Acclaim for Harvey’s new opera, ‘Wagner Dream’

‘Alleluia’ – Anderson reopens Royal Festival Hall
Benjamin’s opera tours Europe and the USA
Adès’s ‘Tevet’: ‘rewriting the orchestral agenda of our age’
Praise for new Davis ballet, ‘Cyrano’
Award for Debussy/Matthews disc
Radiohead’s Jonny Greenwood signs to Faber Music
‘Owen Wingrave’: new chamber version premieres at Covent Garden
The Editor of Opera magazine, in its June editorial, wrote: “Travelling to Luxembourg the other day for the premiere of Jonathan Harvey’s excellent new opera, Wagner Dream, I reflected rather gloomily on the chances of British audiences getting to see this work by one of Britain’s leading composers. Thanks to championship by the Netherlands Opera, Wagner Dream is being staged at the Holland Festival this month; it is also destined for Paris, but there is no indication yet of any British performance. Paris also produced the premiere last autumn of George Benjamin’s Into the Little Hill, and there is a plan to bring it to Liverpool next year, but what are the odds of it being seen in London?”

Opera (John Allison), June 2007

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To a libretto by renowned French author Jean-Claude Carrière, the opera blends fact and fiction in telling of the last hours of Wagner’s life and of a vision he has of the Buddhist opera (Die Sieger) that he has still to write. Harvey’s score is for 24 players, a cast of 11 plus chorus and live electronics:

“A fascinating idea realised with great skill, Wagner Dream joins the lengthening list of operas by British composers that urgently need a staging here.”

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‘One of this British composer’s most self-defining works. A beautifully performed premiere at Luxembourg’s Grand Théâtre shows how Harvey has woven everything together in a piece set on the last day of Wagner’s life… It is Harvey’s sense that takes us into visionary realms, mixing orchestral sounds (Ictus Ensemble under Martyn Brabbins’s baton) with live electronics (the composer himself). There are shadowy hints at Wagner and suggestions of Chinese music – they come together with almost Mahlerian effect…’

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The opera received a further performance in Luxembourg on 30 April before a run at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam, where there were a total of six performances. The Agora Festival in Paris gave two semi-staged performances on 23 and 24 June:

‘La musique envoûte dès les premières notes; évitant la citation (sans se priver toutefois d’allusions stylisées à Wagner) et le pastiche orientalisant, Jonathan Harvey construit une trame musicale extrêmement raffinée. Univers harmonique chatoyant magnifié par une électronique à la fois économique et très présente…’

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Julian Anderson stole the honours when London’s Royal Festival Hall reopened following a £111m, two-year refurbishment and acoustical redesign. Anderson’s 15-minute Alleluia for chorus and orchestra was the first item in the glittering Gala Concert on 11 June, the result of a commission from the Southbank Centre, for London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, who premiered the work under their Principal Conductor-elect, Vladimir Jurowski.

The whole of London’s arts scene flocked to the celebratory event that included performances by all four of the Southbank Centre’s resident orchestras: the LPO, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the London Sinfonietta, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, with conductors Marin Alsop and Christoph von Dohnányi also at the helm:

‘... a tour de force… The luminous thicket of sound with which the piece opened developed gracefully towards its climactic explosion of extemporised shouts.’

The Independent (Michael Church) 12 June 2007

‘... a mystical, agitated, high-strung and complex score, filled with thick-textured Messiaen-like sonorities, spiky harmonic writing and jagged contrapuntal episodes.’

Evening Standard (Barry Millington) 12 June 2007

It was also a bold statement of intent, opening with a new commission from Julian Anderson and including Berio’s Nel blu dipinto di blu and Ligeti as well as the Festival Side’s traversal of Ravel’s Firebird Suite and a logistical tour de force of an encore with all four orchestras – a gaggel of shouted alleluias.’


‘... a tour de force… The luminous thicket of sound with which the piece opened developed gracefully towards its climactic explosion of extemporised shouts.’

Daily Express (Peter Whitehead) 13 June 2007


So after gable programs are festive to a fault. This one was both challenging and entertaining. It opened, as all inaugural programs should, with a premiere: Allegro by the English composer Julian Anderson, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, led by the brilliant 35-year-old Russian conductor Vladimir Jurowski, who becomes the orchestra’s principal conductor this fall.

Anderson’s 15-minute work is not some generically celebratory piece but a mystical, agitated, high-strung and complex score, filled with thick-textured Messiaen-like sonorities, spiky harmonic writing and jagged contrapuntal episodes. During one heroic section the chorus breaks into a gaggel of shouted alleluias.

‘... a tour de force… The luminous thicket of sound with which the piece opened developed gracefully towards its climactic explosion of extemporised shouts.’

