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Festivals and Summer Schools — Issue 110, 1 June 2017

CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS — JIŘÍ BĚLOHLÁVEK (1946-2017)

'As with *Taras Bulba*, it's difficult to express exactly what the specifically "Czech" element in Janáček consists of : it's a combination of its rhythmic and melodic roots in folk music, yet they aren't quotations : what Janáček captures is the *spirit* of what the nation has gone through, somehow transforming the very essence of this into music.' - Jiří Bělohlávek, in conversation with Roderic Dunnett in 2002 [[read the complete interview](#)]

Czech conductor Jiří Bělohlávek was born in Prague on 24 February 1946, learning piano then cello and also singing in choirs when young. He was conducting choirs as early as fourteen. Later he studied at the Prague Conservatoire and at the Academy of Performing Arts in the same city, followed by two years' conducting studies with Sergiu Celibidache.

He won the Czech National Conducting Competition in 1970, and became assistant conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra for two years. He then conducted the Brno Philharmonic on foreign tours (1972-78) and was then chief conductor of the Prague Symphony Orchestra (1977-89).

He became chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic for a short period in 1990, resigning in 1992 after the orchestra voted to replace him with Gerd Albrecht. Instead he founded the Prague Philharmonia in 1993 and served as its music director until 2005.



Jiří Bělohlávek (1946-2017)

From 1995 until 2000 he was principal guest conductor then from 2005 until 2012 chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He also conducted at New York Metropolitan Opera, at Glyndebourne and in Rotterdam.

In 1997 he was appointed professor of conducting at the Prague Academy of Music, and in 1998 he became principal guest conductor of the Prague National Theatre.

He became chief conductor of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (again) in 2012, and in January 2017 his contract was renewed until the 2021-22 season, in spite of speculation about his medical condition. On 31 May 2017 Jiří Bělohlávek died following a long illness, aged seventy-one.

We also mark the passing of Barbara Smith Conrad, Natalia Shakhovskaya, Robert Gutter, Norma Procter, Charles Hoffer and Grigori Zhislin.



Sébastien Daucé

The London Festival of Baroque Music (which has just drawn to a close for 2017) is delighted to announce the appointment of French conductor Sébastien Daucé as guest artistic director for the 2018 festival. Daucé will be working alongside the festival team to help create a dynamic programme based around the music of the French Baroque. Following the departure of Lindsay Kemp as Artistic Director after ten years in post, the festival is adopting a new approach from 2018. Rather than a resident artistic director, the festival will instead feature a different guest artistic director each year, who will be invited to help devise a festival which plays to their strengths and interests.

One of the highlights of the 2018 festival will be Daucé directing his own Ensemble Correspondances in the first UK performance of their realisation of Charpentier's *Histoires sacrées* (featuring the staging of Vincent Huguet) at St John's Smith Square on Thursday 17 May 2018. There will also be a celebration of the 350th anniversary of the birth of François Couperin. Further festival themes and programmes will be announced at the festival launch in January 2018.

Organist, harpsichordist and musicologist Sébastien Daucé specialises in the music of the French Baroque. He formed Ensemble Correspondances whilst still a student at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique in Lyon, where he studied harpsichord and basso continuo. Ensemble Correspondances is one of France's leading early music groups, having performed at many leading festivals around the world. The group records for the harmonia mundi label and is resident at the Théâtre de Caen and the MC2 Grenoble.

The UK's Royal Philharmonic Society announced its Music Award winners on 9 May 2017 at a ceremony at The Brewery in the City of London. The annual awards, in thirteen categories, decided by independent panels, honour musicians, composers, writers, broadcasters and inspirational arts organisations. This year's awards celebrate outstanding achievement in 2016, as viewed by the panel members. The occasion was also used to make a couple of pointed comments concerning the UK's relationship with the European Union and classical music's relationship with young people.



German bass-baritone and RPS gold medallist Thomas Quasthoff (in a recorded message) commented that 'living together in peace is the most important thing', going on to speak of the role of the RPS in 'unifying musicians' and of the importance of a 'borderless Europe so that we can enjoy the music and friendship of different countries and cultures.'

Pianist Stephen Hough, who made presentations to the winners, spoke passionately about the importance of giving everyone the chance to experience classical music, and to ensure that opportunity is not denied through social or financial exclusion. He also cautioned underselling the complexities of classical music, especially to young people, commenting that 'We invite them to climb Primrose Hill when they are ready for Ben Nevis'.

The RPS Music Award winners are as follows:

Audiences and Engagement award: East Neuk Festival, in collaboration with 14-18 NOW, for *Memorial Ground*

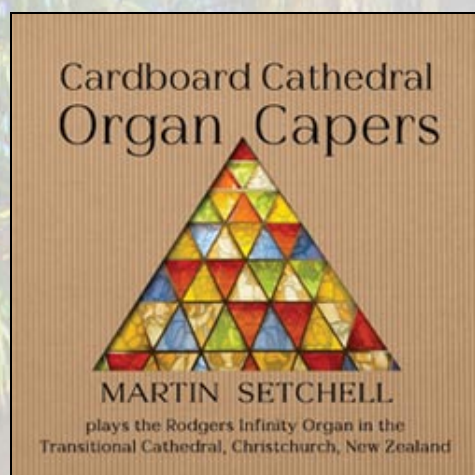
Chamber Music and Song award: Fretwork

Chamber-Scale Composition award: Rebecca Saunders: *Skin*

Concert Series and Festivals award: Lammermuir Festival, East Lothian, Scotland

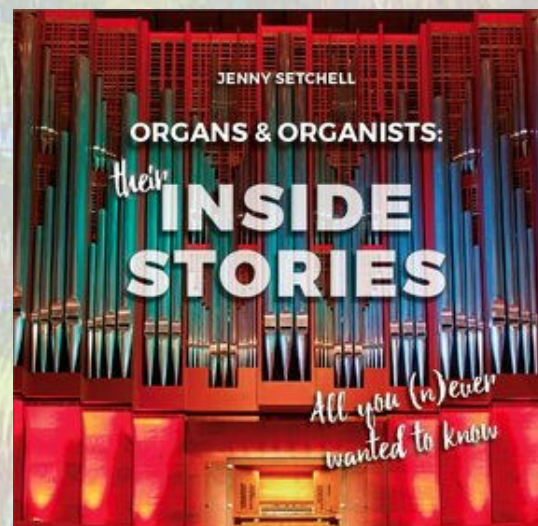
Conductor award: Richard Farnes, music director of Opera North
Creative Communication award: Edward Dusingberre, leader of the Takacs Quartet, for his book *Beethoven for a Later Age*
Ensemble award: Manchester Camerata
Instrumentalist award: violinist James Ehnes
Large-Scale Composition: Philip Venables, for *4.48 Psychosis*
Learning and Participation: South-West Open Youth Orchestra
Opera and Music Theatre: Opera North, for the completion of its *Ring Cycle*
Singer: Finnish soprano Karita Mattila
Young Artist: pianist Joseph Middleton

