

François Bayle



The Music & Vision

classical music newsletter

Box of Wonders – Issue 85, 1 April 2015

Giuseppe Pennisi reports: 'The thirty-first annual festival, Printemps des Arts de Monte-Carlo (20 March-12 April, every weekend, normally from Friday or even from Thursday to Sunday), is currently in progress. Its main feature is to juxtapose contemporary music (often new commissions) with great classics. This year there is an added feature: there is neither ballet nor opera, but concerts are performed in unusual settings such as the Oceanographic Museum, the Cathedral, the Conseil National (the Parliament of the Principality) and churches in smaller villages. Then, in parallel with the music festival, the National Museum carries a major modern art exhibit, and "street art" from the local Arts Academy is a prologue or an epilogue to concerts. Unexpectedly, the end of March was cold and rainy; an indirect incentive to visit art galleries and museums. Finally, to attract new audience (now around 12,000 each year), the festival management organizes chamber concerts in private homes before the start of the event, when artists are already in location for rehearsals.

'I was at the festival on the first weekend, 20-22 March 2015, when three new commissions, receiving their world premieres, were confronted with compositions by Bach, Sibelius and Donatoni as well as less known baroque musicians (such as Reinken and Buxtehude).

'The inauguration was a very long evening. It started in the Oceanographic Museum with the world premiere of *Deviner/Devenir*, two small pieces of electro acoustics by François Bayle (now eighty-three, one of the "founding fathers" of French contemporary music); a very impressive composition based on electronically molded sounds of the sea.

'After this introduction, the audience moved a few metres to the Cathedral for the first version of Bach's *Passion according to St John*. The German complex La Petite Bande performed it quite well under the expert baton of Sigiswald Kuijken. The four young soloists were high quality singers (Lucia Napoli, Stephan Scherpe, Minna Nyberg and Stefan Vock).'

Pennisi also listens to the French ensemble Les Paladins, and reports on a 'Philological *Tosca*' from Rome.



Jerôme Correas and Chantal Santon with Les Paladins. Photo © 2015 Damiano Rosa

Maria Nockin is delighted by *La donna del lago* from The Met: 'On 14 March 2015, Metropolitan Opera transmitted Rossini's *La donna del lago* live in HD to cinemas around the world ... Well-known soprano Patricia Racette hosted the transmission of the opera in which frequent host Joyce DiDonato sang the title character. The production by Paul Curran was designed for the much smaller stage of Santa Fe Opera, which produced it in 2013. The same production on the huge Met stage looked rather sparse. Kevin Knight's kilts were quite long and that is undoubtedly authentic. Nevertheless, the longer "skirt" and short socks did not help make Daniela Barcelona's Malcolm appear to be more masculine. His soft colored costumes for Elena, the Lady, were delightfully attractive, however. Duane Schuler's evocative lighting and Driscoll Otto's technically adroit projections helped the audience see the romance that Scott and Tottola found in the Scottish highlands. Joyce DiDonato sang a brilliant Elena. Her coloratura was positively enthralling and she energized her text with emotion. As James V, the father of Mary Queen of Scots, Juan Diego Flórez was DiDonato's perfect companion in fluid coloratura and dramatic verve. John Osborn was a mellifluous Roderigo di Dhu and Oren Gradus a stentorian Douglas D'Angus.'



From front left to front right: Daniela Barcelona as Malcolm, Joyce DiDonato as Elena, John Osborn as Roderigo and Oren Gradus as Duglas in Rossini's *La donna del lago* at New York Metropolitan Opera. Photo © 2015 Ken Howard

Mike Wheeler is impressed by Jo Davies' production of *The Marriage of Figaro* for Opera North, and experiences the same company's *La Vida Breve*, plus concerts and recitals by Jessie Richardson and Simon Callaghan, the Derwent Singers, Sophie Rosa playing Brahms' Violin Concerto, Alexandra Soumm, Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Mark Bebbington and Sinfonia Viva's schools residency project.