Daily Express (Peter Whitehead) 13 June 2007


It was left to Julian Anderson to give the curtain raiser in the form of a new Alleluia, a 15-minute choral work in which he characteristically reached the climax — Anderson is not a composer to turn out a pedestrian piece — with as many harmonies, textures, and rhythms as could be wrung from it. The luminous thicket of sound with which the piece opened developed gracefully towards its climactic explosion of extemporised shouts.

The Independent (Michael Church) 12 June 2007

Anderson’s ‘Alleluia’ reopens Royal Festival Hall

Neither the title nor the subject of Julian Anderson’s Alleluia, a setting of a 10th-century Latin sequence in which all creation sings aloud in praise of the name of the Lord, is particularly surprising. But it is one of those works that is altogether more resonant on paper than it is when actually heard. The New York Times (Anthony Tommasini) 13 June 2007

Given the diverse audience, it was a night of satisfyingly courageous programming, with two new premieres: Julian Anderson’s Alleluia (a subtle, sensuous account under Marin Alsop) and a gallant tour de force of an encore with all four orchestras on stage for Ravel’s Bolero (a subtle, sensuous account under Marin Alsop).

The mood of celebration was set with Anderson’s Alleluia, a setting of a 10th-century Latin sequence in which all creation sings aloud in praise. Pizzicato strings and plucked harps hovered evocatively in the air. The London Philharmonic Orchestra, with nowhere to hide in such a revealing acoustic, navigated pitch admirably and delivered a virtuoso cadenza of extemporised shouts.

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The Independent (Michael Church) 12 June 2007

Allegro follows an earlier work for chorus and orchestra, Heaven is Shy of Earth, premiered at the 2006 BBC Proms - both of which reveal the composer as an inventive master of the genre. This books well for the opera he is planning to write.
George Benjamin long held the desire to write an opera but the right project never quite presented itself to him. Until the advent of Into the Little Hill, that is, which resulted from his meeting with playwright Martin Crimp. Since its premiere, given by Anu Komsi, Hilary Summers, Ensemble Modern and Franck Ollu at the Festival d’Automne in Paris last November, it has garnered acclaim from all quarters, both in France (see last issue) and at its recent Netherlands premiere at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam (16 and 17 June):

‘In my critical career, I’ve witnessed the birth of several fine new operas – notably those by Adams, Adès and Turnage – that have jolted me out of my underlying pessimism about the genre’s long-term future. But in all that time I have never heard or seen anything so startlingly or brilliantly original as Into the Little Hill. “Masterpiece” is not a word to fling about, but I’m tempted.

Into the Little Hill specifies itself as “a lyrical tale”; “dramatic cantata” might also serve. Its duration is about 40 minutes. Conductor, instrumentalists and performers are integrated on stage, the singers being two uncostumed women who pace up and down sodium-lit catwalks as they narrate the story and enact it, playing several different characters and combining to embody the chorus…

George Benjamin’s score is a miracle. Fifteen players – here drawn from the Ensemble Modern – are used to create a hyper-intense sound world. Not a note is wasted or superfluous – Benjamin’s ear is unerringly precise, and the sonorities he conjures up by combining conventional instruments with basset-horn, flugelhorn and cimbalom are quite ravishing. But this isn’t an orchestral showpiece. The vocal lines are the driving force, and although the writing is often angular and abrupt, it is also richly expressive and alluring…

Britain will get to hear Into the Little Hill next year, when it forms part of the European Capital of Culture programme. You may not like it – the effect is more unsettling than charming – but if you have any serious interest in opera, you simply must hear it.

Daily Telegraph (Rupert Christiansen), 18 June 2007

‘Monteverdi pats on the shoulder, Gluck sends his compliments and even Wagner won’t be too Anglophobe to mumble “well done”. As opera innovators they know the pitfalls of music theatre. And yet they recognize how the Brit George Benjamin goes back to basics in Into the Little Hill, this exquisite performance that the Holland Festival invited to Amsterdam…

Into the Little Hill by George Benjamin touches upon the century-old music theatre question of what leads: music or text? There are composers – see above – that (paradoxically) turn to the text. To then wrap it in music that strikes the target all the more efficiently…

The scenography is simple: two light boxes and Perspex catwalks over wood chips from the garden centre. The music sounds concentrated and gives plenty of space for alto Hilary Summers and soprano Anu Komsi, both great. Ensemble Modern and conductor Franck Ollu let the notes glow from within, one is seduced by the mysterious bass flute, two basset horns lure you over the cliffs. Holland Festival director Pierre Audi shows his fine nose with this project. Into the Little Hill goes on, from the Westergasfabriek to Frankfurt, New York and Australia. It would surprise us if this did not become a contemporary classic.

