

# MUSIC & VISION

classical music  
newsletter

Andrew Parrott. Photo © Dan Forges



*Composers' Intentions? — Issue 103, 1 November 2016*

## COMPOSERS' INTENTIONS?

Lost Traditions of Musical Performance



ANDREW PARROTT

**Roderic Dunnett:** 'In this powerfully rewarding book, incredibly rich in sources and surely a must for any specialist or those drawn to the intricacies of performance practice, Parrott makes his way with assured touch through many a musical minefield regarding the correct handling of - especially - early Baroque repertoire, lays out his extensive material with an ever firm grasp and poses a wide range of questions for which he provides answers, where possible, that draw on literally hundreds of crucially important and relevant texts of the time. All these texts are listed on the bottom of each page, not at the rear, and this layout is an invaluable asset: each source is supplied immediately there and then; and a vast amount of needless and tiresome flipping to the rear of the book and back again is thus avoided.

'This volume is a work of profound scholarship, carefully argued at all stages and painstaking in its grasp of detail and command of the many issues it raises. We may take the quality of the arguments Parrott deploys and the incisiveness



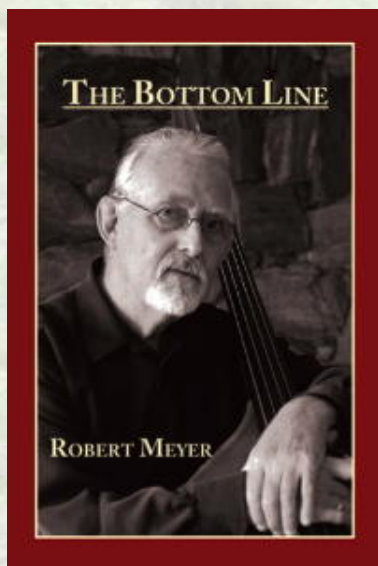
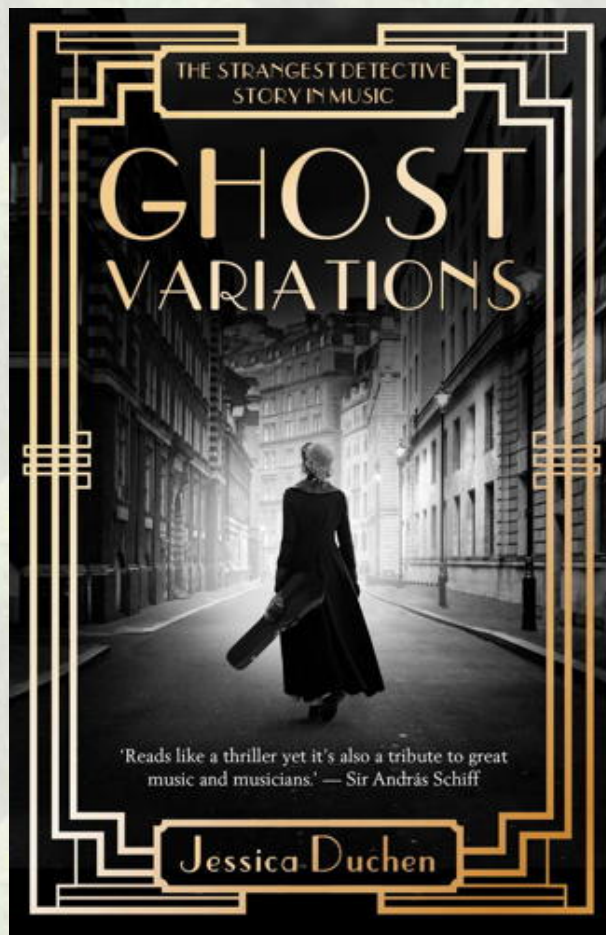
he brings to the examination of every issue as a given. In large part an amassing of articles by the author which surfaced before or more recently in scholarly journals (most obviously *Early Music*, but also *Eighteenth-Century Music*, the *Purcell Companion* and the *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*), it explores numerous points of contention and places rival views in context while presenting a coherent *exposé* of the essential material. By use of significant postscripts, he also ensures that if items have not been addressed at length they are at least noticed and drawn to the reader's attention.'