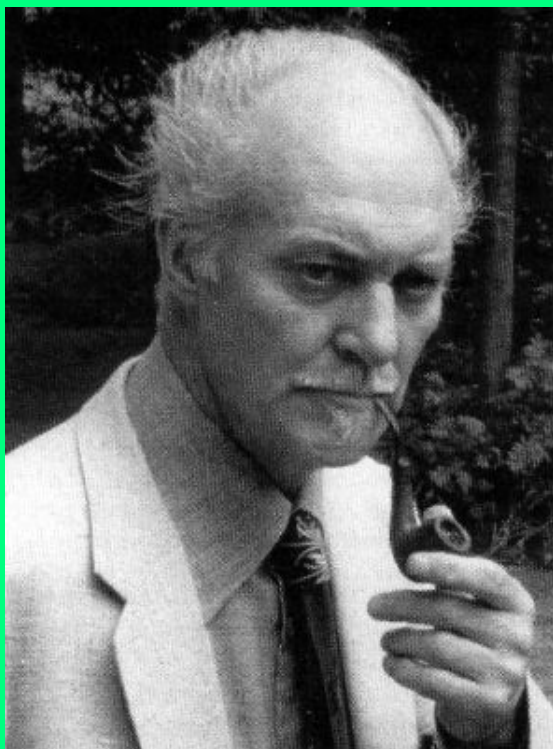
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Ronald Stevenson

'... surely among the very greatest of British musicians ...' — Patric Standford

The British composer, pianist, broadcaster, teacher and writer Ronald Stevenson, who died on 28 March 2015 at his home in the Scottish Borders, was born in Blackburn, Lancashire. Of Celtic heritage, he was Scottish on his father's side and Welsh on that of his mother. He studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music, discovered and helped to revive the works of Busoni, was friends with John Ogdon and corresponded with Percy Grainger.

Stevenson's many works include hundreds of compositions for solo piano, including the seventy-five minute Passacaglia on DSCH for piano, a large collection of songs, two piano concertos, cello and violin concertos and chamber music.

As a teacher, he lectured in composition at the University of Cape Town (1962-65), delivered seminars at Juilliard (1987) and created a course called *The Political Piano* at York University in the 1980s.

Stevenson gave many BBC radio programmes of Busoni's music, and scripted, introduced and performed as solo pianist in a ninety-minute Busoni BBC TV documentary. He also scripted and broadcast a series of radio programmes on the Scots Pipe, Harp and Fiddle.

We also mark the passing of Maria Radner, Oleg Bryzhak, Roy Douglas, Norman Scribner, Peter Katin, Ezra Laderman, Tod Dockstader and Tyzen Hsiao.

In other news, Simon Rattle is announced as the London Symphony Orchestra's next music director, beginning in September 2017, and troubled English National Opera appoints an interim Chief Executive Officer.

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CD REVIEWS — INFECTIOUS PLEASURE



Robert Anderson: 'The productivity of Paul Hindemith is both astonishing and slightly appalling. His two main operas, concerning the painter Grünewald, and Kepler the

astronomer, are works of high ambition and worth the most serious consideration. For the rest, his aim was to produce music that should be useful for almost every conceivable combination of instruments on every possible occasion. Adolf Hitler and his gang had no time for Hindemith's music, so the inevitable result from a more or less free Europe was emigration. It is tempting to wonder whether Russian composers, hounded equally by Stalin, and bidden to reform or suffer the consequences with little hope of escape, did not have the better chance with posterity. Hindemith came to be thoroughly ashamed of his Suite "1922", written when the composer was still in his twenties; and it gave him no pleasure that audiences seemed to prefer it to much of his later music. Its inspiration is clear when it is recalled that three of its five movements have such titles as "Shimmy", "Boston" and "Ragtime". The work is typical of its period, and none the worse for that. David Korevaar plays it with infectious pleasure, demonstrating convincingly that the youthful composer was as naughty as anyone else.' (MSR Classics *MS 1507*)

Geoff Pearce: 'This two CD set of contemporary orchestral music from composers around the world is beautifully performed by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Mikel Toms. The composers represented here are all masters of orchestral writing, and whilst the music will create a challenge for many listeners as it does not have many 'tunes' in the traditional sense, a different approach is needed, looking at texture, combinations of timbres and the portrayal of 'atmosphere'. Do this, in conjunction with the interesting programme notes, and I believe you will find the set rewarding and enjoyable.' (Ablaze Records *ar-00017*) Pearce also listens to music for recorder (Michala Petri) and harpsichord (Mahan Esfahani) from Denmark and the UK (OUR Recordings *6.220611*).