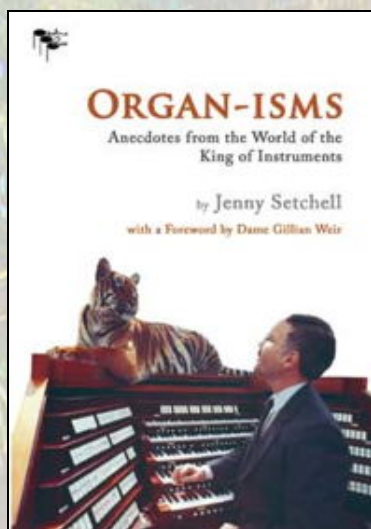
In addition to the awards, film-maker Barrie Gavin joins a long list of notable individuals who have been given Honorary RPS membership. Other recent honorary memberships have been awarded to José Antonio Abreu, Brian McMaster, Graham Johnson, Fanny Waterman, George Benjamin, Tony Fell, Mark Elder, John Stephens, Ahmad Sarmast, Rosemary Nalden, Aaron Dworkin, Ricardo Castro, Armand Diangienda, Martin Campbell-White, Marin Alsop, Evelyn Glennie and Graham Vick. Over more than two centuries of existence of the RPS (which commissioned Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony), honorary memberships have also been received by Rossini, Brahms, Clara Schumann, Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Paul Sacher and Evelyn Barbirolli (Rothwell).



Life must be difficult in Christchurch, New Zealand, following the 2011 earthquake and various more recent quakes. However, the city has a new Transitional Anglican Cathedral, made largely from cardboard, with a Rodgers Infinity digital organ — the original pipe organ is still inside the ruins of the Anglican Cathedral in the Square — and unstoppable organist Martin Setchell's most recent recording is titled *Cardboard Cathedral Organ Capers*. Recorded in the transitional cathedral in the middle of what amounted to a building site in 2014, and including, amongst other Setchell arrangements, a spoof Wedding March, the CD is available from [Pipeline Press](#).

Those who enjoyed the stories in Martin's wife Jenny Setchell's first book, *Organ-isms: Anecdotes from the World of the King of Instruments*, will be pleased to know that she has produced another book, *Organs and Organists: Their Inside Stories* — *All you (n)ever wanted to know* (ISBN 9783928412216), with more stories, plus several other sections (including many photos of the world's most beautiful organs) which try to explain the weird life of organs and organists. Jenny explains that hopefully it will be the sort of book that you can thrust at someone and say 'You don't understand organs or organists? *This* is what it's all about'.





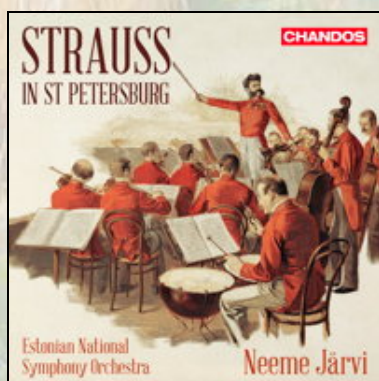
The new book contains over four hundred full-colour photos, and diagrams and cartoons mix in with the text to make a 416-pager. So in a sense this *is* the sequel to *Organ-isms: Anecdotes from the World of the King of Instruments*, but with an added dimension or two.

Visit the Pipeline Press website to read more about the book and find out how to register for a pre-publication discount. The date of release is roughly June/July 2017 in the northern hemisphere and 1 September 2017 in the southern hemisphere.

The previous book *Organ-isms* is on sale at the moment, with a 30% discount from [Pipeline Press](#).

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CD SPOTLIGHT — JOYOUS OCCASIONS



'A thoroughly stimulating issue, dashing performed by Estonian forces conducted by the veteran Neeme Järvi ...'

Gerald Fenech: 'For music lovers in general, the Strauss family is often deemed to have flourished against a Viennese background. But facts prove otherwise. Indeed, Johann Strauss the Younger visited Russia for some eleven seasons between 1856 and 1869, ten of them consecutively, and this is what this CD is all about.

'Seeking to augment passenger traffic on the seventeen mile rail route from St Petersburg to Pavlovsk, the Tsarskoye-Selo Railway Company constructed the Vauxhall Pavilion in 1839, an attractive music and entertainment centre in the grounds of the beautiful Pavlovsk Park. Modelled on London's famous Vauxhall Gardens, this Pavilion was to be the home of many famous conductors and composers, not less members of the

Strauss dynasty, particularly Johann son and Josef, and when Johann gave his last concert there in 1886, he had mustered, thanks to these ventures, a considerable amount of wealth.

'This CD groups together compositions written specifically for these joyous occasions and others that have attained popularity and are now staple diet of any Strauss concert.

'Surprisingly, what I found really interesting is an Olga Smirnitskaya Romance entitled "First Love", a near three minute piece full of enchanting moments.' (*Strauss in St Petersburg* — Neeme Järvi, Chandos CHAN 10937)

'Born in 1841, Antonín Dvořák will always be one of the Czech Republic's greatest musical sons. Indeed, for many he belongs to the whole of mankind, and his music, although imbued with his country's folkloristic element, is so humane and utterly beautiful that the many countries he visited have adopted him as one of their own. One of these is England. Dvořák first visited this country in 1884 to conduct his Stabat Mater to great critical acclaim, following which, the composer was invited back on three subsequent occasions. His connection with England continued, particularly in choral works that were well suited to the flourishing traditions of the genre there.



'Performances are first rate, and Antoni Wit and his forces respond with eloquence and characteristically immaculate singing ...'

'Dvořák wrote his Mass in D in 1887, but the occasion and liturgical circumstances of the piece involved just two female voices, a small choir and organ. Dvořák's usual publisher, Simrock, showed no interest in the work, but Novello did, after commissioning the composer to orchestrate the Mass, a version that was first performed at Crystal Palace in 1892. The work was widely acclaimed, and is still considered, with its many moving, dramatic and blissful moments, one of Dvořák's great choral masterpieces.' (*Dvořák: Mass in D; Te Deum*, Naxos 8.573558)



'... a priceless historic issue that will certainly enrich any musical collection.'