**Read more ...**

**Alice McVeigh:** '... anyone who has read [Jessica] Duchen previously can attest to the elegance of her style. Here's a sample, a description of Jelly [d'Arányi] herself:

*'Her image filled two rounds as he peered through his opera glasses: just as he remembered, all scarlet gown, dark hair and rather dusky skin, her eyes kindling the flame he recalled. And when she began to play she seemed more spirit than body. She moved not like a normal musician, but like a dancer, with her entire being. He imagined that when she spoke to him eventually, he might hear not her human voice but the Bergonzi's emanating from her delicate throat. So this was what had captivated all those composers. This solitary woman had sparked into existence a whole new repertoire of violin pieces. Something exceptional had to lie behind that.*

'This is a hugely atmospheric and thought-provoking book featuring fascinating characters, written by someone as fully in command of her research as of her imagination. It evokes a period pregnant with both promise and menace - and a musical world itself lost forever. Highly recommended.' **Read more ...**



**Howard Smith:** 'I reckon Meyer's lively, incident-packed *The Bottom Line* should be mandatory reading for all serious bass players and for orchestral basses in particular.

'Whether he's recalling redoubtable English bassist, Eugene Cruft (1887-1976), Member of the Royal Victorian Order and Order of the British Empire, or the Three 'knighthed' *Bs* - Boult, Beecham, Barbirolli and Baron Benjamin Britten, OM CH, Meyer treats us to rare inside glimpses behind the scenes in twentieth century musical life.

'In these pages avid music lovers will find an unending cavalcade of international artists appearing and performing, especially in London and Vancouver - though also whilst touring. There are also observations on audiences and

orchestra politics.



'Meyer's narrative is related in straightforward, incident-packed, reflective writing while all the time revisiting conductors, composers, pianists, singers, violinists, wind players and bassists of the past - Ferenc Fricsay, Victor da Sabata, Myra Hess, Isobel Baillie, Maria Callas, Reginald Kell, Michaelangeli, Anatole Fistoulari, Joan Sutherland, Josef Krips, Nathan Milstein, Solomon, Campoli, Klemperer, Tullio Serafin, Leon Goossens, Heifetz, Acker Bilk, Moisevitch, Moura Lympany and legions more.' **Read more ...**

### ASK ALICE – BROMLEY SYMPHONY PLAYERS

**Alice McVeigh:** 'The Bromley Symphony Players were, unusually, conducted by the Bromley Symphony Orchestra's conductor, Adrian Brown, and did marvellously well (not only musically but, I understand, with regard to raising money for the charity Help Musicians — previously known as The Musicians' Benevolent Fund).

'The concert, in the ornate yet lovely St Mary's church, kicked off with my least-favourite of the Mozart Divertimentos, K 137, but Brown incited real verve from the *Allegro di molto*, and refused to allow the final movement to become twee, which is, frankly, always a risk.



Cartoon of Alice McVeigh.  
© 2015 Pat Achilles

'It was followed by Elgar's immortal Serenade for Strings, and here Brown conjured up some really remarkable flexibility, colour and feeling from the chamber orchestra, particularly in the *Larghetto*, where there were moments of exquisitely elegiac hush, though the final *Allegretto* had some very memorable moments as well.

'The first half concluded with an account of Handel's Concerto Grosso Op 6 No 11, where some very elegant playing was supplied by Bernard Brook and Rosie Cousins (violins) and Helen MacDonald (cello), seconded by an orchestra fully alert to the sense of baroque phrasing and contrapuntal vivacity inherent in the score.

'The performance of Bach's concerto for violin and oboe BWV 1060 was glorious. From the very beginning Bernard Brook (violin) and Caroline Marwood (oboe) weaved their lines together with utter confidence and stylishness. The *Adagio* allowed both Brook's limpid bow technique and Marwood's organic and almost effortless sense of phrasing full play. The last movement was perfectly paced, and fresh as paint. The communication between the two soloists, and between each soloist and conductor, was exemplary.

'The Mendelssohn Sinfonia 12 (which I recall recording with the Hanover Band) is a very appealing work, though it can sound a little like a composition assignment. Here the fugue had controlled energy, and the textures weren't too blurred by the acoustic. The kernel of this work is the flowing and eloquent *Andante*, where the violas shone, and where each line was burnished. The *Allegro molto*, which has drive and contrapuntal sections reminiscent of the Octet as well as more searching sections, was powered by the trademark Adrian Brown panache. The reception was rapturous, as it deserved to be.'

