

MULTIPLE MINDS — Issue 141, 1 October 2020

PROFILE — MARK ARNEST

Gordon Andrew R: The philosopher and mystic George Gurdjieff suggested (and flew in the face of Western philosophy at least since Descartes) that humans are not a single person, but their minds are multiple. Each 'person' is actually many 'I's.

This is a very hard concept to grasp as it goes against our notions of individuality and personhood. The philosopher P D Ouspensky (a one time student of Gurdjieff) took up this idea and developed it in great detail and with considerable acumen. The American psychologist Robert Ornstein wrote a book entitled *MultiMind*, where he presents a related concept.

Actors, of course, do this all the time — they become different people in each role they play, and I mention that the great acting teacher Stanislavsky probably learned some things, like multiple 'I's from Gurdjieff directly. But, in absence of a personal centre, the process can be psychically destabilizing — which might explain why actors are often troubled souls.

In the modern world it is often required to play several different roles: worker, parent, spouse, hobbyist etc. and we can cope with that — though we do not often ascribe different personalities to the situations. But, I knew of one man who was a tyrant in his home life, and renowned at the office for being the jokester. But, he is the same man.

In the modern, eclectic world, different styles, manners, customs and social mores jostle us into confusion. Shall we eat Chinese, Indian, Japanese tonight? Watch Manga, Marvel blockbuster or French *film noir*? How do we properly greet a dignitary from Turkey, or First Nations? What spoon do we use first at dinner with the Queen? How do we address the Pope, a Member of Parliament, the Mayor of a City, a businessman or woman, the bank clerk or the plumber now in our home? It is a great jumble of issues, manners and behaviours, but we are not likely to call this the field of different personalities. That would be to wander in the realm of psychopathology.

But, in fact, these are all little symptoms of our minds not being one monolithic, single cast structure, but an amalgam, or a mashup of different parts.

Without wishing to belabour the point, I suggest this multiplicity shows up in creative lives, and also that some would vociferously disagree.

Some composers are adamant that there is one style, one way and that no others are possible. The recently deceased composer Charles Wuorinen was one such: fiercely dedicated to the twelve-tone system of writing, and it seemed that he could not accept, could not grasp and refused to countenance other composers doing other things.

CHARLES WUORINEN (1938-2020)

When I was a student, you could choose your music composing style from one of two: Schoenberg or Stravinsky (of course, before he took up twelve-tone writing). There were three exceptions: if you were Hungarian, you were allowed to sound like Bartók. If French, then you could follow Messiaen. If you went to Yale, then you could imitate Hindemith. I suppose in England you were allowed to sound like whoever you wanted as long as it was Mendelssohn, the perfect English gentleman. I chose late Liszt and Busoni.

But, today, the lines are not so fiercely drawn nor fiercely defended. Oozing between the camps has occurred.

One reason for it is that professional life has become much more a series of gigs rather than an appointment to some Chair of Music, or department of a university or conservatory, and certainly not under the patronage of some kind of nobility.

Musicians need to earn money, they are offered opportunities and they must take them.

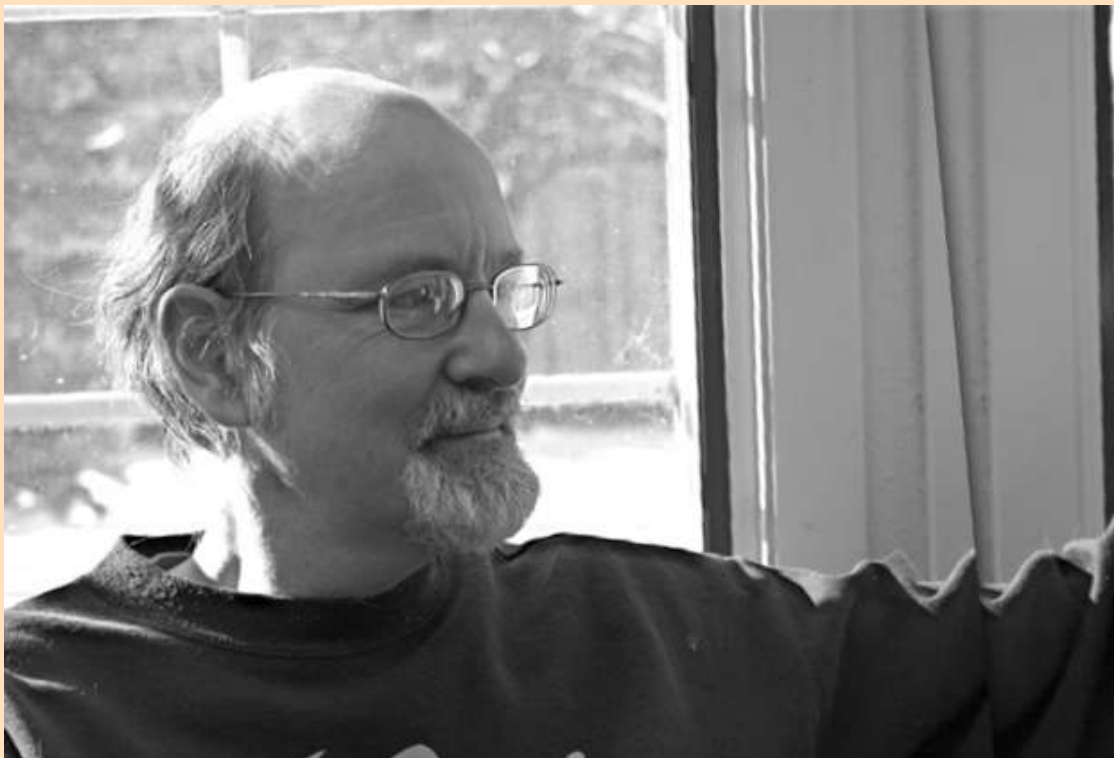
For composers it meant breaking away from some of their rigid thinking and training.

