



## *The Art of Thinking — Issue 137, 1 June 2020*

### NEWS — BLACK LIVES MATTER; RESPONSES TO COVID-19

The USA is experiencing more than its due share of troubles currently. Anthony McGill, principal clarinetist at the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (shown above), has led the online musical demonstration (#TakeTwoKnees) in protest of the death of George Floyd. 'Replies', also by video, include those from tenor Lawrence Brownlee, flautist Demarre McGill, composer and flautist Allison Loggins-Hill, trombonist Weston Sprott, dancer Alicia Graf Mack and trumpeter Billy Hunter.

Anthony McGill commented: *Earlier this year, before the pandemic, I performed in Birmingham, Alabama and Tulsa, Oklahoma. The challenging history of those places speaks for itself, but in those two trips, I met some of the nicest people that you'll ever meet in this country. I also pondered how far we've come and how far we still have to go in terms of treating everyone with respect and decency. We live alongside that reality all across America. What the news this week and most weeks of my life demonstrates, however, is that Black lives didn't matter in our glorified past, and still don't matter that much today ... Now's the time to protest ... let's try and #TakeTwoKnees in the struggle for justice and democracy. No guidelines. Your message, your voice, your mission, your focus. : [twitter.com/mcgillab/status/1266017555753439233](https://twitter.com/mcgillab/status/1266017555753439233)*



*Alienati* - Coccia Theatre, Novara, Italy

Responses to the current COVID-19 crisis vary enormously from country to country. Some organisations have cancelled their summer festivals completely, deferring their programmes until 2021 and/or announcing their 2021 programming now. Some have instead gone online and others are attempting to stage modified festivals this summer, complying with local guidelines. Giuseppe Pennisi has updated us on the state of **European Summer Festivals (and particularly Salzburg)** and on this summer's **Italian Festivals**. Also in Italy, but this time firmly online, Coccia Theatre in Novara is presenting **Alienati** — 'the first Smart Working Opera' on the evening of 2 June 2020.

In France, harmonia mundi's new online store has just opened, offering the latest hm releases on CD, plus a large selection from the company's rich catalogue. New releases, including those recently reviewed here — **Les siècles**, **Les Plaisirs du Louvre** and **Stabat Mater** — can all be found, and forthcoming releases can be pre-ordered. The new online store is at [store.harmoniamundi.com](https://store.harmoniamundi.com)

American conductor Ryan Bancroft has been appointed Artist in Association to Tapiola Sinfonietta, the orchestra of the city of Espoo in Finland. The arrangement is for a three year period beginning in Autumn 2021. Bancroft won the 2018 Malko Competition for Young Conductors, and in Autumn 2020 he will become Principal Conductor of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, assuming that this orchestra still exists at that date — rumours are currently circulating about amalgamation of various BBC orchestras. Details: [tapiolasinfonietta.fi](http://tapiolasinfonietta.fi)



Ryan Bancroft. Photo © 2019 Ben Ealovega

Long Beach Opera (Long Beach, California, USA) has announced four productions for its 2021 'Season of Solidarity', beginning in January. These are *The Lighthouse* by Peter Maxwell Davies (23, 30 and 31 January), *Enfants Terribles* by Philip Glass (20, 27 and 28 March 2021), Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* and Kate Soper's *Voices From the Killing Jar* (17 and 18 April 2021) and *Comet / Poppea* by George Lewis and Claudio Monteverdi (20, 26 and 27 June 2021). Details: [longbeachopera.org](http://longbeachopera.org)

Also in the Los Angeles area, The Broad Stage gives a 2020/21 season preview. The season launches in Autumn 2020 with the first performances of Mark Grey and Júlia Canosa i Serra's mobile theatrical chamber opera *Birds in the Moon*, which will be performed outdoors, at various sites, physically distanced and free to the public. The company is working with Santa Monica College to present a modified in-theatre season, running from January until July 2021. Details: [thebroadstage.org](http://thebroadstage.org)

On 21 May 2020, American record label Bright Shiny Things released *If The Night Grows Dark* — American soprano Camille Zamora's survey of four centuries of Spanish song, which also features Turkish-born guitarist Cem Duruöz.

New releases from Ablaze Records include *Backwards from Winter* by Douglas Knehans, for soprano, electric cello and electronics, recorded live at the Dark MOFO Festival, plus a new recording by American cellist Paul York of Witold Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto. *Orchestral Masters Vol 6* features new orchestral music by sixteen contemporary composers from around the world, played by the Brno Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Mikel Toms. Details: [ablazerecords.net](http://ablazerecords.net)

Parma Recordings is working hard during the COVID-19 crisis, with many new online releases, such as Finnish-Canadian composer Jan Järvillepp's *CONCERTO 2000* — tonal orchestral works played by the Janáček Philharmonic, Moravian Philharmonic and Zagreb Festival Orchestras. Another new release from The Crossing, conductor Donald Nally's professional chamber choir, is *Carthage*, which presents six works by James Primosch, winner of the 2020 Virgil Thomson Award. Both of these releases are on Navona Records — the most classical-flavoured of Parma's several record labels. The company's Parma Live Stage features regular concerts online. Coming soon are members of Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava playing live-streamed chamber music at 1pm EDT (or 17:00 UTC/GMT) on 4 June 2020. Details: [parmarecordings.com](http://parmarecordings.com)

Bang on a Can announces its second Bang on a Can Marathon, live online, 3-9pm EDT on Sunday 14 June 2020 (or 19:00 on 14 June until 01:00 on 15 June 2020, UTC/GMT), to include first performances of ten newly-commissioned works, and twenty-five live performances from Canada, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Scotland, Switzerland and the USA. All the performers and commissioned composers are being paid, and the marathon will be free to stream. Details: [marathon2020.bangonacan.org](http://marathon2020.bangonacan.org)

American pianist Orli Shaham's *MidWeek Mozart* is another feature of the COVID-19 crisis. Each Wednesday she makes available a different single movement from her forthcoming recording of Mozart Piano Sonatas: [orlishahammozart.com](http://orlishahammozart.com)

The Jupiter String Quartet announces its new album *Metamorphosis*, featuring Beethoven's Quartet Op 131 and Ligeti's Quartet No 1, 'Métamorphosis nocturnes'. The release date is 12 June 2020 on Marquis Classics, with physical CDs available on 7 August 2020: [jupiterquartet.com](http://jupiterquartet.com)

One piece of good news coming from England is that Dawsons Music is being rescued from administration. Established in 1898 in Warrington, Dawsons is one of the UK's oldest and largest retailers of musical instruments and equipment. Its network of stores in Belfast, Chester, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Reading were forced to close in March 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions, but the company has been continuing to trade online. The retailer has been bought out of administration by Manchester music entrepreneurs Andrew and Karen Oliver, and all seventy-five members of staff will keep their jobs. [dawsons.co.uk](http://dawsons.co.uk)

