

MUSIC & VISION

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newsletter



Female choirs singing in the Woman Project concert at Festival Maribor. Photo © 2015 Dejan Bulut

Woman for all Seasons – Issue 92, 1 November 2015

SPONSORED FEATURES — JAMES BRAWN'S BEETHOVEN ODYSSEY VOLUME 4



'.. generating excitement
with raw textures ...'

Andrew Schartmann: 'Brawn slows down just a touch as he enters the transition between themes. This willingness to flex tempi between sections is a vestige of historically informed performance practice, the revival of which is quite bold (at least on a modern instrument). But it is precisely these kinds of risks that make Brawn's recordings so exciting. To paraphrase the late Glenn Gould, don't record unless you have something new to say. James Brawn certainly does. And I urge you to partake in his historical project, which is nothing short of magical. Listen to the control, the musicianship, and the artistry. Masterful. Mesmerizing. Pure magic.' **Read more ...**

Andrew Schartmann's review of James Brawn's Beethoven Odyssey Volume 4 (MSR Classics) has recently received an *M&V* article sponsorship.

Sponsored features reward the article's author, who receives half of the sponsorship fee, and can be read by non-subscribers. They also receive extra attention, listed in the sponsored section on the magazine's homepage.

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CD REVIEWS — A RARE BREED

Anthony Davie: 'One of the hallmarks of a great artist is his generosity and John McCabe was one of those artists — he made time to help nurture and work with young musicians and amateurs. He also made time in his career to teach and help run music in communities. He even headed a conservatoire for seven years — the London College of Music. Not that this was enough for him — his insatiable appetite and love for the music of other composers such as Arnold Bax, Alan Rawsthorne, William Schuman to name a few, spurred him on to record and promote these composers' music — it was a lifetime religion. Unfortunately for us, this type of artist is a rare breed.'



'... an excellent and diverse range of pieces covering three decades ...'

'As a historical document, this CD is of great importance and is a must-have for any lover and avid fan of British music. And for the newcomer to classical music — if you simply want to listen to some contemporary piano music which both immediately speaks to you and captures your imagination, then I can guarantee that this CD is one you'll revisit many times.' (Naxos 8.571367)



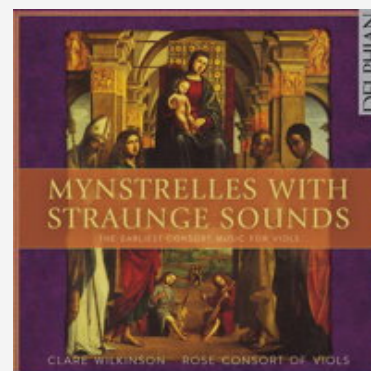
'... Karabits has a real empathy with Prokofiev ...'

Geoff Pearce: 'Right from the opening, the performance of the Fifth Symphony is very different from my earlier recording. The opening is slow and so beautiful, with astonishing attention to mood and detail. Even though this music is a serious response to the World War II crisis in Russia, there is an optimism here so that the listener never feels that the situation is hopeless or grim. This first movement is one of the most compelling things that Prokofiev ever wrote.' (ONYX 4147)

Geoff Pearce also recommends Leif Segerstam and the Turku Philharmonic's recording of Sibelius' *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Naxos 8.573301), and vocal music by Wagner and Elgar

transcribed for organ (MSR Classics *MS 1532*), and he also listens to music by Pamela J Marshall (Ravello Records *RR7901*).

Gerald Fenech: 'For their third recording on this label, the Rose Consort uses a set of instruments from Bologna, dating from 1497. Peerless early-music mezzo Clare Wilkinson joins the consort in a sophisticated interweaving of voices that sheds revealing light on the earliest music for the innovative ensemble. This is music that is delicate and uncomplicated and should be approached with restraint, but those able to grasp the refined sound of this instrument should find much to enjoy.' (Delphian *DCD34169*)



'Performances are quintessentially flawless ...'