Certainly the boundaries have weakened. And they have weakened by the causes mentioned:

The need to gig;
The globalization of our experience;
The realization that 'style' is just another tool in the composer's toolkit.

This last was certainly practiced by William Albright and William Bolcom, both highly respected professors at the University of Michigan. Both wrote in varied styles and manners. Both wrote deeply serious, intensely complex concert music and also Rag Time. (Indeed, these two were instrumental in the rediscovery of that genre, which is now the common heritage of everyone.) Bolcom wrote piano etudes (winning him the Pulitzer Prize) that are playable only by super virtuosi, and also wrote rock music as part of his giant cantata/oratorio on the texts of William Blake.

Today then, the composer is expected, obliged and allowed to create music in a variety of styles, for many different circumstances, in a variety of manners, using a variety of techniques and for any number of purposes.



Mark Arnest is a modern American composer, pianist, scholar and researcher who has done just that.

As an aside: He is one of the foremost authorities on late nineteenth century and early twentieth century piano performance practice as exhibited by the recorded heritage. I know only a few who might be his equal in this field, none his superior.

Mark Arnest

Thus, when considering his compositional creative output, one must consider:

- Theatrical scores
- Full Broadway style shows (written in collaboration with his wife, Lauren Arnest)
- Satirical music and novelty songs
- Intellectual music or music for study
- Choral music
- Concert music

These are broad categories, and a word is needed about each category, though entering into any greater detail would take us too far away from our purpose.

By *Theatrical Scores* I refer to music for plays. This was once called *Incidental music*, though now is often called *sound design*. Here are some of his works in this field:

- *Eleemosynary*
- *Hamlet* (play-within-a-play)
- *Road to Mecca*
- *Pericles*
- *Wind in the Willows*
- *The Winter's Tale*
- *The Glass Menagerie*
- *Scrambled Shakespeare*
- *Our Town*
- *I Am Nicola Tesla*
- *The Seagull*
- *Everyman on the Bus*
- *It's a Wonderful Life*
- *Girl of the Golden West*

Full Broadway style shows (often written in collaboration with his wife Lauren) include:

- *All About Love*, musical adaptation of Plato's *Symposium*, which was later released on CD in 1997
- *Iron & Gold*, a musical about 'nineteenth century robber barons, railroads, and labor' (1998)
- *Pike's Dream*, chamber opera (2007)
- *The Notorious Nugget* (2015)

For novelty songs, I can only suggest *Devil in My Pants*.

By intellectual music, I mean those works intended to demonstrate some aspect of musical technique — and also aiming for aesthetic beauty. The examples of this are versions of Pachelbel's famed *Canon* in these transformations.

These are standard techniques of composition: original, inversion, retrograde and retrograde inversion, and have been used by composers for half a thousand years. Arnold Schoenberg made them part of his system of serial composition, but he was merely continuing a longstanding process. However, here, given the fame of the composition, it is as if one is taking some object and turning it this way and that in one's hands to see it from all different sides, angles and lights. The results are illuminating and Mr Arnest's contribution to our understanding of the music and these techniques is important and valuable. [READ MORE ...](#)

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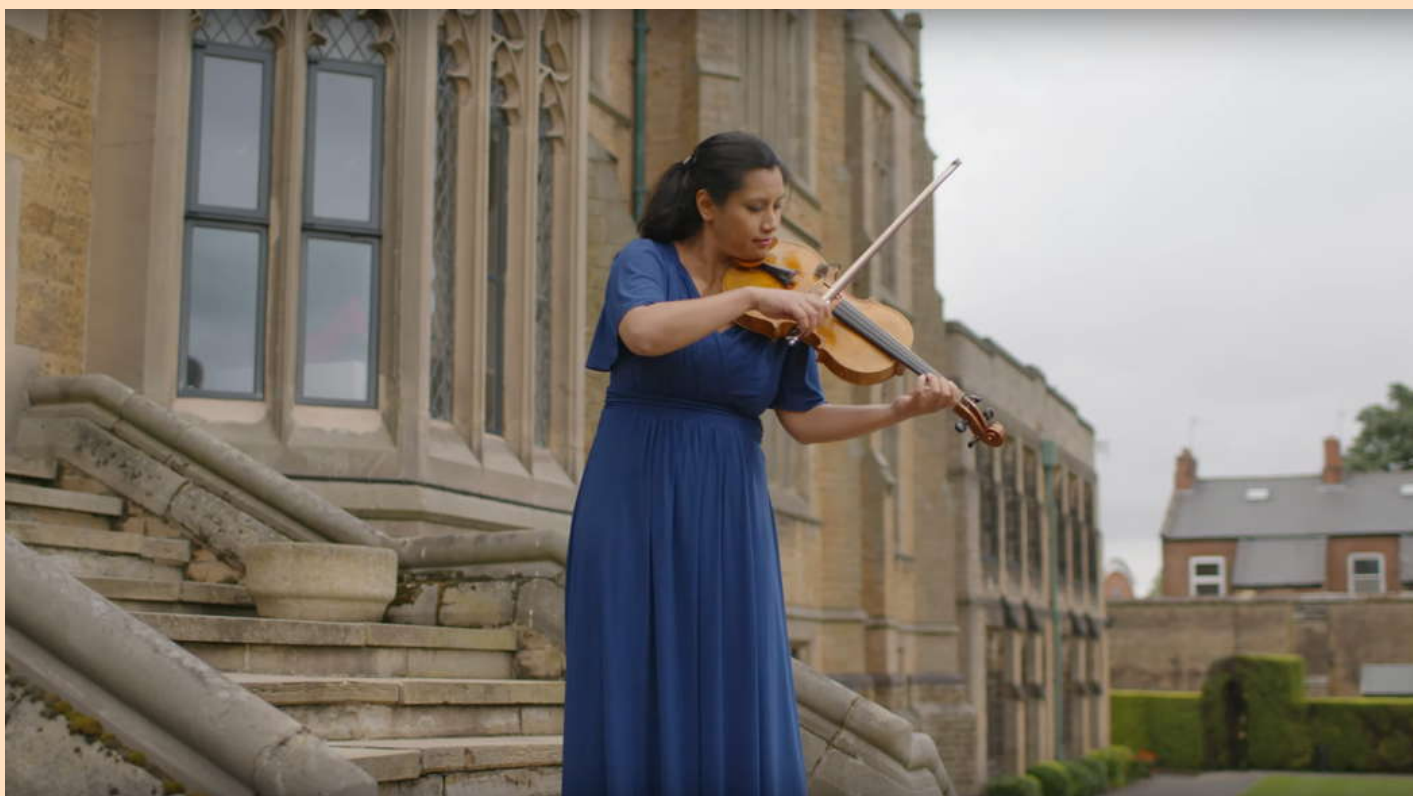
ENSEMBLE — ENGAGINGLY VIGOROUS