The 140-year-old Blackheath Conservatoire, part of London (UK)'s oldest purpose-built arts centre, is re-inventing itself by going online. Art, music and drama classes are being offered for students of all ages and abilities, with special offers being rolled out on social media. The South London charity has completely revised its creative output, and classes are available digitally to students internationally. Details: [conservatoire.org.uk](http://conservatoire.org.uk)

London's prestigious Bach Choir is offering a series of free online choral workshops with conductor David Hill. This coming Wednesday evening, 3 June 2020, 6.30-8pm BST (or 17:30-19:00 UTC/GMT), singers joining the session on the ubiquitous Zoom system, will be offered vocal warm-up exercises before being led through the choruses of the Verdi Requiem: [thebachchoir.org.uk](http://thebachchoir.org.uk)

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Classical Music Daily has introduced two new additions recently. The first, *Updated articles*, indicates which articles have been updated within the last couple of days, often with comments or updates to news items. The second new feature, *Twenty years ago today*, focuses each day on an article from the past. You can see them both in operation [on our homepage](#) which changes daily.

If you've stumbled upon this newsletter by accident or seen it on our website, [send us an email](#) and ask to be put on the mailing list. We'll send you an email each month so that you can read each newsletter immediately. You can also ask to receive an email from us every day, if you'd like to know as soon as each daily feature is published.



## OBITUARIES — MADY MESPLÉ AND JOHN POOLE

French coloratura soprano Mady Mesplé was born Magdeleine Mesplé in Toulouse on 7 March 1931, studying piano and voice at the conservatoire in the same city, and then studying in Paris with Janine Micheau.

She made her professional debut in January 1953 as Lakmé in Liège. She also sang Lakmé at La Monnaie the following year, and would go on to sing this role about 145 times. She appeared at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 1956, and at Palais Garnier in 1958. Two years later, she took over from Joan Sutherland in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.



**Mady Mesplé (1931-2020)**

Initially she concentrated on standard French lyric and coloratura roles, and occasionally sang in German. Later, in the 1960s, she began to explore contemporary repertoire — Charles Chaynes, Gian Carlo Menotti, Hans Werner Henze and Arnold Schoenberg. In the 1970s she diversified again, singing operetta.

During a career lasting over thirty years, she sang at the Bolshoi Theatre, at Covent Garden, at New York Metropolitan Opera and at Teatro Colón.

She retired from the opera stage in 1985 and taught at the Conservatoire in Lyon and at the École Normale de Musique de Paris. She gave masterclasses and judged voice competitions internationally.

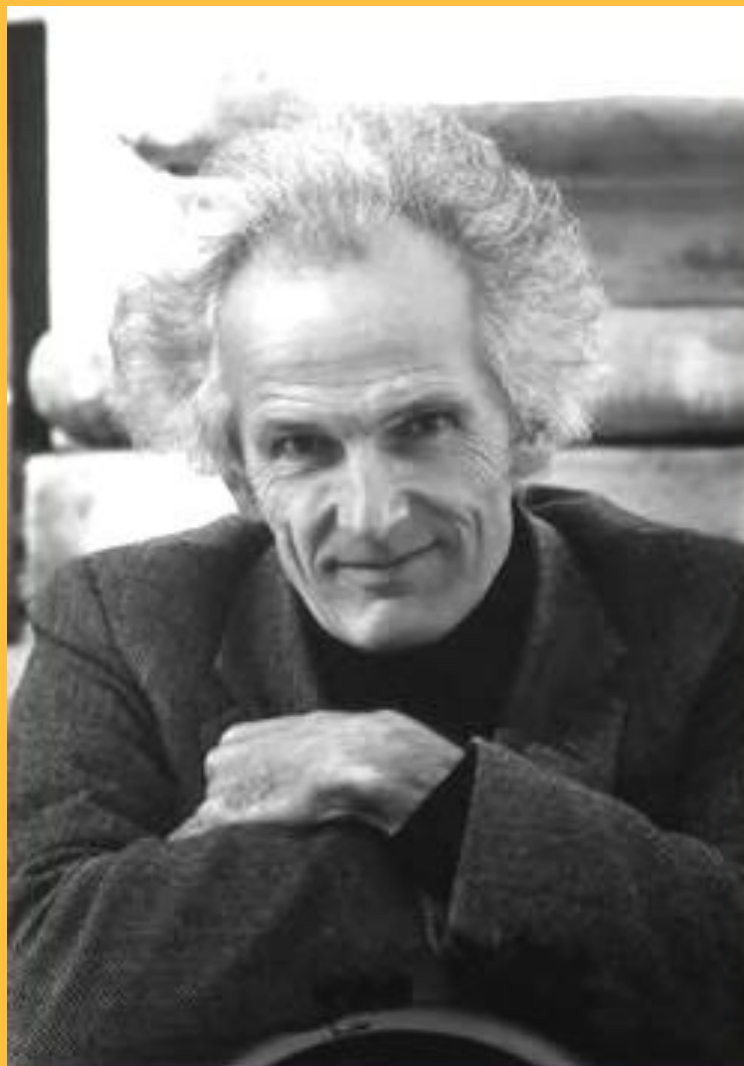
Mady Mesplé was diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease in 1996. She died in Toulouse on 30 May 2020, aged eighty-nine.

She left an extensive recorded legacy, covering a wide range of music. To mark her eightieth birthday in 2011, EMI Classics released a special edition box set. Both in France and worldwide she was really celebrated: a minor planet or asteroid (No 33344) was named after her. In 2019, at the anniversary celebrations of the opening of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, Mesplé's recording of 'air des clochettes' (Air of the Bells) from *Lakmé* was played during the firework display.

British conductor and organist John Poole was born in Birmingham on 5 February 1934. He studied at Balliol College, Oxford University, where he began to conduct choirs and orchestras whilst an undergraduate.

His great sensitivity and his talent for passing on both the joy of music and his depth of feeling to others in a gentle manner was noticed early in his career. Various stories give a strong flavour of this. When indicating how to sing 'O pray for the peace of Jerusalem', for example, he said 'Just think what that would mean'. He was able to step back to listen and think, leaving a choir singing, and then return to completely transform the sound with a small comment or gesture. On one occasion he admonished his sopranos with the words 'How can you *love* with a note so *low*?'

During his National Service in the Royal Signals at Catterick in North Yorkshire, he played the organ at Richmond Parish Church, and was offered, but turned down, a job as music teacher at Richmond Grammar School. Instead he worked as Assistant Music Master at Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith, London from 1957-64 and gained further experience directing choirs as organist of London University's Church and musical director at University College, London. He founded the Bloomsbury Choral Society and regularly conducted choral and orchestral concerts at St George's Church Bloomsbury. It was here that he was first noticed by the BBC and he was soon conducting groups such as the Orchestra of the Light Music Society, the London Studio Players and the BBC Chorus — as it was then.