Volkskrant (Guido van Oorschot), June 2007

‘Benjamin let himself get carried away by the sublime libretto by Martin Crimp, and composed unselfconsciously beautiful and profound music. This piece is a model of experimental theatre, superbly orchestrated for Ensemble Modern, who were at their best this Saturday under Frank Ollu. Only two singers enact the story in a Brecht-like manner. Contralto Hilary Summers and soprano Anu Komsi did this admirably. With ominous lighting, an orchestra pit full of wood shavings and two lit boards a sinister world is evoked. It’s over before you know it. A pity, but even one extra note would destroy this little masterpiece… Into the Little Hill is like a light little butterfly, whirling down, that hits the earth to leave a crater.’

Trouw (Peter van der Lint), 18 June 2007

Into the Little Hill received its US premiere at the Lincoln Center Festival from 26-28 July (reviews in next issue). There are three performances in Frankfurt (9-11 November) 2008 sees the premiere production tour to Liverpool, Vienna, Lucerne, Turin and Milan, an initiative of the Festival d’Automne.

‘…I have never heard or seen anything so startlingly or brilliantly original as Into the Little Hill. “Masterpiece” is not a word to fling about, but I’m tempted.’

PHOTOS: RAPHAËL PIERRE

Benjamin’s new opera in Europe & USA
Adès: ‘Tevot’ thrills audiences at Barbican festival

It was seemingly impossible to escape the lure of Thomas Adès’s unique musical soundworld in London during March.

The Royal Opera revived their premiere production of his opera The Tempest (see page 12), whilst the Barbican hosted a major festival of his music, ‘Traced Overhead’.

The festival featuring Adès as composer, conductor, pianist and curator, was launched with the UK premiere of his latest orchestral work, the 23-minute Tevot, commissioned and performed by Sir Simon Rattle and the Berliner Symphoniker on 7 March.

‘… a modern masterpiece, grounded in tradition and leading that tradition confidently forward.’

The Times (Hilary Finch), 24 April 2007

Tevot can next be heard in Berlin when there are three performances from 31 October to 2 November, before the Berliner Philharmoniker and Sir Simon Rattle give the US premiere in Carnegie Hall, New York on 11 November. This will be the first concert to feature Adès as holder of The Richard and Barbara Debs Composer’s Chair at Carnegie Hall for the 2007-8 season. He appears as composer, conductor and pianist in a number of other concerts, recitals and events throughout the year. These will include his New York recital debut and the NY premiere of his Three Studies from Couperin (Orchestra of St Luke’s/Xian Zhang).

Elsewhere in the Barbican’s ‘Traced Overhead’ festival, Adès conducted the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in a day’s music-making that included his own Chamber Symphony and Stravinsky’s Les Noces:

‘With the Pokrovsky Ensemble enacting the wedding day ritual in suitably raw, ancestral tones, the Labeque Sisters with Rolf Hind and Peter Donohoe pouring away on a quartet of pianos and Adès himself driving the ensemble forward, this was a mesmerising piece of theatre. Les Noces is a work I usually try to avoid, but here, for the first time, I got it.’

Evening Standard (Barry Millington), 26 March 2007

On 22 April, Adès conducted the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in his Violin Concerto (soloist Anthony Marwood) and the UK premiere of his Three Studies after Couperin:

‘This was music that seemed to live on within the body, long after it had left the ears.’

The Times (Hilary Finch), 24 April 2007

On 13 April, Adès conducted the BBC SO in a fascinating programme of Berlioz, Ives, Sibelius and his own controversial America – A Prophecy:

‘Programme building is an elusive art. It is a mystery why some combinations of music make perfect sense even when they have no rationale linking them, while others that ought to fit together fall flat in performance. Whatever the knack is, Thomas Adès has it…

Adès reserved his own music until last… the composer ensured every orchestral detail was viscously intense.’

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 18 April 2007

‘A good-sized audience suggested that Adès is bucking a following of trusting fans willing to follow him into unknown regions in the way that Birmingham audiences used to follow Simon Rattle.

Adès’s own piece, America: A Prophecy, put all else in the shade: primordial and Spanish music jostle thrillingly. Intense and thought-provoking, it manages to say something subtle and new about that now rather hackneyed topic, the clash of civilizations.’

The Times (Richard Morrison), 17 April 2007

‘… a modern masterpiece, grounded in tradition and leading that tradition confidently forward.’

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 18 April 2007

‘“Stratospheric strings shower points of light over the surface of a fathomless, brooding sea, which heaves with restless, unsettling energy… Tevot is a single-movement work, a 25 minute journey of frightening intensity.”

The Observer (Stephen Pitchard), 11 March 2007

‘Adès has produced yet another piece destined to rewrite the orchestral agenda for our age.’

