

The Music & Vision

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Americans in the Emerald Isle — Issue 80, 1 November 2014



'I was completely unprepared for Northern Ireland, first of all for its beauty and its greenness ... Secondly, for its people ... The entire orchestra went out of its way — yes, even the brass and timpani people — to say hi, and thanks for coming and hope you enjoy being here.

'The orchestra was not only marvelous but full of wonderful people ... The couple of weeks of my trial there were a revelation: even people in

restaurants, in the street even, were welcoming. The cello section, led now as it was then by John Leeming, was practically a family ... In fact, the orchestra has always had a family feel, as the *only* symphony orchestra in Northern Ireland. They play chamber music together, teach at the same places, marry each other and go to pubs together coming back from concerts in Coleraine.

'So I was utterly shocked to learn, just in the past couple of weeks, that they are in such horrific financial trouble (BBC not helping, government cuts in the arts) that they might go bankrupt in November!!!! This: the only orchestra in Northern Ireland, the benchmark for Northern Irish culture!!!! This: the source of music lessons and inspiration for a whole region — and such magic people!!! (Of course the administrators aren't to know about the people, but the music? Shouldn't they have a clue about the standard and the importance of the music?)

'Please, please, once you read this, and if you haven't already, sign this petition and get in touch with the Facebook page below. "Else another light might go out" (John Steinbeck)'

**Read Alice McVeigh's
complete article**

**Sign the petition
(search for Ulster Orchestra)**

**The Ulster Orchestra
on Facebook**

WELCOME RARITIES — JAMES SOHRE AT WEXFORD FESTIVAL OPERA

'Before a note sounded at Wexford Festival Opera, the Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht got the season off to a rousing start by announcing that the venue had been designated henceforth as "Ireland's National Opera House".

'After cheering that news to the rafters, we settled in so the industrious company could show just how they helped facilitate that honor by doing what they do best: explore little-known works of lyric theatre and present them in fully-staged professional productions with exciting young singing stars and a festival quality orchestra. In a world where opera companies shy far, far away from including even one such rarity in a season weighted with bankable 'Top Ten Favorites', Wexford has celebrated sixty-three remarkable years triumphantly doing exactly the opposite. Wexford Festival Opera is surely an opera enthusiast's indispensable resource.

'A gala opening night found the troupe in stellar form with Antoine Mariotte's setting of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*. The composer studied with d'Indy, and he was clearly influenced by Massenet and Debussy. It was intriguing to see Mariotte select other sections and slants from the source of Wilde's play, that was also famously set by Richard Strauss. Here, characters are less eccentric, less sexed-up, but with a complex, almost neurotic emotional intensity. The sound palette is more muted, less bombastic. Among the unique musical effects is a brooding wordless chorus that provides an eerie under-pinning for Salomé's paeon to Iokanaan's severed head.' **Read more of Jim Sohre's review ...**



Na'ama Goldman in the title role of Antoine Mariotte's *Salomé* at Wexford Festival Opera. Photo © 2014 Clive Barda

Elsewhere, Maria Nockin finds wild beauty in New York Metropolitan Opera's Verdi *Macbeth*, streamed live to her local cinema in Arizona, complete with witches dressed as 1950s village ladies.

Malcolm Miller reports on the opening of English National Opera's 2014-15 season with David Alden's new production of Verdi's *Otello*, and listens to pianists Mariko Brown and Julian Jacobson in recital.

There's yet more Verdi from the Parma Verdi Festival, *La forza del destino*, rated highly by Giuseppe Pennisi, who also reports on Graham Vick's less-than-successful production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* from the Pergolesi Theatre in Jesi, and, from Naples, on Nicola De Giosa's nearly completely unknown comic opera *Don Checco*, full of irony.



A scene from Nicola De Giosa's *Don Checco* in Naples. Photo © 2014 Francesco Squeglia

Mike Wheeler listens to Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and to the wind quintet formed from the orchestra's principals, to a wide-ranging programme from Christopher Stripp and Lucy Colquhoun, to Brahms, Wagner and Sibelius from the Hallé Orchestra and Mark Elder, and to the Sitwell Singers' concert setting Brahms in an early music context. **Browse our latest concert and opera reviews ...**

WORDS OF CONSOLATION — BRAHMS ON DVD

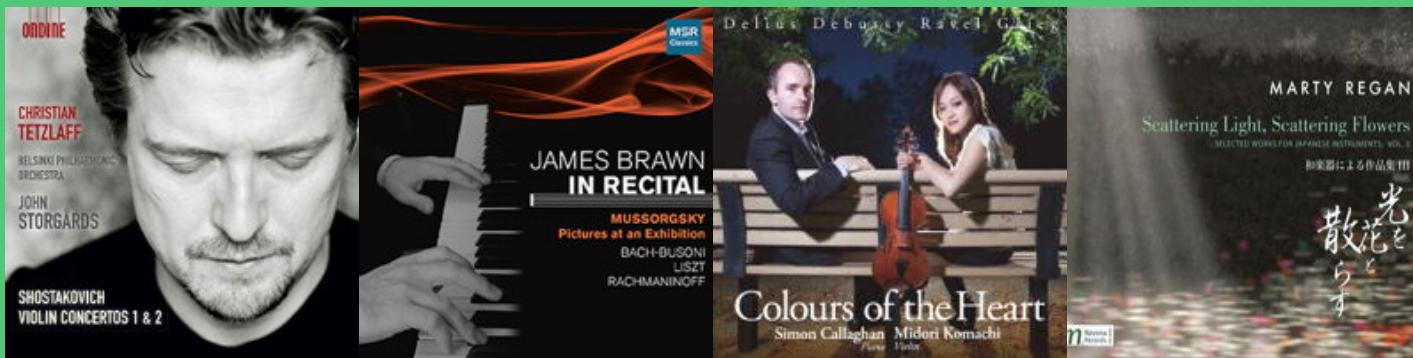
'This is a momentous performance of *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Berlin Philharmonic and Claudio Abbado in the Grand Hall of the Vienna Musikverein (1997) marking the centenary of Johannes Brahms' death. Recognizing this occasion the Viennese audience observed a long appreciative pause before applause broke out.