**More episodes of 'Ask Alice' ...**

**Ask Alice your classical music-related questions ...**



## ENSEMBLE — A PERFECT FIT

**Giuseppe Pennisi:** 'On 23 October 2016, I attended the first performance of *Jenůfa* in the grand fully-filled Teatro Massimo. The production is a joint venture with Antwerp Opera House, with stage direction by Robert Carsen, sets and costumes by Patrick Kinmoth, lighting by Peter van Praet and Gabriele Ferro in the pit conducting the very complex score. The action is based on a gruesome plot with even the murder of a newborn baby. The music drama is integrated with Moravian folk singing and dancing in Act I and Act III. At a deeper level, it is an apologue of forgiveness as clearly shown by Jenůfa and Laça's *arioso* at the end of the opera. During the previous nearly ninety minutes, the orchestration had been a mosaic of small themes, often juxtaposed with one another and the vocal score, in prose not verse, and skillfully studied so that each consonant and vowel had a perfect fit in each note and register. The psychological features and developments of the main characters are explored much more deeply than in the play on which the opera is based.'



A scene from Act II of Janáček's 'Jenůfa' at Teatro Massimo di Palermo

Giuseppe also reviews Antonio Pappano's *Fidelio*, *Un ballo in Maschera*, operettas in Ravenna, Saint-Saëns' *Proserpine*, the baroque show *Aria*, *Giovanni D'Arco* and *Don Carlo*.

**Maria Nockin:** 'On 22 October 2016, The Metropolitan Opera transmitted Michael Grandage's gloomy production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* live in high definition to theaters in seventy countries. The transmission was perfect except for about thirty seconds of silence at the beginning. Hostess Joyce DiDonato was charming as always and she interviewed everyone of importance in the single intermission.'

'Christopher Oram's grim sets were three stories high and the director used every level, but placed almost all of his scenes at the front of the Met's massive stage. Oram's far more elegant costumes were made of silken fabrics and laces. The Don wore a tasseled great coat. Oram's footwear designs were especially interesting as they ranged from Masetto's well-worn boots and laced gaiters to ribbon-tied pumps on the feet of the noble ladies.

'English baritone Simon Keenlyside was an energetic Don as his character strutted across the huge expanse of the Met stage. Vocally, he paced himself well as he attempted to garner new conquests with the mellifluous tones of his clear, lyric voice. Polite and charming when a woman looked at him, this Don never thought of her as a human being with rights similar to his own.

Maria was also at the Metropolitan Opera HD transmission of *Tristan*.

**Roderic Dunnett:** 'Joubert's orchestration [*Jane Eyre*, 15 October 2016, Birmingham UK] is fresh and original from start to finish. What else helped this to be a quite magnificent concert performance, all the more pleasing as it was being recorded live by the ever-bold and imaginative SOMM Recordings?

'The entire contribution of the orchestra - for them too this must have necessitated a lot of homework - was utterly to be admired. Kenneth Woods' direction seemed pretty much masterly: at no time did one feel his paces were anything short of perfectly judged: he kept the flow and the constant undertow absolutely spot on: only Joubert could say for certain if that feeling is right, and if it supplied what he wanted. But most likely it did: one had absolute confidence in Woods' leadership and demeanour, which patently yielded such glorious results.



John Joubert. Photo © 1999 Keith Bramich

'But perhaps the number one accolade, apart from to John Joubert himself, has to go to April Fredrick. Her passion and utter conviction, her display of maturity for a girl (initially) turned eighteen, her every sideways glance and flick of her head, flicker of an eyelid and look of suspicion, the amount she achieved with small, silent swerves of her body, clenched fist or adjustment of an elbow, and her quite fabulous, variable voice, powerful and expressive right across the range, made Brontë's Jane come alive in this arresting opera. No wonder the genuinely exciting evening was such a treat: a truly rich experience.'