John Poole (1934-2020)

In 1968 he was appointed conductor of the BBC Symphony Chorus and in 1972 he became director of the BBC Singers, a group which became, under John's direction, one of the world's top professional choirs. In 1973 he conducted his first concert at the BBC Proms, where he continued to perform. He also led performances at London's South Bank, the Barbican, St John's Smith Square and at many major festivals and tours worldwide.

During this period he gave first performances of many significant works — the best-known probably being Giles Swayne's *Cry* (1979). He remained director of the BBC Singers until 1989, and from 1990 he was the group's chief guest conductor for three years. Following that he maintained a link with the group as a guest conductor.

Sadly John's first wife Anne, the mother of his much loved sons, David, Matthew and Chris, died in 1986.

From 1990 until 1995 John was music director of the Groupe Vocal de France, specialising in contemporary repertoire and performing in Paris, throughout France and internationally. In 1996 he founded the Academie Internationale in Parthenay — a workshop for singers and professional conductors.

From 2001 until 2009 he was a member of the conducting staff in the Jacobs School of Music at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, USA, conducting a stream of American and world choral premieres, including Sven-David Sandstrom's *High Mass* and *Magnificat*, and John Harbison's *A Clear Midnight*.

With his devoted second wife Laura, John retired in 2009 to their house in Bellac, in the Limousin, where he spent much of the time walking in the countryside and playing the piano.



**Laura and John Poole. Photo © Heather Speight**

Every other summer, from 2010 until 2018, they invited the Bloomsbury Singers — the London University choir which John worked with before his BBC appointment — to nearby Le Dorat, where the group rehearsed with John for a week before **giving a choral concert together** in the medieval L'Église de Notre Dame, Bellac.

John Poole passed away in Haute-Vienne, France on 18 May 2020, aged eighty-six.

We also mark the passing of Federico García Vigil, Neil Howlett, Ezio Bosso, Berith Bohm, Angelo Lo Forese, Gabriel Bacquier, José López Calo, John Macurdy, Norbert Balatsch, Willy Hautvast, Lorne Munroe, Rosalind Elias and Anne Heaton. [READ MORE ...](#)

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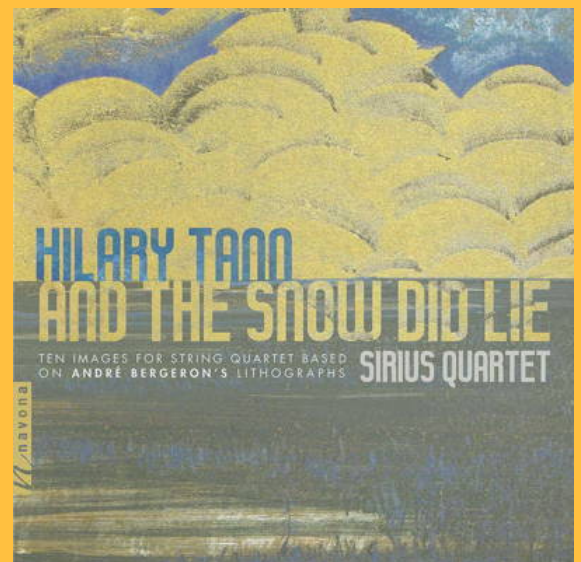


Hilary Tann. Photo © 2015 Lawrence White

**Ona Jarmalavičiūtė:** Welsh-born American composer Hilary Tann took inspiration from the classic French-Canadian novel, *Le Survenant*, for her newest Navona Records CD, *And The Snow Did Lie*. The digital release depicts passage through three seasons — autumn to spring — in a bleak northern landscape. Tann studied composition at the University of Wales, Cardiff, and at Princeton University. Her compositions are published by Oxford University Press and admired for their integrity, craft, and genuine musical expression. Tann's compositional skill is complemented by obvious affections for her materials. For her numerous compositions, she has received grants from ASCAP Standard Awards, Meet The Composer, NEA, NYSCA, Welsh Arts Council, VW Trust, Holst Foundation, American Composers Forum, and the Hanson Institute for American Music Awards, among others. She is the John Howard Payne Professor of Music Emerita at Union College, Schenectady, having retired from being Chair of the Department of Music in 2019. Composer-residencies include the 2011 Eastman School of Music Women in Music Festival, 2013 Women Composers Festival of Hartford, and 2015 Welsh Music Center. Her compositions have been widely performed and recorded by ensembles such as the European Women's Orchestra, Tenebrae, Lontano, Meininger Trio, Thai Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, BBCNOW and KBS Philharmonic in Seoul, Korea. In this interview, the composer opens up about her newest recording, musical style, and music's impact on the listener.

**OJ:** Your newest CD is based on André Bergeron's Lithographs. How were you inspired by them? What unites your music and his lithographs? How would you describe this collaboration?

**Hilary Tann:** *And The Snow Did Lie* is my first (and only) string quartet. As a classically-trained composer and cellist, I've held the string quartet literature in awe for most of my life. André Bergeron's depiction of the natural seasons from fall to spring gave me a way to fuse my love of nature with the many varied timbres of the string quartet. The ten lithographs each have evocative subtitles drawn from *Le Survenant*, a well-known French-Canadian novel by Germaine Guèvremont — for example: 'lake and sky black with birds' or 'floods of May'. All of these word-images were captured by André in visual-images, in turn giving me the opportunity to create sound-images. For me the process is one which seems to belong to the particular kind of natural-world / musical-world synesthesia that informs all my writing. Parma Recordings launched a video of the lithographs and music as one of their Live Stage events, and it may still be [viewed here](#).



**OJ:** How do you understand and create space in the piece of music? What meaning does space have in the sound you create?

Hilary Tann: *And The Snow Did Lie* — Sirius Quartet. Released digitally in April 2020 on Navona Records NV6280

**HT:** Oh, this is a very interesting question. A discussion of space might deal with temporal space or with physical space. To deal with the latter first: a violist once told me that playing a piece of mine was like 'living in a landscape'. I could not ask for a better description of what I try to achieve as a composer. Temporal space is another matter, especially in music — how substantive is silence? Are silences heard differently in different cultures? I was once privileged to interview the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu. I tried to pin him down about *ma* — the Japanese concept of 'void' or 'emptiness'. But he quickly corrected me and said '*ma* is the universe, *ma* is very big and man is very small, *ma* is the mother of sound.'

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## CD SPOTLIGHT — DISTINCTLY CONTINENTAL



'Vogt's piano playing relishes each intricacy of this music, which is so filled with motifs and constant expression.'

**Patrick Maxwell:** This new recording from the Royal Northern Sinfonia sees Lars Vogt as both conductor and soloist, taking the lead for Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, Op 83, and the solo Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op 24. The Second Piano Concerto was first performed twenty-two years after his First, and shows a technical maturity that is innate in his later works.

