



Photographer's Insight — Issue 134, 1 March 2020

Michael Whitefoot: As you look at the fifty-two galleries of images taken at the 2019 Gloucester Three Choirs Festival in the UK, spare a thought for the shoe leather and sixteen-hour days the photographer puts in so that the images are processed and available for the press office and concert reviewers to use at the end of each day. The planning starts as soon as the Festival programme is finalised, and I can see times and venues. Sometimes it's a walk and other times a car journey between venues and on the rare occasion when two events are at the same time, a decision must be made on which to photograph.

It all starts with a visit to each venue to see where I can position myself without being seen, or at the very least where I will not distract from the performance!



Michael Whitefoot in Hereford Cathedral.
Photo © 2018 Michael Whitefoot

Smaller venues are much easier than a Cathedral, as often I can stand at the back with everyone in front of me looking at the performers. However, the Gloucester (or indeed Hereford or Worcester) Cathedral is another matter altogether! [READ MORE ...](#)

ENSEMBLE — EXQUISITELY BEAUTIFUL — MUSIC FOR PERCUSSION

Ron Bierman: Composer Chou Wen-chung, who died recently at the age of ninety-six, was honored at the most recent 'red fish blue fish' percussion concert. Chou's works have been performed by major orchestras throughout the world, and he mentored many who have gone on to successful careers of their own. Tan Dun and Chen Yi are among his best known students. Tan once called him 'the godfather of Chinese contemporary music'.

Steven Schick founded 'red fish blue fish' and remains its artistic director and conductor. The group, made up of University of California, San Diego grad students, performs on the UCSD campus and travels for concerts across the United States and abroad. Schick is Distinguished Professor of Music at the university. An extraordinary percussionist, he has served as artistic director of the Swiss Centre International de Percussion de Genève, was the percussionist for New York's Bang on a Can All-Stars for a decade and is a Consulting Artist in Percussion at the Manhattan School of Music. He was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society's Hall of Fame in 2014.



Performing Michael Pisaro's *ricefall* at UCSD

Pulitzer-Prize composer Roger Reynolds began the evening with a heartfelt description of Chou Wen-Chung's influence on himself and other modern composers. That set the stage for the performance of Chou's *Echoes from the Gorge*, a piece for percussion quartet for which Schick was joined by James Beauton, Fiona Digney and Garrett Mendelow. The

quartet's array of percussion instruments included tiny bells, large gongs, bongos, a bass drum, an assortment of cymbals, wooden blocks and more. At one point I counted fourteen mallets, moving in such a blur I might have missed a few. As Schick tapped, stroked or hammered, subtle hand movements cued the other performers to ensure that complex cross-rhythms and often exotic coloring were executed cleanly. The percussion *tour de force* is divided into eleven brief segments with names such as 'Drifting Clouds' and 'Old Tree by the Cold Spring'. *Echoes from the Gorge* was brought to a frenzied climax of light-speed mallets with 'Falling Rocks and Flying Spray'. [READ MORE ...](#)

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Patrick Maxwell: The Italian operas that have enchanted audiences for almost two hundred years help to mark an important point in the artistic development of the nineteenth-century. Verdi, whose works formed the backbone to all of what followed, represented a style firmly based in romantic ideals. Puccini and his contemporaries were the first purveyors of the Italian *verismo* style, which could be seen as in tune with the realistic trend in literature; opera created a platform to show the hardships of contemporary or historical society. Puccini's work shows both a development in music temperament, which is unsurprising at the turn of the twentieth-century, and a more developed storyline.

The Vienna Opera House, despite not perhaps having the architectural finesse that Covent Garden possesses, is still a spectacle to behold, and the city of Mozart, Beethoven, Mahler and Schoenberg is still full of the aura of brilliance. The gargantuan orchestra, directed by Marco Armiliato, gave a sound that was too verbose, emphasizing to a higher degree than needed the numerous leitmotifs to introduce characters throughout the orchestra.



