



## *Louis Andriessen — Issue 150, 1 July 2021*

The Dutch composer and pianist Louis Andriessen has died in Weesp on 1 July 2021, aged eighty-two, following a battle with dementia.

Born on 6 June 1939 in Utrecht, he studied with his father, the composer Hendrik Andriessen and with Kees van Baaren at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, then later with Luciano Berio in Milan and Berlin.

Early in his career he experimented with pastiche, serialism and tape, and reacted against the conservative Dutch contemporary music scene. From the beginning of the 1970s he avoided the conventional orchestra, writing instead for various idiosyncratic combinations of instruments which often featured orchestral instruments alongside congas and electric guitars and basses.

His mature music was influenced by Stravinsky, jazz and minimalism. Works include *Hoketus* (1977), *De Stijl* (1985) and, in collaboration with Peter Greenaway, the opera *Writing to Vermeer* (1997-8).

Based in Amsterdam, he taught composition at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague, where his students included Graham Fitkin and Steve Martland. He received the Gaudeamus International Composers Award in 1959. [MORE ...](#)

### **CD SPOTLIGHT — SPEEDING UP THE REVIEW PROCESS**

Over the last few months we have overhauled our CD reviewing process to decrease the time between CDs being released and reviews being published. This has been successful for most reviews published, with a few reviews even being published before the CD release date. We often publish large lists of new CDs available for review, increasing the choice of material for our writers. Our CD reviews continue to illustrate the material under review with short audio extracts.

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## THE PEOPLE UNITED — FREDERIC RZEWSKI (1938-2021)



**Frederic Rzewski (1938-2021) playing Rzewski**

*Being a popular melody, ['The people united will never be defeated'] ... lends itself surprisingly effectively to a variation treatment. What Frederic Rzewski ... has done is to come up with a set of thirty-six keyboard variations, which can easily be likened to Bach's Goldberg Variations, or to give a later example, the Brahms variations on a theme by Handel. - Roderic Dunnett, Music & Vision Magazine, 24 June 2016* [MORE ...](#)

*Acoustically rich due to the generous pedalling in all the sonatas, one was aware all the time of the remarkable range of pianistic colours emanating from Rzewski's fingers, displaying an ear for piano sonority rather than merely dry abstract patterns. - Malcolm Miller, Music & Vision Magazine, 5 May 2010* [MORE ...](#)

We mark the passing of Frederic Rzewski, Ad van't Veer, Mzilikazi Khumalo, Jeanne Lamon, Gianna Rolandi, Heribert Beissel, Gwyn Arch, Karla Burns and Alexander Maykapar. [MORE ...](#)

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## PROFILE — PAUL ZICHENG FU — A LIFE IN MUSIC



Paul Z Fu in Buffalo in 1989,  
from the composer's collection.  
Photographer unknown

**Gordon Andrew R:** Born in China in 1928 Paul Z Fu grew up near one of the European concessions where his father owned and operated a photography business. The son took up his father's creativity, but in sound rather than sight and was soon studying Western Classical music with two important émigrés to China who escaped the cultural carnage of Nazi Germany.

He studied with Ernst Weißler and Arthur Schierch. Paul Fu recalls that Weißler (who had sung at Bayreuth) played and sang large segments of Wagner operas from memory. (For further information about Ernst Weißler see: [https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm\\_lexmperson\\_00002477](https://www.lexm.uni-hamburg.de/object/lexm_lexmperson_00002477) in German with photo.) (Of Arthur Schierch searching has found little on-line information.)

Under their guidance Paul Fu acquired a firm and detailed understanding of Western Music from experienced and knowledgeable musicians.

He studied piano, voice, composition and music theory and soon reached a very high level of achievement. His first surviving composition is from 1947 and is a lovely gem of Romantic musical manner.

Through  
the  
1950s Fu  
improved

his professional situation (beginning as an accompanist at the Central Song and Dance Troupe in Beijing). He eventually became Professor of Music at Beijing Teacher's College — a post he held until he left China. In the course of his academic career he taught piano, theory and composition. He also translated material from English and wrote four textbooks.

The situation changed in the 1960s and Professor Fu spent most of his energies upon teaching music theory. One project that was encouraged was the collection of folk songs, and the result of Fu's field work in Xiang Xi, an autonomous prefecture of the People's Republic of China located in Hunan province, is a cycle of folk songs for voice and piano.

By a complex combination of circumstances Paul Fu left China in 1988 and arrived in North America. His daughter had preceded him and she joined the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. His son arrived too and took up the profession of Piano Technician, while also directing a Chinese choir and composing. [MORE ...](#)



Paul Fu and Arthur Schierch,  
circa late 1940s,  
from the composer's collection.  
Photographer unknown



## ENSEMBLE — THREE DAYS IN RAVENNA

**Giuseppe Pennisi:** The Ravenna Festival has always been a multidisciplinary event. Like the Salzburg Summer Festival, it presents mainly music - concerts and musical theatre, with a special autumn session reserved for opera - but also drama and ballet. It is undoubtedly to be commended that this summer, despite the uncertainties and restrictions due to the pandemic, the organizers were able to set up a program with over sixty productions from 2 June to 31 July in mainly outdoor venues in Ravenna and its surroundings. There is a rich and fascinating program, like at the Salzburg Summer Festival or at the Enescu Festival in Bucharest, allowing those who went to the Festival for less than three days - actually two and a half days - to attend five performances.

