



Classical Music Daily

Beauty to Entice the Ears – Issue 160, August 2022

Ron Bierman: The San Diego Symphony's Music Director and Conductor Rafael Payare took up the notoriously difficult French horn at the age of thirteen. During an hour-long Zoom interview while he was in Montreal, I asked how he had managed to become a soloist less than six months later!

'I have to admit it was a little bit fast', he said. Not the haughty egotistical answer I might have gotten from film conductor-stereotypes. His local youth orchestra, a part of Venezuela's extensive *El Sistema* program, needed horns, so he joined a few weeks after first picking one up.

'For a couple of classes, I could only play one scale, but somehow something clicked, and I just started playing more.'

Less than half a year later he passed an audition for the national youth orchestra, and later became Principal Horn with the prestigious Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra, the one that first brought Gustavo Dudamel to the attention of the conducting world.

El Sistema's founder José Antonio Abreu was the first conducting coach of both Dudamel and Payare and a huge influence on their lives and beliefs. Abreu showed them music is a force for social change. While I'd already known they believed that, I hadn't realized it was a major reason Payare was offered and accepted his position in San Diego.

'When I spoke with (CEO) Martha Gilmer, I became excited because her fantastic ambition aligned with what I wanted to do. Wherever I go I try to lift the orchestra to a higher artistic plateau and to bring live music to as many people as possible. I am wired this way.'

A relatively late starter, Payare was thirty-one when he took first prize at the respected Malko Competition for Young Conductors. He said he'd had no thought of winning, only hoping to pass the first round because that meant the competition would cover his expenses in Copenhagen. But he did win and became head of the Ulster Orchestra in Belfast just two years later. There he quickly showed he'd taken Abreu's belief in social change through music to heart, staging some rehearsals near a street dividing Protestant and Catholic areas.

'We'd have open rehearsals so people from either community could come in for the pleasure of listening to music without caring so much about religious differences.' [MORE ...](#)

[MORE ARTICLES BY RON BIERMAN ...](#)

Matt Spangler and Lucy Mauro: The high society women and men, in their tailor-mades, nipped shirtwaists, tailcoats and bowlers, paid scant attention to the slender and petite young woman, her hair tied back in a chignon, as she made her way nervously down the gaslit corridors of the Boston Music Hall to her balcony seat. Little did the patrons know that the woman who slunk low in her blue and white moreen chair, her head swimming with thoughts of the million little things that could go wrong with the evening's performance, was about to make music history.



Margaret Lang (1867-1972) in circa 1900

The young woman was Margaret Ruthven Lang, and it was the evening of 8 April 1893. Under the baton of Arthur Nikisch, her *Dramatic Overture* became the first piece composed by a woman performed by a major American symphony orchestra. The score does not survive - likely tossed onto the hearth during one of Lang's periodic purges of her work - but the program, which has been preserved, frames the piece in terms of influences by the great male composers of the time.

'The dramatic overture,' the program note begins, 'shows the same general tendency to adhere to the spirit of the sonata form, with a very free interpretation of the letter of the law, that we find in many of Schumann's symphonic movements.' The

note goes on to say the 'overture is scored for the classical "grand orchestra", with trombones, big drum, and cymbals, but without bass-tuba, bass-clarinet, English horn, or any of the unusual instruments that go to make up the modern "Wagnerian" orchestra. It is especially noticeable, too, that the stronger brass instruments - trumpets and trombones - have been reserved for special effects, and often do not figure at all in *fortissimo* passages. In this the composer has followed both Beethoven and Wagner in one of their most characteristic veins in instrumentation.'

The performance was met with great enthusiasm from the crowd, who, before the players could resume with the Spohr, Haydn, Schubert, Moszkowski and Dvořák works that filled out the rest of the bill, called back Nikisch three times. It would be another three years, however, before the Boston Symphony's celebrated programming of Amy Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* (Symphony in E minor, Op 32). [MORE ...](#)

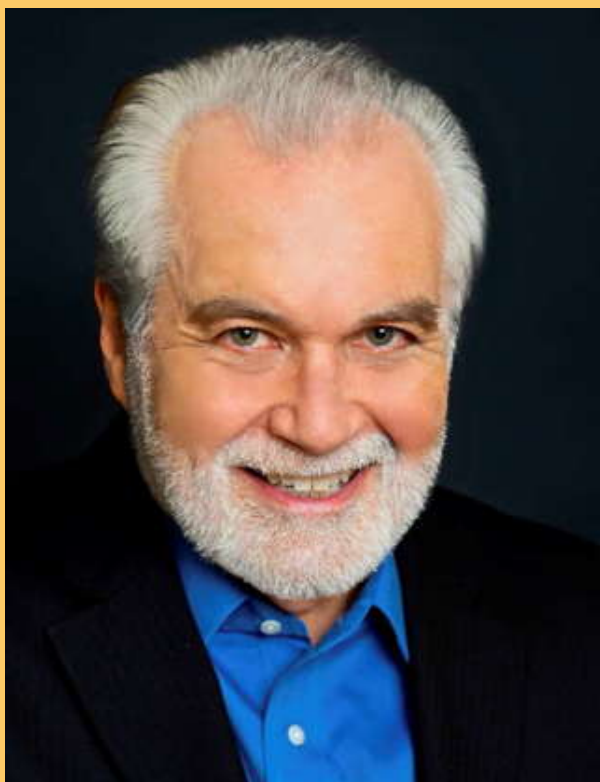
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Matt and Lucy's piece was the inspiration for our [June 2022 video discussion](#) about women composers. Since then, our [July 2022 video discussion](#), led by John Dante Prevedini, was on the subject of youth involvement with classical music. [MORE NEWSLETTERS](#)



Poster for the Boston Symphony Orchestra's 8 April 1893 concert

NEWS — DISCOVERY ORCHESTRA



George Marriner Maull.
Photo © L D Bright Photography

An American orchestra returns post-pandemic to help its audience find inspiration. Led by Founder and Artistic Director George Marriner Maull, The Discovery Orchestra returns to the concert stage after a pandemic break for an exploration of French composer Camille Saint-Saëns' epic masterwork *Symphony No 3 in C minor* (the 'Organ' Symphony). The Summit, New Jersey, USA-based orchestra, which has introduced millions around the world to the joys of listening to classical music, is offering free tickets to individuals and groups to its Sunday 18 September 2022 concert, which will be recorded for broadcast for its sixth national public television special. Featuring a ninety-piece orchestra and recorded at the Hauser Auditorium at Pingry School, Basking Ridge, New Jersey, *Discover Saint-Saëns' 'Organ' Symphony* is projected to begin a three-year national distribution by American Public Television in May 2023. [MORE ...](#)

The 32nd Bard Music Festival, 5-14 August 2022, is an intensive two week exploration of 'Rachmaninoff and His World'. Some of the concerts will be streamed live from the Fisher Center website. [MORE ...](#)

Young Chinese pianist Ji Liu's *Sonata Fantasy, The Book of Moments* runs for more than eighteen hours. A recording made in 2021 at the Concert Hall of Shenzhen University was released in May 2022 on the Heresy Records label.