The first movement opens with a horn call that sets the tone for much of the long movement; a plaintive melody that is used both in a simplistic form and in some of Brahms' most boisterous and triumphant orchestral developments, and the most engrossing piano lines.

It is all carried off with the contrasts of emotions that are needed from both orchestra and soloist, and both make use of their different roles in the piece, with the piano used as an instrument for improvisation and as a response to the melodies and expositions of the orchestra, before the two blend part way through the first movement.

The second movement, *Allegro appassionato*, showcases some of Brahms' best tempestuous music, and some of his finest blends of the expansive and tender music, in such an impressive stylistic score. Vogt's piano playing relishes each intricacy of this music, which is so filled with motifs and constant expression.

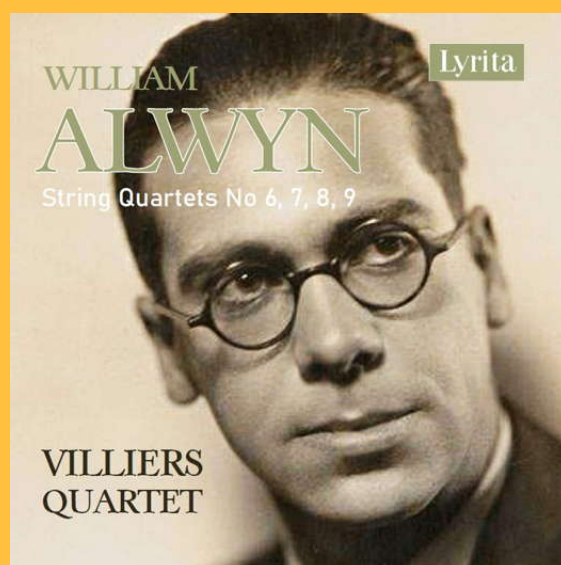
Steffan Morris is an exquisite cellist in the *Andante* third movement; Vogt says that in this movement the cello is 'a newly introduced character' who 'takes the pianist by the hand and hums ... a simple melody of folk-song character'. This movement brings together a wonderful exchange where both instruments seem to hang off the other in a musical exchange of some beauty.

The final movement, *Allegretto grazioso*, is a scintillating finale that has the piano part at almost Mozartian tendencies. [READ MORE ...](#)

**Patrick Maxwell:** William Alwyn is a composer of contrasts. On the one hand he can be seen as a powerful exemplar of English twentieth-century pastoralism, following in the well-trodden line of Vaughan Williams and later Lennox Berkeley. On the other he is a progressive composer that wrote with both an inherent love of dissonance and the possibilities of the twelve-tone serialist method in mind, and developed a style that had more in common with the music of Vienna than the first half of the century produced.

Well, in a way it is easier to see that he was an eccentric mix of both. Alwyn managed to engender a feeling of delicate intimacy that weaved between the bucolic images of England whilst also displaying the technical ingenuity that threw in a whole host of brilliant musical variety.

And so he was perhaps simply a blend, but Alwyn was a composer that cannot be easily defined. He was a highly individual composer who, away from the effeteness of Britten and the vulgarity of Vaughan Williams, was able to carve a unique place in the musical scene. It is a small travesty that his work has been so unjustly neglected by the wider public.



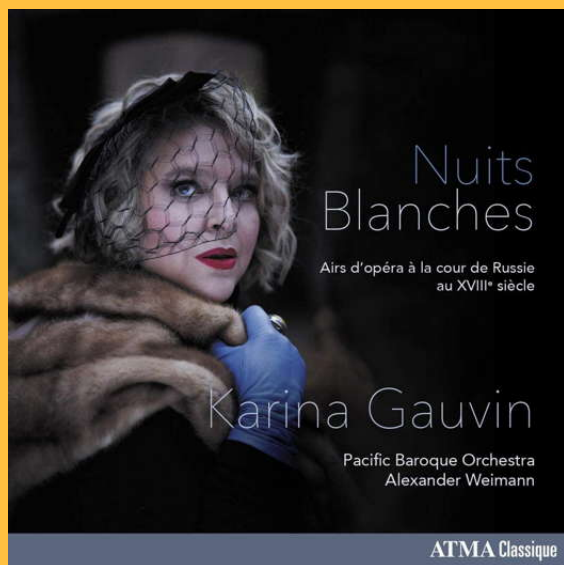
'... carried off with impressive dexterity by the players ...'



This new recording by the Villiers Quartet showcases some of Alwyn's earliest String Quartets, which blend a youthful experimentalism with the almost plaintive melody and expressive tonality that make up all his works. All the pieces included were written between 1923-31, during part of his long connection with the Royal Academy in London, having started as a student there at fifteen, later becoming a Professor of Composition just six years later. There is some wonderful music on this disc, but it does not display the assuredness that would combine with the technical mastery of some other Alwyn works. These pieces are exuberant, as if acting as an exegesis of all Alwyn's youthful influences, of continental and jazz-like harmonies, blended with a uniquely English sense of melody. [READ MORE ...](#)

Patrick also reviews Brahms clarinet chamber music from Marie Ross and friends on Centaur Records.

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'Here the listener can appreciate Karina Gauvin's superb phrasing and elegant coloratura.'

**Giuseppe Pennisi:** Several history music books set the start of Russian music at 27 November 1836, when Glinka's *Zhizn' za Tsarja* (A Life for the Tzar) was premiered at the Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre in St Petersburg. Notwithstanding the relevance of that date for Russian national music, there is a tendency to forget the significant experience of Imperial music during the eighteenth century when the Imperial Court and the cosy Imperial theatre housed within the Palace were the setting of extraordinary experiments in excellent musicianship by national and international composers and interpreters. Tsar Peter the Great considered himself a musician and sang often in the theatre's chorus. Likewise, Tsarina Catherine the Great invited musicians from all over Europe to reside in St Petersburg, both to compose their own work and to help discover national talents in the Empire.

In 1726, even Johann Sebastian Bach was invited to take a permanent and important job at the Imperial Court. He declined. Instead, he sent his student, Jacob von Stähil-Storcksburg, a true talent scout who discovered the musical qualities of two composers born in today's Ukraine, Maksym

Sozontovich Berezovsky (1745-1777) and Dmytro Stepanovich Bortnianski (1751-1825), as well as of Evistgnei Ipatievitch Fomine (1761-1800), born in St Petersburg itself. They and their music were almost unknown until scholars such as Maryna Rystareva and Nicolai Findeizen brought their scores and lives to the attention of musicologists. Most of their music is lost, but in the archives it was possible to discover excerpts, mainly of operas widely performed at the Court Theatre once upon a time.