Austrian soprano Martina Serafin

Tosca was well evoked in the solemn and reliable tones of Martina Serafin, accompanied by the delinquent painter Cavaradossi, played by Aleksandrs Antonenko. Antonenko grew into his part as the performance went on, with his final pleas expertly carried out, especially in the extraordinary love aria 'E lucevan le stelle'. The sinister Baron Scarpia, played by Željko Lučić, was the clearly malevolent force he should be throughout, and his evil desires were expertly performed. [READ MORE ...](#)

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Giuseppe Pennisi: *Eugene Onegin* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky has returned to Rome after nineteen years. It is an absolute masterpiece of theatre in music of the late nineteenth century. The production is by the Canadian Opera Company; it was conceived for the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. It is directed by Robert Carsen; the scenes and costumes are by Michael Levine, the lighting — an essential element of the production — is by Jean Kalman. I was at the opening night on 18 February 2020 in a packed theater. The *Onegin* performances in Rome are dedicated to Mirella Freni, who recently passed away and was a great female performer in the 2001 production. This is the fifth time that the work has been seen and heard in Rome.



A scene from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. Photo © 2020 Yasuko Kageyama

Sixth of Tchaikovsky's twelve operas, *Onegin* has only recently had frequent performances in Italy. At La Scala in Milan, for example, there have been just five productions with a total of about thirty performances. The debut was conducted by Toscanini in 1900 and, in January 2006, the last production was imported from the Glyndebourne Festival (where it was premiered in 1994). The opera, however, has been staged in almost all the major

Italian opera houses in the last thirty years, mainly in the staging, grand but traditional, produced by the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in 1991. The Bologna production was built on the baritone Paolo Coni, whose short season represented one of the highest moments. Dalibor Jeniš has effectively played Onegin in Trieste, Rome and elsewhere. Mirella Freni has been for decades the undisputed and most moving Tatiana. Many Italian editions, and also that of La Scala in 2006, use the score (with a reduced orchestra stave) conceived by Tchaikovsky in 1879 for a few performances (by young performers) at the Moscow Conservatory. The Rome Opera House staging uses the 1885 edition (for large orchestra and experienced voices) for the Bolshoi Theater. [READ MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe also listens to Beethoven string quartets in Rome, marking this year's Beethoven anniversary, to music by Gesualdo, and visits Bologna for a performance of *Tristan und Isolde*. He also experiences Bruno Maderna's *Hyperion*, performed to mark the Italian composer's centenary.

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Mike Wheeler: As Storm Ciara headed towards the UK, the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and conductor Yan Pascal Tortelier were in Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall, whipping up a storm (or, rather, several) of their own — Nottingham, UK, 8 February 2020.

To start, they made their own selection of five movements from the two suites put together from Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* score. In the Pastorale from Suite No 2, the flute and cor anglais episode had an appealingly rustic quality. From Suite No 1 we heard the Carillon, which reflected all the transparency of Bizet's scoring, a Minuet both earthy and delicate, by turns, and a touching account of the strings-only Adagietto. Then it was back to the second Suite for a Farandole of irresistible vitality ...

... The second half began with *Aeriality* by the orchestra's Composer in Residence, Anna Thorvaldsdóttir. A mesmerising thirteen-minute sonic landscape to get happily lost in, it offers a mosaic of tiny sound-images, from percussive sounds both hard — including snap pizzicatos for the cellos and basses, like twigs snapping — and soft — rustlings and murmurings on the edge of audibility, to trickling figures on wind and piano, gentle string glissandos, and quiet but insistent pulsing rhythmic phrases. The emergence of more warmly lyrical string writing towards the end was exhilarating in its own quiet way. I simply didn't want it to end, and the orchestra and conductor did their composer (who took a well-deserved bow) proud. [READ MORE ...](#)



Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir (born 1977)

Mike also listens to Cavendish Winds, and and to Swiss pianist Jean-Sélim Abdelmoula.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS — PREMIO CANTELLI 2020

After a forty-year absence, and to celebrate one hundred years since the birth of Guido Cantelli, the great conductor from Novara in North-West Italy, the conducting competition that was created in his memory comes to life again and takes on a strong international connotation while focusing on the younger generations. The competition has its natural home in the Teatro Coccia of Novara in Italy. Registrations for the competition will open from 1 March to 30 April 2020: conductors of all nationalities, between the age of 18 and 35, will be eligible to participate. Candidates will undergo a preselection based on their CVs and video recordings. From 9 to 12 September the finalists will fulfill the competition's assignments from the podium of the Orchestra del Teatro Regio in Turin and will be examined by a jury drawn from internationally renowned artists and cultural personalities. The second and last round of the finals will take place in Novara on 13 September 2020.



