening and the embellishments of the Giraud orchestration (for Vienna the good man adapted the score too). Instead, with Bizet's rather rough original orchestration (as in this production), the music drama is more powerful. The musical direction (by French conductor Emmanuel Villaume) is as close as possible to that originally conceived by Bizet before his premature death. Villaume, the Teatro dell'Opera orchestra and the chorus (directed by Roberto Gabiani) as well as the children's chorus (directed by José Maria Sciuto) and the soloists show that Bizet was at the peak of his inventive power and bestowed such a melodic, harmonic and orchestral richness on this score that every number seems to be shaped to perfection. The production does not offer the rather conventional reading of *Carmen* as a precursor of verismo. Instead, the musical direction shows that expressionism has a tribute to pay to *Carmen* — a point to stress about this specific production.'

— Giuseppe Pennisi in Rome, who also reviews the mixed reception in Palermo to an important new production of Bellini's *Norma*, enjoys *Orfeo e Euridice* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, surveying the different versions of Gluck's opera, and, at the same venue, reviews Prokofiev's *The Love of Three Oranges*.



Naomi O'Connell as the versatile coloratura La Corilla attracts officers Quirijn de Lang (D'Arlange) and Andrew Glover (Bergerac) plus aghast Dragoons in Offenbach's 'Vert-Vert' at Garsington Opera. Photo © 2014 Mike Hoban.

'Murray's proxy-parrot Vert-Vert apart, there is a palpable star of this show. Irish soprano Naomi O'Connell — now hugely in demand in America — is the feisty popular singer La Corilla, whose coloratura *tours-de-force* at the Lion d'Or — the grenadiers' tankard-clinking tavern — simply blew the lid off this performance. My, did O'Connell raise the temperature — it's a terrific role to play, one of the strongest bits in the text; producing at the same time a glorious response from Garsington's regular Rossini conductor David Parry — to whom, thanks to a happy chance (a musical legacy of scores; it was he who introduced *La Périchole*), we owe this whole new interest in Offenbach's music.

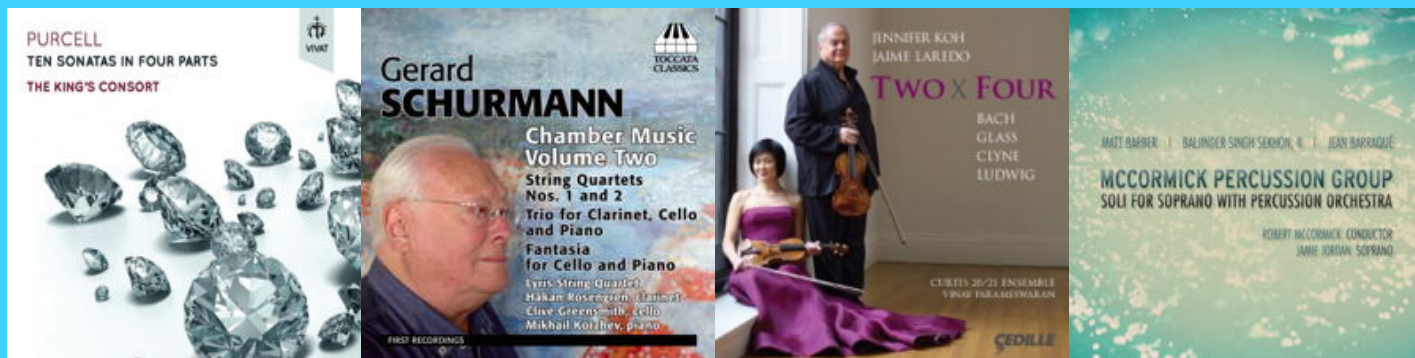
'Under the enthusiastic and here pioneering Parry there were some joyous moments from the ample orchestra pit (Douglas Boyd conducts *Fidelio*; Garry Walker the *Vixen*): some of the arias, including d'Arlange's (sounding a bit like 'Annie Laurie' with Peter Sparks' clarinet, so scrumptious), and the two dragoon officers' spiffing duet, were characterfully accompanied; and the same went for Vert-Vert's solos, for the potty stage business typical of Dolton's ('It is a key ... It is a key') and Wilde's dotty antics. Mimi's solos, and Fflur Wyn's whole demeanour, were to be treasured.'