Gerald Fenech also recommends music by Max Bruch for violin and orchestra, played by Antje Weithaas and the NDR Radiophilharmonie under Harmann Bäumer (cpo 777 846-2), Russian music for cello and orchestra played by Jamie Walton with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Okko Kamu (Signum *SIGCD407*), and vocal and choral music by Colombian composer Jaime León (Tocatta Classics *TOCC 0142*).



'... outstanding in every respect.'

We continue to publish CD reviews by the late Howard Smith, who listened to an Italian lyric soprano: 'Maria Borsi's gorgeous debut solo album from Naxos is outstanding in every respect ... Puccini has six of the nine arias in this programme — from *Madama Butterfly*, *Turandot*, *La bohème*, *Suor Angelica*, *La Rondine* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Three other composers get one track each: they are Alfredo Catalani (1854-1893), Respighi (*Il tramonto* — a lied) and Verdi with a track from *Otello*.' (Naxos 8.573412)

Howard also listened to Rebecca Newman's album *Dare to Dream* on Rambling Rose Records.

[Browse our latest CD reviews ...](#)

If you enjoy listening to the sound samples in our CD reviews, you might already know that you can usually hear an extra sample on the 'CD information page' which is linked from the bottom of each review. An alternative way to reach these CD information pages is via our **New Releases** section, where you can also listen to samples from recent CDs which haven't yet been reviewed.

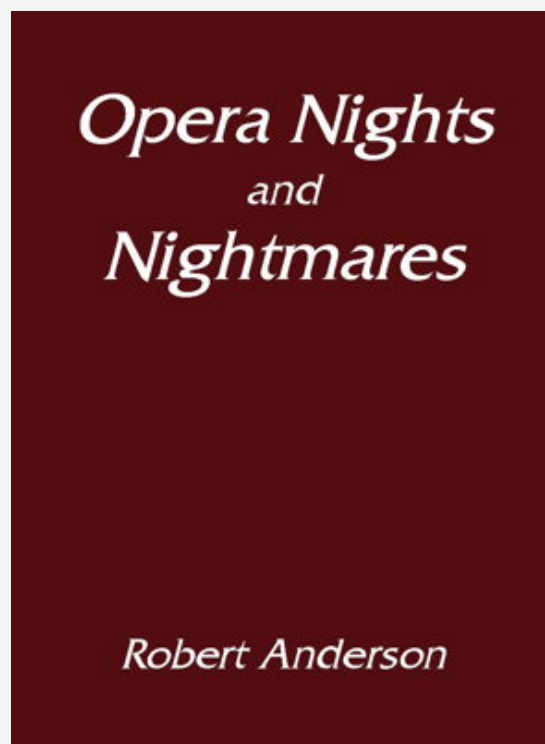
MUSICAL PROWESS — BOOK REVIEWS

Gerald Fenech: 'Robert Anderson is well known as a music critic, conductor and pedagogue, so it is a true joy to have his collection of opera reviews from performance and CD published in a *magnum opus* at last. An *M&V* contributor since its inception, some of his witty reviews have already appeared here but it is good to read them again in one collection.

'The sheer variety of works covered is quite astounding. Apart from trailblazers such as the Mozart and Wagner operas, there are rare works such as Saverio Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi* and a tantalizing review of an Opera Rara LP featuring excerpts from Simon Mayr's operas. Mentioning Mozart, I was thrilled to read the reviews on the early operas, *Mitridate* and *Il sogno di Scipione* — both coming from Leopold Hager and the Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra — these sets were actually the first encounters with Mozart opera for me.'

[Read more ...](#)

Opera Nights and Nightmares is available now from **Muzika lagellonica** in Poland, but we hope to announce a UK-based distributor soon.



