



CLASSICALLY
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CD SPOTLIGHT – BRAHMS IN LONDON



Gerald Fenech: 'One of Brahms' most popular works and undoubtedly his greatest choral piece is *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Premiered in its complete seven movements on 18 February 1869 in Leipzig, the Requiem was a great success despite some initial critical reservations.

'The work was soon enthusiastically sought out by choral societies all over Europe not least in Britain, where choral singing is regarded as the lifeblood of the nation. Indeed,

there are records of its being performed some thirty times between the full Leipzig premiere and the 1873 Philharmonic Society performance. But, oddly enough, the Philharmonic's was not the first English performance. This took place on 7 July 1871 in a private performance in London with reduced forces using Brahms' four-handed arrangement instead of an orchestra. The records show the choir was of about thirty voices and the piano duettists were the veteran English composer Cipriani Potter and Kate Loder, a prominent pianist at the Royal Academy of Music. This version subsequently became known as the "London Version" and the composer and scholar George Alexander Macfarren, in his notes to the Philharmonic's performance of 2 April 1873, dubbed the work "An English Requiem".' (*Johannes Brahms: An English Requiem*, Delphian DCD34195) Gerald also listens to Ástor Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer's *María de Buenos Aires* (Delphian DCD34186) and to *Jorge Federico Osorio — Final Thoughts* (Cedille CDR 90000 171).

Geoff Pearce: 'On this disc are my favourite Shostakovich String Quartets. (I have them all on a fabulous set, quite a few years old now, with the esteemed Borodin Quartet.) The performers here truly understand this music and play with great precision, feeling and empathy, and I enjoyed this performance very much.

'The seventh string quartet, dedicated to Shostakovich's first wife, is quite a tempestuous work and goes through a large range of emotions. It is also the shortest of the three quartets here. The first movement opens happily enough with a jaunty little tune, but contains unsettling little outbursts.

'The second movement, brief and slow, is quite unusual with a sorrowful melody over a busier accompaniment. This is quite disturbing and one can sense the underlying unease.

'The last movement, the longest of them all, is somewhat manic and taut. The performers are on their mettle, and the work is gripping in intensity. There is some respite in the second section where things slow down, but the melody is unsettling, with strange short interjections from the instruments not playing the melody.' (*Altius Quartet — Shostakovich: String Quartets 7, 8 and 9*, Navona NV 6125) Geoff also listens to *Genesis — Martin Georgiev Symphonic Works* (ICSM Records ICSM 010) and to *Barbara Harbach — Orchestral Music III* (MSR Classics MS 1614).

Roderic Dunnett: 'Vítězslav Novák (1870-1949) was one of the most significant figures of Czech music at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. He thus belongs to the group of major figures — Fibich, Foerster, Ostrčil and of course Janáček — who took over from or indeed allied themselves with Dvořák, furthering the cause of folk idioms and developing their own individual brand of evolving Romanticism.

'Novák was in fact a student in Dvořák's composition class, from which he learned much. But his growing allegiance, after folk music, was to post-Romanticism: akin to that wide-ranging body of composers, French but especially German and Polish, who emerged in the post-Wagner era with an array of distinctive voices, characterised by sumptuous chordings, scrumptious orchestral colourings and heavily laden counterpoint which would characterise not only Strauss, to whom Novák became devoted after hearing *Salome* in 1906, but Schreker, Franz Schmidt, Szymanowski, Karłowicz and many others.

'Novák's operas, especially *Karlstijn* and *Lucerna* (The Lantern, which has been recorded on Supraphon with the legendary Karel Berman and Eva Děpoltová), even if they did not enjoy early approval, are worth an acquaintance.

