

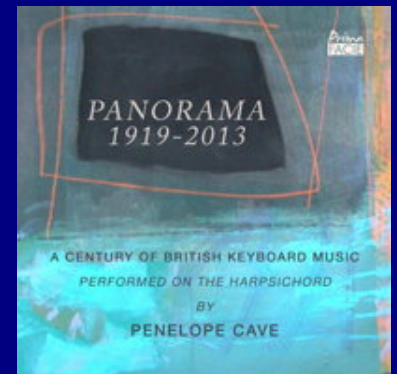
	C	L	A	S	S	I	C	A	L	
M	U	S	I	C		D	A	I	L	Y

## Monthly Newsletter

*A Fantastic Collection – Issue 105, 1 January 2017*

**Alice McVeigh:** 'This is a fantastic collection of little-known gems, selected, performed (and in one case actually dedicated to) British harpsichordist Penelope Cave. It ranges from a Delius work written in 1919 to the ravishing *Le Panorama en Rondeau* (2013) by Raymond Head. The works are presented in order of composition, but — and I found this strange — the CD doesn't feel "bitty" — not at all — indeed, it has a wonderful ebb and flow, either because of the pieces chosen, or because of the marvellous variety Cave brings to them, or both. It's a lovely CD just to put on and let wash over you. However, the works, as well as the soloist, deserve consideration in greater detail.

'Starting with Delius' piquant *Dance for Harpsichord*, we then have a first recording, of a *morceau* by Holst (*A Piece for Yvonne*) in 7/4 time. This is followed by four selections from Herbert Howells' delightful *Lambert's Clavichord*. According to Cave's lively programme notes, Howells apparently said, "Ralph Vaughan Williams had a theory that I was the reincarnation of one of the lesser Tudor luminaries" and — if true — then R V W at that point rang the bell, entitling himself to cigar or coconut, according to choice ... Particularly notable here are overtones of Tudor lutes. The harmonies are affectionately archaic and quirky, while Cave's performance is so effervescent that one can almost imagine Anne Boleyn at Hever, dancing.' [Read more ...](#) (Prima Facie, *PFCD048*)



'... succeeds utterly, as does the immaculately sensitive [Penelope] Cave.'

### SPONSORED FEATURES

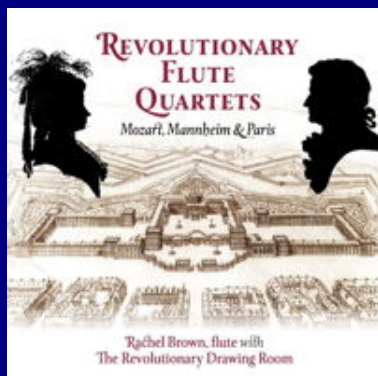
Alice McVeigh's Penelope Cave CD Spotlight feature recently received a Music & Vision Magazine Article Sponsorship.

Any organisation or person can sponsor an *M&V* feature, thereby rewarding the article's author, who receives half of the sponsorship fee. Sponsored features can be read free-of-charge by non-subscribers, and they receive extra attention, listed in the

sponsored section on the magazine's homepage.

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

**Alice McVeigh** also highly recommends Rachel Brown's *Revolutionary Flute Quartets*: 'This is a wonderful double CD set of works by Mozart and his contemporaries, performed by international flautist Rachel Brown, along with one of the UK's finest period instrument ensembles, The Revolutionary Drawing Room — Adrian Butterfield and Kathryn Parry, violins; Rachel Stott, viola; Ruth Alford, cello.



'The double-CD is worth buying for this slice of Gluck alone.'

'Mozart's K 285 is surely familiar to all musicians — and perhaps even over-familiar to those of us who have played in flute quartets! However, it serves as the perfect opening here: the textures clear and vibrant yet without a hint of echo; the phrasing finished without a touch of affectation; every bar neatly phrased but nothing fussy or over-phrased. The players locate, not just the right speed, but also the right pacing — which is of course very much harder.

'In the second movement, Brown's rounded, supple sound and effortless technique is luminous over the guitar-like *pizzicato* strings. The finale, in terms of tempo, admittedly sounds a little

too conservative at first, but the slightly *pesante* feel permits Butterfield's silvery violin to toss ideas back to Brown's flute without any sense of a flogged tempo, and I wound up convinced.' (Uppernote Recordings *UPCD004*)

**Geoff Pearce**: 'This great recording features Van Cliburn shortly after his win in the International Tchaikovsky Piano competitions and is conducted by the legendary Kiril Kondrashin. Although the recordings are more than fifty years old, their remastering and reissue have certainly stood the test of time.

