

MUSIC INSPIRED BY HOMER'S ODYSSEY



An Immersive Experience — Issue 125, 1 September 2018



Craig Safan: Sirens — Music inspired by Homer's Odyssey

Varèse Sarabande 302 067 560 8

'The blending of classical instruments with new electronic techniques combined in melodious, catchy themes, resulting in an unusual orchestration.'

Anett Fodor: For millennia, Homer's evergreen *Odyssey* has inspired many artists. Its miraculous mythological creatures, possessed with superhuman abilities, can still fascinate us mere mortals today, in part, because their stories portray eternal truths.

By Craig Safan's own admission, he has been enchanted by ancient Greek mythology since his childhood. He does not wish to focus directly on the myths themselves. His intention is to portray the feelings they evoke through his music. As he expresses it, his work is an 'inward experience and journey' rather than actual story-telling. He would like to encourage people to contemplate and reconsider both their own psychological and their spiritual *Odysseys*; the metaphorical pathways they have already chosen and have yet to complete.

To my mind, *Circe's Island*, *Persephone: River of Tears* and *Ithaka: Visions of Home* portray the doubts of wandering and pathfinder people. Whilst *On a Dolphin's Back* is about our precarious and sometimes rather fragile existence. *She Sang Beyond the Genius of the Sea* tells us how easily beauty can become our temptress. *Let Me Go*, *Calypso*, *Penelope* and *Poseidon* each portray in turn a nymph, Odysseus' wife, and the god of the sea. These three creatures represent seductiveness, fidelity and revenge.

Two of the tracks — the quasi-jazz 'improvisation' *Melodius Discord* and the eerie *I Have Heard the Mermaids Singing* — are linked by interrelated motives.

The fugue-like *Twists and Turns* depicts Odysseus and the Singer of Tales' rhythmical characteristics tend to invoke the style of ancient story-tellers. [READ MORE ...](#)

Gerald Fenech: Born in 1961, Lowell Liebermann is one of America's finest and most frequently performed and recorded living composers. His prodigious output includes works in every genre, from opera and symphonic music, to instrumental, art song and chamber music. Much of his music has become standard repertoire, and his piano pieces in particular are much admired. Indeed, his vast output for the instrument frequently appears in concerts and competition programmes, something that testifies strongly to his command of the instrument and his profound understanding of its sonic possibilities.

With this third volume, David Korevaar continues on his journey of recording all of Liebermann's works for the piano between 2001 and 2017 and the programme is, maybe, one of the most imaginative and representative of the composer's immense gifts to write music that is modern and yet so beautiful and attractive.

The four Nocturnes, the last he composed in the genre, push the boundaries to almost the very limits, and while Nos 8 and 11 contrast an opening simplicity with brilliant virtuosic climaxes, Nos 9 and 10 are more subtle and tranquil in their means.

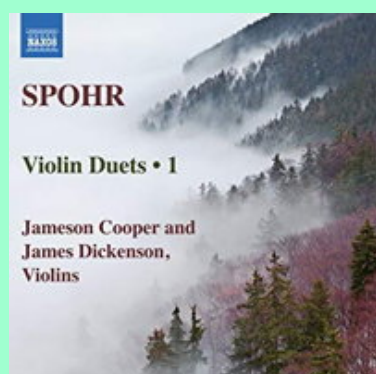
The Schubert Variations (after Goethe's 'Heidenröslein') combine virtuosity and historical references in a wonderfully imaginative and at times bizarre way, incorporating not just the Schubert melody but also echoes of the sombre 'Dies Irae' chant and the motive 'BACH'. [READ MORE ...](#)



Lowell Liebermann Piano Music Volume 3 — David Korevaar

MSR Classics *MS 1688*

'... superbly performed and sumptuously annotated and recorded.'



Louis Spohr: Violin Duets 1

Naxos *8.573763*

'... charming yet exhilarating performances full of subtle touches of colour and textural variety ...'