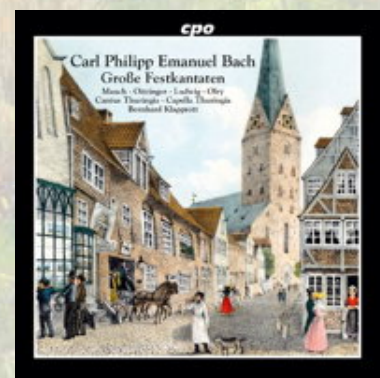
'One of Hungary's leading twentieth century composers, Béla Bartók (1881-1945) remains an enigma to many, if only for his uncompromising attitude towards the musical tastes of his day. His music seems harsh and at times very complicated, but closer scrutiny reveals a true master of his art, a wonderful orchestrator and a musician of consummate ability in form and structure.

'Throughout his career, Bartók was always fond of the string quartet. Indeed, he was only eighteen years old when he first tried his hand at the genre, and while on his death bed in September 1945 in a New York hospital, he discarded sketches for a seventh quartet.

'His six works in this genre span a period of 31 years (1908-1939) and each quartet is a prime example of Bartók's stylistic evolution culminating, sadly, in a final utterance that betrays a certain lack of invention and harmonic density due to his deteriorating health. Each Quartet has its own inimitable timbre, but posterity regards Nos 2-5 as the most mature and inventive, and these are the ones most frequently performed.' (*Béla Bartók: The String Quartets — Vegh Quartet*, Praga Digital PRD 250358)

Gerald also listens to Dvořák on Praga Digital (*Serenades from Bohemia*, PRD 250 371), to Moonkyung Lee playing Tchaikovsky works for violin and orchestra (Navona Records NV6079) and to music for brass and organ from Barbara Bruns and the Thompson Brass Ensemble (MSR Classics MS 1481).

Roderic Dunnett: 'The alto recitative (Austrian mezzo Margot Oetzing: her numerous connections include the enviable Bach Collegium Japan) is nicely done, quite high (at least, in her upper-middle range); the chorale, rejoicing in "the brightness of the eternal sun" sounds instead as if it is regretting the gloom of twilight and dusk. Bach has judged it not so well to follow immediately with a second chorale. The tenor's aria ("You flew on high too early, O shepherd"), with gorgeous Thuringian strings, emerges as a reverential movement. It has a slight feel of Handel, and is taken very slowly; but Ludwig's artistry and expressiveness ensure he carries it off and overcomes all difficulties, even though its key words include *Heil* and *Freude* ("Hail" and "Joy").



'The tenor's aria ... with gorgeous Thuringian strings, emerges as a reverential movement.'

'[Guillaume] Olry certainly has an appealing albeit gentle tone, and the bounce in his aria "Tritt hin" ("Step up to the altar") — the last aria in the work, and much helped by the orchestra and indeed the conductor's nicely elevating pace (which does indeed "Tritt hin" — trips along) shows this baritone in perhaps the best light.

'The CPO sound is bright, perhaps a little harsh at higher levels or in occasional *fortissimi*, but generally fine for this kind of Baroque repertoire, and at times positively enhancing. Strange that Bach was writing this the year after Mozart's *Figaro*. Carl Philipp Emanuel is usually described as a link, the stepping-stone, between the Baroque and the Classical. Not on the whole here, but a few exceptions might suggest themselves. Some of the choruses could actually be from *Idomeneo*. The girls' duet ("Dein sanftes Wort") sounds like *The Magic Flute*.' (*Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: Große Festkantaten*, CPO 777958-2)



'... small storms should be taken in small doses.'

Paul Sarcich: 'My one reserve about the disc is that due to the often dense piano writing, and the brightness of the piano sound in the recording, sometimes the cello does get lost under the welter of notes. It could have been placed a bit more forward in the mix. Sun is a strong and driving pianist, as shown in the short *Ariette*, which has a jazz/blues influence among the Czech idioms, or in the *Seven Arabesques*, which also show a heavy American influence, Martinů living in the USA from 1941-1953 after fleeing the Nazis in Europe.

'These pieces are no mere trifles, the third in particular having enough meat in it to drive a sonata first movement, with its polyrhythms and frequent changes of gear.

'The fourth has a ragtime influence, and the fifth seems to carry a certain quality of homesickness. Blecha-Wells is sparing with her vibrato generally, I felt more *mitteleuropa* romanticism was needed for this. The final two are skippy *allegretti* which are played with more delicacy.' (*Small Storms* — *Bohuslav Martinů*, Navona Records NV6092)

Geoff Pearce: 'On listening to the lovely first song, *The Evening Primrose*, there is no doubt that this is English music, and you can really sense the evening primrose bloom at dusk and night. The song has a pastoral wistfulness, and the soloist's enunciation is clear enough for all the words to be easily heard.

'*Airman RFC* has an entirely different mood, somewhat reminiscent of Benjamin Britten. An airman hears the whistling bombs, sees the searchlights and hopes for a better world than that containing all the violence around him. Taught and full of tension, this song is never brittle or despairing.

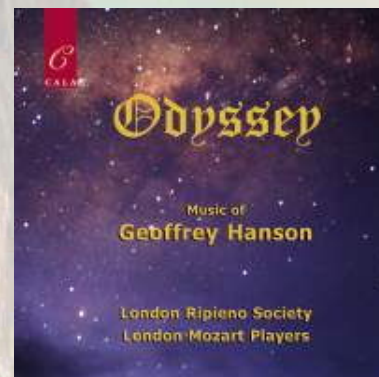
'Gareth Hulse, an oboist whose work I'm very fond of, plays beautifully in the opening to the beautifully wrought *Piano*, again in pastoral mode, with restless harmonies giving a really nostalgic feeling, and including a hymn-like passage. As a woman plays the piano and sings, the listener wishes for this past time of his life.

'Cat courtship can be quite violent and noisy. In *An Appeal to Cats in the Business of Love*, the singer appeals to the gentler expression of love, and asks the cats to think more of this. In places whimsical and at other times tender, there are some very evocative *miaow* sounds in the string writing.' (*Odyssey: Music of Geoffrey Hanson*, Cala Records CACD 77026)

The late **Howard Smith** listened to *Red Priest — Pirates of the Baroque* (Red Priest Recordings *RP 004*), to the Kantorski-Pope Duo playing 21 Hungarian Dances by Brahms (whaling city sound *wcs 045*), to Alexander Feh't's *Arion — Pushkin Songs Disc 2* (Alexander Feh't 8 06467 24354 3) and to Rachmaninov from Rikke Sandberg (CDKlassisk *CDK 1010*).