This CD is an important step to make these composers and their music known to a wider circle than just musicologists. It includes arias and overtures they composed as part of their operas, as well as music by Domenico Dall'Oglio and Christoph Willibald Gluck; in the eighteenth century, Dall'Oglio and Gluck's works were frequently performed in St Petersburg. The CD is produced by Atma Classique, a Canadian boutique record company. It is titled *Les Nuits Blanches* to recall St Petersburg's 'White Nights'. It features a Canadian soprano of international standing, Karina Gauvin, accompanied by the Pacific Baroque Orchestra conducted by Alexander Weimann. Paradoxically, we get to listen to the most Western Russian eighteenth century music by means of a Vancouver ensemble. The recording was carried out in Mirabel (Quebec). The CD includes a very useful and exhaustive booklet on the composers and on eighteenth century music in St Petersburg. [READ MORE ...](#)

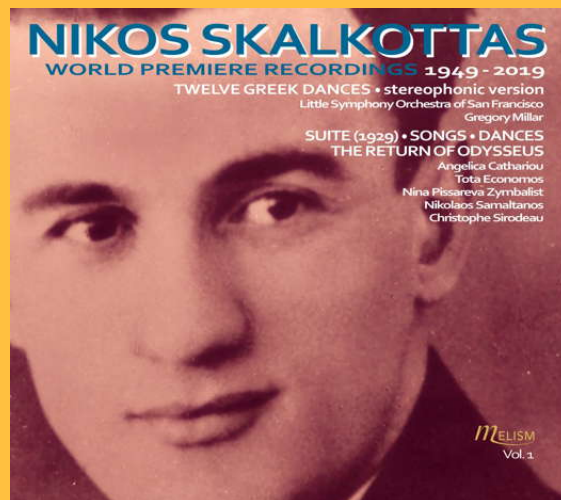
Giuseppe also reviews music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold on the Capriccio label and *Souvenirs of Spain and Italy* on Cedille Records.

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**Paul Sarcich:** Name a Greek composer. Well, after Xenakis and Theodorakis, those of us of a certain age might conjure up Nikos Skalkottas (1904-1949), principally known for his sets of Greek Dances — founded in folk music, and showing the nationalistic side of this composer. But more than being a mere folkloricist, he had a thoroughly modernist side, from his studies in Germany with the likes of Kurt Weill, Janach and Schoenberg. The critic Hans Keller ranked him among the *four S's* of modern music, the others being Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Shostakovich. Few would make that grouping today, but at one time his importance to modernism was so acknowledged.

However, fleeing Berlin in 1933 from the rising Nazi tide, he left behind over seventy works, most of which were lost. Coupled with his premature death at the age of forty-five, this means we have been robbed of much of his output. This disc, consisting of both historical and modern recordings, goes some way to restoring a view of what was and what might have been.

It also means that at times we have only part works available, or works written originally for one format but presented here in another. Such a work is the Violin Suite from 1929, originally for soloist and small orchestra, but this was lost and what we hear is the violin and piano version, not discovered until 2010 in the Buffalo University archives. Not only that, but the piano part for the (later added) fifth movement is missing, so we are given only the violin part. [READ MORE ...](#)



'... Skalkottas is no slave of Schoenberg — he has his own take on Schoenberg's methods and one could not confuse the two.'

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'Minasi's control is great here.'

**Lucas Ball:** When Mozart enthusiasts say that he never makes an ugly gesture in any work, these symphonies demonstrate why they might think that. Mozart's grasp of first Viennese School classical symphonic form gives the listeners pleasure and recordings milk that pleasure.

In this CD recording of Symphonies Nos 39-41, ends of phrases seem to be treated with utmost care in second movements, and this gives the music further character. Strident passages are contrasted with lighter, humorous ones in the reading of Symphony No 39 in E flat, conductor Riccardo Minasi drawing out this Mozartian character from all sections of the Ensemble Resonanz. In the development section, constant changes in dynamics also add to the character.

Minasi's control is great here. Dotted rhythms in the second movement are, as far as I could tell, as tight as they need to be and there is shape in the phrases.

The same level of care is taken in the third and fourth movements of Symphony No 39. Moments of silence in the last (fourth) movement are special because they further add character.

Symphony No 40 in G minor is maybe a hackneyed work, but Riccardo Minasi brings out its character so that, if we are not blinkered by the fact that it is well-known, we may experience its freshness. Dynamic contrasts and symmetry in phrasing again add to its character. [READ MORE ...](#)

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**Geoff Pearce:** Paul Reale is an American composer whose music I am rather fond of. His music is readily accessible, sometimes quirky and humorous, but in a style all of his own.

The first work on this disc, *American Elegy* (2008) is presented twice, first at the beginning of the disc and again at the end (where chimes are added). The composer calls it a 'kind of homage to Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*'. The piece does not have the same deep sadness that the Barber work has, but there is a feeling of reverence that the composer was aiming for. It starts off with a pattern of repeated chords, and a broad tune soon comes in in the middle strings. The work is not hurried and is a kind of elegy.

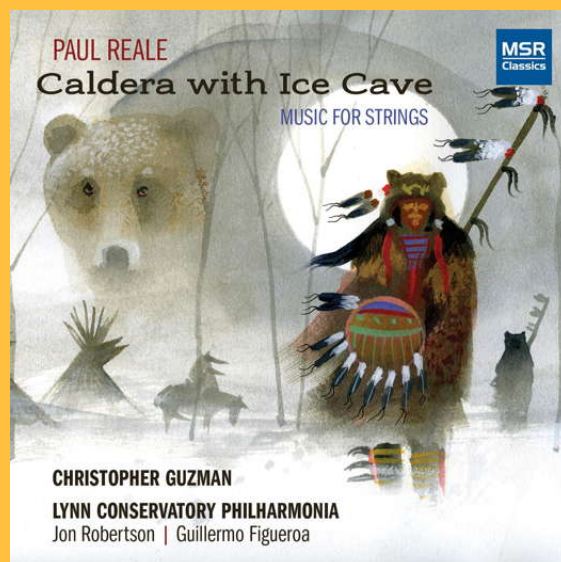
*Hextet* (2017) is a three-movement work for strings, inspired by the Halloween and horror movies of the 1930s.

The first movement 'Tarantella' is a spirited dance with strong rhythms which the composer describes as a 'kind of demented dance with accompanying delirium'. Paul Reale shows himself as a fine composer for string ensemble and the movement (and indeed the whole work) is engaging.

The second movement, 'Zombies', is deliberately creepy, with a lot of atmospheric slides, rapid dynamic changes and clashing intervals. It is harmonically somewhat unsettled with modulations and melodies that emerge, only to be interrupted with strange rhythmic interjections or upward sweeps.

The last movement, 'Walpurgisnacht', is a real Witches' Sabbath, with the devil on the fiddle. It is a fascinating movement, wild and abandoned. The writing is adventurous and effective, but still makes engaging listening. [READ MORE ...](#)

[READ THE LATEST REVIEWS BY GEOFF PEARCE ...](#)



'Paul Reale shows himself as a fine composer for string ensemble ...'



'The repetition of phrases in the musical exchange between the two choirs becomes almost hypnotic for the listener, and one feels totally engrossed in the Eucharistic mystery.'