Mike Wheeler: Nottingham Chamber Music Festival was founded in 2018 by its director, viola-player Carmen Flores. With no live performances possible this year, Flores teamed up with local film-maker Tim Bassford, to create *Nottingham Stories: Separation and Serenade*. The project consists of six separate videos, between about five and six minutes each, in which she plays J S Bach's Cello Suite No 3 in C, BWV 1009 (in an uncredited transcription), the six movements in six different Nottingham locations that have hosted NCMF events in previous years.

Each video opens with a short slow-motion clip of Flores walking towards the venue concerned — by the time I got to No 6, I had started to find this rather tiresome — accompanied, incongruously, by the sound of a string orchestra tuning. In a short introduction, someone connected with each venue describes its connection with the festival, and the effect of COVID-19 on its work, before Flores plays the movement in question. As she plays, the camera cuts, from time to time, to brief shots of the interior — and, occasionally, exterior — of the building.

Bizarrely, the movements are presented not in their correct sequence, but in an apparently random order; we are not told the reason for this. So we begin, not with the Prelude — that comes fifth! — but with the second movement, the *Allemande*. Flores plays this on the main interior staircase of Nottingham's Council House, following an introduction from Nigel Hawkins, the City Council's Head of Culture and Libraries.

We are introduced to St Mary's Church in Nottingham's Lace Market, where Flores plays the *Sarabande*, by its Director of Music, John Keys. For the *Courante* we move to Delilah Fine Foods, a 'high-end delicatessen', in the words of operations director Nik Tooley, and an established favourite with festival audiences. The *Bourrée* was filmed at Nottingham High School (where Christopher Hogwood was a pupil), with an introduction from Daniel Gill, Operations Officer cover. The main outside staircase, of course, presents a complete change of acoustic from the interior locations.



Carmen Flores plays the Bach 'Bourrée' at Nottingham High School

The *Prelude* sees Flores on stage in an otherwise empty Royal Concert Hall, whose Music Programme Manager, Neil Bennison, comments that it is 'nice to feel connected to the other venues that are taking part in this project as well'. Finally comes the *Gigue*, in Nottingham Contemporary, an art gallery that, as it happens, is a near neighbour of St Mary's. Andy Batson, Head of Audiences and Partnerships, voices a thought that the other contributors will also, no doubt, have had at the backs of their minds: 'what it means to be a public space where the public can't visit'.

Flores' performances are engagingly vigorous, with structural clarity in the *Prelude*, sprightly in the faster dances, and while I would have preferred the *Sarabande* just a notch quicker, we don't lose touch with the dance impulse.