'The three works on this disc — effectively symphonic poems — reveal just how beguiling a composer Novák had become by his early to mid-thirties. The music is lush, sparkling, adventurous, hectic and beguiling by turns. All this is captured with flair and sensitivity by the Buffalo Philharmonic, from New York State, under its current Music Director JoAnn Falletta, who has a reputation for exploring, as here, composers at the side of the repertoire, including the Austrian Marcel Tyberg (1893-1944), like Novák a neoromantic, and one of those who perished at Auschwitz; Suk; Dohnányi (including two violin concertos); Moeran; Respighi; and many American composers, stretching from John Knowles Paine (1839-1906) to Corigliano and black American composer Adolphus Hailstork in her many recordings for Naxos.' (*Vítězslav Novák: In the Tatra Mountains*, Naxos 8.573683) Roderic also listens to *Carl Friedrich Abel: Symphonies Op 7* (cpo 777 993-2) and to *Victoria de los Ángeles — Fauré, Debussy, Ravel* (Praga Digitals PRD DSD 350 137).

We also continue to publish, posthumously, the CD reviews of Howard Smith: this month *Rachel Barton Pine — Beethoven and Clement Violin Concertos* (Cedille CDR 90000 106), *Classical Ballads — Wilhelm Pfeiffer and Fabricio Moreira* (the noeck records CD 2007) and *Archangel! Corelli Opus 5 — Judith Aller* (USA Music Group USACD-1010).

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ENSEMBLE — THE ROMANTIC CONNECTION

Giuseppe Pennisi: 'Would French Romantic music and British rock make a good blend for an evening at the opera? Many opera goers and ballet fans would doubt it. A proverb says: "try before reaching a conclusion or formulating a judgement". The mix can be effective, and charming, if the bridge linking the two components is the view of a good ballet danced by a top-notch company. This was the conclusion reached on 28 January 2018 by the audience of the second new production of the ballet season of the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. I was one of them.

'Under the title *Soirée Française*, two very different ballets were performed. Firstly, a Serge Lifar ballet titled *Suite en Blanc*, on the music of Édouard Lalo. Following this was the *Pink Floyd Ballet*, created by Roland Petit on the basis of a number of selected songs by the well known "progressive rock" group. The program's two elements were both contrasting and complementary. They were contrasting because Lalo's delicate and elegant French Romantic music sounds quite different to Pink Floyd's philosophical rock.

The first part had musical support from the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma Orchestra conducted by Luigi Bonini; the music score of the second part was a taped selection of Pink Floyd songs.'



Alessio Rezza in Roland Petit's *Pink Floyd Ballet* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Photo © 2018 Yasuko Kageyama

Giuseppe also listens to Rossini's *William Tell*, Verdi's *I Masnadieri*, Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*, music by Kodály, Philip Glass, Bruckner and Giacinto Scelsi, and to Bernardo Pasquini's dramatic passion *La Sete di Cristo*: 'On 25 January 2018, the Accademia Filarmonica Romana — a private society of music lovers created in 1813 — opened, within its 2017-2018 season, a series of concerts in the Teatro Argentina, a gem of a theatre which enchanted Stendhal during his travels in Italy and where Gioacchino Rossini premiered his *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in 1813.

'The series opened with *La Sete di Cristo* (Christ's Thirst) by Bernardo Pasquini, on a libretto by Nicolò Minato. It is a two part oratorio on the Crucifixion, premiered in 1689. Pasquini was a prominent musician of the Roman baroque school. He had the strong support of Christine, Queen of Sweden after her conversion to the Roman Catholic Religion and during her exile in Rome. He was also highly considered by prominent Church personalities like Pietro Cardinal Ottoboni. He composed eighteen operas and a large number of oratorios as well as instrumental music. He was the leader of a musicians' club where younger members were, among others, Alessandro Stradella, Alessandro Scarlatti and Archangelo Corelli. Georg Friedrich Händel was one of his followers in the first period of his career.