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'Performances are superb and everyone is a standout.'

ENSEMBLE — HIGH AMBITIONS

Michael Landes: 'On 14 May 2017, the American Protégé Awards brought together an eclectic mix of performers, most notably ranging in age, in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall for their tenth "International Piano and Strings Competition". The youngest of the thirty-one featured musicians was the six-year-old Samantha Hung, who played a charming, short piece by William Gillock, to performers who held multiple higher degrees playing works by Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Eugène Ysaÿe. This variation was also evidenced in the instruments that appeared on stage: the performance's name was proven incomplete, as oboes, flutes, and even a euphonium appeared onstage. Especially notable among these performers was Harin Bae, playing *Kokopeli* for solo flute by the night's only female composer, Katherine Hoover. Drawing largely on world music, the piece combined a controlled atonality with Latin American influence, creating an entrancing work.'



Hsin Ju Yu

'Another highlight of the night was the winner of the competition, Hsin-Ju Yu, who contributed Ysaÿe's Sonata No 3 for solo violin. As can always be expected from Ysaÿe, the extremely complex piece made full use of the capabilities of the instrument, and Ms Yu capably teased out his dissonant harmonies with pathos. The Sonata demands multiphonic technique throughout the majority of the piece, in a challenging inversion of the expected relationship between harmony and melody in a work for solo violin which Ms Yu navigated to great success, appropriately recognized by American Protégé.'

[Read more ...](#)

Maria Nockin: 'On 13 May 2017, the Metropolitan Opera transmitted Richard Strauss' 1911 opera [*Der Rosenkavalier*] in a Robert Carsen production that updated the work to the time of its premiere. At the end of this season, both Renée Fleming and Elīna Garanča are saying goodbye to their thoroughly memorable characters, so this live in HD showing was the last chance for the world-wide audience to sample their interpretations.'

'Strauss loved the sound of women's voices and in this opera he wrote duets and trios that demand distinctive female voices that can be followed as they weave their way through his ensembles. Fleming, who has both soaring high tones and a notable chest register, Garanča, whose caramel espresso sound layed in the dark ground and Erin Morley, whose bright voice has focus and a sweet lyricism, filled the bill perfectly.'



Erin Morley as Sophie and Elina Garanča as Octavian in Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* at New York Metropolitan Opera. Photo © 2017 Ken Howard

'Carsen updated the time period to 1911 so this production shows us the foibles of Viennese aristocracy in the last days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Set designer Paul Steinberg included numerous military artifacts. The *nouveau riche* von Faninal has earned his money by dealing in armaments and Baron Ochs is a military officer whose deportment spoke of times to come. Despite the less colorful time period, Brigitte Reiffenstuel's costumes provided a great deal of eye-candy. They were well constructed and fit the situations in which the characters found themselves.

'The first surprise came when Octavian sang his opening line in a hallway, but a moment later a wall flew up and the lovers were in Steinberg's ornate design for the Marschallin's bedroom. Although the set for Act II included some armaments, the biggest change came in Act III. Octavian and Ochs met at a full-fledged brothel. Nothing was hidden for reasons of refinement, and the Innkeeper was a madam. When the Met Opera premiered this production on 13 April 2017, there were a few boos as that curtain rose.'

[Read more ...](#)

Maria also reports from one of the Met's previous HD productions — *Eugene Onegin*: 'Paula Williams' staging gave us an introverted Tatiana who wanted to star in a real life romance novel. Williams' Onegin was a world-weary playboy who ridiculed Tatiana's innocence. Later, having realized what might have been, both of them would contemplate the reality of the refrain Madame Larina sings at the beginning of the opera: 'Heaven sends us habit in place of happiness.'

'Set designer Tom Pye transplanted us to northern Russia where skies were gray and snow fell on outdoor scenes. Some of his surfaces were reflective, however, and they multiplied small islands of color while reminding the audience of its participation in the wider aspects of Pushkin's poem. Lighting designer Jean Kalman's chiaroscuro added much to the ambience, as did the videos by Finn Ross and Ian William Galloway. Costume designer Chloe Oblensky pulled out all the stops when it came to fabrics for the principals. The red velvet ball gown worn by Anna Netrebko as Tatiana was the utmost in eye candy. Other outfits helped set time and place. Some of us might actually remember wearing a hat with an eye-covering veil.



Anna Netrebko as Tatiana and Stefan Kocán as Prince Gremin in the Ball Scene from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at New York Metropolitan Opera. Photo © 2017 Marty Sohl

'Television and cinema director Gary Halvorson gave the movie house audience all the close-ups they could possibly want and still showed the broader aspects of the Met's huge stage, especially during the dances. In both Act I and in the Ball Scene, Kim Brandstrup's outstanding choreography made the Met's audience realize that they were watching an authentic performance of a Russian opera where dance is an important part of the mixture.' [Read more ...](#)

Giuseppe Pennisi: 'The Teatro Comunale in Bologna has revived a production of Benjamin Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*. I saw and heard it in the 21 May 2017 matinée performance. The production was created some twelve years ago as a joint effort by the Modena Teatro Comunale, Ferrara Opera House, and Ravenna Dante Alighieri Theatre. It is a demonstration that smaller theatres can provide excellent time-resisting productions, far superior to those offered by highly subsidized major opera houses.

'British operas are not often staged in Italy, especially because of the difficulties finding interpreters able to master singing in English. Major houses import productions lock, stock and barrel from Britain. Thus it is praiseworthy that three small theatres joined forces to produce one of the best versions of *Peter Grimes* I have seen and heard in the last fifteen years.