[MORE ...](#)

We mark the passing, during the last three months, of Martin How, Stefan Soltész, Alice Harnoncourt, Jeroen van Riel, Jan Wijn, Bramwell Tovey, Andrew Ball, Alfred Koerppen, Joseph Banowetz, Richard Taruskin, Blanka Kulínská, Kurt Equiluz, Iulia Buciuceanu, Ivonne Haza, Rino Vernizzi, Nils Thornander, David Lloyd-Jones, Eugen Mamot, Jaromír Vogel, Kai Bumann, Simon Preston, Teresa Berganza, Henry Mollicone, William Bennett, Alexander Toradze, Kjell Lönnå and Minoru Nojima. [MORE ...](#)

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ENSEMBLE — WITH ME SO FAR?

Mike Wheeler: *La Donna del Lago*, one of Rossini's less familiar operas, was to have been the Buxton Festival's headline production for 2020. Now it has finally arrived on stage, and it's been worth the wait.

Based on Walter Scott's narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake*, it started the trend for operas based on his work; his romanticised vision of Scottish life went down a storm in Europe in the early decades of the nineteenth century. It is a convoluted tale of rival clans and tangled love-interests. Elena, the lady of the title, who crosses the lake in a boat every morning in the hope of seeing her lover, Malcom, meets instead a man calling himself Uberto, who is really King James V in disguise. He takes a fancy to her but soon learns that she is due to marry Rodrigo, a Highland chief who opposes him. Elena's father, Duglas, James' former tutor, has switched sides; Malcom, who we later see exchanging vows with Elena, has also joined the rebels. With me so far?

Director Jacopo Spirei sets the action across two periods, the sixteenth century of Scott's original setting, and the present day. At the start, an archaeological dig is in progress, centred on an ancient well-head, supervised by Albina (in the original scenario, Elena's confidante).



Máire Flavin as Elena in
Buxton Festival's *La Donna del Lago*.
Photo © 2022 Genevieve Girling

Then the sixteenth-century characters come onto the scene, as the archaeologists disperse, leaving Albina to watch, from her present-day vantage-point, and eventually become caught up in the action. In Act II, the site of the dig has become a museum, with the well roped off, and with Albina as tour guide.

In the title role, Máire Flavin has the vocal resources to project both Elena's strength and her vulnerability.

Catherine Carby, in the trouser-role of Malcom, is a no less forceful presence, warm-toned and heroic by turns.

The two join in a tender, barcarolle-like duet. Nico Darmanin's Uberto is convincing as the king who is concealing his real identity. The role often takes him to the top of his range, which he navigates with ease. John Irvin has the vocal flexibility for the role of Rodrigo, though his physical presence tends towards the stereotyped.

David Ireland captures Douglas' patriarchal (not in a good way) character, and Fiona Finsbury is a warmly sympathetic Albina.

Jake Wiltshire's lighting is notable particularly for its atmospheric use of shadows. The Festival's house band, the Northern Chamber Orchestra, is alertly responsive, and conductor Adrian Kelly keeps everything taut and focused.

[MORE ABOUT THE BUXTON FESTIVAL](#)

Mike's wide-ranging coverage of the 2022 Buxton Festival can be read via the link above. He also joins the Sitwell Singers to pay tribute to former conductor Malcolm Goldring, listens to Jess Gillam and the Hallé Orchestra, visits another Derbyshire choir, Derby Choral Union, for its first major concert with new conductor Paul Provost, helps to celebrate Sinfonia Viva's fortieth anniversary and drops into Music in Quiet Places' recital by harpist Lucy Nolan. Mike also visits Nottingham to hear the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and to catch up with Wagner's *Parsifal* on tour with Opera North.

[MORE BY MIKE WHEELER](#)

Adam J Sacks: Among the most recent daring experiments in avant-classical must surely be counted Steve Hackman's hybrid orchestral tone poems that fuse pop with classical. Akin to a Hip-Hop DJ formulating samples, he splices together song fragments and symphonic statements with results that amount to a wholly new work, neither clearly one nor the other. At the start of the Philadelphia Orchestra's rendition of his *Brahms X Radiohead* on 3 May 2022, he asserted that the program amounted to Radiohead through the lens of Brahms. Ultimately what the audience received was neither a full performance of any of the tracks from Radiohead's 1998 album *Ok Computer* nor any full movement of Brahms' First Symphony which premiered in 1876. Something rather more *sui generis* emerges, almost an entirely new musical form and genre, which tears down the wall that separates not only audiences, but how we even think of pop versus concert music.

Upon first glance it may seem like sacrilege to affix the human voice over a symphony, which may be defined as the voice of collective, crafted instruments. The passionate, affecting and even theatricality of the voice evokes, at times, oratorio, musical, or even church tent revival meeting. Yet the melodies of the Anglo-Celtic pop tradition to which Radiohead is heir are languid and rubato-like, not clipped, fixed or declamatory. And Brahms represents the apotheosis of the rigorously formal and developmental symphonic Austro-German tradition, notoriously short on extended melody. In this musical sense they form an improbable match, but one of the ingenuities of this grafted collaboration is how the two genres can serve each other as corrective as genuinely adding something otherwise absent.