Gerald Fenech: Born on 5 April 1784 in Brunswick, Ludwig Spohr is considered as one of the most accomplished musicians of his age. Much admired by Beethoven, Spohr excelled as composer, violin virtuoso, conductor and teacher, and by the time of his death on 22 October 1859 he was, maybe, the most influential composer, after the great master. His father, a doctor, was opposed to his son becoming a musician, but Spohr would have none of it, and after overcoming this obstacle, he received his first violin lessons in Sessen, the town where he spent his first years as a boy. It was also in Sessen that Spohr wrote his first pieces.

By 1797 he was at peace with his father, and this enabled him to return to Brunswick to further his studies. In 1804 the composer made his first independent concert tour of Germany, establishing him as one of the leading violinists in the country.

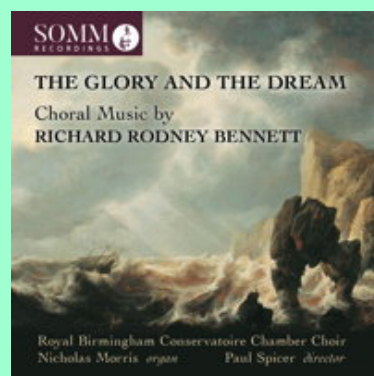
In the following years leading to 1820, Spohr displayed his talents in some of the most important musical centres in Europe such as Vienna and London, and in 1822 he was trusted with the position of Kapellmeister at the court in Kessel, remaining there up to 1857, two years before his demise. In this same year he broke his left arm which failed to heal properly. This injury caused him a lot of pain and anguish, and it contributed much in hastening his death.

This first volume of his Violin Duets takes us back to his boyhood days in Sessen when the young Ludwig tried his hand at composition for the first time, and indeed the programme includes one of his earliest surviving compositions, the Duet No 3 WoO 21 written when he was just twelve years old. [READ MORE ...](#)

Gerald Fenech: Together with John Rutter and James MacMillan, Richard Rodney Bennett is today considered as one of the foremost British twentieth century composers who has given a substantial contribution in almost every genre of British musical life. Born in 1936, Bennett was a composer, performer and entertainer of immense versatility and imagination. His first studies were at the Royal Academy of Music under the expert hand of such eminent names as Lennox Berkeley and Howard Ferguson, and in the late 1950s he was often a visitor to the Darmstadt summer courses and a student of the famous Pierre Boulez in Paris. It was also around this time that the composer was very busy writing film scores, an endeavour that brought a hefty income and international fame. Still it was largely as a composer of art music that Bennett set his hopes and aspirations for the future. Moreover, there was also a burning desire to write music across a broad range of genres that would attract both performers and critics alike, not to mention audiences as well. Naturally gifted, he was able to respond to a vast array of commissions which regularly came his way, particularly after settling in New York in 1979. Excelling in every area, he died in 2012 aged seventy-six, leaving for posterity a large number of works.

Choral music was one of Bennett's most productive genres. Indeed this CD is dedicated to some of his most impressive works in this category. The earliest pieces to be written are three 1961 madrigal settings of which two, 'The hour-glass' and 'Still to be neat', are found on this recording. Bennett was very much attracted to poetry of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, and these two creations attempt to capture something of that era's expressive wedding of words and music, though viewed through a twentieth century prism.

Lullaby Baby, *The Sorrows of Mary*, *Remember*, *O Thou Man* and *I wonder as I wander* are what one might classify as Christmas carols, though not in the strict sense of the word. Whatever the case, these four pieces are prime examples of Bennett's wonderful ability to match words with music, and the way he expresses all the emotional and spiritual content of the texts even matches Britten's unrivalled mastery of the genre. Indeed this is music of great contemplative power that commands the listener's undivided attention from start to finish. [READ MORE ...](#)