**Mike Wheeler:** 'The Derby-based Sitwell Singers marked their fiftieth anniversary in style by not only commissioning a new piece from Bob Chilcott, but getting him to conduct it, as well as others of his own pieces, beginning with his four *Salisbury Motets* (Derby Cathedral, Derby, UK, 15 October 2016)

'Extracted from his large-scale *Salisbury Vespers* to make a stand-alone work, they set



non-liturgical texts referring, or addressed, to the Virgin Mary. Their mood-progression was nicely captured, from the gentle 'I Sing of a Mayden', through 'When to the Temple Mary Went', catching the pleasing rhythmic lilt of the occasional bars of 7/8 time, and the poignant 'Lovely Tear of Lovely Eye', to the jubilant choral fanfare 'Hail, Star of the Sea Most Radiant'. The choir sang these, and everything else, in so-called scrambled position, with a resulting gain in immediacy.

'Regular conductor Malcolm Goldring took over for Brahms' *Ach, Arme Welt, du Trügest Mich*, Op 110 No 2, sung with a fine sense of the music's flow. Assistant conductor Carolin Hlusiak conducted two pieces by Mendelssohn - *Richte mich, Gott*, Op 78 No 2, the resonant eight-part textures vividly projected, and nicely contrasted with the serenity of the increasingly popular *Verleih' uns Frieden*.'

Mike also listens to the Hallé Orchestra and Mark Elder, to Katherine Jenkinson and Alison Farr, to Sinfonia Viva at Derby Folk Festival, and to the Brussels Philharmonic.

[Read our latest concert reviews](#)      [Listings of forthcoming concerts and festivals](#)

## NEVILLE MARRINER – CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS



High profile English violinist and conductor **Neville Marriner** died on 2 October 2016, aged ninety-two.

We also mark the passing of Roland Dyens, Peter Reynolds, Gerhard Wimberger, Pompeiu Harasteanu, Donald H White and Thomas Round.

Giordano Bruno comes to Dublin for Roger Doyle's electronic opera *Heresy*.

*The Virgin Eye: Towards a Contemplative View of Life* by the late Robin Daniels was published on 21 October 2016 by Instant Apostle.

Various concerts and recordings have featured the music of British composer John McCabe since his death in February 2015.

[Read our latest news](#)

## SPONSORED FEATURES

Sponsor an *M&V* feature and reward the article's author, who receives half of the sponsorship fee. Sponsored features are available to non-subscribers, and they receive extra attention, listed in the sponsored section on the magazine's homepage.

[Read more about sponsoring articles ...](#)

## DIES IRAE — SECULAR AND ROMANTIC USES OF THE OLD LATIN HYMN

**George Colerick:** 'The Grim Reaper was the medieval personification of death, in black cloak and carrying a large scythe. He appears now mainly in comic sketches, but features respectfully in a symbolic chess-playing role in Ingmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal*, a film epic of Europe's fourteenth century plague. A revered musical equivalent was for the first time used facetiously in the year 1830. The melody dated back to the thirteenth century, the *Dies Irae*, giving terrifying warning of the day of wrath, when God will descent to judge all humanity. Whilst Western Christianity was united, all believers feared it, and until recently, when the melody was withdrawn from the Church liturgy, most Catholics were familiar with it.



'With the solemn, unchanging plainsong beat, it starts with the notes *C B C A B G A A*, one of the most inspired and imposing in all music. The words have been present in the Requiem masses of numerous composers, and Hector Berlioz had used them in his. Familiarity may bring contempt, so he seized an agnostic's chance to make a sophisticated joke. He composed a version to be used in a Hellish context, the hallucinatory scene which forms the finale to his *Symphonie Fantastique*.

'Here, an impish revelry of witches is interrupted to church bells by the *Dies Irae* at first solemn, then often changing shape and pace, briefly into a fast satanic dance alongside the work's main theme also transformed. This is the protagonist's ultimate degradation, Walpurgis Night being the occasion, never so incongruously celebrated. So far from regarding it as blasphemous, Franz Liszt was impressed by his older friend's burlesque and by the age of twenty-two had given the whole work one of his many piano transcriptions.' **Read more ...**

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 November newsletter are both Wednesday 23 November 2016. Details here.

Read us at [www.mvdaily.com](http://www.mvdaily.com)

Contact us

Newsletter archive