Opera Nights and Nightmares. Robert Anderson
Muzika lagellonica SP, Kraków, 2015



Musical Instruments — Highlights of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. J Kenneth Moore, Jayson Kerr Dobney and E Bradley Strauchen-Scherer. © 2015 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA

Keith Bramich: 'The Department of Musical Instruments at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art has produced a lavish, large-format and beautifully illustrated catalogue featuring highlights from its collection. As explained in *About the Musical Instruments Collection* at the end of the book, the strength of this compilation lies in both its breadth and its encyclopaedic approach. As the oldest comprehensive collection of musical instruments in the USA, with the first items collected in 1878, it contains more than five thousand instruments, ranging from those dating back as far as 2,300 BC to those created within the last decade. A staggering two thirds of the collection comes from non-Western cultures, although the remaining third is particularly strong in late seventeenth through to nineteenth century wind instruments, and European and American keyboard instruments, including the world's oldest piano, built in 1720 by Bartolomeo Cristofori in Florence.'

'In 192 pages and with 166 colour illustrations, many of them occupying a full 9.5 inch by 9.5 inch page, this new volume, distributed via Yale University Press and available from October 2015, samples more than a hundred of the collection's most notable instruments, with fascinating texts by the three authors, who all work in the museum's Department of Musical Instruments.' [Read more ...](#)

CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS

Sixteen-year-old British pianist Julian Trevelyan has won second prize in the Long Piano Contest (with no first prize awarded). Warner Classics is extending its distribution and marketing infrastructure to third-party labels. The Future Blend project is encouraging composers to write for minority instruments, and needs help.



Julian Trevelyan



Patric Stanford
(1939-2014)

Patric Stanford's family has set up an online archive to hold information about the English composer who died in 2014. The archive is collecting memories, thoughts and experiences about Stanford, particularly from his former students and from performers in the *Christus Requiem* at St Paul's Cathedral, London in 1972.

The Sorabji Archive is selling its collection of paper master copies of all of the music scores and published literary writings of English composer Kaikhosru Sorabji (1892-1988). The sale will be by auction, and bidding will remain open until 31 December 2015.



Kaikhosru Sorabji
(1892-1988)

We mark the passing of Patricia Kern, Duncan Druce, Armin Kircher, Saša Britvić and Christopher Tambling. [Read more ...](#)

WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS — REVIEWS OF LIVE PERFORMANCE

Gerald Fenech reports from Slovenia: 'The Woman Project concert was utterly brilliant and was definitely the highlight of the whole festival. Satu Vänskä and Richard Tognetti were in their element with the various works on offer, including pieces by Germaine Tailleferre, Vivaldi, Philip Glass, Barbara Strozzi, Tchaikovsky and the utterly decadent Erwin Schulhoff with his Sonata Erotica quite brilliantly pulled off by Meow Meow. The surroundings of the Slovene National Theater allowed for video excerpts that interspersed brilliantly with all that went on, and the concert was truly the high point of proceedings.'



Richard Tognetti and Satu Vänskä playing at Festival Maribor. Photo © 2015 Dejan Bulut

'The Parallel Worlds concerts also provided interesting chamber fare. Held on consecutive days in Maribor and Graz, Tognetti was joined by Vänskä and Jasminka Stančul on the piano for sonatas by Beethoven, Brahms and works by Sergej Prokofiev and Clara Schumann. I was enthused by the Brahms Sonata No 3 where Tognetti really delved into the spirit of the piece. The 'Manna' concert was also quite brilliant, with the Dvořák Piano Quintet particularly enthusing.' **Read more ...**

Mike Wheeler: 'They know how to throw a party in Dresden. Brahms' Academic Festival Overture was a thoroughly unbuttoned affair in the hands of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Michael Sanderling, full of perky high spirits, and with a full-throated burst of 'Gaudeamus Igitur' to end with. Played with a tonal clarity full of delectable details, it was an irresistible start to the evening ... and a powerful contrast to the very different emotional world of Elgar's Cello Concerto. Sol Gabetta was the soloist in a performance that combined emotional commitment with a firm grasp of where the music was going. The first movement's opening had both determination and dignity, while Gabetta and the orchestra suggested a solid foundation to the ethereal flutterings in the scherzo, though absolute control of those scurrying figures seemed to slip briefly, once or

twice. The third movement was near-ideal in its intimate, confiding manner, projecting (if that's not too forceful a word) an edge-of-seat inwardness and concentration at the end. The finale set off full of striding vigour, even a suggestion that things might turn positively carefree given half a chance. But then came the gradual sinking toward the recall of the slow movement and the opening gesture of the whole concerto. Gabetta and the orchestra's sensitive handling compellingly drew us in to the work's most private moment, before Elgar slams the door shut with that short brusque ending.' **Read more ...**



Sol Gabetta. Photo © Marco Borggreve

Mike also listens to Beethoven, Bartók and Tchaikovsky from the Eeden Quartet, to Belinda Sykes and Jogleasa, and to most of a piano recital by Ashley Wass.