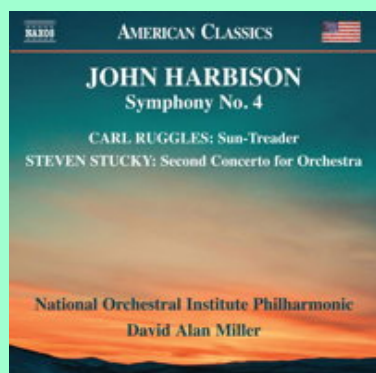


The Glory and the Dream — Choral music by Richard Rodney Bennett

SOMM Recordings SOMMCD 0184

'Paul Spicer and his choristers give eloquent performances, full of precise details and expressive energy, and in their hands Bennett's imaginative prowess is brought to life with intense clarity.'

Gerald also listens to music by Elgar (*Ecce sacerdos magnus* — *Music for Chorus and Orchestra*, SOMM Recordings, SOMMCD 267) and Praetorius (*Missa Tulerunt Dominum meum*, Delphian DCD34303, Blu-ray audio format).



**Ruggles, Stucky, Harbison:
Orchestral Works**

Naxos 8.559836

'On hearing this work,
you will thirst for more.'

Geoff Pearce: This disc, released as part of the Naxos American Classics series, presents some interesting music. John Harbison is perhaps the best-known of the composers presented, and I have also previously heard a few works by Steven Stucky, but this is the first music I've heard by Carl Ruggles (1876-1971).

Ruggles' *Sun-Treader* takes its inspiration from Robert Browning's poem *Pauline*. This rather interesting fifteen-minute work, full of contrast, with rather dissonant pounding sections, layered with quieter, almost lyrical moments, is not the sort of music to sing along to in the shower, but is certainly a powerful listening experience, because of the tremendous contrasts in the sections, changes in mood, texture and speed. Although Ruggles' melodies tend towards a serial construction, this is more in the manner of Alban Berg than of other composers of

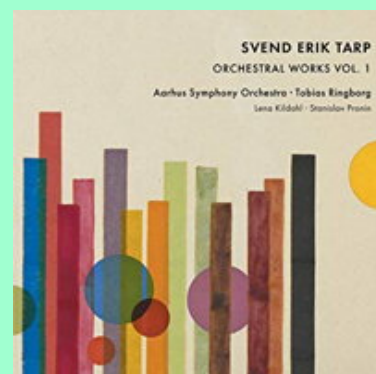
that school. *Sun-Treader* is not an easy work to perform, but the National Orchestral Institute Philharmonic gives a fine and detailed account, and all sections of the orchestra are strong. Considering that this is in fact a 'training orchestra', the results are astounding.

Steven Stucky (1949-2016) is more widely known, and presented here is his Second Concerto for Orchestra (first performed in 2004), which is in three sections. The composer creates a concordance between letters of the alphabet and musical notation, and from this makes many motives and puzzles. [READ MORE ...](#)

Geoff Pearce: Those of you like myself who are unfamiliar with Svend Erik Tarp (1908-1994) are in for a treat. This Danish composer writes engaging and tuneful music, over a wide range of genres, including film music, and truly deserves to be a lot more widely performed. I hope that this disc stirs up some interest in this sadly neglected figure.

The first work here, from about 1942, is a suite drawn from the ballet *The Dethroned Animal Tamer*, Op 38. The ballet itself only received sixteen performances and has not been revived since.

The suite, in nine movements, contains much contrast of moods, and the composer shows that he is a truly deft orchestrator, as well as being able to write music that is truly entertaining without ever being trite. The orchestra and its director are on top form, and this is a certainly a great



**Svend Erik Tarp:
Orchestral Works Vol 1**

Dacapo 6.220668

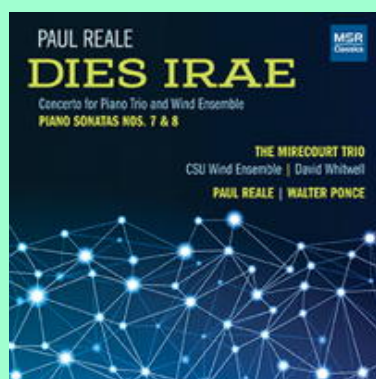
'... this disc left me thirsting
for more from this composer,
and from Scandinavian music
generally.'

introduction to this composer. I can hear elements of Debussy, Ravel and even Stravinsky in this music, but it is not at all derivative, and shines with the composer's good humour.