'Van Cliburn's interpretation of the Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 3 is much more thoughtful and expansive than I would have expected. As one of the hardest concertos to play technically, this work is often given the warhorse treatment and the work's expansiveness and lyricism can be lost, but not so here.

'The first movement is a true joy and I have not heard it played better. Van Cliburn's expansive touch gives this work a breadth and life which is often lacking. His accelerandos are tasteful and never unnecessarily driven, and he judges the contrasts between sections admirably. In the massive solo passage, his playing is not free from errors in some of the massive chords, but given that the recording is of a live performance, his playing is very impressive. There are times when the orchestra sounds a bit far back from the piano, but that is in line with the recording techniques of the day.' (Praga Digital's *PRD 350 123*)



'The final few minutes are electrifying.'



'... a fantastic whirl of sound and energy, guaranteed to make the most jaded listener sit up on the edge of the seat.'

Geoff also highly recommends music by Christopher Rouse: 'I expected great orchestral playing from this first-rate ensemble, led one of my favourite conductors. The composer was not known to me, but was the New York Philharmonic's Marie-Josée Kravis Composer in Residence from 2012 until 2015. The playing was indeed as special as I thought it would be, but I was in for a surprise — the music really pulled me in. Christopher Rouse is a master orchestrator whose music is vital, energetic, fresh, approachable and very much for this century.'

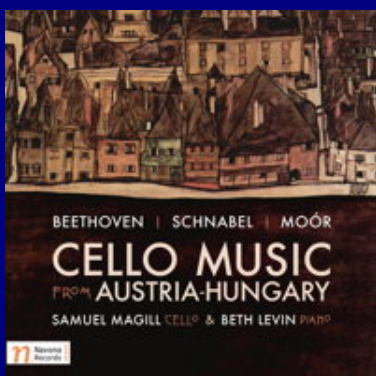
'The first work, *Odna Zhizn* ("A Life" in Russian), is a homage to someone of Russian heritage, who hasn't had an easy life, but who the composer has loved and admired. A construction method which partially assigns pitches (and sometimes also durations) to particular letters of the alphabet makes the resulting work sound as dry as unbuttered toast, but the end result proves to be anything but dry, very listenable to, and with strong tonal centres. There are sections of great tension and excitement, and others which are tender.' (Dacapo 8.226110)

**Gerald Fenech:** 'Despite being the least popular of the three, Peter Cornelius' contributions to this programme are wonderfully crafted gems, delectable, melodious, and yet full of emotional and sensitive touches that reflect the composer's ability to pull the strings of one's inner being. The Op 6 and 16 cycles deal mainly with the different aspects of love, but other feelings such as those connected with the attachment to one's home, parting and death are also given a splendid musical garb. There is also a beautiful adaptation of Psalm 121.'



'The two soloists exude immaculate performances full of smooth, silky singing, where every nuance behind each word and note is brought to light ...'

'The two soloists exude immaculate performances full of smooth, silky singing, where every nuance behind each word and note is brought to light with translucent artistry. Burnside is wonderfully responsive in his playing, and his sympathetic support throughout is unflinchingly consistent. Some off the beaten track repertoire that should not be missed. Sound and notes are exemplary.' (Delphian DCD34167)



'... as infectious as it is fastidious to every little detail and nuance of the music.'

**Gerald Fenech:** 'This beautiful CD is somewhat of a novelty because, Beethoven apart, its repertoire comprises some very rare music and composers, well off-the-beaten track. And even the great master's Violin Sonata, No 9 has this taste of the unusual. Obviously, the 'Kreutzer' Sonata certainly needs no introduction, but when the piece was composed in 1803 and eventually dedicated to Rudolph Kreutzer, the dedicatee found the piece unplayable and unintelligible and never performed it. Was he right? Well, maybe for his time, but history has proved that this sonata is one of the great masterpieces of the genre, and has very few rivals, if any.'