Alice McVeigh: '*West Side Story* has always been *the* best musical. The complexity and fire of the score, the dance numbers, the sure-footed emotional pacing, and the strength of even some of the smallest roles all set it apart from the pack. Bernstein himself admitted in later life that he didn't know quite how he'd done it — and also that "Maria" was the single best thing he'd ever composed.

'So, I knew it was going to be good, when I heard that the jewel in Bromley's crown, the Bromley Youth Music Trust, was putting it on this year. I just didn't know how good it was going to be.' **Read more ...**

Maria Nockin: 'On Saturday afternoon 17 October 2015, the Metropolitan Opera transmitted *Otello* to cinemas in seventy countries, giving a huge audience the chance to enjoy one of Giuseppe Verdi's most seminal works. This performance, which featured an outstanding roster of principals, was an example of the Metropolitan Opera Live in High Definition at its absolute best.

'Conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin had a deeply moving conception of the score, and his resourceful conducting combined Verdi's profound music with director Bartlett Sher's generally cogent staging of the Shakespearean drama. At the beginning of the opera the movements of the chorus were quite static, but Sher handled the later scenes more effectively.' **Read more ...**

Maria was also at the Met's HD transmission of // *Trovatore*: 'Opera fans know that to present Giuseppe Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, an opera company needs the four greatest singers in the world. If the Metropolitan Opera did not have them all on Saturday 3 October 2015, it certainly came close. Singing leading roles were Anna Netrebko as Leonora, Dolora Zajick as Azucena, Yonghoon Lee as Manrico, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky as Count di Luna.' **Read more ...**



Aleksandrs Antonenko as Otello and Sonya Yoncheva as Desdemona in the Love Duet from Act I of the New York Metropolitan Opera production of Verdi's *Otello*.
Photo © 2015 Ken Howard

Giuseppe Pennisi on Weill and Brecht's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*: 'I attended the opening night in Rome of a new production which will be seen in Venice (La Fenice) and Valencia (Palau de Les Arts of Reina Sofia). It is a grandiose, but intelligent staging by Graham Vick and his usual team, Stuart Nunn for sets and costumes, Ron Howell for choreography — there are twenty mimes and dancers — and Giuseppe Di Iorio for lighting. Of course, there is great use of projections and extreme attention to acting and dancing. In the pit, John Axelrod conducted the Rome Opera orchestra and Roberto Gabbiani the Rome Opera chorus. An excellent cast of singers (Iris Vermillion, Dietmar Kerschbaum, Willard White, Measha Brueggergosman and Brenden Gunnell) had the main roles. The musical aspects were excellent.' **Read more ...**



The final scene from Act III of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* in Rome. Photo © 2015 Yasuko Kageyama