Guido Cantelli (1920-1956)

Guido Cantelli was born in Novara in 1920, and in his hometown, at the Teatro Coccia, he conducted his last concert on 17 November 1956 where he led the Orchestra of La Scala of which he had been nominated Principal Conductor the previous day.

Only a few days later, on 23 November, the airplane that was taking him to New York crashed immediately after taking off from Orly airport in Paris. Cantelli was only thirty-six at the time, but had already become one of the most important conductors of the second part of the twentieth century, and had been acknowledged by Arturo Toscanini as his most authentic heir. [READ MORE ...](#)

The [Elgar] Festival's commitment to increasing the presence of music by living British composers will be demonstrated by the regional premiere of the new Requiem by internationally-celebrated Worcester-based composer, Ian Venables, featuring the acclaimed choir of Merton College Oxford in Malvern Priory, as well as in works by Visiting Composer, Adrian Williams.



Adrian Williams at home in the Welsh Borders, close to Hergest Ridge. Photo © 2018 Keith Bramich

Based in neighbouring Herefordshire, Williams is the English Symphony Orchestra's John McCabe Composer-in-Association for 2019/20 — as part of this year of Williams' music, *Migrations*, a major work from 1998 for string orchestra, will be performed at the ESO's concert on 29 April 2020 in Great Malvern Priory. The Elgar Festival Gala Concert on 30 May 2020 features Adrian Williams' 1998 BBC commission, *Dies Irae*, one of his strongest earlier works, powered by concern about the destruction of the natural world. There's also a chance to hear Adrian Williams as a performer — he will play in his new Piano Quintet

on 28 May, and his piano improvisation skills will be on show at the Elgar Festival's 'Improvising with Elgar' event. [READ MORE ...](#)

The Municipal Symphonic Orchestra of Copiapó has just performed at the most important classical music encounter in Chile and one of the most important in Latin America, the Frutillar Music Weeks. The fifty-second version was held between 27 January and 5 February 2020. It is considered a major event in the 38 years of formation of the orchestra that has the support of Marcos López, Mayor of the City of Copiapó and the Ministry of Arts, Cultures and Heritage. Undoubtedly, this presentation will transform the cultural landscape of the north of the country, in particular the Atacama Region.

Since the arrival of the young cultural manager Pablo Ferrera three years ago, who assumed the executive direction, and Paulo Macías, artistic director and principal conductor, in addition to the cooperation of Carlos Ulloa, producer of the Atacama Cultural Center — home of the OSMC — they have established clear artistic goals for the orchestra, resulting in an increase of the technical level, an improvement of the sound that they were looking for, and repertoire of greater artistic solidity, including works and contemporary pieces of national authors, which has been much appreciated by the audience that fills the Atacama Cultural Center's theater in each presentation.

In the spectacular Teatro del Lago of Frutillar, the orchestra conducted by maestro Paulo Macías, performed a striking, strong and colorful opening with *Desiertos de Alicanto* (Alicanto's Desert) by the young Chilean composer Manuel Bustamante. The piece refreshes the memory about the most arid desert in the world, where paradoxically flowers can grow and of Alicanto, a mythological bird of the Atacama Desert, a bird of magical beauty that has large metallic-colored wings and feeds itself with precious metals. In this piece, the orchestra performed subtle and powerful percussion sounds, together with the brightness of the wind section and the precise mixture of the strings section, achieving a beautiful sound full of furious energy and spectacular drama that was enjoyed and acclaimed by the crowd that filled the theater. [READ MORE ...](#)



The Municipal Symphonic Orchestra of Copiapó at Frutillar Music Weeks

Acclaimed Iranian Soprano Darya Dadvar comes to Los Angeles as the headliner for Farhang Foundation's twelfth annual celebration of Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, on Sunday 8 March 2020, 6pm at Royce Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, USA.