'Indeed, Beethoven knew what he had composed, and strived to have the work performed with regular frequency, so in 1822 he suggested to his pupil Carl Czerny to arrange the

work for cello and piano, something that Czerny duly obliged. Sadly, this version was lost for over 160 years, and was not discovered until 1922, a fact which might explain why it has not entered the essential cello repertoire. Now we have the chance to listen to what Czerny contrived of this monumentally demanding piece that is symphonic in scope and structure and replete with technical difficulties, albeit with the inclusion of a later version by French cellist Auguste Franchomme, which restored many passages that were unnecessarily simplified by Czerny.' (Navona Records NV6024)

Gerald also listens to music by James MacMillan (*Since It Was the Day of Preparation*, Delphian DCD34168), Niccolò Monti (*Miserere; Nelle ore desolate di Maria SS<sup>ma</sup>*, Tactus TC 761303), Stravinsky (Choral Works — Mass; Cantata, Delphian DCD34164) and Heinrich Schütz (*Weihnachtshistorie*, Christophorus CHR 77404).

**Keith Bramich** listens to The King's Singers' *Christmas Songbook* (Signum Classics SIGCD459) and the late **Howard Smith** listens to choral music by Morten Lauridsen (Naxos 8.559304) and to Cameron Roberts' original transcriptions for piano (Move Records MCD 404).

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

## ENSEMBLE — LINES OF BLUE LIGHT



Eric Owens as Jaufre and Susanna Philips as the Countess in Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de Ioïn* at New York Metropolitan Opera. Photo © 2016 Ken Howard

**Maria Nockin:** 'When the Metropolitan Opera stages a work, it sometimes produces a show that few other companies can equal. In a production by Robert Lepage, designed by Michael Curry with landscape images by Lionel Arnould and lighting by Kevin Adams, Kaija Saariaho's tonally grounded but not linearly melodic opera *L'amour de loin* was spellbinding when seen at the Met.

Finnish conductor Susanna Mälkki held her disparate forces to strict *tempi* so that Saariaho's Baroque ornaments and medieval modal harmony intermingled subtly with her unique twentieth century overtones and spikes of dissonance.

Like the leading female character in the opera, both composer and librettist know what it is to be far from the countries of their birth. Although born in Finland, Saariaho lives in France, as does librettist Amin Maalouf who was born in Lebanon but writes in French. The Met transmitted *L'amour de loin* in high definition to cinemas in seventy countries on Saturday 10 December 2016. Although a number of companies, including Salzburg and Santa Fe, had already mounted the opera, more people witnessed its magic at the movies on this single day than have seen it in all the opera house performances put together.'

[Read more ...](#)

**Giuseppe Pennisi:** 'In this Cagliari production, Stefano Poda, author of the stage direction, sets, costumes and lighting, places the action in a totally abstract context; a cube and a few props handle the eight scenes. To heighten the dreadful contents of the plot, the stage is often dark with lighting at just a few moments. This is quite innovative for *Il Trovatore*. The Cagliari opening night audience (on 16 December 2016) was enthusiastic and applauded Stefano Poda and his collaborators.



Daniela Schillaci as Leonora with the chorus in Act III scene 2 of Verdi's *Il Trovatore* at Teatro Lirico di Cagliari

'In *Il Trovatore* the orchestra does not play a major role. The conductor, Giampaolo Bisanti, treated, in an intelligent manner, each scene as a 'musical number', even though the scene included arias, duets, trios and choral intervention. *Il Trovatore* is mostly voice.'

[Read more ...](#)

**Giuseppe Pennisi:** 'What are the main differences between the February 1904 version and the generally produced 1906 version? The 1904 version is made up of an introduction to Japan through Western European eyes; there is more than a bit of racism: Cio-Cio-san is a young prostitute (due to the political suicide of her father and the impoverishment of her family), her uncles and the rest of her family are caricatures, and Pinkerton is a young American who wants to have fun-and-games. The long second act is a tragedy. Musically, the first one is almost a descriptive comedy, while the second shows some slight influences of the Second Viennese School (then starting). It contains dissonances worthy of Richard Strauss, and quite a bit of post-romanticism (eg in the intermezzo) and even chit-chat music. Most of these elements are also in the 1906 version but softened so as not to be so prominent.

'Under the baton of Riccardo Chailly, the orchestra was showing the innovations (for the time) and beauties of the original score, especially in the second part.

'This was helped by the staging of Alvis Hermanis and his "creative team" — Leila Fteita, Kristine Jurjāne, Gleb Filshinsky, Alla Sigalova and Ineta Sipunova for, respectively, sets, costumes, lighting, choreography and video. Their references are not Kabuki theatre, as some reviewers have said, but European paintings about Japan from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. This is a very good solution.