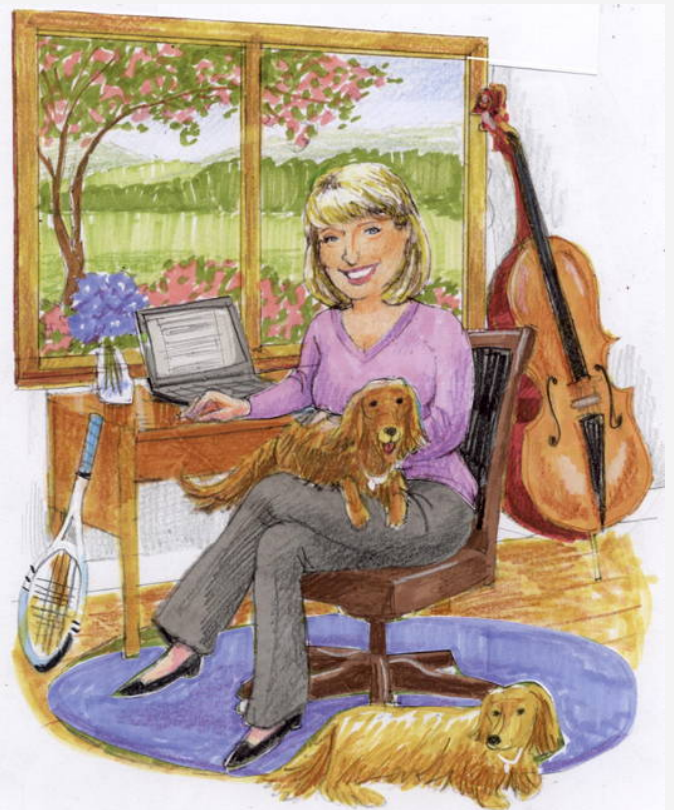
Giuseppe also reports on the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin in Rome, and on the first in a series of orchestral concerts in Rome's Sala Santa Cecilia.

[Browse our latest concert and opera reviews ...](#)

ASK ALICE — BRIGHT POCKETS OF LIGHT IN A FADING LANDSCAPE

Alice McVeigh reacts to Anna Goldsworthy's article *The Lost Art of Listening* in *The Monthly* — *Australian politics, society and culture*: 'I think this is quite an important article, by a hugely articulate musician new to me.'

'Wow. Australia is making the 21st-century UK look cultured, is my first reaction. But then, as American friends keep reminding me, classical music's roots lie deeper here in Europe. The roots in Australia and the US are far shallower, in countries so much younger — and thus their European-based classical music roots are so much more likely to wither. I had read before of the demolition of conservatory training in Australia and shivered, but this article made terrible sense of it. Where demand dries up and resources are husbanded, what's the first thing to go? Individual cello or clarinet lessons, is the answer. And where these go,



Alice McVeigh. Cartoon © 2015 Pat Achilles

can the death of Aussie orchestras themselves lie far behind?' [Read more ...](#)

Alice also doles out advice on rushing when performing music, looks at David Johnstone's works in the style of J S Bach, and investigates multiple remedies for a music- and sport-related ailment.

[More episodes of 'Ask Alice' ...](#)

[Ask Alice your classical music-related questions ...](#)

FUTURE PERFORMANCES



Sonus Brass Ensemble

Our November listings include Fantini, Praetorius, Telemann from the Sonus Brass Ensemble in Vaduz, Liechtenstein; *Cav* and *Pag* in Santiago, Chile; Sibelius, Hakola, Beethoven, Glinka, Dvořák and Rachmaninov from the Seoul Philharmonic in South Korea, and Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* in Melbourne, Australia.

J S Bach's *St John Passion* is performed by the American Classical Orchestra, and *Messiah ... Refreshed*, a performance of the 1959 Beecham/Goosens re-orchestration for full orchestra, both take place in New York City.

In the UK, McCabe, Stravinsky, Turnage, Ives and Antheil are played by the BBC Philharmonic, and McCabe and Beethoven are performed by the Hitchin Symphony Orchestra. Selections from CoMA's Open Score repertoire are presented in London, and Warren Mailley-Smith continues his Chopin cycle. András Schiff plays Schumann and Joshua Bell plays Tchaikovsky, both in Cambridge. Haydn, Pärt and Sibelius from the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra, Mozart, Beethoven and Mendelssohn from the Blaze Ensemble, Toby Young, Elgar, Sibelius, McDowall and Handel from St Albans Choral Society, and Sibelius, Haydn and Christopher Brummel from the Bushey Symphony Orchestra are all conducted by George Vass. [Read more ...](#)

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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.

The editorial and advertising copy deadlines for our December newsletter are both Thursday 26 November 2015. [Details here.](#)

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