



The Music & Vision

classical music newsletter

Christopher Hogwood – Issue 79, 1 October 2014

English conductor, editor, keyboard player, musicologist and writer Christopher Hogwood has died, aged seventy-three, following a short illness. He founded, with David Munrow, the Early Music Consort in 1967. Hogwood also founded the Academy of Ancient Music in 1973, remaining music director until 2006, and continued to perform and record with the group until 2013, with more than two hundred recordings on Decca. Once described as the 'Von Karajan of Early Music', Christopher Hogwood later expanded into other areas, conducting opera from 1983 onwards, including Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* in Madrid in 2009, and also concentrated on the music of Britten, Copland, Honegger, Martinu and Tippett.

Born in Nottingham on 10 September 1941, Hogwood studied music and classical literature at Cambridge, then performance and conducting with Thurston Dart, Raymond Leppard, Mary Potts, Rafael Puyana, Gustav Leonhardt and Zuzana Ruzickova.

Hogwood was artistic director of the Mostly Mozart Festival (Barbican Centre, London, 1983-5). He conducted regularly in the USA from 1981, and was artistic director of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society from 1986 until 2001 and then conductor laureate for the rest of his life. He was also musical director of Minnesota's St Paul Chamber Orchestra (1988-92).

As an editor, Hogwood was known for his work with music by John Dowland, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Paul Wranitzky and Felix Mendelssohn.

Much honoured, Hogwood was appointed CBE in 1989, was awarded the University of California's Award for Artistic Excellence in 1996, received the Handel Prize from the city of Halle in 2008 and the Beijing Music Festival's Artist of the Year award in 2010. He had professorships at Cambridge, the Royal Academy of Music and King's College London, Gresham College London and Cornell University.

A VERY LUCKY MAN — SAIMIR PIRGU TALKS TO MARIA NOCKIN

Albanian lyric tenor Saimir Pirgu has sung in the world's most important opera houses. He began his career as a protégé of legendary tenor Luciano Pavarotti. When the famous tenor was at a spa, he asked for a singer to come and perform for him. Pirgu's teacher sent his eighteen-year-old student. Pavarotti liked the young man's singing so much that he became his mentor. Pirgu says that was the luckiest moment of his life!



Saimir Pirgu. Photo © Fadil Bersha

'When I was eighteen and a Brunetti student in Bolzano, Luciano was on vacation in nearby Merano. During his free time the great tenor liked to listen to new voices. Since he had heard that there was a very young Albanian tenor studying at Bolzano, he sought me out and we met. I could not believe my good fortune because he wanted me to sing for him. From that time on, whenever his schedule permitted, we worked together. He taught me so much, coaching me in roles and in stylistic matters. I had the good luck to study all of the parts that have been important in my career thus far with him.' **More ...**

LOVE COMES STEALING IN — WOLFGANG OSTBERG

'I had the fortune during the 1990s to befriend a distinguished Berlin Metropol Theatre entertainer, Wolfgang Ostberg. Of small stature, very agile and with a phonetic ear, his versatility took him often beyond the line of duty, such as swinging from chandeliers or playing drunken jailors climbing on a wardrobe in *Fledermaus* or "one-legged" and finding a comic Saxon accent for Carl Millöcker's *Beggar Student*.

'I first saw him in Paul Lincke's *Frau Luna*, Berlin's inimitable moon farce, as an officious but amorous Berlin policeman in a balcony scene with a compliant bargirl. He doubled as a visiting Lunar official who once seduced a maid in Berlin's Zoo Garden:

*Softly, silently, like a thief in darkest night,
With the old seductive tunes, Love comes stealing in.*



Wolfgang Ostberg (centre) as a Berlin policeman in *Frau Luna* at Berlin Metropol Theatre. © Günter Gueffroy

'As it had occurred in the dark, they don't recognise each other until years later, a "touching" event when on the moon he falls into her arms, to her reproachful, lingering waltz *O, Theophil!* How could you ...

'These and Offenbach's *Madame Favart* are among the best of operetta libretti, very entertaining comedies or farces, even without their accompanying music. The latter, with a respectful glance at Mozart, is a late work (1878), in part almost a delicate chamber work far removed even in melody from the drums, panache and hyperbole of Offenbach's masterwork, *The Grand Duchess*. It is critically noted for its musical consistency, not its "hits". Its gentle *Rondo des vignes* was sung by Yvonne Printemps in the film *La valse de Paris* (1949), a romanticised view of the promiscuous Offenbach.'

— George Colerick makes his first appearances in *M&V* with this **Wolfgang Ostberg feature**, and also writes about **Bizet, Ivan the Terrible and the Nazis**.