A scene from Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna. Photo © 2017 Rocco Casaluci

'In this production, Juraj Valčuha is the conductor, and the chorus is led by Andrea Faidutti. The director is Cesare Lievi, the sets are signed by Csaba Antal and the costumes by Marina Luxardo. The sea with its violence and its richness is felt from the prologue in the Moot Hall arranged for a coroner's inquiry. The Borough, and even The Boar Inn, are surrounded by dark Suffolk sea. Many reviewers consider *Peter Grimes* to be an ambivalent opera: the audience is left to decide whether Grimes is to be pitied or to be blamed. Juraj Valčuha makes a clear choice; in the opera there is violence (from most of the Borough residents against the marginalized and progressively excluded Grimes) but also a great deal of tenderness: from Grimes' aria "Now the Great Bear and the Pleiades" to his second act monologue; from the duet between Ellen and Auntie to the final chorus when it becomes clear that the Borough has experienced a tragedy from which it ought never to recover.' [Read more ...](#)

Giuseppe also visits Florence for a production of *Don Carlo* and, back in Rome, discusses operas representing intrigues which couldn't be discussed in public, and was also in the audience for Alban Berg's *Lulu*: 'The Teatro dell'Opera production I saw in Rome on its opening night (19 May 2017) is a joint effort by New York Metropolitan Opera, Dutch National Opera and English National Opera. Stage direction, sets and lighting are by William Kentridge and Luc De Wit. As Thomas Piffka, one of the main singers scheduled for the evening, was suddenly ill, Luc De Wit had to play the spinto tenor role Alwa on stage whilst tenor Charles Workman sang in the pit. Kentridge and De Wit's sets, costumes and staging effectively evoke the times — the nineteen twenties and thirties — when *Lulu* was written and composed.

'In the Rome performance, Alejo Pérez conducted the Orchestra del Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, interpreting this difficult score in a very competent manner. The specific musical numbers (rondos, duets and ensembles) that go back even to eighteenth and seventeenth century opera to recall sensuality (as in Cavalli and Monteverdi), following the Mahlerian technique of reminiscence, were excellent. Finally, the dramatic *crescendos* are intensively built up, and the climaxes of the final duets of Acts I and II (and partly also of Act III) are made much more compelling by the inexorable insistence on the thematic material. The style has nothing in common with the *ostinato* technique: it is counterpoint which achieves great dramatic tension through an increasingly concentrated density of melodic lines.



A scene from Act III of Berg's *Lulu* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Photo © 2017 Yasuko Kageyama

'Agneta Eichenholz had the title role — a very taxing part as she is on stage for almost the entire opera. She is a dramatic coloratura soprano and received ovations at the end of the opera. In the large cast, there are voices well known in Italy (such as Jennifer Larmore in the part of Countess Geschwitz and Willard White in that of Lulu's father, Shigolch) and

singers working mostly in the German world (such as Brenden Gunnell in the double role of Dr Schön and Jack the Ripper)

'Even though the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma audience is not accustomed to Berg's music, the four hour performance was warmly applauded and Agneta Eichenholz received well-deserved ovations.' [Read more ...](#)



Freddy Kempf

Mike Wheeler: 'With a first half of popular favourites and a second of less familiar music, the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Yuri Simonov came up with a neat bit of programming (Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham, 16 May 2017).

'Revelling in the sensuousness of the *Adagio of Spartacus and Phrygia*, from Khachaturian's *Spartacus* ballet, they brought out its latent affinities with Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin. The descent from the big climax was as carefully handled as the build-up to it.

'Launching Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2, soloist Freddy Kempf followed the score rather than convention by not only keeping those celebrated opening chords on the move but starting them at a genuine *pianissimo*, as marked. When the first theme is later recapitulated as a march Kempf and the orchestra played down the swagger to reveal something more soulful underneath. The whole performance, in fact, was a master-class in how eloquently this work speaks when not sugar-

coated, revealing just how tautly and compactly structured it is. But Kempf's intelligent articulation and phrasing saw to it that there was nothing cold or brusque about the performance, as did the orchestral playing, among which the warm viola sound was particularly attention-grabbing.

'Kempf didn't fully project the rhythmic ambiguity of the opening of the second movement, but it was a soulful account, backed up by expressive woodwind solos, that for the clarinet looking forward to its equivalent in the Second Symphony. The calm after the more agitated central section was eloquently realised. In the finale, oboe and viola doubling gave a plangent colour to the broad lyrical theme. Overall, the performance seemed to minimise any suggestion of a divide between Rachmaninov's Russian and American periods, some passages coming across as anticipations of his final work, the *Symphonic Dances*.' [Read more ...](#)

Mike also listens to the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, to the Hallé Orchestra, to Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and to members of the Kanneh-Mason family performing at the Belper Festival: 'Look out, world, here come the Kanneh-Masons. Where pianist Isata and cellist Sheku have blazed the trail, their younger siblings are coming up close behind.



Konya (top left), Aminata (top right), Jeneba (bottom left) and Isata Kanneh-Mason (bottom right)

'On this occasion, part of the Belper Festival (St Peter's Church, Belper, Derbyshire, UK, 7 May 2017), violinists Konya and Aminata, and cellist Jeneba began with a string trio transcribed from four of Mozart's twenty-five pieces for three basses, K 438b. There was a wonderful freshness to their playing, and I don't think I've seen so much intent eye-contact even from a number of professional chamber groups.

'Konya then moved to the piano for the first movement of Haydn's Sonata No 59 in E flat, H XVI:49, finding wit in the passages of treble/bass dialogue, and plotting a turbulent path through Chopin's Scherzo No 1.

'With Jeneba at the piano, Aminata was agreeably buoyant in the first movement of Haydn's Violin Concerto in G. Jeneba then had the platform to herself, bringing out apt moments of Beethovenian gruffness in the first movement of his Sonata in E, Op 14 No 1, and heightening the expressive contrasts in Chopin's Scherzo No 3, from vehemence to an attractive delicacy in the chiming figures.' [Read more ...](#)

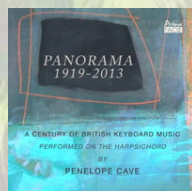
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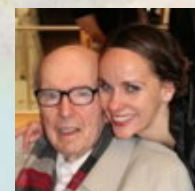
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Sponsor an *M&V* feature and reward the article's author, who receives half of the sponsorship fee. Sponsored features are available to non-subscribers, and they receive extra attention, listed in the sponsored section on the magazine's homepage and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

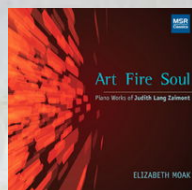
CD Spotlight. A Fantastic Collection. Penelope Cave Panorama CD. Little-known harpsichord gems, strongly recommended by Alice McVeigh



Ensemble. A view from the pit - John Joubert's *Jane Eyre*, praised by Alice McVeigh



CD Spotlight. An Encyclopedic Recital - Elizabeth Moak plays Judith Lang Zaimont, heard by the late Howard Smith. '... a stature of compelling merit.'