In order of time, the first performance I attended was a symphonic concert by the Accademia Bizantina led by Ottavio Dantone. The group is known mainly for its philological performances, with period instruments, of seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century music. Performances such as those of Vivaldi's *L'Olimpiade*, Monteverdi's *Il ritorno di Ulisse in patria*, and Handel's *Rinaldo* and *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno* marked a turning point in performance practice and remained memorable.

I do not know if this is the first time that this orchestra and conductor face the Romantic repertoire, and in particular German symphonic romanticism. It is, however, a novelty that has attracted not only many Italians but also numerous foreigners to Rocca Brancaleone, the concert venue, especially from the Germanic world. Although there was fear of a thunderstorm, the Rocca's outdoor auditorium was packed. The acoustics are good thanks to the thick, high walls built by the Venetians at the end of the fifteenth century.



Accademia Bizantina playing at Rocca Brancaleone in Ravenna as part of the 2021 Ravenna Festival.  
Photo © 2021 Zani Casadio

The two symphonies are short and can be performed without interval in order to comply with the anti-COVID-19 rules. They are very well known. What is most interesting is the reading by Dantone and the orchestra. The two symphonies have titles that indicate two precise locations: Italy and the Rhine. Mendelssohn composed the fourth symphony after a long journey to Europe in which he had received a



strong impression of Italy. Schumann composed the third symphony in Düsseldorf, a city that is crossed by the Rhine. Dantone and the orchestra read the two scores in an almost pictorial way. [MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe also reports from the Spoleto Festival and on a production of *La forza del destino* in Florence. He listens to Wagner and Shostakovich in Rome and also previews the Aix-en-Provence Festival.

#### THE LATEST CD REVIEWS BY GIUSEPPE PENNISI ...

**Mike Wheeler:** The Birmingham-based Françaix Wind Trio - Jacob Perkins, oboe, William Hammond, clarinet, and Dominic O'Sullivan, bassoon - made an entertaining contribution to the current series of Derby Cathedral lunchtime concerts - Derby UK, 18 June 2021.

They included two numbers arranged by Jacob Perkins from the collection of piano pieces *Frösöblomster* (Frösö-Flowers) by Swedish composer Wilhelm Peterson-Berger - charming miniatures, and his equivalent of Grieg's *Lyric Pieces*. (Frösön is the town in north Sweden where he eventually settled.) 'Sommarsång' (Summer song) was particularly fresh and appealing, and in 'Vid Frösö Kyrka' (In Frösön church) the affinity with Grieg came through from time to time.

In between, they played Beethoven's Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano' (from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), originally for two oboes and cor anglais. They deftly navigated the changes of character, from the skittish first variation to the comic-tragic sixth, and relished the ending's expressive ambiguity.

Claude Arrieu studied with Paul Dukas. Her *Trio d'Anches* (Reed Trio, also known as Trio in C) is influenced by Poulenc but not dominated by him. We heard a polished account of the dapper, spirited last movement. [MORE ...](#)



The Françaix Wind Trio in 2019

Mike also returns to Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall for a performance by all seven Kanneh-Mason siblings, and listens to Ukraine-born pianist Ivan Hovorun in Derby Cathedral.

#### THE LATEST FEATURES AND REVIEWS BY MIKE WHEELER ...



**Keith Bramich:** The nearly ten-minute *Russells' Elegy* for string orchestra is a 2011 adaptation of the slow movement of [Adrian] Williams' String Quartet No 4 (2009). The title refers to the passing of two men who have been important in Adrian Williams' career. Williams worked briefly with film director Ken Russell (1927-2011) in the 1990s and they discovered a shared love for wild places and late Romantic British music. Conductor, pianist and close friend of Finzi, John Russell (1916-1990) was one of Williams' teachers at the Royal College of Music ... The music, with its important viola solo, and in a much more traditional style, is mostly quiet, reflective, poised and pastoral-sounding, but with a climactic outpouring of grief towards the end.

Lastly, in this superb fifty-minute online concert, *Migrations* for twenty-two solo string instruments, very different again, is a fragile and almost minimalist-sounding meditation on the migration of birds - not humans (although at one point in the music I thought this could also represent human migration, and we shouldn't be big-headed enough to always treat *homo sapiens* differently from other species). It's well worth quoting conductor Ken Woods here:

*In this piece, his meditation on the migrations of birds evokes both wonder and sorrow, and a profound mixture of connection and isolation. It's one of the most moving works I've come across, from any generation, in a long, long time, and you can see in the performance the depth of the players' emotional engagement with it as well.*



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

Ken Woods discovered Williams' music fairly recently, spelling out what those of us close to him have known for some time:

*I checked out his website, and within 24 hours I was convinced he was one of the finest composers of our time and I immediately asked him to succeed David [Matthews] at the ESO.*

It's certainly time for Adrian Williams' music to become more widely known. [MORE ...](#)

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Next month we plan to return to the video format, and you're welcome to come to the recording session and to participate or just observe.  
The details will be shown on our [newsletters page](#) nearer the time.

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The background image behind this PDF newsletter is derived from a late June 2021 photograph by Keith Bramich of a mackerel sky in Worcestershire, UK