The Concertino for flute and orchestra was written in 1937 and its three movements have both been described as 'Neo Classical' and 'Neo Baroque'. I like this work — there are no clouds on the horizon here, and it is music purely to enjoy, whilst at the same time impressing the listener with its light orchestration, melodic and rhythmic invention and clean lines — like a crisp dry white wine. The soloist performs convincingly, and the cadenzas and few virtuoso passages are executed with aplomb, whilst the second movement, with its lovely long expressive lines, is beautifully wrought.

Tarp wrote two comedy overtures, the first of which is presented here. Written in 1940, this is a lovely romantic work with a brisk pace and bouncing happy rhythm, and is another great introduction to this composer. Whilst I say romantic, this music is not sentimental, and again the clean elegance of this composer's writing is evident.

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Paul Reale: Dies Irae

MSR Classics MS 1693

'... the musical material evolves as it goes ...'

Geoff Pearce: The compilation is admirable, and most of the programme notes are written by the composer, who also plays the larger of the two piano sonatas, No 7, *Veni Creator Spiritus*. The performances are very fine and committed by all concerned, all the music is written with passion and conviction, and Mr Reale is a composer who takes a lot of care over what he writes, taking time, and often revision.

The first work, *Dies Irae*, a concerto for piano trio and wind ensemble in three movements, is the earliest of the works presented. This is music requiring a lot of hearings, I think. There are moments of great beauty, but also, at least to me, rather incredible crassness. There is certainly a great deal of contrasting material and textures, but it is easy to feel totally swamped, as I guess one would probably feel at the sounding

of the last trumpet and what will follow ... For me this work was probably the most interesting of the three works presented, but I did feel as if I had been through a blender by the end of it.

Piano Sonata No 7, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, is in five movements and takes around twenty minutes to perform, which the composer does here with great conviction and virtuosity. It cannot be an easy work to play.

The opening prelude is quite interesting because of its unison passages and the rapid flourishes which are placed between sonorous chords. The feeling is open and expansive.

[READ MORE ...](#)

Geoff Pearce: I was always aware of Lyell Cresswell, a fellow Kiwi and eleven years older than me, by reputation, and we shared two of the same professors at Victoria University of Wellington. I don't think I had previously heard any of his pieces, and I see that he has lived much of his time in Scotland. I have been out of my native NZ for much of the last forty years, and in Australia, New Zealand composers generally don't get much airplay. I want to hear more of this composer — his music is coherent and interesting.

Capricci, a set of ten dances, commissioned in 2014, is probably the most easily accessible of the works on this disc. These fascinating dances are generally lively and taut. The ensemble reveals itself as being quite at home with this complex music which requires the crispest of rhythms and tightest of entries.

Ricercari (2016) is a set of nine short related pieces, played without a break, although divided into tracks here. Scored for violin and cello, and inspired by the composer's favourite painter, Maurizio Bottarelli, they are exquisite miniatures and, like the rest of this CD, are performed superbly. Although not as immediately accessible as the *Capricci* dances, they are nevertheless interesting and worth the listen. In some of them, I sense the stillness of the NZ rainforest, interspersed with native birdsong — at least this is what I'm reminded of. [READ MORE ...](#)

The late Howard Smith reviewed music by Oskar Morawetz (*A Child's Cry from Isieu — complete works for violin and piano — Centrediscs CMCCD 12807*) and a recording by the 360 Degree Guitar Duo (*Out of Classic, Guitart GUIT 05/07*).



Lyell Cresswell:
Music for String Quartet

Delphian DCD34199

'The Red Note Ensemble,
a Scottish group
specialising in new music,
gives taut, precise performances,
played with conviction.'