CD Spotlight. Pure Magic - James Brawn's continued Beethoven Odyssey, awaited by Andrew Schartmann. '... generating excitement with raw textures ...'



CD Spotlight. Well Realized - Varda Kotler and Israel Kastoriano - recommended by Geoff Pearce. '... partnership and sensitivity ...'



CD Spotlight. True Command - James Brawn plays Bach, Liszt, Musorgsky and Rachmaninov - recommended by Andrew Schartmann. 'The "Promenade" ... is like butter in Brawn's hands.'



Ensemble. Melting Rhapsody - Malcolm Miller enjoys Jack Liebeck and Danny Driver's 'Hebrew Melody' recital, plus a recital by David Aaron Carpenter



An Integral Part - Lindsey Wallis looks forward to the Canadian Music Centre's tribute concert to composer Roberta Stephen



CD Spotlight. Masterful Handling - Volume 3 of James Brawn's Beethoven, praised by Andrew Schartmann. '... his interpretive choices are exquisite.'



CD Spotlight. Perfect Indeed - More Beethoven from James Brawn, recommended by Andrew Schartmann. '... a profound - almost spiritual - connection to the music ...'



CD Spotlight. Masterfully Controlled - James Brawn's Beethoven Odyssey impresses Andrew Schartmann. '... the movement bubbles over with excitement ...'



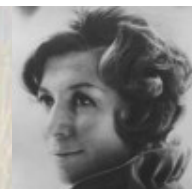
CD Spotlight. Uncommon Piquancy - Music for two cellos, heard by Howard Smith. '... riveting effect.'



Letter to Louise Talma
(Never Sent) - by Jenna
Orkin



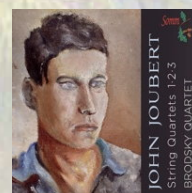
Think of Something
Beautiful - Malcolm Miller
pays tribute to contralto
Sybil Michelow (1925-2013)



DVD Spotlight. Olympic
Scale - Charles Gounod's
Roméo et Juliette,
reviewed by Robert
Anderson. 'Musically the
performance deserves all
the applause it gets.'



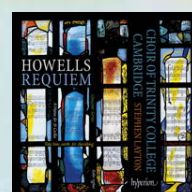
CD Spotlight. A Fascinating
Recording - John Joubert's
string quartets, heard by
Alice McVeigh. 'The
Brodskys throw themselves
into the lament for
Shostakovich ...'



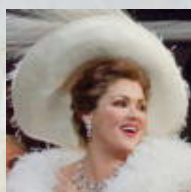
CD Spotlight. Most
Remarkable - Jamaican
pianist Orrett Rhoden,
heard by Bill Newman. '...
one of the finest on disc ...'



CD Spotlight. Beautifully Apt
- Choral music by Herbert
Howells, heard by Robert
Anderson. '... Howells at his
finest.'



Vocal Glory - Massenet's
Manon in HD from New
York Metropolitan Opera,
enjoyed by Maria Nockin



An Outstanding Evening -
Bill Newman listens to
American pianist Rorianne
Schrade



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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](#).

BACKGROUND IMAGE




We have over 1,000 background images, and feature a different one each day on our website. This newsletter's header and background image, showing palm trees along the Colorado River, one hundred miles north of the Mexican border, is taken from a 2011 photo by Maria Nockin.

FESTIVALS AND SUMMER SCHOOLS


The northern hemisphere's summer festival season is here, and we look forward to visiting a selection over the coming months, but we end this early summer newsletter with a springboard of links to popular festivals, summer schools and competitions around the world, throughout the summer and beyond. If your event isn't listed, you can do something about that [here](#).

Aspen Music Festival and School (29 June-20 August 2017, Colorado, USA)

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Bayreuther Festspiele (25 July-28 August 2017, Bayreuth, Germany)

BeethovenFest (8 September-1 October 2017, Bonn, Germany)

Bergen International Festival (24 May-7 June 2017 and 23 May-6 June 2018, Bergen, Norway)

**Festivities**
**Acosta
Danza:
Debut**
Carmen with a Cuban heart.
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**Foundations**
**Mozart.
Life, Love &
Lust**
Amorous arias and duets.
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**Friction**
**London
Sinfonietta**
Nobody does contemporary music quite like the London Sinfonietta.
[Buy tickets](#)

Calendar
24 MAY - 07 JUNE 2017

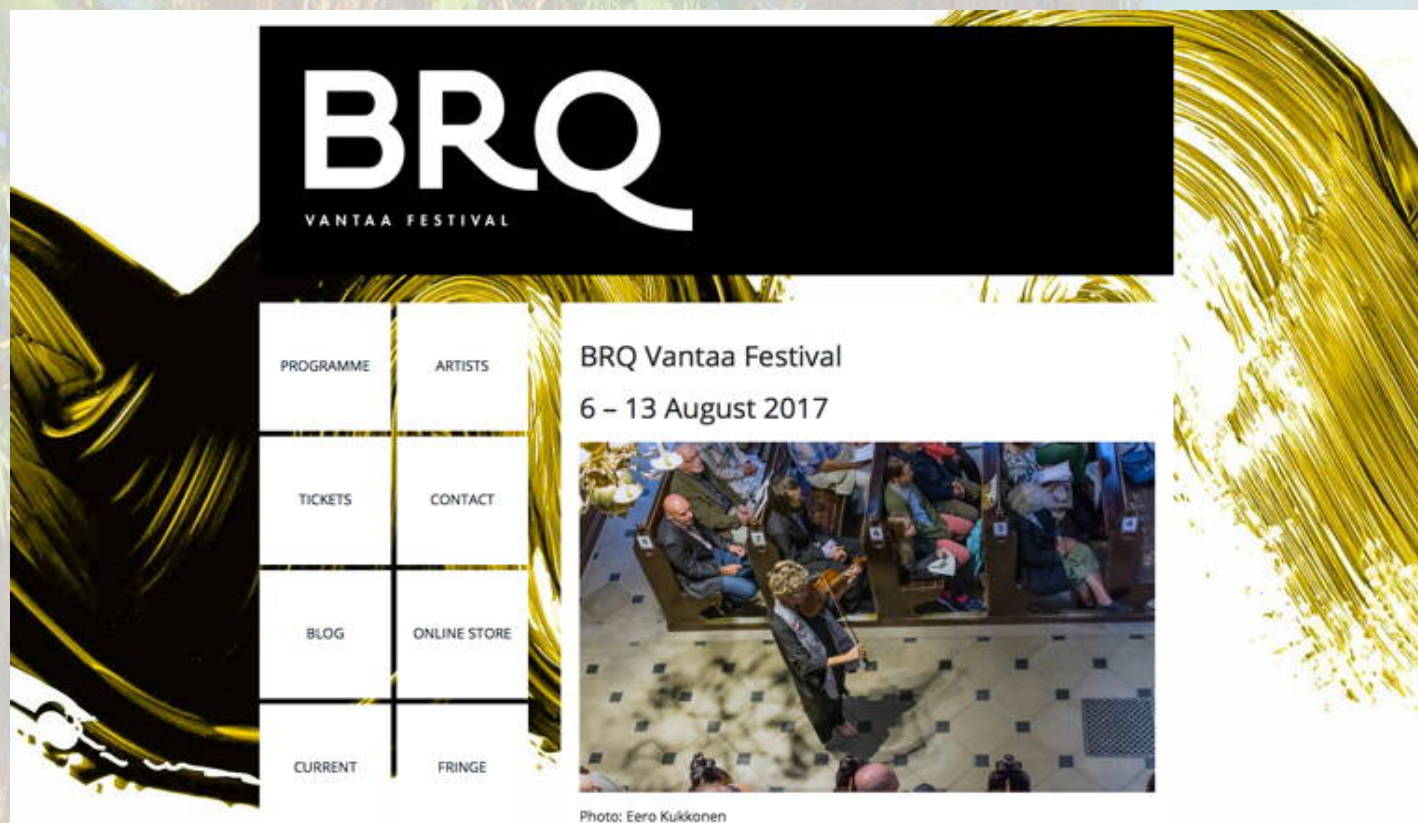
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Genre
[All](#) [Dramatised concert](#)
[Outdoor](#) [Music](#) [Theatre](#)
[Exhibition](#) [Dance](#) [Opera](#)
[Debate](#) [Family](#) [Circus](#)