'Full of symphonic and choral inspiration, *Ein Deutsches Requiem* is substantially responsible for Brahms' fame as a composer of international repute; consequently it deserves a place in any serious music-lover's CD/DVD collection.' — Howard Smith is impressed by this recording on EuroArts Music International.

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CD REVIEWS — FINE INTERPRETATIONS



'Zhdanov in the Soviet Union was a cultural monster, and yet he did ensure that Russian composers avoided till later the twelve-tone blight that crippled so many musicians in the West. If official criticism behind the Iron Curtain was harsh (in fact it see-sawed capriciously), there were always the desk drawers to house works that might not receive approval for the moment. In lands of comparative freedom, the ready chance of a first performance too often ensured it was also the last. Prokofiev's long period of initial fame in the West fortified him to some extent against the onslaught of Soviet barbs; Shostakovich was helplessly their victim.' — Robert Anderson admires Christian Tetzlaff's performances of Shostakovich on the Ondine label.

'When James Brawn released the first two volumes of his Beethoven Odyssey, he established himself as one of the greatest living interpreters of Hans von Bülow's 'New Testament'. As we eagerly awaited the third installment in that series, Brawn gave us another recording, this time of music by Bach, Liszt, Mussorgsky, and Rachmaninoff. And it just so happens to be brilliant. Rarely does a performance make words seem so frivolous, but here we are. I shall try, nevertheless, to offer some remarks on the veritable *event* to which my ears bore witness.' — Andrew Schartmann recommends James Brawn in Recital on MSR Classics.

'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.

'The Debussy is one of the finest interpretations I have ever heard, and certainly the most interesting. At times very restrained, and elsewhere bold and virtuosic, but without ever being brash or flashy, somehow all the interesting textures, changes of mood and bursts of colour are so well brought to life. I felt so musically satisfied at the end of this work.' — Geoff Pearce is completely captivated by Midori Komachi and Simon Callaghan's *Colours of the Heart*.

'Listeners tend to like what sounds familiar to them. Different scales, instruments seldom played in the West, and that wildly wide vibrato may be off-putting to some. But if so, give it a chance. A few hearings should be enough to convince even skeptics that Marty Regan is using those exotic elements to create beautiful and exciting music. Highly recommended.' — Ron Bierman listens to *Scattering Light, Scattering Flowers* on Navona Records.

Gerald Fenech listens to the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge on harmonia mundi, and to Benjamin Nicholas playing the organ at Merton College, Oxford.

Howard Smith listens to the '...fantastical carnival of sound, style and social critique' that is Kevin Malone's *The Music of 9/11* on Metier, and to the outstanding string writing of William Zinn, as heard by the Wihan Quartet on Nimbus Alliance.

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SIBELIUS AND MYTH

'In Lemminkainen's dealings with The Maidens of Saari the theme of two-sided infidelity enables Sibelius to structure the developing conflict around two melodies within a hostile landscape which might suggest Lapland. Lemminkainen arrives confident, with a jaunty, upward-striving theme, but is outwitted towards a slowly unravelling climax. *Lemminkainen in Tuonela* (the land of the dead, like the Greek Hades) has most sombre orchestral harmonies, and this time, the hero has no muse in an episode unusual even in mythology. He is killed, then his mother puts his bones together again and he comes back to life.' — George Colerick investigates. **Read more ...**



Akseli Gallen-Kallela's 1897 painting *Lemminkäinen's Mother*

VERY UNASSUMING - REMEMBERING JOHN RITCHIE

'I sang in a choir, and from time to time, when Professor Ritchie's music came our way, I always enjoyed singing it.

'His legacy is considerable, and he's remembered fondly by many NZ composers and other musicians who were influenced by him. I have played a reasonable amount of music written by his composer son Anthony, and whilst the music is quite different from that of his father, the influence is definitely there.

'I remember John Ritchie as a kindly and scholarly figure. He was very unassuming but made a real difference to many lives.' — Geoff Pearce remembers the influential New Zealand composer and teacher John Ritchie, who died on 29 September 2014. **Read more ...**

NEWS AND EVENTS

We mark the passing of Stephen Paulus, Pavle Merkù, Mats Rondin, Anita Cerquetti, Petr Skoumal, Kresimir Sipusch and Konrad Boehmer.

The original signed manuscript of Malcolm Arnold's Symphony No 7 is for sale.

The trustees of the Schellhorn Trust announce the 2015 inaugural Schellhorn Prize for Sacred Music Composition.

American pianists Susan Merdinger and Steven Greene release a new four-hands-at-one-piano CD.

Receive 65% off the price of Bill Neely's *Adventures in Classical Music* - an online course on the history of classical music.

Read this news in detail ... Live performance in November 2014 Add concerts 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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Recent Articles

- Plangent Atmosphere - A duet recital by Mariko Brown and Julian Jacobson, heard by Malcolm Miller
- Ask Alice - On the future of the Ulster Orchestra, with classical music agony aunt Alice McVeigh
- Ensemble. High Fives - Mike Wheeler listens to Canada's National Arts Centre Orchestra and to the NAC Wind Quintet
- Ensemble. Exuberance in Reserve - A wide-ranging programme from Christopher Stripp and Lucy Colquhoun, heard by Mike Wheeler



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