The connective tissue between the Brahms and Radiohead, as Hackman made clear, is more mood based, as there is a brooding melancholic pathos that animates both. Though he maintained Radiohead was looking ahead toward the isolating über-connectivity of the internet age, one could just as easily argue they were mourning the eclipse of rock as the hegemonic unifying genre in pop music. In that sense, both works are infused with a sense of the terminal of a reaching the end of the line. Accordingly, for both, the brooding takes the form of an intensely cerebral, intellectual rigor which so marked them both off from their respective peers. The kind of loose exaltation that Brahms ceded to his contemporary Wagner is, however, infused by the addition of the three stellar pop vocalists featured. The 'God loves his children' refrain from *Paranoid Android* comes across as a first rate church chorale. Keren Tayar, Bill Prokopow and Andrew Lipke each come out of either the world of pop or are dedicated boundary crossers. Ditching formal orchestral evening wear for the leather jackets and scarves of the rock world, each singer functioned as a soloist, making their voices in slack unison particularly electrifying. While there was no operatic soprano, the singer with the most classical training, Lipke, unsurprisingly demonstrated the greatest control at higher registers. [MORE ...](#)

[MORE ARTICLES BY ADAM J SACKS ...](#)



Mykola Lysenko (1842-1912)

John Dante Prevedini: On 1 May 2022, conductor Harry Christophers led his final concert with the Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) in a performance of Haydn's *Creation* at Boston's Symphony Hall. The concert marks the conclusion of Christophers' thirteen-year tenure with H+H, the oldest continuously performing vocal and instrumental ensemble in the United States. The concert featured soloists Joëlle Harvey (soprano), Katherine Growdon (mezzo-soprano), Robert Murray (tenor) and Matthew Brook (bass-baritone) and ran for just over two hours, including an opening performance of Mykola Lysenko's *Prayer for Ukraine* and a twenty-minute intermission. The hall was filled to capacity with masks and COVID vaccinations required for attendance. Now in its 207th season, H+H has a history with *The Creation* which, according to the concert program notes by Teresa M Neff, dates back to its very inception. As Neff recounts, Part I of the oratorio was performed at the ensemble's inaugural concert on 25 December 1815, and the entire work has subsequently been performed by H+H to mark significant anniversaries throughout their history, including their bicentennial in 2015. This choice of repertoire - in the context of the ensemble's history, Christophers' departure and recent global events - thus seems to render the whole concert as a symbolic meditation on responsible stewardship for the worlds we inherit and inhabit.

The opening Lysenko *Prayer for Ukraine* (1885), a roughly four-minute strophic composition here arranged for orchestra and choir, was sung in Ukrainian with the original Oleksandr Konynsky text and an English translation printed

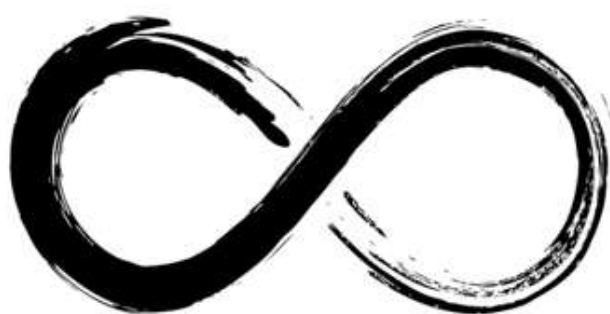
on a program insert. Remarkably, the ensemble adapted their performance of this late nineteenth-century work to fit the same eighteenth-century style of instrumentation and performance techniques called for by their preparation of Haydn's *Creation*. The overall effect of this decision was something I found quite striking and inspiring; in addition to creating a feeling of stylistic continuity between the Lysenko and the Haydn in the concert program, it also lent to the Lysenko a certain air of poetic anachronism - a sense of an enduring Ukrainian spirit transcending time and historical epoch. [MORE ...](#)

[MORE ARTICLES BY JOHN DANTE PREVEDINI ...](#)

Giuseppe Pennisi: I went to Siena on 5-7 July 2022 for the initial concerts of the eighth edition of the International Chigiana Festival and Summer Academy. This year, the event extends until 3 September and is undoubtedly unique in Europe. It includes ninety concerts, with twenty-three world premieres, two opera productions (one of which was the first production in modern times of a Vivaldi opera), two concerts in Piazza del Campo, and a final section (in collaboration with the Salzburg Mozarteum) dedicated to the Baroque period after about seven weeks emphasising modern and contemporary music.

CHIGIANA

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL & SUMMER ACADEMY 2022



[FROM SILENCE]

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This edition has a theme and a title: *From Silence*, the sound of music that makes us come out of our silences. As with every previous year, there is a protagonist: Luigi Nono in the thirtieth anniversary year of his death. There is a very close link between the theme and the protagonist because Nono opened the dramaturgical conception of sound in modern music and, with it, the lexicon that makes it a key to read the world, even politically.

Nono's *No hay cominos, hay que caminar ... Andrej Tarkovskij* (1987) is the first part of the inaugural concert. Dated 1987, this is perhaps one of the most complete formulations of his poetics. It comes several years after *Intolleranza 1960* and *Al gran sole carico d'amore*, works in which the voice and chorus are at the centre of the compositional process. In *No hay cominos, hay que caminar ... Andrej Tarkovskij* there are no voices but there are seven groups of instruments which Nono called 'choirs'. Two are on stage including strings, timpani, bass drum and trombones accompanied by another section, behind the audience, with strings, trombones, timpani and bass drum that are essentially the voices of protest and desires of the *campesinos* - the poor landless Latin American farmers. On both sides of the audience, there are four 'choirs' of three instruments and bongos arranged in mirror fashion. You can find feedback with, or memories of, Verdi's operas, especially those with more explicitly 'political' *concertati*, obviously with language very different from the nineteenth-century one, but no less fascinating. [MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe Pennisi: *Mass* is defined by the composer [Leonard Bernstein] as 'a theatrical work for soloists, chorus, actors and dancers'. Thus, it involves all the artistic masses of the theatre: chorus, children's chorus and various soloists - two baritones, a mezzo, a bass, various actors and the *corps de ballet* with two pairs of first dancers. It is also a way to facilitate cohesion between the artistic masses of the theatre. Strictly speaking, it requires two orchestras: one mainly of strings, in the pit, and one of percussion, brass and jazz instruments on stage. In Rome, they were both in the mystical gulf - ie in the pit ...