Besançon Music Festival (8-23 September 2017, France)

Brecon Baroque Festival (26-30 October 2017, Powys, Wales, UK)

BRQ Vantaa Festival (6-13 August 2017, Vantaa, Finland)



Cheltenham Music Festival (1-16 July 2017, Gloucestershire UK)

Chopin and his Europe (12-30 August 2017, Warsaw, Poland)

Christmas Music Festival — Church Holidays in the Land of Mary (27 November 2017-7 January 2018, Tallinn, Estonia)

Classical Movements — Kennedy Centennial (27 June-4 July 2017, Washington DC, USA)

Colorado Music Festival (29 June-4 August 2017, Colorado, USA)

CoMA Contemporary Music Summer School (22-30 July 2017, Orkney, UK)

Cracovia Music Festival (27 September-1 October 2017, Cracow, Poland)

Dartington International Summer School and Festival (29 July-26 August 2017, Devon, UK)

Dubrovnik Summer Festival (10 July-25 August 2017, Dubrovnik, Croatia)

Edinburgh International Festival (4-28 August 2017, Edinburgh UK)

El Jem International Festival of Symphonic Music (8 July-12 August 2017, El Djem, Mahdia Governorate, Tunisia)

Estonian Manors (27-30 July 2017, various venues, rural Estonia)

Fayetteville Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Camp (12-16 June 2017, Fayetteville, USA)

Festival Chopin à Paris (17 June-14 July 2017, Paris, France)

Festival Maribor (7-17 September 2017, Slovenia)

Festival of Choirs and Orchestras in Prague (6-10 September 2017, Czech Republic)

Festival of Songs — International Choir Festival (31 May-4 June 2017, Olomouc, Czech Republic)

Festival Vaduz Classic (24-27 August 2017, Vaduz, Liechtenstein)

The screenshot shows the Vaduz Classic website. At the top, there are logos for 'VADUZ CLASSIC' and 'ivoclar vivadent: passion vision innovation'. Navigation links include 'AKTUELLES', 'PROGRAMM', 'ORGANISATION', 'SPONSOREN', 'KONTAKT', and a red 'TICKETS online' button. The main banner features a large red 'V' logo and a photograph of a stage with blue hexagonal lights. Text on the left of the banner reads: '24 - 27 AUGUST 2017', '27.08.2017 LIECHTENSTEIN SPIELT', 'Parkhaus Merzplatz, Vaduz', and 'MEHR INFOS'. Below the banner, a timeline lists the events: '24.08.2017 CLASSIC OPEN AIR', '25.08.2017 Galakonzert', '26.08.2017 Tag der Jugend', and '27.08.2017 Abschlusskonzert'.

Garsington Opera (1 June-30 July 2017, Wormsley Estate, Stokenchurch, Buckinghamshire, UK)

George Enescu Festival (2-24 September 2017, Bucharest, Romania)

George Gershwin International Music Competition (24 October-5 November 2017, New York, USA)

Glimmerglass Festival (7 July-22 August 2017, Cooperstown, New York, USA)

Glyndebourne (20 May-27 August 2017, East Sussex, UK)

Grachtenfestival (11-20 August 2017, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Grand Prix Thailand — International Choir Festival (26-30 July 2017, Pattaya, Thailand)

Grant Park Music Festival (13 June-19 August 2017, Chicago, USA)

Haydn Festival (24 August-3 September 2017, Eisenstadt, Austria)

Helsinki Festival (17 August-3 September 2017, Helsinki, Finland)

Henry Wood (BBC) Promenade Concerts (14 July-9 September 2017, London UK)

Holland Festival (3-25 June 2017, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (17-26 November 2017, West Yorkshire, UK)

Ihlombe! South African Choral Festival (21-29 July 2017 and 20-28 July 2018, Cape Town, South Africa)

Illumina Festival (2-14 January 2018, São Bento do Sapucaí, Brazil)

International Festival of Choirs and Orchestras (27 June-1 July 2017 and 2018, Budapest, Hungary)

International Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition (29 June-6 July 2017, Moscow, Russia)

Istanbul Music Festival (29 May-21 June 2017, Istanbul, Turkey)

Joy of Music Festival (23-29 October 2017, Hong Kong, China)

Korkyra Baroque Festival (2-12 September 2017, Korcula, Croatia)

LA/Reykjavík Festival (3-12 October 2017, Reykjavik, Iceland)



CONCERTS & TICKETS

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25. APRIL 2017

LA/Reykjavík Festival at Harpa Concert Hall

Longborough Festival Opera (8 June-4 August 2017, Gloucestershire UK)