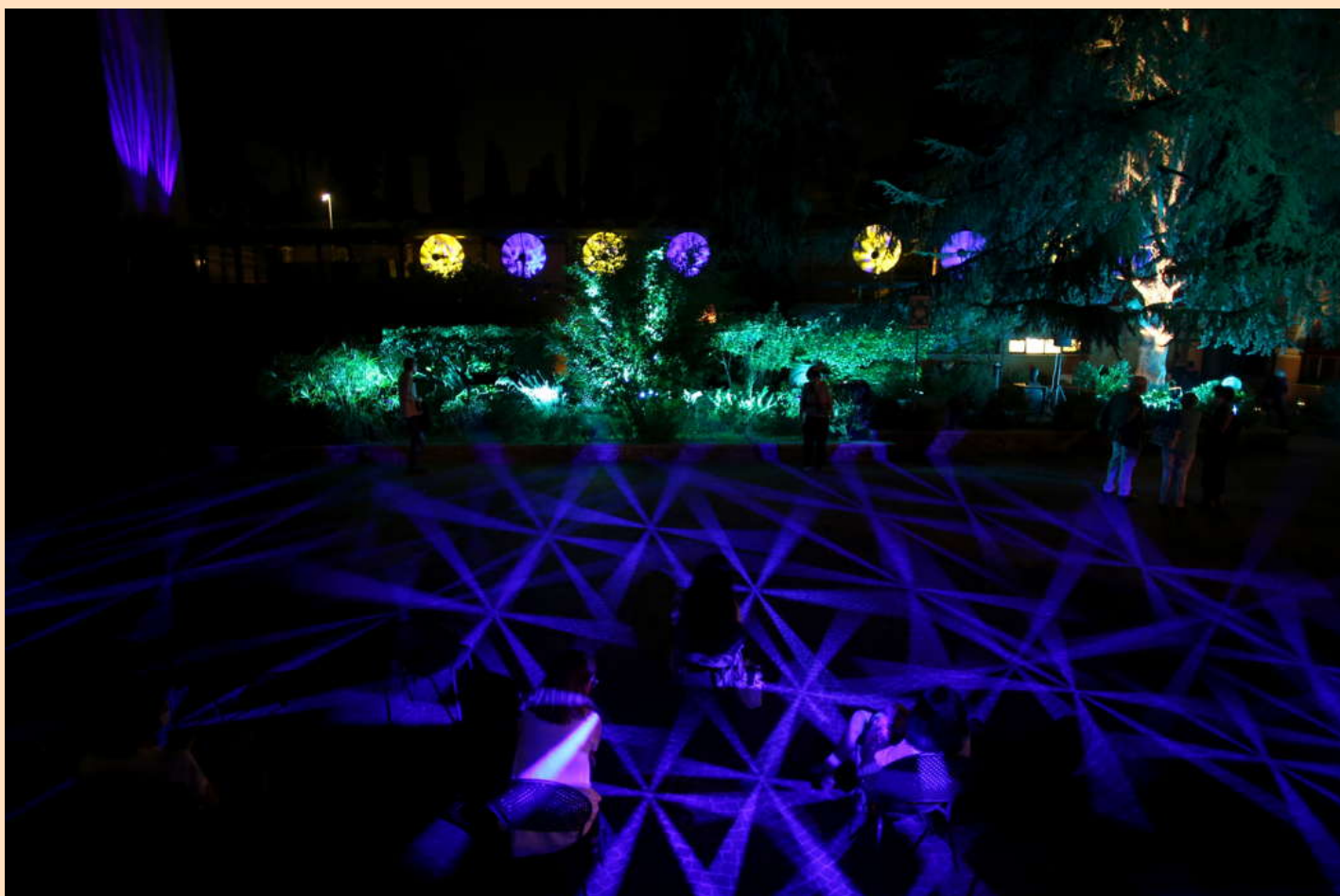
Her viola was closely recorded, with a (visible) microphone fastened on the shoulder of the instrument (and suitably windscreened for the *Bourrée*). The rather fierce sound that results, coupled with the very resonant acoustic of most of the venues, doesn't always make for comfortable listening; in the Royal Concert Hall, in particular, it has very much larger-than-life quality. But it does allow for clear textures, and relishes in particular the husky sound of the instrument's bottom string.

According to the NCMF website, 'each movement of the suite has been selected to complement the venue it is performed in'. It would have been interesting to have been told something about the thinking behind the different pairings.

The videos are free to watch on demand. And you can always choose to run them in the correct musical sequence.

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Giuseppe Pennisi: While the great music festival Mi.To is staged in Milan and Turin this month, there are several outdoor contemporary music initiatives in Rome. Some are festivals previously scheduled for spring or early summer and rescheduled during autumn due to the pandemic. Others are festivals that normally take place in autumn, using the beautiful gardens and parks of the capital when the evenings are mild. Of the many, two are particularly significant: the ArtScience Festival and the Roman Philharmonic Academy's Garden Festival.



A scene from one of the ArteScienza concerts. Photo © 2020 Marco Iacobucci

We have already discussed the latter in past summers, pointing out that this is an international festival organized in collaboration with the cultural institutes of some of the main countries; this brings contemporary music from the rest of the world to Italy. The former, which began way back in 1993, is a festival of musical and electroacoustic research that combines sound study, electronics, musical experimentation and visual installations.

From each of the two, I chose a concert. Let's start with ArtScience. The festival includes concerts, performances, installations, movies screenings, conferences, meetings with artists and masterclasses, in search of everything that is innovative, original and stimulating from the meeting between music, art and science. ArtScience, organized by CRM — Centro Ricerca Musicale (Music Research Center), has chosen as the title for the 2020 edition 'Acceleration Deceleration', two opposing phenomena that have stimulated the reflections of sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers and that touch several spheres of our society.

Divided into thematic areas intended for different audiences, the festival takes place in several prestigious venues, transformed into places of the imagination thanks to music, its innovative art forms, participatory action of the public and dialogue with artists. The opening was at Casino Nobile in Villa Torlonia on 8 September 2020. Most concerts take place, almost every night until the end of September, in the gardens and conference room of the Goethe Institut, CRM's preferred partner since 1993. This is also a space for artists' music videos, concerts/installations with holophones — special sound projectors patented by CRM, poetry, dance, theatre and music, projections and performances that every day investigate an instrument or a pair of different instruments — purple, clarinet, percussion, flute, sax, clarinet and bayan ... To further enrich this edition, on 30 September 2020, the Church of St Ignatius of Loyola hosts a concert for organ and live electronics — Giulio Tosti organ with Pasquale Citera, live electronics — with works of traditional and contemporary music. The concert will be preceded by a meeting with the philosopher and historian of metaphysics Paul Gilbert.

What are holophones, a term coined by CRM? They are works of visual and musical art at the same time, with a high technological profile, the result of *avant-garde* research that the Conservatory and the University of L'Aquila have built. The photo shows the holophones in the Lower Garden of the Goethe Institut. I attended the evening of 19 September. It opened in the Lower Garden with saxophone improvisations by Danilo Porticaro, hidden behind a hedge, which also presented new work by Andrea Benedetti, inspired in turn by paintings of Roy Lichtenstein and spread in the air by holophones.