Teatro dell'Opera di Roma's corps de ballet performing in Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. Photo © 2022 Fabrizio Sansoni

The work begins with a bird-like flute solo that flashes around the hall to signify the Holy Spirit. Its final note is taken up by a solo boy of the choir. At the beginning all the artists are in harmony and in agreement. During the *Mass*, however, the street chorus begins to express doubts and suspicions about the need for God in their lives and about the role of the *Mass*. The street choir sings with Latin lyrics until they catch a line that turns into a complaint or a selfish boast; that is, Latin: *dona nobis pacem* (peace be with you) in street choir language: 'Give us peace now and peace to hold on to'. In this way, Bernstein intertwines and contrasts social commentary and prayer. The bitterness and anger of the street chorus continues to grow and make each of the subsequent meditations more bitter.

At the emotional climax of the work, the growing cacophony of the chorus complaints finally interrupts the elevation of the bread and wine. The celebrant, furious, throws the sacred bread, contained in an ornate cross, and the chalice of wine, smashing them on the floor. The other cast members collapse to the ground as dead as the celebrant sings a solo. This solo blends the unbelief of the chorus with its crisis of faith. He feels exhausted and wonders where the strength of his original faith has gone. At the end of his singing, he too collapses. A flute solo similar to a bird - the Holy Spirit - flashes here and there from several loudspeakers, to 'rest' on a single clear note. An altar boy, who was absent during the conflict, then sings a hymn of praise to God: 'Sing to God a simple song'. [MORE ...](#)

Giuseppe was also at the Spoleto and Ravenna festivals, at several concerts of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia's 2021-22 symphonic season, in the audience for Verdi's *Ernani* and the ballet *Il Corsaro* and also listened to sixteenth and seventeenth century Polish Baroque music, to Orchestra da Camera Canova playing Mozart and to Roberto Cominati's Ravel piano music. He also sampled Quartetto Prometeo's complete Shostakovich quartets. [MORE BY GIUSEPPE PENNISI ...](#)

Roderic Dunnett: Since 2011, when following the untimely death in 2005 of the Festival's founder and initial inspiration, Leonard Ingrams - the banker youngest brother of Richard Ingrams of *Private Eye* and *The Oldie* fame - and after a brief transition, Garsington Opera was obliged to shift location from Ingrams' Jacobean manor to a new venue, Mark Getty's spacious and elegant estate at Wormsley, just across the Buckinghamshire border.

Garsington at Wormsley, now presided over by administrator Nicola Creed (Executive Director) and artistic director Douglas Boyd, was chosen from over a dozen possible venues, and with its still brand new-feeling auditorium it has proved a triumphant success. Ingrams' wife, Rosalind, has succeeded as the event's president, so the link - and the excellent idea of retaining the Ingrams' Garsington name - is one touching aspect.

This year's programme featured a highly praised staging of Monteverdi's early opera *Orfeo*; Dvořák's best known and extraordinarily beautiful creation *Rusalka*, his second last opera (conducted at Wormsley this year by Boyd) - although much else of Dvořák remains to be discovered: ten operas, such as *Vanda* and *Jakobín*; and here, Benjamin Britten's masterpiece *The Turn of the Screw*, expertly conducted and nursed by Mark Wigglesworth.



The Governess's first close encounter with the (to her) horrifying ghost of Peter Quint in Garsington Opera's chilling *The Turn of the Screw*. Photo © 2022 Julian Guidera

Myfanwy Piper's miraculously crafted libretto - the same goes for her adaptation later of Thomas Mann's autobiographical *Death in Venice* - is so startlingly inventive, so poetic, such a key part of the whole opera, that not a word or phrase should be missed. Even the housekeeper, Mrs Grose - the splendid Susan Bickley, admirably sympathetic - has her moments: 'Cradles for cats Are string and air ...'. Her description of the mysterious, but to her well remembered, Quint's death, is horrific, the music equally so. Unlike the Governess she knows the two supposedly malicious characters are both dead. But she has worldly wisdom too: 'A boy is no boy for me unless he be a little wild.' [MORE ...](#)

Roderic Dunnett: Longborough Festival Opera was launched - one might say took flight - in 1998. Founded and managed by husband and wife Martin and Lizzie Graham - and what a daring, courageous team they proved - it made its artistic mark immediately, with Wagner: a huge success almost instantly to be compared, in location, standards, unique, unpompous invitingness, and its own vivacious style, exuberance and panache - with the other well-known out of London venues: for instance Hampshire's Grange Park, founded that very same year.

And now it has scored a wholly original hit, in the redoubtable Carmen Jacobi's shivering and spectacular - and stunningly staged and sung - production of Erich Wolfgang Korngold's eerie, claustrophobic postwar opera, *Die tote Stadt* (1920).

Longborough has witnessed, and richly deserved, the non-stop success of its productions of Wagner's *Ring* (with a host of Wotans), plus a steaming hot *Tristan*, again directed by Jacobi and universally acclaimed, in 2015 and 2017, *Tannhäuser* in 2016, *Dutchman* in 2018. I saw that first *Ring*, and even with a reduced orchestra and rather brilliant circumscribed surtitles (a series of hints), it was truly exhilarating.

Now it seems possible Longborough's tradition would be not only well preserved, but extended under Polly Graham's patently inspiring (she is that kind of person), fresh and innovative Artistic leadership: by reaching out beyond Wagner in one ideal direction - apart from, say, Mozart or Puccini. Indeed this summer's *Die tote Stadt* is a resplendent example of what might be possible under, to all intents and purposes, a new regime: neo-Romanticism.