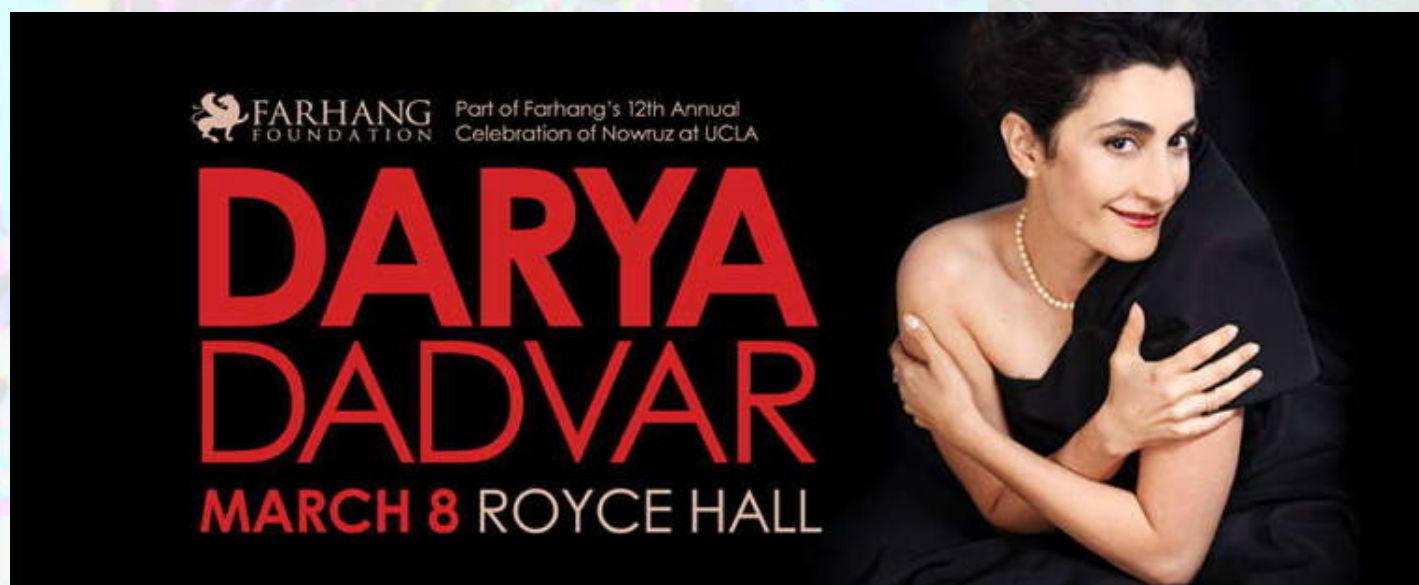
Recognized as the leading Iranian soprano working today, Darya Dadvar has put together a special Nowruz program that includes classical Iranian songs interpreted in a western operatic style.

'I am thrilled to be taking part in Farhang Foundation's prestigious Nowruz celebrations, and to once again perform in Los Angeles after so many years,' says Dadvar. 'I have several reasons to be so excited about this event. 8 March marks International Women's Day, and it is wonderful to be welcoming Nowruz on such a meaningful day. Women and Nowruz are both symbols of life, creation, rebirth, love, and giving. It is an honor to welcome spring and to also thank women around the world for the kindness, tenderness, and love they bring to our lives every day. Many members of my family and friends reside in Los Angeles, and this performance gives me a chance to see them all at beautiful Royce Hall.'

'As organizer of one of the largest celebrations of Nowruz in the world outside of Iran, Farhang always strives to present an exceptional Iranian artist as our headliner, and this year is no exception', says Alireza Ardekani, Executive Director of Farhang Foundation. 'We have been admirers of the magnificent Darya Dadvar for many years, and it is such a delight to have her in Los Angeles to grace the Farhang stage at Royce Hall as part of this year's celebration of Nowruz.'

Dadvar creates her original music by combining the traditional music of Iran with a European classical style. Her unique talent in arranging Iranian music with styles such as Baroque, classical, jazz and blues sets her apart as one of the most innovative artists in world music today. She will also occasionally combine different musical styles within one song, bringing historical periods together, and crossing languages and dialects.