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ENSEMBLE — LOVERS' OPERA



Vladimir Reutov as Don Giovanni and members of the chorus in Giovanni Pacini's *Il Convitato di Pietra* at the Villa Paolina in Viareggio

Giovanni Pacini's operas are produced seldom and far between. A 'Pacini Renaissance' was attempted in Italy in the mid-nineties when Catania's Teatro Massimo Bellini and the Valle d'Itria Festival made a joint effort to stage *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*, a Pacini melodrama that in 1825 had been a major hit in Naples at the Teatro San Carlo. Although *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* was appreciated by the reviewers and by the audience, there was no significant revival of Pacini's works.

The outcome may be better if comic and light operas became a vehicle for Pacini's renaissance: they require a small orchestra, a limited number of singers, simple sets and, therefore, could be ideal for small provincial theatres. This thought came to my mind on 24 August 2018 in Viareggio when in Villa Paolina I heard and saw a performance of *Il Convitato di Pietra*.

Although he was born in Catania, Pacini lived between Lucca and Viareggio for most of his life. There, in addition to composing, he created musical institutions and was even Viareggio's mayor. He was very handsome, had three wives and a long love affair with Paolina Bonaparte who had a Villa built in Viareggio in order to be near him.

Il Convitato di Pietra was written for a private performance in Belluomini Palace in Viareggio in 1832 and was performed in a public theatre a few months later. The Belluomini family were aristocrats in Paolina Bonaparte's entourage. The private nature of the performance involved a few choices: a small orchestra, singers selected among

Pacini's family and friends, and elementary sets and props. The libretto is attributed to Gaetano Barbieri and follows quite closely that written by Lorenzo Da Ponte for Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. There are, however, short-cuts. Most importantly, the spirit and the approach are quite different. Mozart's masterpiece is a serious tragedy on crime and punishment. Pacini's work is named 'operetta' and 'farce' in the two 1832 programs still available. It is a light comedy meant to make the audience smile, laugh and not worry about the afterworld. [READ MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe attended the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro, sending back reports of *Adina*, *Ricciardo e Zoriade* and *The Barber of Seville* :



From left to right: Maxim Mironov as Almaviva, Aya Wakizono as Rosina and William Corrá² as Fiorello in Pier Luigi Pizzi's new production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for the Rossini Opera Festival in Pesaro. Photo © 2018 Amati Bacciardi

Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is one of the most performed and reviewed operas of the nineteenth century. On 13 August 2018, the Rossini Opera Festival (ROF) unveiled a new and much awaited production, for three reasons:

1. It is the festival's key production for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Rossini's death
2. Two of the three previous ROF productions of the masterpiece had not been very successful, and the third (in 2014) was a simple staging that circulated mostly in provincial theatres
3. This year's production has been entrusted to 88-year-old Pier Luigi Pizzi — his debut with this title — and an all-star cast

I was in the audience at the Adriatic Arena in Pesaro, full to the hilt. The production was an overwhelming success, with open stage applause after each of the main musical numbers and nearly twenty minutes of ovations at the end.

On the dramaturgical side, the main innovation is to treat *Il Barbiere* not as a comic opera but as lyrical comedy. The characters are not funny *opera buffa* individuals but have psychological depth and development. For instance, Bartolo is not treated as a buffo (as in most productions) but as an astute bourgeois attempting to put his hands on his pupil's dowry and Basilio, often another buffo, as an opportunist trying to make money and improve his position from that of a poorly paid music teacher. Also Figaro acquires a different dimension: as a barber he does all sorts of odd jobs, both for the aristocracy and the upper middle class, and at the end of the opera he reaches his goal to have permanent employment as a member of Count Almaviva's staff. As we all know, Rosina seems very innocent, but she is a little tiger. Even the old housekeeper Berta is flirting with the powerful in the house, as we will know in the next instalment, dealing with the marriage of Figaro.