Maria José Siri as Cio-Cio-san, Bryan Hymel as Pinkerton, Carlos Álvarez as Sharpless, Carlo Bosi as Goro, chorus, dancers and extras in Act I of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at Teatro alla Scala, Milan. Photo © 2016 Brescia/Amisano

'Uruguayan dramatic soprano Maria José Siri was excellent in the title role. She has a perfect emission and was really moving in the second part when she has to leave the most precious thing of her life — her son — to Pinkerton's American wife. There were a lot of expectations for the American tenor Bryan Hymel, well known for his *belcanto* roles; he is a traditional Pinkerton. Carlos Álvarez is a very experienced Sharpless. Annalisa Stroppa is a high impact Suzuki.' (*Madama Butterfly* in Milan, 7 December 2016) [More ...](#)

Giuseppe also reports on Christmas concerts in the Holy Land, and a strong production of Rossini's *Otello* which opens Teatro San Carlo's new season in Naples.

**Mike Wheeler:** 'Now here was a nice winter warmer for a chilly December day, streamed live to a local care home, which added to the festive atmosphere. Jenny Lin was making a welcome return to Nottingham Royal Concert Hall's Sunday morning piano series (Nottingham, UK, 18 December 2016), with a half-dance, half-song programme that began with three movements from Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* transcribed by Mikhail Pletnev. She gave us a perky March, a rich but clear Intermezzo and a lively Trepak. They were followed by two waltzes from Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, in which Lin judiciously balanced the spiky and the gracious, and a concluding Arioso that captured all the magic of the original. [Read more ...](#)



Jenny Lin. Photo © 2012 Liz Linder

**Mike Wheeler:** 'It's always refreshing to find a string quartet prepared to go out on a limb in terms of repertoire even if only slightly. So no Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or Schubert from the Villiers String Quartet on this occasion (Derby Chamber Music, Multi-Faith Centre, Derby University, Derby, UK, 2 December 2016). Instead, they began with Tchaikovsky's Quartet No 1 — not particularly out-of-the-way, given the popularity of its second movement, but not the first work that comes to mind in terms of core quartet repertoire, either. They brought out the chant-like character of the opening particularly well, finely contrasted with the energy elsewhere in the opening movement. An eloquent account of the second movement made effective use of the pauses and silences that punctuate it, and there was plenty of heft to the dance rhythms in the third movement. Tuning problems in the first movement and the finale were merely passing distractions.



The Villiers String Quartet. From left to right: Nick Stringfellow, cello, Carmen Flores, viola, Tamaki Higashi, violin 2 and James Dickenson, violin 1. Photo © Charles Gervais

'It is tempting to describe Delius' String Quartet as good Delius but not a good quartet. The writing is too cluttered, with not enough air in the texture. The Villiers Quartet clearly believes in it, though, and took what opportunities there were to lighten the tone in the second and third movements, giving a warmly affectionate performance of the third, known as "Late Swallows". They even managed to bring some cohesion to the finale, where Delius often seems to lose his way.' [Read more ...](#)

Mike also reviews Puccini from Opera North, Derby Bach Choir's Dvořák Stabat Mater, Sinfonia Viva and Duncan Ward, Handel's *Messiah* in Derby Cathedral, and Christmas concerts from Derby Choral Union, the Sitwell Singers and Derby Concert Orchestra.

[Read our latest concert reviews](#)

[Listings of forthcoming concerts and festivals](#)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS

American composer Andrew Norman wins the 2017 Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for his work *Play*.

The Royal Flemish Philharmonic will give the inaugural first performance in Antwerp's new Queen Elisabeth Hall, of Wim Henderickx's Symphony No 2, for orchestra, soprano and electronics. The Ealing Music and Film Festival returns to London UK, 8-12 February 2017.

We mark the passing of Bernard Zaslav, Miriam Pirazzini, Valery Khalilov (and many members of Russia's Alexandrov Ensemble), Heinrich Schiff, Weston Noble, Karel Husa, Antonio Membrado, Elliott Schwartz, Julia Gomelskaya, Gigliola Frazzoni, Elisabeth Carron, Kamilló Lendvay, Aleksei Maslennikov and Allan Zavod. [Read our latest news](#)



## NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

We're building an archive of our monthly classical music newsletters. They've been published in this PDF format since September 2013, and you can download and read any of them from [this page](#).

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 February 2017 newsletter are both Friday 27 January 2017. [Details here](#).

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

[Contact us](#)

[Newsletter archive](#)