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Darya Dadvar at Royce Hall, UCLA, USA, 8 March 2020. Part of the Farhang Foundation's twelfth annual celebration of Nowruz at UCLA



**Stjepan Hauser. Credit: 2011
Bridget Samuels (CCSA 2.0)**

This Easter, head to Soma Bay, Egypt's leading Red Sea destination, to witness award-winning cello player and former member of 2CELLOS Stjepan Hauser give his only live performance in Egypt on 18 April as part of his 2020 tour. Accompanied by a full orchestra conducted by Robert Zeigler, and in celebration of his new classical album, Hauser's musical extravaganza is not one to be missed!

Hauser has performed in more than forty countries, sold out arenas worldwide, and performed at some of the most famous concert halls including Wigmore Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Southbank Centre and the Zagreb Philharmonic. He has collected over twenty first prizes among national and international competitions such as the highly acclaimed VTB Capital Prize for Young Cellists 2009 and has subsequently been invited to perform for H R H Prince Charles in Buckingham Palace and St James's Palace. Soma Bay is delighted to welcome such a celebrated international musician, and Hauser's performance demonstrates the destination's reputation as a world class cultural venue.

While you're in Soma Bay, why not take the opportunity to enjoy some of the many attractions that this winter sun destination has to offer. Home to some of the best snorkelling, diving and kitesurfing conditions in the world, the largest Thalasso spa in Africa and the largest Championship Golf course in Egypt, there's certainly no shortage of day-time activities on or in the water. For those culture ventures, step outside the destination to discover the city of Luxor, the 'world's greatest open-air museum', and some of Egypt's biggest treasures. [READ MORE ...](#)



Soma Bay Peninsula Jetty. Credit: 2017 Soma Bay Team (CCSA 4.0)

We mark the passing, last month, of Sergei Dorensky, Reinbert de Leeuw, Christophe Desjardins, Hamish Milne, Margareta Hallin, Sorrel Hays, Mirella Freni, Sergei Slonimsky, Nello Santi, Volker David Kirchner and Peter Serkin. [READ MORE ...](#)



Mirella Freni (1935-2020) at the 2005 opera gala held in her honour. Photo © 2005 Ken Howard

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PORTRAITS — JENŐ HUSZKA

Anett Fodor: On 9 February 2020, I was lucky enough to attend the final performance of this season's popular operetta *Prince Bob* by Jenő Huszka at the National Theatre of Győr, Hungary. It was directed by Denise Radó and performed to a packed house. Operettas are still very popular in Hungary.

118 years ago, Huszka and his two librettists chose an English setting for this work. The main character is a young prince, Prince George. He isn't at all interested in his duties and doesn't like the princess to whom he is betrothed. He and his teacher often sneak out to London in disguise, nobody being aware of their true identity. George uses the nickname, 'Bob'. He meets and falls in love with Annie, the daughter of a poor elderly photographer. The gist of the plot, in a nutshell, is how George becomes king and he and Annie, overcoming difficulties, are finally married.

The main singers, Attila Fejszés (Bob), Zsófia Kisfaludy (Annie), Nóra Fehér (Victoria), Eszter Bellai (the Queen) and Gábor Péter Vincze (Pomponius), portrayed their characters in a really clever and humorous manner. They often made the audience burst into laughter. Although their voices were all good rather than great, the characters were very well played and rather loveable.

Chorus members took part in the scenes and showed not just singing ability, but good acting skills as well. The orchestra, under Szabolcs Medveczky, gave an adequate, if not outstanding performance.

Three scenes changed for the acts on a revolving stage: the main square of a city, the courtyard of the palace and the throne room. These romantic sets, as well as the colourful costumes, were designed by György Csík and were well in keeping with the style of the libretto. They reminded me somewhat of an attractively illustrated children's book.

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Prince Bob by Jenő Huszka at Győr National Theatre

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WIDOR Organ Symphonies • 1 Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, Op. 13 Wolfgang Rübsam, Organ



'... a fascinating series of contrasts within a framework of spectacular effects.'