Pizzi also designed the sets and costumes, with his long-time collaborator Massimo Gasparon. We are in an all-white Seville, both on the square in the first scene and within Bartolo's house where the plot develops. The costumes are rigorously black and white with very few exceptions: Almaviva's shocking red cape, Bartolo's violet coat and Rosina's pale blue dress. This is a very elegant staging with first class acting. [READ MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe was also in Salzburg for the Summer Festival, reporting on Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Richard Strauss' *Salome*, the Salzburg Conductors' Competition and Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*:



A scene from Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* at the Salzburg Summer Festival. Photo © 2018 Monika Rittershaus

On 5 August 2018, a new production of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame* had its premiere at the Salzburg Festival. It was a very special evening with the performance starting at 6pm, followed at 9.30pm by a Gala Dinner in the Residence of the Prince Archbishops who governed the small Alpine State until its annexation to Austria. Thus, the sold out Grosses Festspielhaus was full of gentlemen in dinner jackets and ladies with

long evening robes. This quite matched the opera and the specifics of the production. The opera deals with a decaying society — as discussed in **A Dark Lady, 23 June 2015**. The production emphasizes this theme; the stage direction by Hans Neuenfels, the stage sets by Christian Schmidt, costumes by Reinhart von Thannen and lighting by Stefan Belliger place the action in a timeless context where black and white are the dominant colors. More specifically, most of the characters and chorus members are in dark grey or black — with the exception of the youngsters in the opening scene in St Petersburg's summer garden — while Liza and the Countess wear white (or black-and-white) and Herman a shocking red uniform.

In a single set, where a few props and projections are sufficient to give the idea of the various places where the action evolves, and with the chorus often as an immobile commentator of the plot, this *Pique Dame* well reflects Tchaikovsky's mood when he composed it in Florence. He was starting on the road toward suicide — three years later — and the dark *Pique Dame* and his sixth symphony were his funeral march. The march did not involve the three protagonists only: the Countess dies by heart attack when she fears that Herman would shoot her to know the secret of winning cards when gambling, Liza drowns herself in the river Neva when she realizes that Herman was using her as a tool to enter the Countess' bedroom and grasp her gambling secret, and Herman kills himself when the ghost of the Countess tricks him into the cards' wrong combination.

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Mike Wheeler continues his reviews of Derby Cathedral's summer organ recitals — visiting organists Carleton Etherington, Michael Haynes and Andy von Oppenkowski responding to the 'crossing borders' theme :

In his introduction, Andy von Oppenkowski aptly described the theme of Mendelssohn's Andante with Variations in D as a 'song without words for organ'. His judicious choice of registration — Mendelssohn doesn't specify — coloured the individual variations just enough for the work to still have coherence.

Another border crossing — Sir William Harris, firmly embedded in the Anglican Cathedral establishment, has at least a toe-hold in Germany, thanks to Andy von Oppenkowski first hearing his music during the broadcast of Princess Diana's funeral. His *Evening Melody* was given a reading of quiet integrity.

To end with, Andy von Oppenkowski came up with the idea of creating a composite organ sonata, taking the first and third movements from Guilman's Sonata No 4, and the final two movements from Vierne's Symphony No 1, both works in D minor. Has anyone else ever done something similar? The slight stylistic mis-match between composers of two different generations was particularly noticeable when Vierne's Andante followed on the heels of Guilman's Minuet. But it was an interesting experience, all the same. The instrument was heard in all its romantic colours in the opening movement of the Guilman, followed by the minuet third



Andy von Oppenkowski

movement, which in this account contrasted with the Handel in its greater athleticism. The joyous peal-of-bells toccata that is the finale of the *Vierne* was buoyant and exhilarating, and Andy von Oppenkowski even let us savour a fleeting Valkyrie moment in the middle.