Concerto Romano on the stage at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on 25 January 2018. Photo © 2018 Max Pucciariello

'*La Sete di Cristo* is a very dramatic oratorio. It is divided into two parts, with a total time of about a hour and a half. The ensemble is composed of nine instrumentalists. There are four singers in very well-defined roles: The Virgin Mary, St John, Joseph of Arimathea and Holy Nicodemo. There is action: in the first part, the singers are divided into two pairs. In the second, they become a small chorus. Each of them has a strong personality, well depicted by the arias and the music.'

Mike Wheeler listens to a school production of Bizet's *Carmen* and is impressed by a piano recital by Colin Stone, and by Mark Elder and the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain: 'On paper it looked rather a risky programme — three pieces, all beginning quietly, and two of them ending quietly as well. But the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and conductor Mark Elder held us in the palms of their hands, ensuring that the gentle murmurs of Lyadov's *The Enchanted Lake* worked their magic from the very first note. For a piece that doesn't actually go anywhere it's a remarkably compelling experience, and the muted strings' velvety tone, and the points of light from other parts of the orchestra, created a thoroughly bewitching soundscape.'

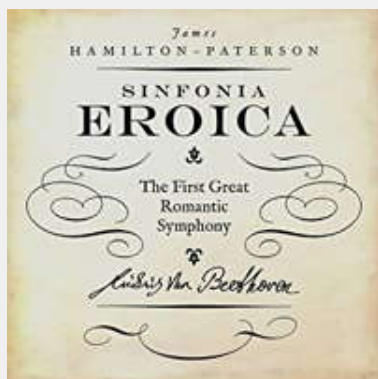
'Dukas' *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is about enchantment of a different kind, based on Goethe's tale of a spell that gets out of control. The NYO and Mark Elder's rhythmically tight performance had a healthy injection of mischief. Even so, it was good to hear the piece treated as more than just a jolly romp, with its second half given even greater expressive weight as it rushed to its denouement.'

'In the second half, the orchestra tackled its first ever complete opera (discounting Act 3 of *Die Walküre* at the Proms nearly thirty years ago). As an interior drama that does not depend on physical action, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* lends itself to a concert semi-staging like this. A video screen suspended over the back of the orchestra carried graphics marking the opening of each door, and surtitles — the main part of the work was sung in the original Hungarian. A pity they were from Christopher Hassall's aged singing translation, whose twee, pseudo-archaic style suggests we urgently need a new one (from one of Angela Carter's or Roald Dahl's present-day successors, perhaps)'.



Robert Hayward, who sang the title role in Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* in Nottingham

BOOK REVIEW — EXCEPTIONALLY WELL INFORMED



Gerald Fenech: 'James Hamilton-Paterson begins his book by recalling the foundations of the development of classical music through sonata form, before delving into the biographical details of the early life of Ludwig van Beethoven, the ground-breaking composer of this symphony. He then explores the theme of Prometheus for which Beethoven wrote ballet music which in turn was re-used for one of the movements of the *Eroica*. In this same chapter he also deals with Beethoven's deafness which so profoundly affected the composer and which inspired the heartbreaking *Heiligenstadt Testament*.

'When describing the different movements of the symphony itself, apart from the technical details, Hamilton-Paterson stresses the awe-inspiring originality of the *Eroica* which proved to be so stunning to audiences who first heard it. Nothing like that had ever been composed before.

'There is much debate over the dedicatee of this symphony, and Hamilton-Paterson examines the various candidates, including the most famous one — Napoleon Bonaparte.'

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CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS — JAKUB JÓZEF ORLIŃSKI



Jakub Józef Orliński

Twenty-seven-year-old Juilliard-trained Polish countertenor **Jakub Józef Orliński** will record his first album for release in Autumn 2018 on Erato, which has signed an exclusive recording contract with this young man, who has also trained as a professional break-dancer.

The new recording will be a recital of seventeenth century sacred arias, and it will also feature the baroque ensemble Il

Pomo d'oro with its conductor Maxim Emelyanychev.