The second part took place in the Upper Garden of the Goethe Institut and featured clarinetist Michele Marelli who worked for ten years with Karlheinz Stockhausen. The main part of the concerts was *Uversa 16thNow*, composed by Stockhausen in 2007, that is, shortly before his death. The first performance was entrusted to Marelli. It is a long piece — twenty three minutes — in which the sound of the clarinet is accompanied by electronic music on tape. This is experimental music not for all palates. Perhaps a lower volume would have benefited?

Stockhausen's piece was preceded by Marco Stroppa's *Il peso di un respiro* for amplified basset horn and followed by *Prima della traccia* by Stefano Gervasoni for basset horn and live electronics, *Art Metal II* by Yan Robin and *Tripophobia* by Walter Cianclusi. The audience was not very dense, as happens in musical research concerts, but there was warm applause.

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Giuseppe also visits Florence for Handel's *Rinaldo* and Ravello for a rare Stabat Mater by Nicola Bonifacio Logroscino (1698-c1765) and for a performance of Schubert, Wagner and Mozart by Daniele Gatti and the Mozart Orchestra.

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Maria Nockin: On Saturday 12 September 2020, mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato gave an online recital from Bochum, Germany with accompaniment by pianist Carrie-Ann Matheson and the Baroque chamber group *Il Pomo D'Oro* (The Golden Apple). Most recently, DiDonato starred in the title role of Handel's *Agrippina* at the Metropolitan Opera.

The artists performed live at Bochum's Jahrhunderthalle (Century Hall) in Germany's Ruhr area. After decades of use as a gas-fired power plant, the building was converted into a festival theater with a light-flooded foyer, modern infrastructure, and elaborate technical equipment that complemented its industrial charm.



Joyce DiDonato in the Jahrhunderthalle, Bochum, Germany

DiDonato appeared wearing a simple but elegant black chiffon trouser outfit that allowed her to move comfortably around her performance area. She opened her program with a sad, almost vibrato-free rendition of 'Addio Roma' (Good-bye Rome) from Monteverdi's 1643 opera *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*.

She followed it with the final scene from Berlioz's *Les Troyens* in which Didon stabs herself with Énée's sword to the horror of her people. At the moment of her death, Didon has one last vision: Carthage will be destroyed, but Rome will be immortal.

Adding one more song in a similar mood, Gustav Mahler's *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (I am lost to the world), DiDonato pulled the audience into her world of dreams and meditation with incredible breath control and pianissimo singing.

The Met then showed a video clip from their *Live in HD* presentation of Gaetano Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda*. Di Donato sang a shattering rendition of her character's second act scena with the Met chorus and orchestra conducted by Maurizio Benini. The clip showed the artist in a very different light while giving her a tiny break in her recital.

She continued with the traditional American *Oh Shenandoah* which she sang with absolute purity of tone. Her vocal choices reminded me of the pristine nature that once covered the New World.

Returning to the Old World, DiDonato and the Pomo D'Oro performed Irene's *da capo* air 'As with rosy steps, the morn' from Handel's oratorio *Theodora*. In this aria showing Irene's decision to stand her ground despite death threats, DiDonato sang the repeat section with graceful and intriguing decorations.

'Illustratevi, o cieli' (Show it, O heavens) from Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* is Penelope's aria on the return of her husband. With exquisite coloratura, DiDonato's character calls upon the birds to sing and the rivers to murmur because the Phoenix has risen from its ashes.

In 'Dopo notte atra e funesta' (After a terrible and fatal night) from Handel's *Ariodante*, perhaps referring to the current COVID problem, DiDonato, as the title character, jubilantly hailed a new bright day after the darkness of night. Having plenty of room in this setting, DiDonato literally danced with joy as she sang a filigreed *da capo* section.

At this point the program switched from live music to a recorded feature. DiDonato spoke with Sister Helen Prejean CSJ, who wrote the original book that became the movie and then the opera, *Dead Man Walking*. The mezzo also talked with Kenyatta Hughes whose song *I Dream a World* to words by Langston Hughes she premiered immediately afterward. The music to the new song is interesting in that it is slightly reminiscent of a Spiritual while maintaining its own unique qualities. It was a lovely piece with piano and cello accompaniment arranged by Craig Terry.

I noticed that the Pomo D'Oro cellist then left his modern cello near the piano and walked back to the antique instrument he had left at his chair in the baroque group. Then we heard Orontea's aria 'Intorno all'idol mio' (Around my idol) from Antonio Cesti's 1656 opera *Orontea*, completing the singer's presentation of Baroque music.

The final group contained some unusual combinations: 'Voi che sapete' (You who know) from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Craig Terry's arrangement of *La vie en rose* (The rose-tinted life) by Louiguy (Louis Guglielmi) were sung in different styles, as were the *Canción al árbol del olvido* (Song to the tree of oblivion) by Alberto Ginastera and Terry's arrangement of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' From Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. Most importantly, all were delightful to hear.

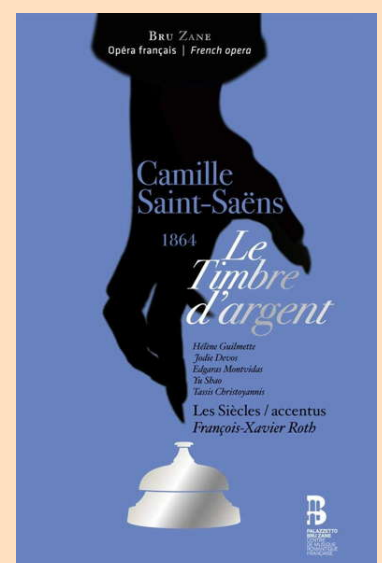
I'm finding this series quite fascinating because singers' recitals with piano or a small group of musicians allow the audience see them in different aspects from those seen on the opera stage. Although I cannot wait to go to the theater for opera again, I hope these online recitals will continue as well. This recital can still be enjoyed at [Met Stars Live](#) for US\$ 20 until 24 September 2020.