Gerald Fenech: Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), one of the towering figures in French music during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, can also be regarded as one of the most unfortunate. Hugely influential and highly esteemed in his time, and a master composer in practically all genres, he is today just associated with the organ. To add insult to injury, Widor's extensive *oeuvre* for the instrument barely makes an appearance in the concert hall. All that one can hope to get are a handful of movements from his ten symphonies for organ, the mainstay of his wide repertoire in the genre. Critics cite two main reasons for this neglect: one, this music needs several hearings until one can get to the real gist of Widor's musical expression; and two, many of the movements are

very difficult to play, testament to the creative and technical mastery that the composer retained even in old age.

These symphonies went through some unrecognizable transformations over his eminently long career. After the 'Classical' flavour of Op 13, Widor's voyage proceeded through the virtuosic monumentality of the developments in Op 42, and he finally arrived at the two final works, the 'Gothique' Op 70 and the 'Romane' Op 73, both influenced by Gregorian chant and suffused with an air of spirituality. These works help immensely to comprehend Widor's aphorism: 'To play the organ is to manifest a purpose that has been filled with the gaze of eternity at first hand'.

This first volume in this new Naxos cycle includes the first two symphonies. The Op 13 No 1 is a homage to Bach, luminous, ceremonial and punctuated with virtuoso flourishes.

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Gerald also listens to Ireland and Tchaikovsky from pianist Tom Hicks on Chatelet Records, and to Mendelssohn from the Stankov Ensemble on Meridian.

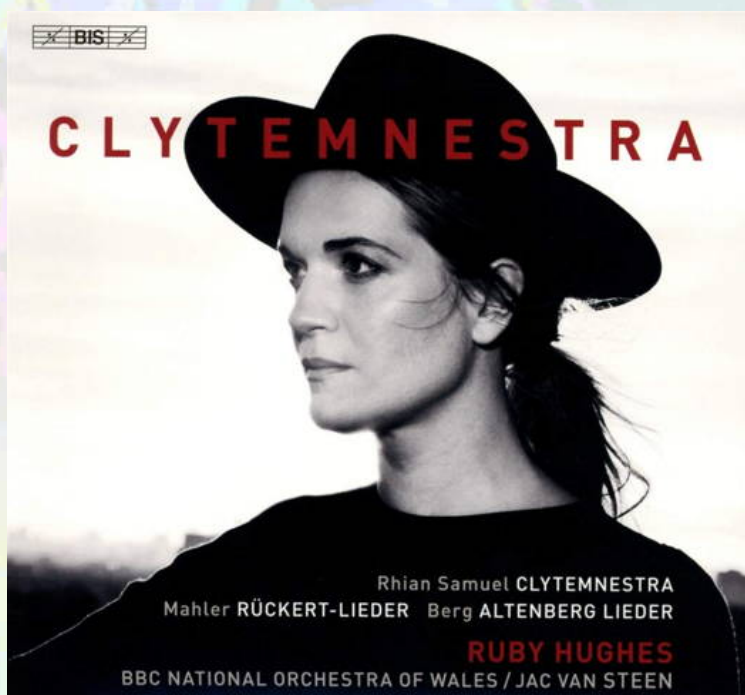
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Geoff Pearce: Whilst I know the *Rückert-Lieder* well, I had only heard the *Altenberg Lieder* once before, and *Clytemnestra* was unknown to me, as was its composer Rhian Samuel. The musical forces employed on this disc are impressive, and a delight, and I was left very favourably impressed ...

... The final work here is the very impressive *Clytemnestra* by Rhian Samuel, commissioned and performed in 1994 by the orchestra on this disc, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. The composer has written clear notes in the booklet and I certainly enjoyed this work immensely.

The first movement deals with the speed of the message relayed from Troy, relaying the victory over the city and that the Greek warriors would be returning. The language, whilst being modern and at times quite dense, is not out of place with the other two works presented on this disc. The orchestral palate used is colourful and impressive, and the orchestra is let loose much more than in the other two works. It would be easy for such forces to overpower the singer, but in this case it certainly does not. Ruby Hughes' dynamic control is quite wide, and her pitching is accurate and diction very clear without being over enunciated.