Gerald Fenech: 'Although William Faulkes is, maybe, England's greatest composer in the solo organ genre, he is still one of the least appreciated, so this CD has a very important role to play in re-establishing the fame of someone who was held in high regard during his lifetime (1863-1933). Indeed, by the time of his demise, he had amassed and published over five hundred compositions for the organ and many more were left in manuscript ... Duncan Ferguson's renditions are as enthralling as they are warmly expressive, and his virtuosic talent oozes all the brilliance from the St Mary's Organ at the Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh. A compelling disc, full of music that is both glorious and invigorating, albeit seldom heard.' (Delphian Records *DCD34148*) Fenech is also impressed by Nelson Freire's concerto broadcasts 1968-1979 on Decca *478 6772* and by music by Étienne Moulinié (1599-1676) on harmonia mundi (*HMC 902194*).

Howard Smith: 'As Hitler's Third Reich trampled over Europe in the late 1930s, targeted Jews fled to America or Britain. At the same time, with the Soviet invasion of Poland, budding twenty-year-old Polish composer Mieczysław Weinberg escaped from the Nazi "frying pan" to Belarus (Minsk), then to Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and eventually, by 1943, to Stalin's Soviet "fire" at Moscow Conservatory where sixty-two-year-old Nikolai Myaskovsky was professor of composition ... This symphony deserves prominence among standout Russian works of the twentieth century. Weinberg's Violin Concerto and the Shostakovitch Op 77 may well be regarded as complementary.' (Warner Music Poland *08256 4 62248 3 8*) Smith also listens to Alice Sara Ott and Francesco Tristano on Deutsche Grammophon (*479 3541*), to Elgar from the RLPO and Vasily Petrenko (Onyx *ONYX4145*), to Zoco Duo (Cala *CACD77018*), to Brahms and Bruch violin concertos from Hideko Udagawa (Nimbus Alliance *NI 6270* and to works for violin and piano by Xavier Montsalvatge (1912-2002) on Naxos (*8.572621*).

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ASK ALICE — SHOCKING NEWS FROM THE BACH FAMILY

Alice McVeigh: 'The musical world has recently been greatly diverted by the efforts of various people — who, one and all, undoubtedly believe that Mrs Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* — to convince sane musicians that Anna Magdalena Bach — a very tolerable singer, by all accounts — composed J S Bach's sensationally mature and unmatched cello suites.



The Bach family, Johann Sebastian and Anna Magdalena, with (under the table), Franz Eduard, their talented musical gerbil

This is clearly rubbish.

However, here at

mvdaily.com, we can

exclusively reveal (drumroll, editor, please) that new evidence suggests that Bach's much-loved gerbil (Franz Eduard Bach) composed the B Minor Mass !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Not only has eminent handwriting analyst I M Nuttie certified that there are gerbil markings on pages 2, 6, 19 and 48 of the manuscript in question, but the well-known musicologist Høpe Tobé Famoüse has long disputed whether someone like Bach could possibly have found the time to write all those works while hoofing around fathering twenty-one children (at least three of whom turned out to be accomplished composers in their turn).

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COMMENT (ON ASK ALICE, ABOVE) ...

Hmmm ... Jerbill Bark less likely than Konlon NMI Nancabbage, Hovergull Brain or Zorn Willeygums rolypolygamy from eyefoam app. How about Rothsichild? Burnsteim? Lehár Vilja Labos? Hildegard of Bingham? Pro-cough-Geoff ... All could be Weill or Saxtony! Stavinsky? STAVINSKY?? Quelle double-proophreeding??? Boo-Sony! Boo-Les! Boo t'oven! Boo to-a-goose-eggstahude! Drumroll, Franz Joseph Hangman, please - pip-pip, Mary Squeam of Spots

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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