Orliński became known internationally while still a student, when he won competitions on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council in 2016. He has given memorable first concerts at Carnegie Hall, Aix-en-Provence and at Frankfurt Opera. During summer 2017, a video of Orliński singing the Vivaldi aria *Vedrò con mio diletto* was viewed more than two million times.

During 2018 he will appear in London at the Barbican Hall — Handel's *Rinaldo* with The English Concert, Tuesday 13 March, 6.30pm — and at the Wigmore Hall — recital with Michal Biel, piano, including music by Handel, Purcell and Schubert, Wednesday 13 June 2018, 7.30pm — during 2018.

The **Barlow Endowment for Music Composition** at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA, encourages and financially supports composers who demonstrate technical skills and natural gifts for the composition of great music. The Endowment achieves this through its Barlow Prize, commissioning programs, and support of student composers.

The Barlow Endowment has announced that applications are now open for the **Barlow Prize**, Barlow General Commission and Barlow LDS Commission. All applications and scores must be received before the close of business on 1 June 2018.

The Endowment is particularly generous and wide-ranging, with no restrictions with regard to musical style, nationality, age, gender, race, religion or political persuasion.

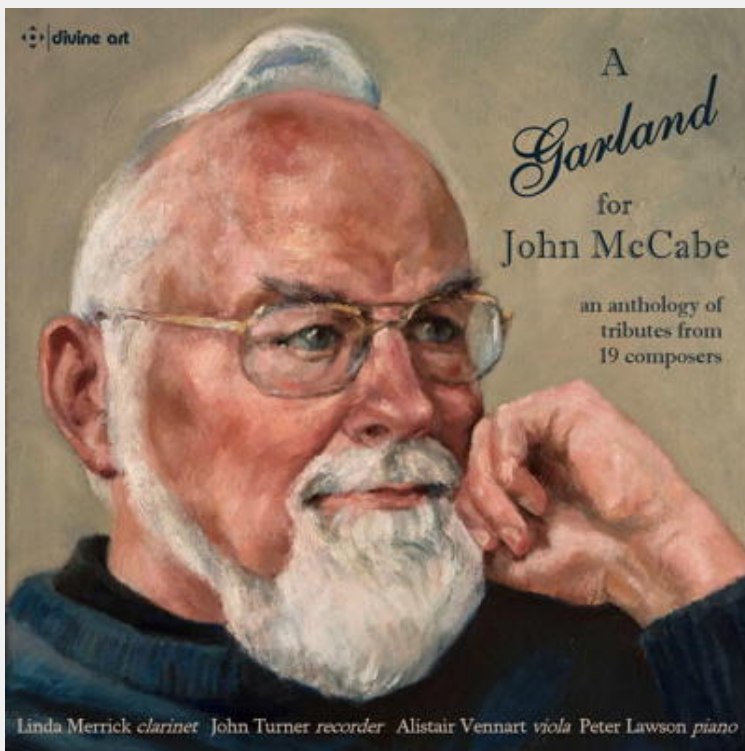
The winning composer of the Barlow Prize 2018 will receive a US\$12,000 commission for a major new work of 9-12 minutes' duration for unaccompanied SATB choir. The work will then be performed by a consortium of choirs. The composition is expected to meet the highest artistic requirements for the medium. Half of the commission fee will be paid when the contract for the commission is signed, and the other half will be paid when the completed score is submitted to the Endowment.

Stacy Garrop from Chicago, Illinois, USA, one of 159 applicants, is the most recent winner of the Barlow Prize, receiving US\$12,000 for her major new work for reed quintet. Takuma Itoh from Honolulu, Hawaii was granted an honourable mention. The Endowment also granted US\$79,000 to seventeen composers, after considering 214 applications for the General and LDS commissioning programs.