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Roderic Dunn continues his sequence of in-depth reviews of this summer's Three Choirs Festival in Hereford, focussing on Monteverdi and Elgar — a third installment will appear in a few days' time :



The Three Cathedral Choirs of Hereford, Worcester and Gloucester with their period instrument orchestra, the marvellously accomplished Brecon Baroque. Photo © 2018 Michael Whitefoot

The Three Choirs Festival is acknowledged as not only the oldest choral festival in the world, but for bringing together the substantial, well-rehearsed choral societies of three of Britain's most celebrated, and proximate, cathedrals: Worcester, Gloucester and Hereford. Three years ago, at Hereford, it celebrated its (believed) 300th anniversary; six years from now it will celebrate the actual 300th festival — several years having been missed due to two World Wars.

And in 2018 it has been Hereford again. The proposed programme, issued a year earlier — Gloucester has just issued its list for 2019 — can evoke mixed reactions. No such issues in this case. I came to Hereford full of optimism for this year's events. John Ireland's *These Things Shall Be* and Dame Ethel Smyth's Mass in D on the first night (**which I reported here**) was an original enough piece of programming to enliven the whole week.

The performances, under this year's Artistic Director Geraint Bowen, and with the chorus

especially alert on what was, for them, their first public outing of the festival, shone as brightly as one could possibly hope for. But more excellence has naturally followed, and that included an evening of Elgar and then another of Parry, both under the tutelage of Sir Andrew Davis, now a great supporter of the festival, and of which (and whom) more below.

But strangely, for one who came aching to hear rare Parry and Elgar, and who found both events bracing and satisfying, the surprise of the week came midway. I hesitated — how foolish can one be? — over whether to trek to a midweek evening performance of Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers*. [Tuesday 31 July 2018]

I went, in the end, for the most obvious and pressing reason: this was the concert by the Three Cathedral Choirs, who throughout the festival have offered some of the pearls of the week during the regular Evensongs, accompanied, often as not, by the superlative Peter Dyke, who knocked us all for six and glued us to our seats with his own memorably registered arrangement of the finale of Dvořák's *New World* Symphony. The three cathedrals seem to breed arrangements: David Briggs' Mahler organ transfers are now legendary. Can one look forward to a wealth of organ-arranged Brahms and Schumann, and one day Bruckner's Eighth, from the rest? Perhaps Maxwell Davies' Fifth?

But this Monteverdi, again with Geraint Bowen conducting, was something other, by which I mean that it struck nerves and produced as strong and intimate a frisson, that shiver down the back, as any performance or recording has for me since, say, Harnoncourt's revolutionary treatment in the 1960s. [READ MORE ...](#)

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CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS — GÁBOR KÁLI



Gábor Káli, winner of the Salzburg Festival Young Conductors Award 2018.
Photo © 2018 Wildbild / Salzburg Festival

Young Hungarian conductor Gábor Káli won the Salzburg Young Conductor Prize on 5 August 2018 at the Salzburg Summer Festival.