It proved a great choice. It requires an electrifying Wagnerian tenor, onstage and visible virtually all the time; a soprano of huge reserves. An amiable baritone of some forcefulness where required; a mezzo (or contralto) exuding humanity, decency and understanding. All these Longborough gave us. [MORE ...](#)

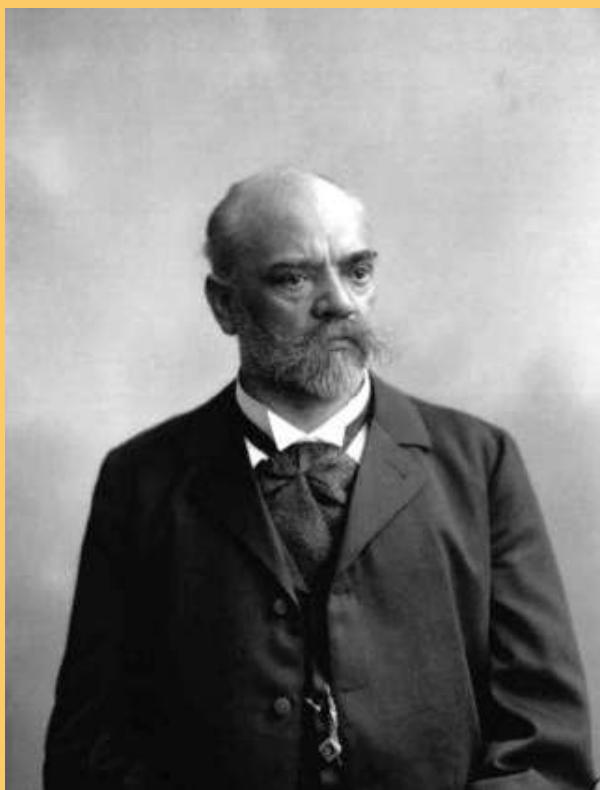


Peter Auty as Paul in Carmen Jacobi's stunning staging of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* at Longborough Festival Opera.
Photo © 2022 Matthew Williams-Ellis

Roderic Dunnett also reviews Charpentier, Offenbach and Weber in Warwick, UK.

[MORE ARTICLES BY RODERIC DUNNETT ...](#)

Keith Bramich: The rarely performed Requiem in B flat minor by Antonín Dvořák is a large, multi-section, fascinatingly different and serious work. Commissioned by and for an October 1891 music festival in Birmingham UK, Dvořák decided to use the opportunity to try to improve on some of his previous choral works, such as the Stabat Mater. Performance times well in excess of ninety-five minutes, plus requirements for four soloists and large orchestra (including tam-tam) are possibly all reasons for the work's unpopularity with performance planners.



Antonín Dvořák in 1904

Many of the Requiem's sections are substantial works in themselves, although they're held together by the latin text of the Requiem mass and by the four-note motif formed from adjacent notes: *F, G-flat, E* and *F*, which is stated very plainly in the violins at the opening, and which permeates the whole work. Gwilym Bowen's programme notes for last night's opening concert of the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford Cathedral mention that this motif forms the shape of the cross. As significant as this is, my ear seemed to prefer to pick up rather on the almost Janáček-like ostinato effects that Dvořák creates from this pattern in, for example, the shimmering repetitions in both the choral writing ('quia pius es') and in the cellos near the end of the final Agnus Dei.

This was a great performance - particularly by the Philharmonia Orchestra, which I could hear with great clarity from my seat far away from the performers, under Simon Beer's huge decorative *Corona* (crown of thorns) in Hereford Cathedral. Particularly notable were the occasional shafts of light from Dvořák's string writing, his use of solo horn and brass, and unusual compositional choices - male voices for the *Pie Jesu*, for example.

The soloists were really excellent, too - Australian soprano and mezzo Anita Watson and Catherine Carby, respectively, British tenor Ruairi Bowen and German bass-

baritone Stephan Loges (born in Dresden in 1972), replacing an indisposed Matthew Brook. Sometimes I had difficulty hearing the choral diction - a problem that it's easy to blame on cathedral acoustics and my distance from them - but this 120-strong chorus, drawn from all three cathedral cities - Hereford, Gloucester and Worcester - made a massive and moving sound. [Three Choirs Festival, Hereford Cathedral, UK, 23 July 2022]

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CD SPOTLIGHT — MIXED FEELINGS

Geoff Pearce: I was eagerly awaiting this disc, even though there were some transcribed works (which quite frankly leave me a bit mixed in opinion). The musicians are all very competent players and Andrius Puskunigis is undoubtedly a very fine player with great breath control, dexterous finger work and tongue and an attractive tone. The whole disc left me somewhat overwhelmed, however.

The recording, in Lithuania, was made in a very live building, and I found the overall sound levels too high, and perhaps a bit close. This had the effect of being quite oppressive in the louder and faster sections, and the sound, to my ears, was quite muddled and on steroids. The performance of the soloist, to my ears, was quite forceful and after a short while, aural fatigue set in and I was only really able to listen to a little at a time.

Whilst some of the earlier recordings, particularly of the G minor concerto (HWM 287) were dreary and stodgy, the *tempi* here chosen were often a bit too brisk, and the sound overly bright. This seems to be evident in a lot of modern recordings. Sometimes, it works well, but in others, as is the case here on occasion, the style of the music is overlooked. On saying that, there are some truly lovely moments, such as the Adagio of the C minor concerto.

Whilst there are a lot of premier recordings of music presented here as oboe concertos for the first time, I did not find the presentation all that convincing, and I think the recording engineering had a lot to do with this. [MORE ...](#)

Geoff Pearce: I was waiting eagerly for this set as Boris Lyatoshynsky was not a composer I previously knew of, but in his home country he is widely regarded as the father of modern Ukrainian music. Theodore Kuchar is a fine conductor and I was privileged to play in an orchestra under his direction in the mid 1970s in New Zealand, and was impressed with his clear conducting style and impressive musical knowledge. He is also a fine viola player and has been particularly active in the performance and promotion of chamber music.

Lyatoshynsky's music falls basically into three periods. The first period, full-blown romantic in style, lasted until the 1920s, and not surprisingly his musical style reflected the tastes of his teacher, Reinhold Glière. Around the time of the first symphony being composed, one of his strongest influences was Scriabin. Shortly after the composition of this symphony, Lyatoshynsky became interested in the second Viennese school, particularly in the music of Alban Berg, and this lasted until 1929 when he began to explore his



'... there are some truly lovely moments ...'

Ukrainian music heritage. From the late 1920s, however, Stalin brutally repressed anything remotely resembling Ukrainian nationalism in favour of Soviet realism. It was not really until after Stalin's death that modernism and Ukrainian influences could be safely explored and developed in music again, and many of Lyatoshynsky's students were at the forefront.



The first Symphony, completed in 1919 and first performed in 1923, is a substantial three movement work. To my ears, the influence of Scriabin is very important and the music is erotically romantic, sometimes using the orchestra's full forces to deliver some quite shattering climaxes. At other times, the forces are reigned in to provide relief and contrast.