Stacy Garrop, winner of the 2017 Barlow Prize

English recorder player John Turner has organised a CD of nineteen tributes to **John McCabe**. These short pieces, gathered as *A Garland for John McCabe* on the Divine Art label, were written in memory of a composer and pianist who generously performed other composers' music, as described on the John McCabe website by McCabe's wife Monica: 'John's love was for the art of music, and for his joy in the created sounds. It was not self-seeking, even though, as with any composer, he had an imperative drive to express himself in music. For this reason he was as happy to listen to the successful work of other composers as to succeed himself, and as a pianist he was able to take part in and promote the music of others.'



A Garland for John McCabe. Divine Art dda25166

On the CD, John Turner is joined by clarinettist Linda Merrick, viola player Alistair Vennart and pianist Peter Lawson. The tributes are for various forces, ranging from viola solo and piano solo to all four players.

The tributes, all written in 2016, are by James Francis Brown, Gary Carpenter, Peter Dickinson, Martin Ellerby, Anthony Gilbert, Edward Gregson, Christopher Gunning, Emily Howard, John Joubert, Rob Keeley, Malcolm Lipkin, William Marshall, David Matthews, Elis Pehkonen, Robert Saxton, Gerard Schurmann, Howard Skempton, Robin Walker and Raymond Warren.

The liner notes have been written by Monica McCabe and the composers

whose work is presented. The CD's cover photo is a reproduction of an oil painting of John McCabe by Angela Palmer.

A Garland for John McCabe will be available from 16 February 2018 on Divine Art dda 25166.

Applications are open for the **2018 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition** (known colloquially as 'The Flick'), which is accepting entrants for the first time from Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Other changes for this 15th competition, which takes place in November, are that the age limit has been reduced from 35 to 30, that the final round of the competition will be streamed live on medici.tv and that the preliminary rounds of the competition will be open to the public for the first time.

Applications must be sent via the LSO website, by 6pm GMT on 20 April 2018. The competition takes place 20-22 November 2018 at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and at the Barbican Centre in London, UK.



Donatella Flick

Donatella Flick comments: 'We have thought very carefully about how best my competition can benefit young conductors, and this is why we have decided to change the criteria for applications, broadening reach, while also ensuring that it is conductors at the very start of their careers who benefit. I am delighted to partner with medici.tv for the first

live stream of the Competition, and also to allow the public into the preliminary rounds. I believe that the more we can open up music-making to the world, the more people will be as enthralled and inspired by it as I am, so I'm really pleased that so many more people will have the opportunity to see the finalists in action next year. Finally I want to thank the extraordinary conductors and musicians who are on the judging panel, as I know each of them will inspire everyone who takes part. I wish everyone who enters the very best of luck!"

Created by Donatella Flick in 1990, the competition aims to help a young conductor establish an international conducting career, bridging the gap between conservatoire training and professional life.

The winner is offered an award of £15,000 plus the opportunity to become Assistant Conductor of the LSO for up to one year.



Debussy: The Complete Works, now available on Parlophone Records 0190295736750

French composer's known works, including six pieces in first recordings made specially for this edition. The box set will be available as Standard Download and on all streaming platforms.

Drawing on Warner Classics' unrivalled catalogue, the collection marks the one hundredth anniversary of Debussy's death, which falls on 25 March 2018. The recordings, selected for their artistic quality and their authenticity of spirit, have been compiled in collaboration with the world-renowned Debussy expert Denis Herlin, who has made several critical editions of Debussy's music for the composer's publishing house, Durand. The box even includes recordings made by Debussy himself — he was a superb pianist. Many other distinguished names are among the performers, including a suitably impressive contingent from France.

'Modern music begins here' — Pierre Boulez

One of history's most captivating and inventive musical geniuses, Claude Debussy, exercises an influence unmatched by any other French composer.

Warner Classics' new thirty-three CD set — the most complete recorded collection of his music ever assembled — comprises all of his known works and includes six specially-made first recordings.