Lucerne Piano Festival (18-26 November 2017, Lucerne, Switzerland)

Lucerne Summer Festival (11 August-10 September 2017, Lucerne, Switzerland)

Mananan International Festival of Music and the Arts (19 June-1 July 2017, Port Erin, Isle of Man, UK)

La Mariette String Masterclasses (3-19 August 2017, Indre-et-Loire, France)

Melodia South American Music Festival (7-13 July 2017, Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Mendelssohn Festival (11-24 September 2017, Leipzig, Germany)

Mostly Mozart (25 July-20 August 2017, New York, USA)

Munich Opera Festival (18 June-31 July 2017 and 24 June-31 July 2018, Munich, Bavaria, Germany)

Ohrid Summer Festival (12 July-20 August 2017, Ohrid, Macedonia)

Opéra de Baugé — Country House Opera in France (27 July-6 August 2017, Pays de la Loire, France)

Opera Holland Park (1 June-29 July 2017, London UK)

Petworth Festival (12-29 July 2017, West Sussex, UK)

Prague Summer Nights — Young Artists Music Festival (12 June-10 July 2017, Prague and Tabor, Czech Republic and Salzburg, Austria)

Presteigne Festival of Music and the Arts (24-29 August 2017, Powys, Wales, UK)

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24-29 AUGUST 2017
24-29 AWST

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Puccini Festival (14 July-19 August 2017, Torre del Lago, Italy)

Rossini Opera Festival (10-22 August 2017, Pesaro, Italy)

Ryedale Festival (14-30 July 2017, North Yorkshire, UK)

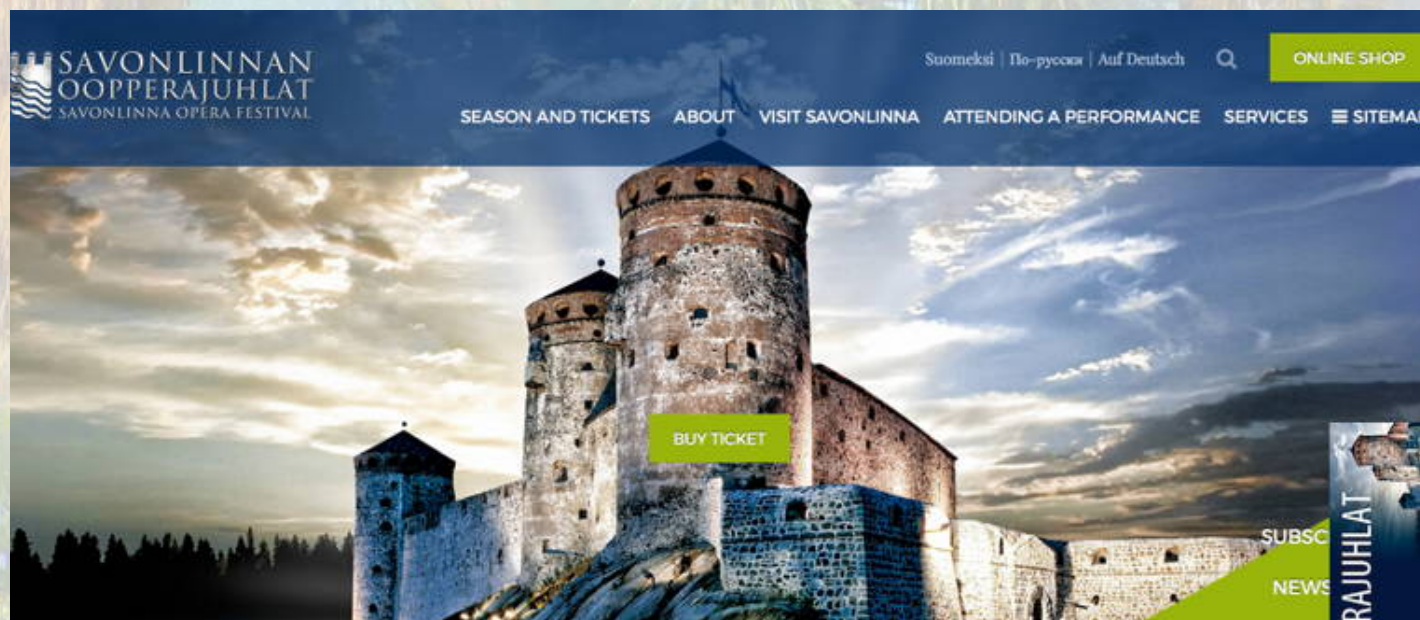
Salzburg Summer Festival (21 July-30 August 2017, Austria)

Salzburg Whitsun Festival (2-5 June 2017, Austria)

San Francisco Opera — Summer of Love (31 May-2 July 2017, San Francisco, California, USA)

Santa Fe Opera (30 June-26 August 2017, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA)

Savonlinna Opera Festival (7 July-4 August 2017, Savonlinna, Finland)



Schubertiade Schwarzenberg (17-25 June, 25 August-3 September 2017, Austria)

Schubertiade Hohenems (13-16 July, 5-8 October 2017, Austria)

Scotia Festival of Music (28 May-11 June 2017, Nova Scotia, Canada)

Singapore International Piano Festival (1-4 June 2017, Singapore)

St Magnus International Festival (16-24 June 2017, Orkney, UK)

Summer Music Academy (27 June-12 July 2017, Kiev, Ukraine)

Swaledale Festival (27 May-10 June 2017, North Yorkshire, UK)

Tanglewood (16 June-3 September 2017, Massachusetts, USA)

Three Choirs Festival (22-29 July 2017, Worcester UK and 28 July-4 August 2018, Hereford UK)

Toronto Summer Music (13 July-5 August 2017, Canada)

Valletta International Baroque Festival (13-27 January 2018, Valletta, Malta)

Verbier Festival (21 July-6 August 2017, Switzerland)

Verdi Festival (28 September-22 October 2017, Parma and Busseto, Italy)

Wexford Festival Opera (19 October-5 November 2017, Wexford, Ireland)





WEXFORD
FESTIVAL OPERA

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WEXFORD FESTIVAL OPERA
19 OCTOBER - 5 NOVEMBER

West Cork Chamber Music Festival (30 June-8 July 2017, Bantry, County Cork, Ireland)

Yiddish Summer Weimar (15 July-12 August 2017, Weimar, Germany)

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 July 2017 newsletter are both Monday 26 June 2017. [Details here.](#)

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