[READ THE LATEST FEATURES AND REVIEWS BY MARIA NOCKIN ...](#)

CD SPOTLIGHT — A MULTIFACETED INDIVIDUAL

Giuseppe Pennisi: *Le timbre d'argent* (The Silver Bell) is an *opéra fantastique* in four acts to a French libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, the same team that wrote the librettos for Gounod's *Faust* and for Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. *Le timbre d'argent* is the first opera that Saint-Saëns composed. The work's premiere was delayed, first by the financial difficulties of the opera house and then later by the Franco-Prussian War. Over the next twelve years, Saint-Saëns recomposed the dialogue to form a *grand-opéra* version, but the Théâtre National Lyrique, who finally staged it, decided to use the original 1865 rendition for the opera's premiere in 1877. The grand opera version was first performed in 1913. The CDs opt for the final version, as revised for Brussels' Théâtre de la Monnaie, because it contains the most music since it replaces the dialogues with recitative. Only one number is cut: the waltz for orchestra in the last act. The recording is based on the revival of the work at the Opéra Comique in 2017 where the waltz was cut for theatrical reasons and could not be reinstated.

The plot is quite simple. Conrad, an artist, has an unhealthy obsession for gold, and he is further engrossed by his own painting of Circe, embodied in the living world by Fiametta, a ballerina. Conrad is given a silver bell by Dr Spiridion: when he strikes the bell he will receive all the gold he craves for, but at the cost of someone's death. The opera concludes with the realization that all of the events have only occurred within Conrad's own fevered mind.



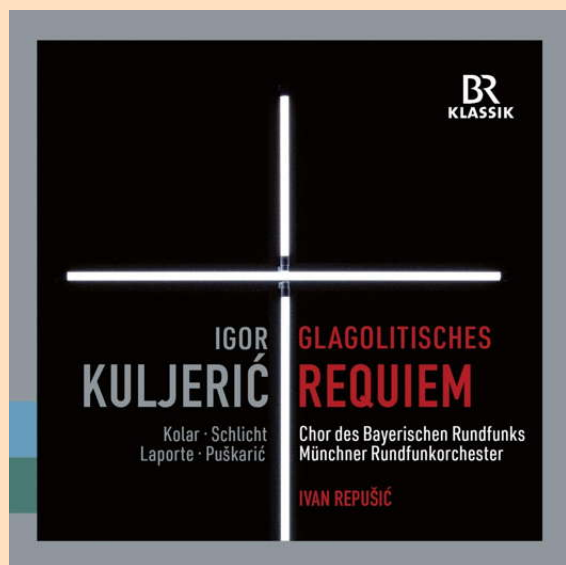
'From the very start of the overture, the listener feels that this is a brisk and expert ensemble.'

Like Gounod's *Faust* and Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Le timbre d'argent* explores the hero's reliance on a menacing older man imposed by a diabolic pact. The character of Conrad is similar in many ways to that of Hoffman in Offenbach's opera, and the villainous character of Dr Spiridion corresponds well to Offenbach's villains — Lindorf, Coppélius, Dapertutto and Dr Miracle.

The music of *Le timbre d'argent* is both versatile and fluent. The drama at times poses difficulties, especially the mimed part of Fiametta and the somewhat weak revelation of truth at the opera's end. However, there are several effectively bold scenes such as a theatre viewed from the back of the stage and a number of imaginative transformations. A number of the positive aspects of this opera undoubtedly influenced Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, as his first focused efforts on composing Hoffman took place during the first eighteen performances of *Le timbre d'argent* in 1877.

The Opéra Comique and the Palazzetto Bru-Zane Centre de musique romantique française coproduced the 2017 revival that is at the basis of this CD set. The orchestra is Les Siècles, with the choir Accentus conducted by François-Xavier Roth. From the very start of the overture, the listener feels that this is a brisk and expert ensemble. [READ MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe also reviews Romabarocca's Girolamo Rossi CD on the Bongiovanni label, Johann Simon Mayr's *Le due duchesse* on Naxos, harpsichord music by François Couperin on Cedille, Beethoven string quartets from Cuarteto Casals on harmonia mundi, and Joanne Chang's *New York Impressions* on the Centaur label.



'An enticing discovery that has all the hallmarks to command serious investigation from all music lovers across the board. Sound and presentation are first-rate.'

Gerald Fenech: In 1991 Croatia separated from Yugoslavia to become an independent republic. A young state housing an ancient people with a future full of hope for better days. But this fledgling country paid a heavy price for its freedom with a four-year war that brought untold suffering, misery and death. Indeed, history was repeating itself. Ever since the barbarian invasions, Croats had settled in the region between the Pannonian Basin and the Dalmatian coast, situated on the Christian interface between Rome, Aquileia and Constantinople, and between Slavic Orthodoxy and Roman Christianity. The periods of self-determination were all too brief; a Croatian royal dynasty evaporated in 1097, after which the Hungarian crown ruled for nearly nine centuries. Up to the end of the First World War Croatia was constantly dependent on two great powers: the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. At the end of the 1980s, with the death of Josip Broz Tito, the Socialist Republic comprising Slovenes, Serbs and Croats crumbled again, and as they say, the rest is history.

It was against this turbulent background that Igor Kuljerić (1938-2006) spent his childhood absorbing various musical impressions on the Dalmatian coast, elements that were to strongly influence him in his later compositions. Once, when asked about the musical roots of his *Croatian Glagolitic Requiem* composed in 1996, Kuljerić confessed that it had arisen 'out of a deep desire to transform something I heard in my youth, and carried inside me from then on, into music — when the Glagolitic rites echoed within me'.