Immediately I was struck with what a fine orchestra this is, and the symphony itself is colourful and original. I found it an enjoyable work to listen to. In the third movement, I felt the influence of Tchaikovsky, Glière and perhaps even Rachmaninoff. I do hope this work becomes more widely heard.

'There is some very impressive playing here by this magnificent orchestra.'

composer's finest and was written in 1955. It is based on an epic poem by Adam Mickiewicz telling of a Ukrainian princess who battled and was later killed by the Teutonic knights after disguising herself as her husband and leading the troops into battle. This work lasts for nineteen minutes. It opens with murmuring strings, and a solo cor anglais provides the melodic interest. This is followed by a faster, militaristic section, perhaps a call to arms, before subsiding to a development of the opening employing fuller forces and it is quite rhapsodic and emotionally charged in nature. This is followed by a grand section which starts in an almost processional nature but gradually becomes more heated and restless, and has a section of rising sequences which adds to the excitement.

Towards the end, the music slows down. Firstly there is a series of chordal calls in the brass, and the opening mood returns, but in a kind of solemn funeral procession. This is quite an exciting and varied piece of music, and is certainly one that will resonate with most listeners, given the current situation in Ukraine. The music is romantic in nature, but I feel the influence of Scriabin is absent from this later work. I have to mention the very fine cor anglais playing which features a lot in this work. Perhaps this is a depiction of the voice of Grzhyna herself. [MORE ...](#)

Geoff also listens to John Ireland orchestral music from John Wilson and the Sinfonia of London on Chandos, to wind quintets by Niels Viggo Bentzon on Dacapo Records, music by Ghedini and Hindemith on Brilliant Classics, to two discs of works by New Zealand composer Eric Biddington on Navona Records, to Jonathan Berger's powerful opera *Mỹ Lai* about the Vietnam War on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, to Ravel on period instruments on the harmonia mundi label, and to Victor Ullmann's opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* on BR Klassik.

[MORE ARTICLES BY GEOFF PEARCE ...](#)

The symphonic ballad *Grzhyna* is one of the

Gerald Fenech: In the 1730s Vivaldi left Venice never to return. He died, a poor and forgotten man, in Vienna on 28 July 1741 and was buried in a mass grave with no tombstone. Vivaldi was an extremely prolific composer writing in every genre of the time, and sacred music was no exception. But this great mass is not a Vivaldi original, and this may come as a surprise to many. The puzzling paradox is that, although the composer devoted over thirty years to writing music for the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, no complete musical setting of any liturgy by him has come down to us. By intercalating existing examples of his sacred music, such as the famous Gloria, and other works given a different text to suit their new liturgical function - Sanctus and Agnus Dei - Les Arts Florissants now offers us a compelling reconstruction of a solemn Mass which the 'Red-Haired Priest' might have written, maybe for an assembly of distinguished soloists as on this recording. [MORE ...](#)



'... gloriously uplifting and spiritually profound.'

CÉSAR FRANCK

LES ÉOLIDES · LES DJINNS · RÉDEMPTION
VARIATIONS SYMPHONIQUES
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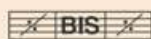
FABIO BENEGAS *PIANO*
LVIV NATIONAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA OF UKRAINE
FRANCISCO VARELA *CONDUCTOR*

Gerald Fenech: Francisco Varela draws the very best from the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, and performances are consistently fresh, alive and often compelling. Soloist Fabio Benegas' contribution is also immense. Indeed, his virtuoso playing has a sweep and grandeur that carry the music towards its intended goal with warmth and dexterity.

Apart from celebrating the two-hundredth anniversary of Franck's birth, this CD has an additional significance and poignancy with the outbreak of war in the orchestra's homeland, only a few months after these sessions were completed. As a result, Guild will be making a donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukrainian Appeal for every CD sold. Indeed, a double reason why you should get this issue without further delay. Sound and annotations are top-notch. [MORE ...](#)

'Francisco Varela draws the very best from the Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra of Ukraine, and performances are consistently fresh, alive and often compelling.'

Gerald Fenech: The Grand Prix de Rome owes its beginnings to Louis XIV. Instituted to encourage competition between painters and sculptors, it eventually embraced even musicians. Between 1803 and 1968, the Grand Prix de Rome marked the zenith of composition studies at the Paris Conservatoire. In Maurice Ravel's time the competition included an elimination round - a fugue and a choral piece - followed by a cantata in the form of an operatic scene. The entries were judged by a jury which generally favoured expertise and conformity more than originality, and Ravel's growing reputation as a member of the *avant-garde* was therefore hardly to his advantage, and may explain why he never won the coveted 'Premier Grand Prix' and the three-year stay at Rome's Villa Medici that went with it. As the twentieth century dawned, Ravel hoped to win this prestigious prize to further his career. Indeed, between 1900 and 1905 he made five consecutive attempts, and was highly optimistic that he could follow in the footsteps of such greats as Berlioz, Gounod, Bizet and Massenet. Sadly, he failed every time. In 1900, after presenting the short choral piece *Les Bayadères*, he was eliminated in the first round. [MORE ...](#)



Maurice Ravel Cantates pour le Prix de Rome

Véronique Gens · Sophie Koch · Vannina Santoni · Janina Baechle
Julien Behr · Michael Spyrès · Jacques Imbrailo

Chœur et Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire
Pascal Rophé



'Pascal Rophé draws some convincing performances and, in his hands, the music has an immediacy that keeps it consistently fresh and vivid.'



'... brilliant performances from both singers and players ...'