Debussy: The Complete Works, released by Warner Classics on 5 January 2018, stands as the most complete collection ever made of recordings of Debussy's music. On 33 CDs, the box set comprises all of the

Puerto Rican-born composer **Roberto Sierra** has been awarded the Tomás Luis de Victoria Prize, the highest honor given in Spain to a composer of Spanish or Latin American origin, by the Society of Spanish Composers (SGAE) Foundation. The prize, including a 20,000 euro award, will be presented to Sierra in Madrid during Spring 2018. A concert of Sierra's music will accompany the ceremony.

Sierra studied in Puerto Rico, London, Utrecht and Hamburg.

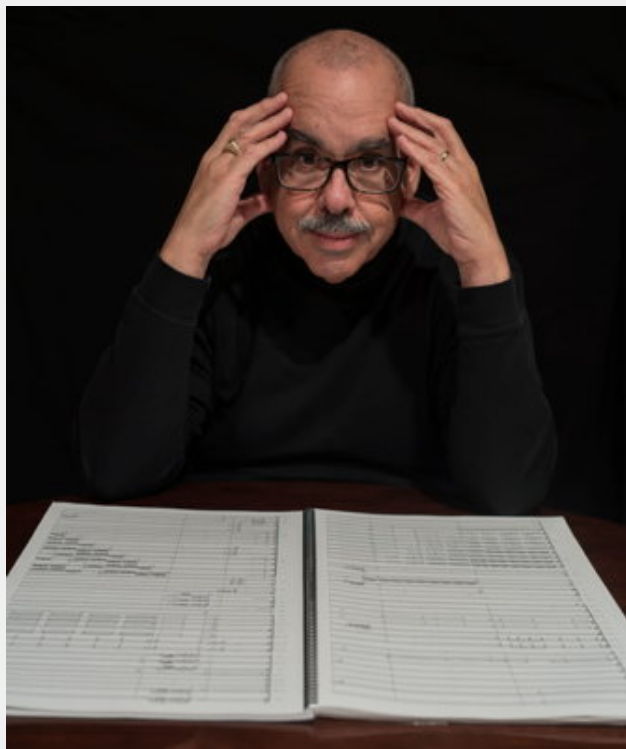
He became Dean and then Chancellor of Puerto Rico's Conservatory, then left to take up a position as composer in residence with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in the USA. He became known internationally in 1987 when the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra performed his first major work, *Júbilo*, at Carnegie Hall, and during the three decades since then, many of his more than 100 works have formed part of the repertoire of many of the main European and American orchestras.

His recent work includes *Graffiti*, commissioned by Chile's Sigma Ensemble for the Manuel de Falla International Spanish Music Festival.

Since 1992 Sierra has been teaching at Cornell University.

We mark the passing of Francisco Savín, Igor Zhukov, Renaud Gagneux, Anshel Brusilow, François Morel, Pierre Pincemaille, Colin Brumby and Konrad Ragossnig.

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Roberto Sierra

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DVD SPOTLIGHT — HARD TO CHEW

Gerald Fenech: 'Born on 22 November 1924, Axel Borup-Jørgensen is considered one of Denmark's most important twentieth century composers. Reared in Sweden since the age of two and a half, the young Axel inherited his father's passion for invention, and from early boyhood he was able to play several instruments. The complete shift towards classical music came in 1942 when his piano teacher introduced him to the slow movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*. Indeed, the composer admits that the sensation he felt was that of a religious conversion.'

'Borup-Jørgensen also nurtured a great love of nature, particularly the Swedish landscape, and this was a constant source of inspiration in his musical career. In 1946 he returned to Denmark, where, with the help of several teachers he was introduced to various forms of music, something that spurred him to abandon piano playing and make composition his main activity.' (*Marin — Axel Borup-Jørgensen, 1924-2012*, OUR Recordings 2.110426)



'This is music that needs to be listened to several times before one can start to comprehend the composer's inner thoughts ...'

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