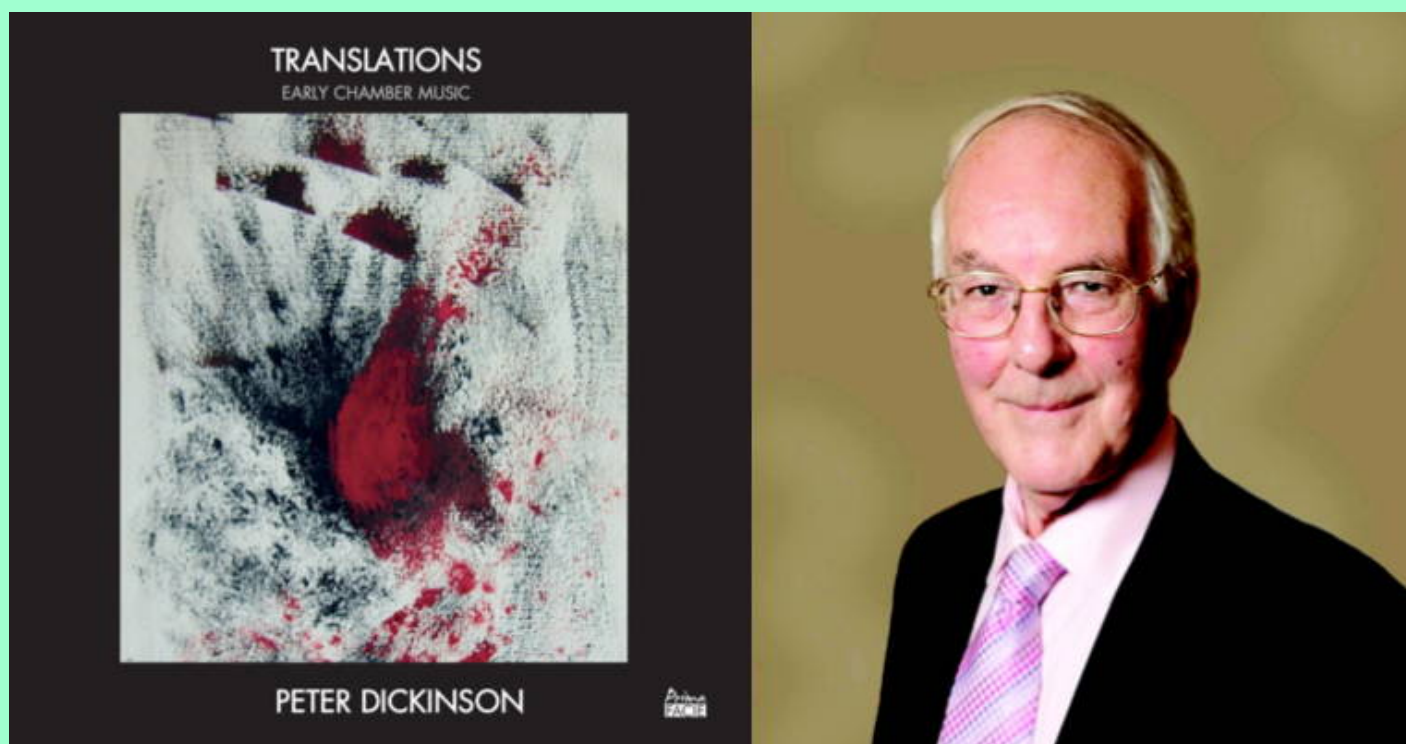
The Opera Stage, a Stockholm-based jobs and auditions website for opera singers, has moved into providing courses for a group of artists traditionally poorly catered for in skills trainings and courses — dramatic singers.

In the lead up to its 30th Anniversary year, Garsington Opera, the Philharmonia Orchestra and The English Concert are delighted to announce new partnership arrangements from 2020.

BIS Records presents the release of 'House of Cards Symphony' and other works by American composer Jeff Beal.

We mark the passing of Inge Borkh, George Walker and Donald Hunt.

Prima Facie Records announces the release of *Translations: Early Chamber Music* by Peter Dickinson.



Translations — Early Chamber Music CD cover (left) and composer Peter Dickinson

A celebration of European song will be the focus of the 2018 Oxford Lieder Festival (12-27 October) and will showcase the familiar masterpieces of the song repertoire while exploring wider cultural influences from Finland to the south of Spain and from Dublin to Moscow. The great masters of the German Lied brush shoulders with composers from Carl Nielsen to Ester Mägi to Lili Boulanger. Fascinating talks and study events will illuminate music, art and literature across the continent. A series of 'language labs' explore language and poetry from Polish to Czech to Estonian.

Following its first performance at the Cheltenham Music Festival in July 2018, Joseph Phibbs' chamber opera *Juliana* received its first Welsh performance at the Presteigne Festival in August.

John Poole, the choral conductor who led the BBC Singers in the 1970s and 80s, made a rare appearance conducting the Bloomsbury Singers in Bellac, France on 24 August 2018. [READ OUR LATEST NEWS ...](#)

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