From the 1960s onwards Kuljerić became a central figure in Croatian musical life and he was the recipient of many prestigious positions, while also being the catalyst of several festivities in his native country. This 'Requiem' cannot be compared to the standard pieces we are accustomed to — those of Berlioz, Verdi and others, say. It is stirring and utterly moving, and its powerful suggestive imagery leaves a profound effect on the listener. And all this against the mystical Glagolitic chants of the East. The real message of this uplifting piece lies, maybe, in the 'Offertorium' which ends thus: 'Lord, in praise we offer you sacrifices and prayers, accept them on behalf of those whom we remember this day. Lord, make them pass from death to life.'

Premiered on 27 July 1996, the work was wholeheartedly embraced by local audiences but, as with all Croatian music, it is only in very recent times that this musical treasure trove has started to emerge.

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Gerald also listens to five Naxos CDs — Lori Laitman's *The Secret Exit*, two guitar discs: music by Hans Haug and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco played by Marisa Minder and concertos by Rodrigo, Ponce and Garcia, played by Junhong Kuang, piano music by Herbert Howells, and to orchestral music by the Brazilian composer Alberto Nepomuceno.

Geoff Pearce: Naomi Pinnock (Born 1979) is not a household name to most of us, however she is highly regarded in the field of contemporary music. Her music is challenging to perform, and challenging to listen to, but is certainly interesting and thought provoking.

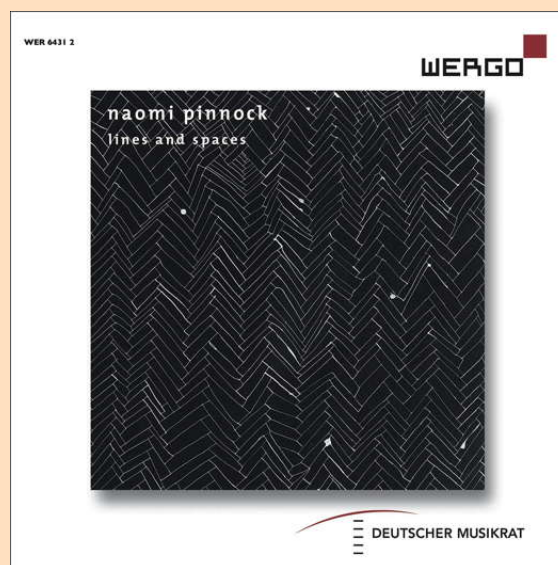
The disc starts with the second of her three string quartets. This work was written in 2011-2012. The composer uses her musical material very economically. It would be appropriate to quote the composer here: 'This treatment of musical material is similar to my manipulation of text in receipt works. It has a lot to do with memories — how sometimes a vividly experienced dream can suddenly vanish upon waking and all you can grasp hold of are fragments. And how those fragments often linger but finally fade away.' Interestingly I had this thought in my mind as I listened to this work. It is of about twelve minutes duration and is in two quite different movements, but repetition plays an important part in both. The opening movement is expansive, but starts with a 49 bar passage for viola alone, whereas the second movement, although still containing a lot of repeated patterns, is somewhat sparser and nebulous. I find this very effective work somewhat disturbing, not in a nightmarish way, but in the uneasiness it establishes in my mind, no matter how many times I listen to it.

Words was written in 2010-2011 and was structured around text written by the composer. I refer the listener to the booklet that accompanies this disc. I found this to be a most fascinating work, scored for baritone and ensemble. It is one of those works that, for me at least, needs to be listened to with total attention. A good pair of high-quality isolating headphones is ideal. The work is in three movements.

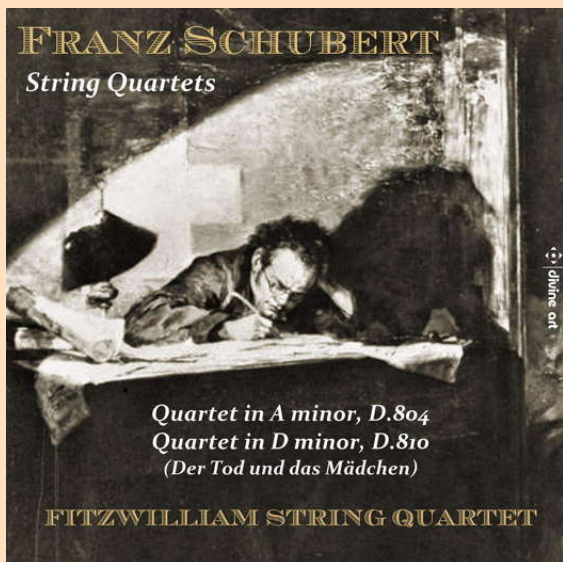
Lines and Spaces for solo piano (2015) was inspired by some minimalist square paintings of Agnes Martin that were composed of grids and lines. 'They are just grids and lines, and yet they evoke more, with the delicate layering of paint and beautiful imperfections. These miniatures fluctuate between compressing or expanding, creating a bold line or subtle bands of faint colours.' This description sums up beautifully this work that constantly alternates spaces and lines, realised by the vertical and the horizontal. [READ MORE ...](#)

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Geoff also listens to Symon Clarke's *Songs for the Last Act* on Ablaze Records, to *Chopin's Ghosts* — more music by the late Paul Reale, to orchestral music by Barbara Harbach and to Brendan Collins' *Great Southern Land*.



'The performances and attention to detail were impressive, which added to my enjoyment and comprehension of the music.'