**Gerald Fenech:** Born in Verona in circa 1535/36, but an inhabitant of Cremona since 1570, Marc'Antonio Ingegneri is one of those Renaissance composers who contributed much, but whose music is still in the process of evaluation. Ingegneri lived and worked during a period of immense religious upheaval. The Protestant Reformation was a tempest that shook the Catholic Church from its very foundations. That which was standard belief and practice for 1,500 years was undermined at its very core, and everything — liturgy, theology, rituals and even music — was called into question. The Church had to respond, and it did, with one of the most famous councils in its history, that of Trent.

The council had several vital items on its agenda, among which was the nature of worship, which also incorporated the musical aspect. In the final sessions of the council, which ran from 1545 to 1563, the council Fathers stressed the importance of balance in polyphony between text and music, doing away with improper melodies known as 'canti fermi', and musical teachers were now obliged to teach music in seminaries and to compose sacred works which would ideally compliment solemn celebrations. The council also had a great

impact on a place like Cremona. In the second half of the sixteenth century this city lacked a real musical canon. Gregorian chant was still the only form employed in its cathedral gatherings, and the singers were often led by priests who were not up to the job.



It is in this turbulent environment that Ingegneri comes in. In 1573 the composer took up the role of 'maestro di cappella' of the cathedral, and from then on, on the recommendation of the music-loving Bishop Sfrondrati, began the substantial and daunting task of re-establishing a musical tradition at the cathedral. With this aim in mind, Ingegneri introduced various instruments combined with voices, thus creating a new lease of life to the liturgy. His innovations put Cremona Cathedral on a par with such famous venues as Santa Maria Maggiore, Bergamo, San Petronio, Bologna, San Marco, Venice and Sant'Antonio, Padova.

His use of instruments perfectly served the council ideal of the 'ecclesia triumphans', where sacred music, particularly Masses and Motets, were used to help the liturgy become an anticipation of divine glory and paradise. Indeed, Ingegneri acquired such an enterprising reputation that one of his pupils was none other than Claudio Monteverdi. Although Ingegneri wrote music of breathtaking beauty and richness, the Mass 'Laudate Pueri Dominum' is the only extant Mass of the composer in eight parts, and maybe the most profound, among the known works that have survived. [READ MORE ...](#)

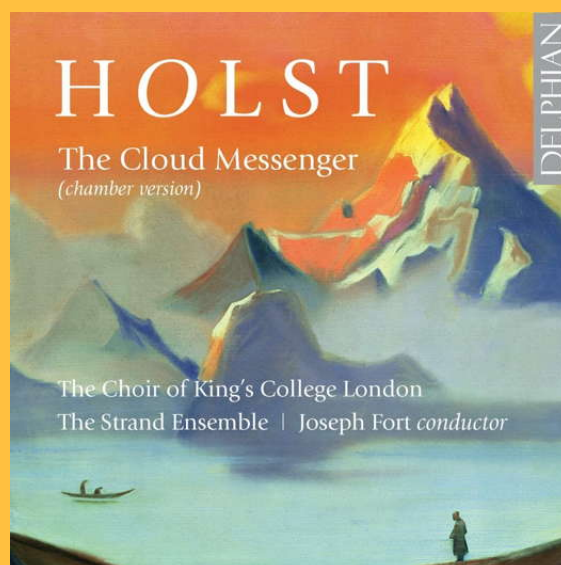
**Gerald Fenech:** Gustav Holst (1874-1934) is one of those composers who have attained fame throughout just one piece, in this case the huge orchestral suite *The Planets*. His catalogue of works is substantial and his interests were indeed diverse; from symphonic to choral, concerto to song, opera to chamber music. He was also highly interested in the culture of other countries, particularly Indian literature and poetry.

Holst had first encountered the epic poem *The Cloud Messenger* as translated in R W Frazer's *Silent Gods and Sun-Steeped Lands*, published in 1896. It was indeed that volume which inspired the composer to start delving into Sanskrit literature, and most probably it was some time in the 1890s that Holst began studying the works of the great fifth century Indian poet Kalidasa.

So dedicated was he to his task that, by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Holst had already acquired a fair knowledge of how that ancient language works. Certainly he knew enough to undertake his own translations aided by previous translations from other scholars, and in a fairly short time he had built an extensive library of Indian literature, including several books in Devanagari and Sanskrit script in which one may observe Holst's own annotations.

*The Cloud Messenger*, based on Kalidasa's epic poem *Meghaduta*, was the composer's favourite piece in the genre, together with *Savitri*, and he rated these two works as better than the 'Veda' hymn settings. The storyline, in brief, is one of true marital love and fidelity. A 'yaksha', a semi-divine subject of King Kubera, is exiled for neglecting his duties. Pining for his wife, he petitions a passing cloud to deliver to her a consoling message of his love. At this stage Holst embarks on a journey describing the landscapes, cities and sights the cloud encounters on its voyage. [READ MORE ...](#)

Gerald also writes about Beethoven's Mass in C on Naxos, about music by the Italian Baroque composer Giovanni Battista Vitali (1632-1692) on Tactus, Christian Lindberg's recording of Leonard Bernstein's first two symphonies on BIS Records, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Kashchei the Immortal* on Melodiya, Etsuko Hirose's recording of Moritz Moszkowski piano music on Danacord Records, *Les siècles* — François-Xavier Roth's recording of Ravel and Musorgsky for harmonia mundi, and *Hypermnestre* by French baroque composer Charles-Hubert Gervais (1671-1744) on the Glossa label.



'This colourful chamber version by Joseph Fort lends the more tender passages a new intimacy and clarity, while retaining much of the force of the original and preparing the foundations for a new life in performance.'

[MORE REVIEWS BY GERALD FENECH ...](#)

Because of COVID-19 and the continuing dearth of concert reviews, we have another bumper crop of CD reviews this month, by Lucas Ball, Gerald Fenech, Patrick Maxwell, Geoff Pearce, Giuseppe Pennisi and Paul Sarcich, and they're worth exploring in more detail.

Our CD reviews are all illustrated with sound samples, usually chosen by the author of each review. If you enjoy listening to these, you can usually hear an extra sample on the 'CD information page' linked from the bottom of each review. An alternative way to reach these CD information pages is via our New Releases section, where you can also find information about recent CDs, including those which haven't yet been reviewed, and this also enables you to follow the review cycle process for any particular CD.