The second is a lament by Clymnestra for her husband King Agamemnon. She is eagerly awaiting her husband's return and has missed him. The vocal part predominates in this

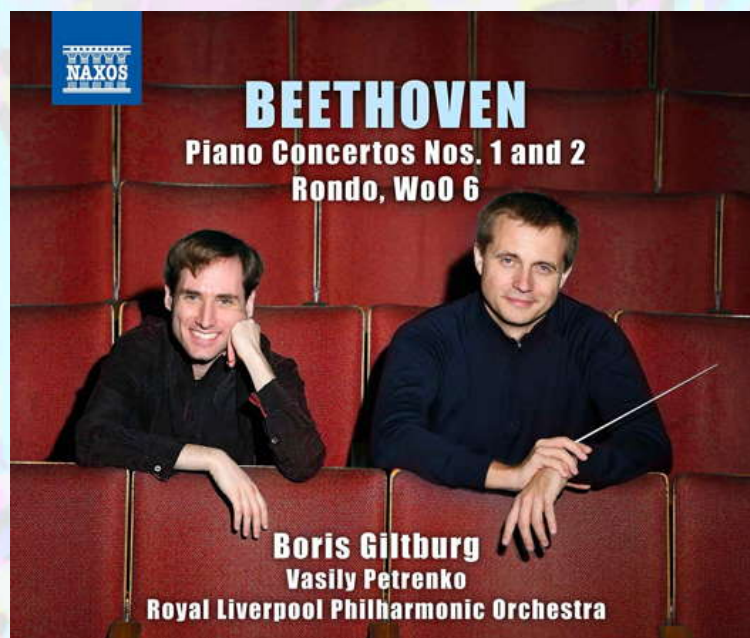


'Right from the start, she shows a more flexible and somewhat lighter voice, but a very good understanding of the lyrics, and she colours her voice beautifully to express this.'

movement, where the orchestra occasionally interjects rather ominously, it accompanies the vocal line. [READ MORE ...](#)

Geoff also listens to music played by the Apollo Chamber Players.

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'... the orchestra and the piano are often interwoven in their lines, and the conversational phrases built up a tension that is perfectly managed by Giltburg.'

become more evident in later pieces.

This recording by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Vasily Petrenko, showcases Beethoven's early piano works that display both sides of the composer in the very late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first two concertos on offer are performed with exquisite precision, if not with the musical virtuosity that can transform the score into an intellectual phenomenon in its own right. Boris Giltburg is the pianist, and his technical skill is in no doubt, taking every note, chord and phrase to a new degree, and expressing a mixture of playfulness and tenderness that is welcome in the breezily optimistic first concerto from 1795-1800. The first is a deeply Mozartian creation, and it is important to remember that it was only in the previous few decades that the piano concerto had become such a popular art form in itself, after Mozart's twenty-three achievements.

The First, in the confident C major, has all of the Mozartian features in the beginning; with a strong introduction followed by the piano. Despite a rather tentative string opening, the introduction of the rest of the orchestra adds a new vigour that makes the piece distinctively Beethovenian. [READ MORE ...](#)

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Patrick Maxwell: Beethoven's reputation as being the first true Romantic composer, or at least the bridge between Classicism and its predecessor, has never been sufficiently tainted. His early works show the distinct effect of Mozart and his teaching by Haydn, but also display the largesse and splendour that would characterize his more groundbreaking and life-affirming later works.

That is of course not to say that there are two Beethovens; one of early preciousness and distinctly classical style in the first, and the more sumptuous later works in another. There are both classical and Romantic elements in his earlier works, and the touch of personal brilliance that would

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CLASSICAL MUSIC DAILY

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Classical music news - February 2020 Obituaries
Our summary of those the classical music world lost last month

Russian pianist Sergei Dorosky has died on 26 February 2020, aged eighty-eight. Born on 3 December 1931, he studied with Grigory Ginsberg at Moscow Conservatory and won several prizes, resulting in his touring America and Western Europe. He taught at Moscow Conservatory, where he was a professor from 1978 until 1997... [read more >>](#)

Classical Music Daily — Sunday 1 March 2020

Featured today

Classical music news - February 2020 Obituaries — Our summary of those the classical music world lost last month

Anniversaries

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1643); Fryderyk Chopin (1810); Václav Šnitil (1928); Lorraine Hunt Lieberson (1954); Henriette Renié (1956); Brian Kellow (1959); Thomas Adès (1971); Victor Babin (1972); Jean Martinon (1976); Rafael Puyana (2013)

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