CD REVIEWS — BLOWN AWAY



'I was "blown away" at hearing phenomenally gifted Italian/Brazilian flautist Marina Piccinini in Niccolò Paganini's breath-defying Twenty-Four Caprices, arranged here for flute by Piccinini herself. The forty-six-year-old musician is clearly a "Mullova of the winds", blessed with hypnotic interpretative gifts and with flawless, unexcelled technical skills. I doubt if we'll encounter a greater gift of recorded, instrumental artistry in 2014.' — Howard Smith recommends this disc on the Avie label, and also listens to orchestral and vocal music by Dohnányi on Naxos, to Hampson Sisler on MSR Classics, to the Wihan Quartet playing arrangements of Beatles songs on Nimbus Alliance, and to Caitriona O'Leary's *Sleepsongs* on Heresy Records.

'This was a very interesting album. I have often admired some of the German close harmony vocal ensembles and looked forward to reviewing this one. I was not disappointed. There is an amazing mix of style and some of the best vocalization I have heard. But ... the part that I thought I would enjoy the most (songs of Mendelssohn, Brahms, Schubert, Bruckner and Reger), I actually thought was less successful than what was to follow. The programme is interesting and is drawn from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 — "To everything there is a season".' - Geoff Pearce listens to Vocalensemble Lalá on Hänssler Classic, and also to Greg Bowers' *Rational Passions* on Navona.

'Sylvia Schwartz was Spanish-born, received her early training in Madrid, and is now resident soprano at Deutsche Staatsoper in Berlin. Hers may not yet be a familiar name to music collectors, but she is accumulating quite a resumé for a young singer. Barely in her thirties, she's already performed with Sir Colin Davis, Pierre Boulez and Gustavo Dudamel. This recording leaves little doubt about her affinity for Spanish music. She begins with a familiar melody, more often heard as part of the Goyescas piano suite. Granados also used it in a one-act opera of the same name, and that is the version heard here. Although Spain dominates the release, the emotional moods are mixed, as is quickly shown on the second track when Schwartz sings — her man is ugly ... but discrete.' — Ron Bierman finds atmosphere and rhythm in this Hyperion release.

Gerald Fenech recommends Margret Köll's harp music from early baroque Naples on Accent, and Sibelius orchestral music from the Lahti Symphony Orchestra and Osmo Vänskä on BIS; Julian Jacobson listens to John Whitfield and James Winn's Brahms cello sonatas on MSR Classics; Stephen Francis Vasta finds sensitivity and tenderness in Richard Strauss' *Eine Alpensinfonie* on BR Klassik.

Browse our latest CD reviews ...

THE NEW ZEALAND STRING QUARTET — DISARMING EASE

'Springtime's Salon/Series 2014 has brought the superlative New Zealand String Quartet (NZSQ) to eight nationwide centres as unlike as Geraldine, population 2,301 and Auckland, population 1.5 million. In doing so it had devised *Salon 2*, a programme cemented with solo J S Bach movements interleaved by complete works of Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Hugo Wolf (1860-1903), Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) and Pulitzer-prize-winning Chinese/American composer Zhou Long (born Beijing, 1953). By turns the NZSQ personnel presented items with disarming ease.' — Howard Smith was in the audience in Wellington, and also heard a joyous Haydn *Creation* from the Orpheus Choir of Wellington and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

Giuseppe Pennisi listens to 'an interesting production but one which retains only a thin connection with *King Arthur* as conceived by Dryden and Purcell', visits Sagra Musicale Umbra for the Francesco Siciliani Prize and for Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and sends two reports from the 2014 Rossini Opera Festival.

Mike Wheeler listened to a recital by pianist Antony Peebles, and was also at Peter Gould's last full-scale organ recital as Master of the Music at Derby Cathedral :

'With one romantic blockbuster opening the programme, another one closed it. Guilmant's First Sonata is a big, rhetorical piece, and it got playing to match ... the performance took in every aspect of the work, from the "gentle pastorale" (Peter Gould's description in his spoken introduction) of the middle movement, to the unstoppable spinning momentum of the finale. It was a big statement for Peter Gould to go out on. This was his last full-scale recital in Derby Cathedral before stepping down as Master of the Music at the end of December, after thirty-two years in the post. The standing ovation and bouquet he received at the end were entirely apt.'

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

NEWS AND EVENTS

We mark the passing of Christopher Hogwood, Francisco Feliciano, Antonín Tucapský and Salah El Mahdi.

VIVAT announces Viola de Hoog's recording of J S Bach's Six Suites for Solo Cello, students are invited to join Morley Collge's orchestral conducting class in London, and the sixty-third Wexford Festival Opera runs from 22 October until 2 November 2014.

Read this news in detail ...

Live performance in October 2014

Add concerts here if not listed

ASK ALICE — LITTLE RITUALS

'... I was a performer ... and I used to have little rituals, such as eating pasta before a recital and not drinking coffee (even in the morning) on the day of a concerto, and I wondered how widespread this was. Now I'm older it seems pretty silly, really!'

'I can't answer your question for sure, but I *suspect* it's very widespread. Why? Because musicians tend towards the eccentric, and even the average person can be pretty superstitious.' — Alice McVeigh, who also writes about trouble in Atlanta and blocked emails, and explains why she didn't attend any of this year's *BBC Proms*.

Read more ...

Ask Alice your classical music-related questions ...

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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