**LATEST CD REVIEWS**

**NEW RELEASES**

## ENSEMBLE — FRESH AND ENERGETIC PERFORMANCES

**Malcolm Miller:** To mark the Beethoven 250 Anniversary, the Oxford Beethoven Festival launched an exciting year-long celebration in January 2020 with a star-studded roster of international artists performing a wide range of Beethoven's *œuvre*. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, as with so many festivals worldwide, much of the schedule was, sadly, though necessarily, cancelled. Yet, if it is still possible that cancelled highlights might take place at some point, perhaps next year, it is also just possible that the Ninth Symphony may still feature at its original date, three days before Beethoven's birthday in December, given by the resident Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra under the dynamic baton of their founder Marios Papadopoulos, the Festival's Artistic Director. Papadopoulos, whose energy and enthusiasm inspired the festival from the start and who has developed the event into a formidable international event, is also the conductor-soloist of the entire cycle of piano concertos, the second concert of which I was fortunate to attend, on 25 January 2020 in the resonant acoustics of the historic, capacity-filled Sheldonian Theatre. Whereas the opening concert featured the 'Eroica' symphony and Piano Concerto No 1, here we were regaled with three masterpieces, the first and fifth symphonies and the Piano Concerto No 4.

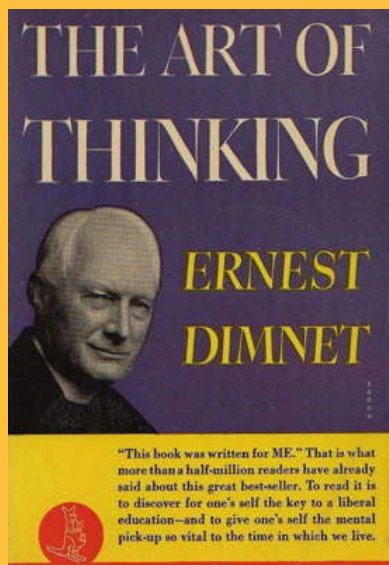


Marios Papadopoulos with members of the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra playing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4 in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, UK. Photo © 2020 Malcolm Miller



Throughout the superb evening, the OPO gave fresh and energetic performances. Indeed Papadopoulos and the Oxford Phil are not strangers to these works, of which this was their third such cycle, interpreted with elegance and always effective drama. The Oxford Phil is fortunate to have a very rich and creamy wind section, rich brass and a substantial string section, and Papadopoulos' immersive interpretations were absorbing. [READ MORE ...](#)

## LIFE UNDER QUARANTINE — THE FINAL INSTALLMENT




*The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet

**Gordon Andrew R:** A great book, now sadly little known is *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet (1866-1954). It was quite popular in its day — circa 1929 — and still reads quite well now. Dimnet spoke of two men who were held captive for some months. Let him explain:

*Maroncelli, in his additions to Silvio Pellico's Mie Prigioni, relates how Pellico and himself being deprived of books, pen and paper, during the early months of their captivity, easily managed to give food to their minds. They would, sometimes singly, sometimes together, go over what they remembered, one day about history, another day about literature, another day again about philosophy. Supplementing each other it was surprising how much more they could remember than they had imagined. Gradually their knowledge, from being a useless chaos, became orderly and ready. Their minds simultaneously grew freer. — The Art of Thinking*

Such was their good use of their incarceration. I can tell you now, that these little quarantine essays of mine, which began on 18 March, have been my conscious attempt to do the same. I have tried to recall what I know and place it in some kind of interesting order. Many know far more, some remember less of what they know, but, in our quarantine, it might have been a good idea to bring to the surface the thoughts, ideas, informations, suggestions, inspirations and ideals that we have stored away in our minds. These jottings are the contents of mine. I hope you have enjoyed these mini-essays.




**LIFE UNDER QUARANTINE**

*Suggestions for the classical musician,  
from GORDON ANDREW R*

Life alone can be difficult at the best of times. Thanks to our mammalian heritage, humans do need companionship. With the arrival of the Corona Virus and the lock down of some countries (with more to follow most certainly), people are quarantined in their homes.

Many are not used to this. They were free to come and go, and indeed, most spent their days out of their homes. Now, they have to stay in.

In Italy, spontaneous street concerts are going on as people open their windows and sing to their neighbours. That's a wonderful thing, but evening comes and it's time to go to bed - or, we would all like a bit of quiet.



Quarantined Italians,  
singing from their homes

So, what do you do in the enforced solitude?


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Buckminster Fuller wrote: 'I have a feeling that in music, man may be able to deal with the new life much more effectively than science ...'

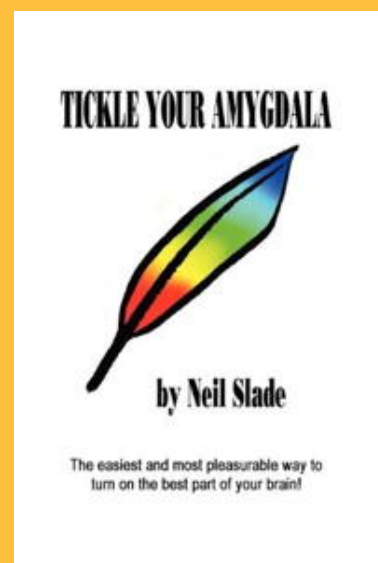
One musician who seems intent on fulfilling Fuller's prognostication is Neil Slade. Actually, he is more than a musician, as he also has worked and studied in various aspects of brain research and so combines art and science. His music is varied and in various genres, and he was nominated for an Emmy.

He is dedicated to the idea that neurobiology's practical techniques can trigger 'pleasurable bodily sensations, dramatic increases in intelligence and creative ability, pronounced feelings of well-being and harmony ...'

One of his primary techniques is detailed in his interesting book *Tickle your Amygdala* which uses a simple mental visualization to achieve its effects.

He has a [Youtube channel](#) with many videos and numerous interviews explaining his ideas.

I admire Mr Slade for combining art and science for a fruitful contribution to our betterment. [READ MORE ...](#)



*Tickle your Amygdala* by Neil Slade

The quarantine suggestions in Gordon Andrew R's quarantine article [Life Under Quarantine — Suggestions for the classical musician](#) were updated every day for two months, so even if you read this feature last month, there is now much more to read.

If you have any ideas of your own, [contact us](#) and we'll add yours to the list.

Don't miss Gordon's companion article, [Opening up after Quarantine](#).

Although many countries are now 'opening up', the spread of COVID-19 is somewhat unpredictable, so it could be wise to continue living under quarantine/lockdown conditions for some time yet, if you're able to.