— Roderic Dunnett reporting from Garsington Opera at Wormsley on Offenbach's rarely seen *Vert-Vert*.

Mike Wheeler listens to the Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Cristian Mandeal and by Mark Elder, and Kelly Ferjutz spends a dazzling ninety minutes in the company of Franz Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra for Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

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

CD REVIEWS



'... irrepressibly elegant and restrained.' - Gerald Fenech recommends Vivat's new Purcell disc from The King's Consort and the re-release of Marin Marais' *Alcione* from Jordi Savall's *Le Concert des Nations* on Alia Vox.

'The percussion work on this album is of a very high standard ...' - Paul Sarcich returns to the McCormick Percussion Group on Ravello Records, this time with guest soprano Jamie Jordan.

'... potent, consuming, thematically cogent and burning with zeal.' - Howard Smith is impressed by Tocca Classics' latest disc of the music of Gerard Schurmann, and also recommends Jennifer Koh and Jamie Laredo's 'Two x Four' on Cedille - music by Bach, Glass, Clyne and Ludwig, and Halida Dinova's *Masterpieces for Children* on Cantius Classics. Howard also listens to Shostakovich and Schnittke from the Pacifica Quartet, again on Cedille, to Amy Porter's *In Translation* - Bach cello suites for flute on Equilibrium, to opera transcriptions for piano, played by Andrew Wright on Divine Art, and finds searching depth and abiding consolation in Brahms' *German Requiem* from Warsaw forces conducted by Antoni Wit on Naxos.

Robert Anderson discovers an abundance of riches in *Orquestango* from the Binelli-Ferman Duo on 4Tay, and Andrew Schartmann listens to Clementi piano sonatas played by Ian Hominick on MSR Classics.

Browse our latest CD reviews ...

ASK ALICE - 'THE BROKEN CONSORT' ON HELIOS

'There's a marvellous sense of freedom and intuitive movement in these [pieces], and the playing is provocatively beautiful. (The line up was Judy Tarling and Theresa Caudle, violins, Mark Caudle, bass viol, Paul O'Dette, Elizabeth Kenny and Fred Jacobs, theorbos and Peter Holman on chamber organ, with Susanna Pell as second bass viol in some of the pieces.) The violins answer each other as if improvising above a bass never obtrusive but always solid. It's absolutely 'whole' in a way that might well be envied even by top international string quartets. The 'fantasy' element is always to the fore, even in the faster movements, and the flow has an intensely human feel: a sense of breathing and life to it. I find that I write fiction to it better than to any other music I know, even preferring it to Bach's cantatas.' — Alice McVeigh recommends Peter Holman's 'The Broken Consort'.

She also writes about Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* at Covent Garden. **More ...**



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

COMING SOON — LIVE PERFORMANCE IN JULY 2014

From harpsichord duos in Tallinn from Imbi Tarum and Julia Ageyeva Hess to Richard Goode playing Mozart, J S Bach and Schubert in New York, and from the Gluck/Berlioz *Orphée et Eurydice* in Brussels and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in Luxembourg to Ballet Lorraine in Tel-Aviv, we list concert performances all over the world.

Derbyshire's Buxton Festival runs from 11-27 July, and we hope to publish coverage of several events. Haarlem's International Organ Festival runs from 12-26 July, Ihlombe, the South African Choral Festival, runs from 16-27 July, and there are many other music festivals running throughout the summer.

There's a birthday concert of John McCabe's choral music from George Vass and the Canterbury Chamber Choir, and the same composer's *Songs of the Garden* performed by Mousai, both in Kent, UK. The London Concord Singers give the first performance of Judith Bingham's *The Very Distant Days*.

New York Choral Society's 'Summer Sings' encompass Handel's *Messiah* and Verdi's Requiem, and the first performances of John Luther Adams' *Sila: The Breath of the World* can be experienced in the same city.

Coming soon — live performance in July 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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MUSIC & VISION

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Tuesday 1 July 2014



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* Anniversaries: Nikolai Demidenko; Pierre Monteux; Hans Werner Henze; Nicola Benedetti; Erik Satie; Emile Jacques-Dalcroze

* Today's concerts: Billroth String Quartet; London, UK; Duo Imbi Tarum and Julia Ageyeva Hess; Tallinn and Tartu, EE; Gluck / Berlioz: *Orphée et Eurydice*; Brussels, BE

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