Patrick Maxwell: Schubert's musical world is perhaps one of the most distinctly Romantic of any of his nineteenth-century contemporaries; to peruse one of his scores is to be set upon some of the most impassioned and key-dominated work, built with a simplicity of harmony which so often evokes the spirit of Caspar David Friedrich's famous *Wanderer*, which can speak of a heartfelt mix of joy and melancholia. It could be said that he was plagued by Beethoven's shadow, and famously (although only purportedly) asked how anyone could achieve real musical greatness after the former's death in 1827. Their musical difference stems often from Schubert's love of chamber music, and his quest for a sound that spoke more evidently of the pastoral and yearning (although often cliché-ridden) poetry of Müller, Heine and Rellstab (all writing under the shadow of Schiller), which can be seen in some of the works of Schumann and others after him.

'This CD holds within some extremely heart-rending, joyous and emotionally infused music, played by some wonderful individual players.'

All of this seems to have been realised by the players of the Fitzwilliam Quartet, in this new recording of two of his most well-known string quartets. Yet the effect is not as impressive, as wholesome, as can be gained from the works they perform here; there is not the overall variety needed to interpret these

works. Schubert, not just in his string works, can seem repetitive, the same figures, emotional standpoints given multiple times, and his ability to flow between sections not as ornate or unseemly as Beethoven's, often employing the simple chord progressions to change sections. There is most certainly a range of tones and expressions in this recording, and an impressive mix of the different instruments to create a polyphony in the more tempestuous sections, yet a monotonousness is sometimes found that is unwanted in trying to get the music away from its bare manuscript and into the emotional arena that Schubert was so enveloped in, and to keep the music constantly changing in effects.

The first quartet in this collection is the Quartet in A minor, D 804 from 1824. The first movement has a deep, intensely morose feel which is evident from the very start in the falling A minor triad in the first violin and the searching accompaniment in the second.

The key shifts quickly between the minor and major, as the overall tone does equally swiftly between moods of lyricism and contemplation and the 'angry abruptness and severity', as violist Alan George describes it in his informative but often inanely written notes. (I am reviewing the music here, but the quality of writing of the programme notes is important, especially when there is an evident wish of the Quartet to provide context for their interpretations, and the style of these notes is at points meretriciously weak.) That tendency for musical severity and surprising changes into musically violent emotion is a theme of this first movement, and the need for maturity in approaching the different points in the music is often missing, leaving the effect to be diminished when repeated many times. The lack of variation hinders the opportunity to give a new perspective on Schubert's score, which, although bearing the hallmarks of the troubled mindset he was in at the time of composition, does have the need for a more measured approach, in order to make the at times repetitive music still seem vivacious enough by the end of the long first movement.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC NEWS — ELEONORA PERRETTA

Young Neapolitan guitarist Eleonora Perretta has won the 2020 Mottola Guitar Festival in south-east Italy. Francisco Lopes from Portugal came second, and Chinnawat Themkumkwun from Thailand gained third prize. [READ MORE ...](#)



Eleonora Perretta

Also in Italy, hosted by the cities of Milan and Turin, MITO SettembreMusica 2020 was different to all other previous editions of the festival. [READ MORE ...](#)

Yo-Yo Ma, Mischa Maisky, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Alisa Weilerstein and Pieter Wispelwey will perform at the virtual CelloBello Gala on Sunday 11 October 2020. [READ MORE ...](#)

The Sussex-based English Music Festival plays its part in the return to music-making in the UK with an Autumn Festival on 9 and 20 October 2020. [READ MORE ...](#)

We mark the passing of musicians including Isidora Žebeljan, Frédéric Devreese, Vyacheslav Voinarovsky, Caroline Kaart, Jan Krenz, Paul Méfano, Stéphane Caillat, Annette Jahns, Christian Manen, Sonny Chua, Patrick Davin, André Reichling, Mohinder Singh Sarna, Christiane Eda-Pierre and Rinat Ibragimov.

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IS IT STILL SAFE IN OUR HEADS?

Keith Bramich: We're beginning to become aware of the physical 'after effects' of the 'royal' virus which has had (and still has) us all dancing to its silly little tune for at least half a year. Musing on Gordon Andrew R's 'multiple minds' theme of this newsletter, I couldn't help but wonder about the mental effects of lockdown, social distancing, face-covering, performing and teaching online, or of the direct effects of the dreaded crown virus itself? Surely these psychological effects can't be so easy to measure? After months of lockdown, am I likely to be able to judge my own mental state, or should I report for analysis? And I'm one of the lucky ones ... not living on my own, enough money to survive and able to continue with 70-80% of my normal activities throughout this strange year — so far.

Over the last couple of weeks I have been privileged to conduct, separately, the two halves of an amateur orchestra — strings last week, then wind and brass this week. (This was almost as magical an experience as when I first heard live music again, just a few weeks ago, whilst passing a church.) The group was split like this because of the venue's limitations on numbers to make it 'COVID-safe'. The timpanist and I were the only people in the room on both occasions. To all intents and purposes, these meetings were of two different groups playing very different repertoire — not one orchestra. I made a video of each session, so that each half of the band could experience everything.

We've all no doubt been wondering how different the 'new normal' would be, but somehow my experience of this organised institutional split personality seemed a metaphor of all the forced rehearsals, recording sessions and meetings across glass computer screens that our uninvited pesky little health hazard has been causing.

It almost felt, working with the two separate halves of Blackfriars Sinfonia, that I was experiencing, in true science fiction form, two parallel alternative futures.



This newsletter is a monthly taster for our high quality and colourful online classical music magazine, published every day since January 1999. Founded by the late Basil Ramsey and current editor Keith Bramich.

The editorial and advertising copy deadlines for our November 2020 newsletter are both Monday 26 October 2020. **Contact us here.**

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