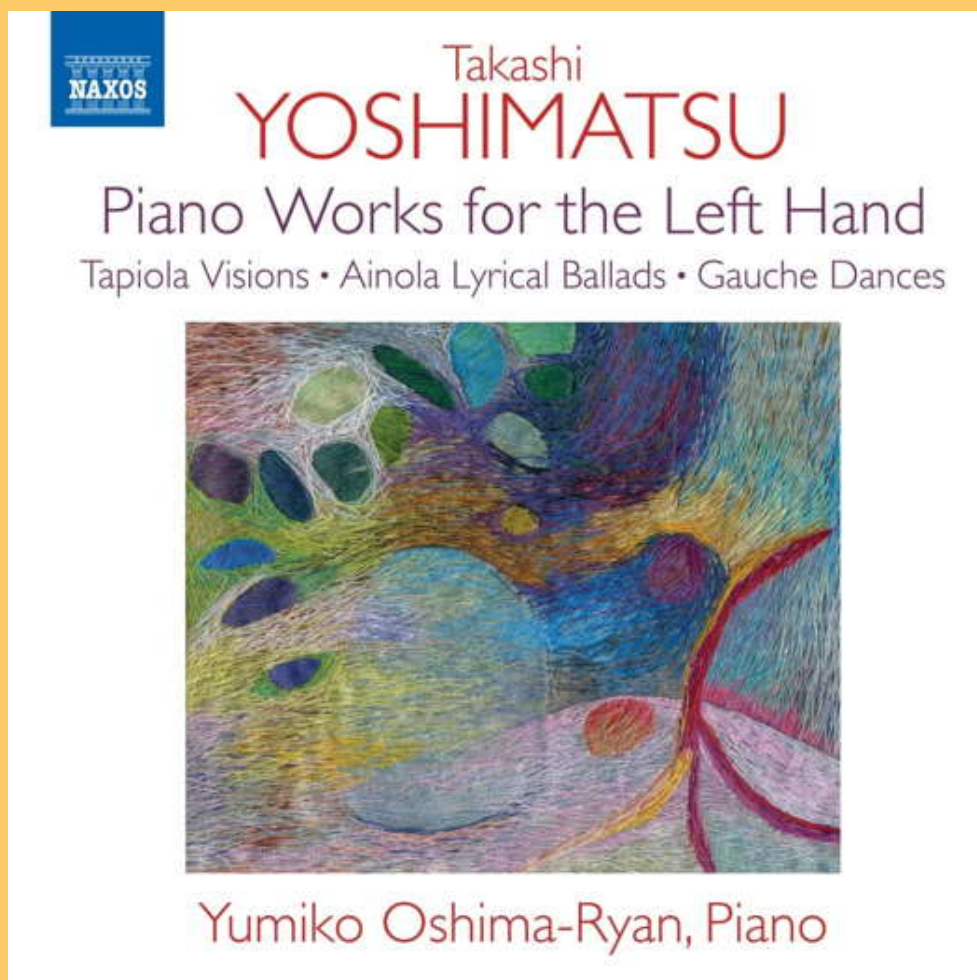
Gerald Fenech: *Caio Fabricio* is a 'pasticcio' opera - a 'compilation' opera containing a brilliant and well-considered collection of some of the finest eighteenth century Neapolitan arias by different composers - selected, arranged and assembled by Georg Friedrich Handel (1685-1759). In the first part of the eighteenth century, Handel played an important role in firmly establishing opera in London, through which he was able to introduce the music of Johann Adolph Hasse (1699-1783) to public attention by his endeavours as Master of the Orchestra of the Royal Academy of Music. Despite being criticised for borrowing music by other composers, Handel chose to direct and perform nine 'pasticcio' operas with the Royal Academy rather than rely entirely on his own compositions. These 'pasticcios' contained music by composers who wrote in the modern, innovative Neapolitan lyrical style which was melody-led rather than driven by counterpoint. Among this group of composers one finds J A Hasse, fourteen years younger than Handel, who had been trained in Italy and quickly rose to become

the most widely admired composer of *opera seria* in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. This new Neapolitan language, combined with Hasse's own contrapuntal working methods, forms the unique stylistic mixture that permeates his own later works. [MORE ...](#)

Gerald also strongly recommends Naxos' recording of operatic fantasies by Sigismond Thalberg and unreservedly recommends Heidelberger Sinfoniker's recording of little known Haydn symphonies on Hänssler Classic. He also listens to British music on Naxos and cpo, to Rossini's *La scala di seta* from Wildbad in Germany on Naxos, to nineteenth century Polish composers Henryk Wieniawski, Ignacy Feliks Dobrzyński and Karol Kurpiński on the NIFC (National Institute Frederick Chopin) label, and to many other recordings.

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

John Dante Prevedini: *Piano Works for the Left Hand* is a new release from Naxos featuring three piano suites by Japanese composer Takashi Yoshimatsu, performed by Yumiko Oshima-Ryan. The album, which is available in both digital and CD format, contains program notes by Oshima-Ryan and features fifty-one minutes of music over sixteen tracks. The three pieces, as Oshima-Ryan tells us, were written by Yoshimatsu in 2004-2006 for the pianist Izumi Tateno, who had lost the use of his right hand due to a stroke he suffered while performing at a concert in Finland. The resulting music sees Yoshimatsu drawing upon the full range of his eclectic stylistic and technical palettes to create a sensitive, sophisticated and good-humored listening experience for which the exclusion of the right hand proves no impediment whatsoever.



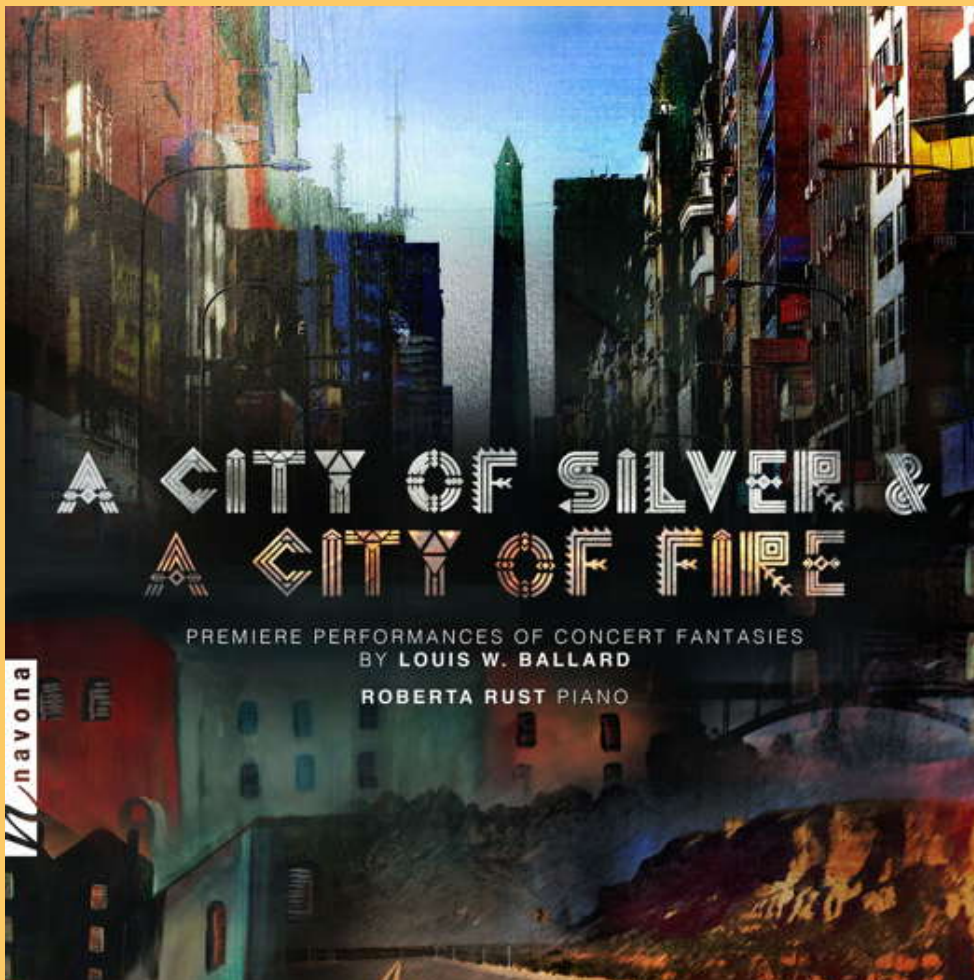
'... Oshima-Ryan brings a remarkable clarity and precision to the performance ...'