## LOCRIAN — A CLASSICAL MUSIC WORD PUZZLE

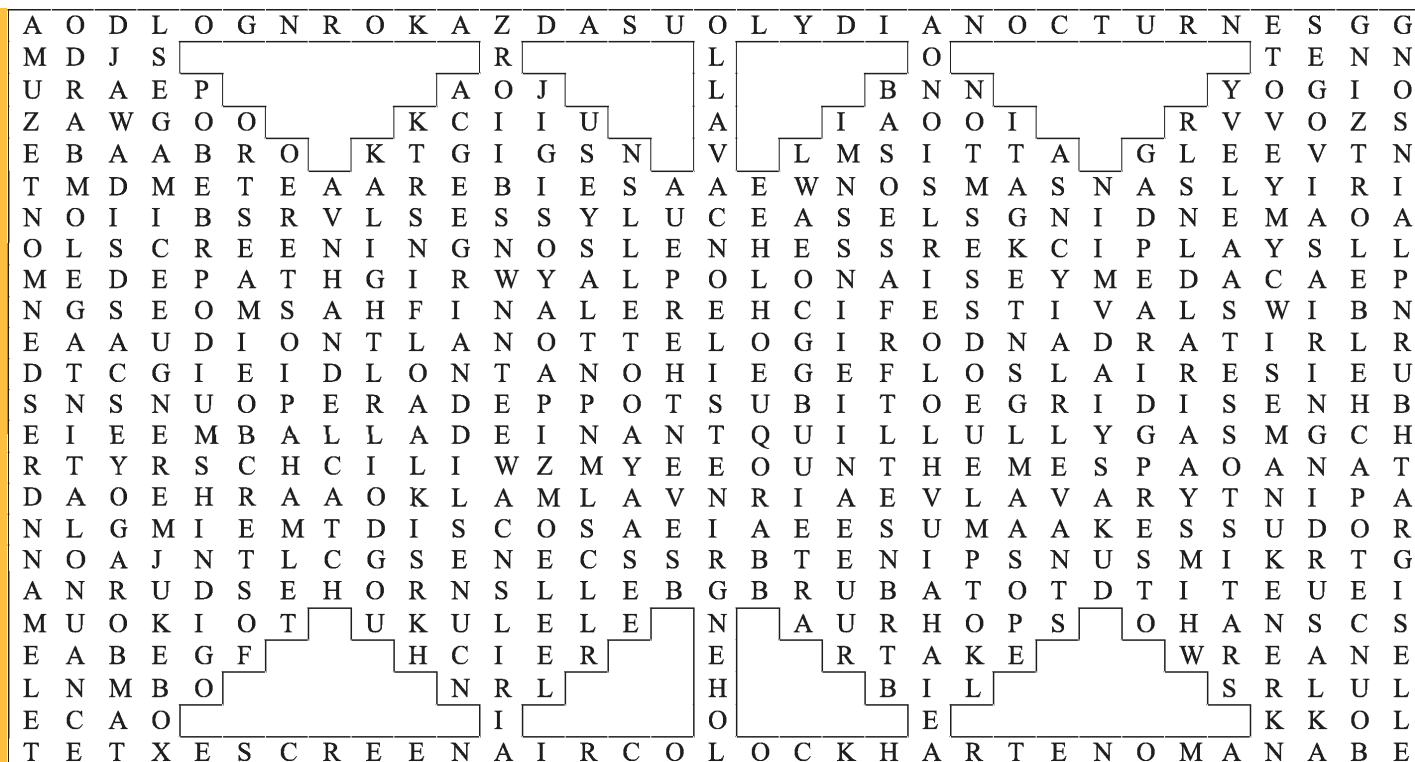
**Allan Rae:** Music students are not terribly interested in learning terminology from history — I had been one of them — so while I was a sessional instructor, I started making puzzles to encourage the students.

I put together a dictionary of sorts containing about 2,500 composers' names, titles of compositions and music terms from French, German, Latin, Spanish and Greek. Also included are words from the jazz, pop, theatre and art world.

At the moment I have more than three hundred 'Find a Word' puzzles: with patterns when complete, with patterns before solving, easy, medium or hard.

With these puzzles, words can be hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally and in retrograde.

The solution is complex as many letters are used multiple times, so only marking a line 'stroke' through the word is necessary. Many of the commercial puzzles say to circle each word as you find it; on these hand drawn puzzles, however, it is necessary just to stroke.



My 'Find a word' puzzle *Locrian* is shown above. How many words can you find? If the puzzle is not visible, or if you can't see the letters in the puzzle clearly, then please [click here](#). All of the words below are hidden in the puzzle above. If you can't see the list of words clearly, please [click here](#).

|                  |                |                   |               |                  |                 |                  |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Academy          | Airing         | Amending          | Amuse         | Aria             | Arjuna          | Artists          |
| Attis            | Audio          | Ballade           | Barber        | Baroque          | Beatles         | Bebop            |
| Bells            | Berlin         | Berwald           | Bounce        | Brain            | Bream           | Capote           |
| Catch            | Cello          | Choir             | Dirge         | Discos           | <u>Djawadi</u>  | <u>Drakkar</u>   |
| Dresden          | <u>Dukas</u>   | <u>Dussek</u>     | Easels        | <u>Elegia</u>    | Festivals       | <u>Ficher</u>    |
| Finale           | Foster         | Gigs              | Giselle       | Glee             | <u>Goyescas</u> | Hamlet           |
| Handel           | Hanson         | Hess              | Horns         | Images           | Ionian          | Iseler           |
| Iturbi           | Jukebox        | <u>Korngold</u>   | <u>Krenek</u> | <u>Landowska</u> | <u>Leachman</u> | Leoncavallo      |
| Levant           | Levy           | Ligature          | Light         | Lightfoot        | Limbo           | Listen           |
| Lockhart         | <u>Locrian</u> | Lohengrin         | Lombardo      | <u>Lontano</u>   | <u>Lortzing</u> | <u>Lousadzak</u> |
| Lully            | Lydian         | Maestro           | <u>Malko</u>  | <u>Manabe</u>    | Merengue        | Monet            |
| Montezuma        | <u>Nanie</u>   | Natural           | Nelson        | Newman           | Nielsen         | <u>Nobile</u>    |
| Nocturnes        | Nuance         | <u>Nussio</u>     | Nylon         | Octave           | Oldie           | Opera            |
| <u>Pachelbel</u> | Picker         | Piston            | Plainsong     | Player           | Plays           | Playwright       |
| Podium           | Polonaise      | Presto            | Quasi         | Quill            | <u>Rathburn</u> | Reich            |
| Repeats          | Rigoletto      | <u>Ritardando</u> | Rubato        | <u>Rusalka</u>   | <u>Salzedo</u>  | Samson           |
| Sansa            | Scenes         | Screen            | Screening     | Segovia          | <u>Seiber</u>   | Serial           |
| Seventh          | Sextet         | Shindig           | Sitars        | <u>Solfège</u>   | Spinet          | <u>Spohr</u>     |
| Stereo           | <u>Stesso</u>  | Stopped           | <u>Subito</u> | <u>Surdin</u>    | Take            | Talon            |
| <u>Tambora</u>   | Taped          | Telemann          | Themes        | <u>Tintagel</u>  | Tonal           | Tovey            |
| Ukulele          | Ulysses        | Valve             | Whimsy        | Wiseman          | <u>Zwilich</u>  |                  |

Good luck! Please let me know how you get on, via the *Classical Music Daily* [contact page](#), and whether you would like more! [READ MORE ABOUT ALLAN RAE ...](#)

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