We begin with the *Tapiola*

Visions in five movements. Oshima-Ryan informs us that the work's title refers to the god Tapio from Finnish mythology, and she quotes Yoshimatsu's direction that this piece 'can be played with either the left hand or both hands'. The listening experience here is vividly shaped by the programmatic movement titles: *Vignette in Twilight*, *Gigue of Frost*, *Pavane for Water*, *Commas of Birds* and *Toccata in the Wind*.

Immediately apparent are the myriad ways in which the music maintains continuous contrast, interest and variety among multiple compositional parameters. For instance, monophonic passages are frequently varied through complex melodic development and ornamentation, or they are effectively transformed into multi-register chordal or polyphonic material through judicious use of pedaling or arpeggiations of implied underlying polyphonic textures (the latter being in a manner reminiscent of the Bach cello suites).

Sometimes the timing of the damper pedal itself becomes the sole means of varying repeated material. In short, this music masterfully demonstrates the vast range of technical resources available in a one-handed piano performance. [MORE ...](#)



'... a probing, articulate and understated artistic collaboration whose proper exposure is long overdue.'

music of a Native American composer by a Native American pianist'. (Specifically, Rust is of Sioux descent, and Ballard was of Cherokee and Quapaw ancestry, according to their respective accompanying biographies.)

The liner notes tell us that the composition of *A City of Silver* was 'inspired by [Ballard's] visit to Buenos Aires, Argentina in August 1980 and the warm memories of that great city'. Furthermore, we are told that Ballard draws upon two additional threads in the integrated symbolism of the work: the theme of silver as an important precious metal in the history of the region and the memory of the recently 'disappeared' Argentinian citizens. The latter is further underscored by the piece's dedication as indicated in the liner notes, 'Para todos los desaparecidos del mundo' ('For all of the disappeared persons of the world'). In response to Rust's observations here, the composition - as heard in the recording - strikes me as unifying these themes through a single gesture that plays out simultaneously both in short spans of time and over the entire piece as a whole. Specifically, the gesture seems to begin in a relatively quiet dynamic level, a relatively diatonic harmonic palette and a relatively slow tempo. Gradually, the gesture increases in intensity through *accelerando*, *crescendo* and mounting atonal chromaticism until the music is suddenly silenced. We hear a short-form expression of this gesture, for example, in the first thirty seconds of the piece. As the gesture reappears in different contexts and layers, Ballard integrates the results within a very broad rhythmic and harmonic palette, creating the overall sense of a land of both vast riches and volatile risks. [MORE ...](#)

[MORE ARTICLES BY JOHN DANTE PREVEDINI](#)

John Dante Prevedini: *A City of Silver & A City of Fire* is Navona Records' recently released double feature of eponymous single-movement concert fantasies for piano composed by the late Louis W Ballard and performed by Roberta Rust. The recordings - apparently previously unreleased - are from Rust's premiere of the two pieces at her 12 October 1984 recital at New York's Carnegie Hall. The album is available exclusively in digital format, and the liner notes contain composer and pianist biographies along with Rust's program notes, all of which can be accessed directly on the Navona label's website. While very brief at a total length of fifteen minutes spanning two tracks, the album - which many would call an EP - is both artistically compelling and historically noteworthy. As Rust recounts in the liner notes, quoting Ballard, the 1984 recital 'marks the first performance in Carnegie (Recital) Hall of the

Roderic Dunnett listens to *Der Freischütz* from René Jacobs and the Freiburger Barockorchester on harmonia mundi, and highly commends Christian Bonath's recording of Johann Mattheson's oratorio *Joseph* on Capriccio Records. Giuseppe Pennisi listens to Joseph Summer's opera *Hamlet* on Navona Records, to solo violin sonatas by Eugène Ysaÿe played by Anca Vasile Caraman on Stradivarius Records and to Warner Classics' twenty-two CD box set of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Patrick Maxwell explores another Warner Classics box set - of Barbirolli's Elgar recordings. Stephen Francis Vasta listens to Bartók - Susanna Mälkki conducting the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra on BIS Records.

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DISCUSSION SESSION ON CLASSICAL MUSIC AND VISUAL DISABILITY

Classical Music Daily is planning another *Zoom* discussion session on 'classical music and visual disability' in September 2022. Possible subjects for discussion include the production of braille sheet music via Music XML format, inclusivity for performers and audiences, which live streaming services are most useful to blind audience members, and whether it's possible for conductors to be useful to blind musicians. As usual this online discussion will be open to all. In order to try to create a level playing field, the edited version of this discussion will be available only as an audio file.

If you would like to take part, please [contact us](#) to receive details by email. The recording date and other details will be announced later on our newsletters page [here](#), where you can also find links to all our previous PDF, video and audio newsletters.

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This newsletter is an occasional PDF 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.

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