The Times (Richard Morrison), 9 March 2007

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‘Cyrano’ – plaudits for new Davis/Bintley ballet

Cyrano, Carl Davis’s first collaboration with leading choreographer, David Bintley, was premiered on 7 February this year. The choreography was Bintley’s second attempt to capture this classic tale in dance. With Davis’s score as a discreet, supportive and imaginative accompaniment, the venture won widespread appreciation. Bintley’s company, Birmingham Royal Ballet, commissioned and staged the three-act production in the Birmingham Hippodrome, with the orchestra conducted by Paul Murphy. The production then toured to The Lowry (Salford), Plymouth Theatre Royal, Sunderland Empire Theatre and the New Theatre Oxford: ‘Bintley makes a first rate job out of this wonderful story… From the rollicking crowd scene that opens the action to the swashbuckling antics of the eponymous hero and his friends, the wooing of Roxane, the pyrotechnically convincing battle scene and our hero’s sad demise in the closing moments… Carl Davis’s score is full of melody and urgent rhythms. He is a master of pastiche…’

‘Davis’s commissioned score fits the piece like an elegant 17th Century Frenchman’s favourite glove. Carl Davis’s score is full of melody and urgent rhythms. He is a master of pastiche and the string tones emanating from the pit sounded like a sub-Korngold soundtrack for an Errol Flynn movie, and all the more effective for that reason. Few choreographers can claim that their music is comedy but one of Bintley’s greatest gifts is a sense of theatre that he can make an audience laugh out loud.’

‘Bintley makes a first rate job out of this wonderful story… From the rollicking crowd scene that opens the action to the swashbuckling antics of the eponymous hero and his friends, the wooing of Roxane, the pyrotechnically convincing battle scene and our hero’s sad demise in the closing moments… Carl Davis’s score is full of melody and urgent rhythms. He is a master of pastiche…’

‘Where does the glory fall for Birmingham Royal Ballet’s new production of Cyrano? Is it with choreographer David Bintley for crafting what is sure to run and run, or with composer Carl Davis for the terrific score, or with Robert Parker for creating a classic title role and dancing with that huge prosthetic conk?… Davis’s commissioned score fits the piece like an elegant 17th Century Frenchman’s favourite glove. An old hand at composing for ballet and for film, Davis has created a theatrical piece that takes in all the romantic, comic, military and tragic nuances of the plot.’

‘This 2007 staging, swashbuckling and heartfelt is vastly superior to his 1991 flop. Most importantly, it has the benefit of an entirely new score from Carl Davis. Davis embellishes the choreography with a rich tapestry of sound… is wonderfully dancey and most flattering to the production as a whole. Bintley’s response is to turn on the dancing, lots and lots of it. There are dazzling combat marches that trundle on a 17th century French battlefield, lively set pieces, with unheated swordfights in the streets of Paris, tender declarations of love for Roxane and Christian, even a larker parodying the Rose Adagio with baguettes instead of flowers. What Bintley gives Cyrano – besides that famous big nose – is choreography that thrives on grand gesture: sweeping romantic statement, gallant swordplay, witty aplomb…’

‘… makes for the kind of evening that sends an audience out into a snow-heavy night with a warm feeling in their hearts.’

‘… makes for the kind of evening that sends an audience out into a snow-heavy night with a warm feeling in their hearts.’
Colin Matthews's extraordinary orchestrations of Debussy's 24 piano Préludes reached their conclusion with the premiere of the final five of the series in a Hallé Orchestra concert as Manchester on 6 May 2007. Mark Elder conducted a performance that also included the world premiere of Matthews's own homage to Debussy in the form of a short Postlude, subtitled 'Monsieur Croche'.

'One of the Hallé's most successful projects since Mark Elder's appointment… Other composer-arrangers have preceded him down this route, but the sensibility of Matthew's one and the bold intelligence of his imagination gives his versions a stronger chance of survival.'

Not afraid to reconceive extensively when the piano textures are thin (as in the 'Girl with the Flaxen Hair'), Matthews has also avoided sending translating the effect of the sustaining pedal into orchestral terms, creating magical halos of sonority without raising the spectre of Mantovani…

In celebration, and in gratitude to Elder for his support, Matthews has added a "Postlude", entitled "M Croche", after Debussy's journalistic alter-ego, and this spunky little number sits happily beside the character studies of Debussy's own orchestral writing, while at the same time taking you by surprise.

Matthew's brilliance lies in his ability to reproduce the sensuous immediacy of Debussy's own orchestral writing, while at the same time taking you by surprise. ‘Brouillards’ becomes a playable game of musical tag for five solo strings accompanying delightfully through the orchestral landscape…

Matthews's imaginative orchestrations of Debussy's 24 piano Préludes reached their conclusion in Colin Matthews's imaginative orchestration… Forget the piano originals, there are far more than ‘orchestrations’, the music is completely and creatively rethought in orchestral terms…'

The Guardian (Tim Ashley), 10 May 2007

‘Matthew’s Postlude was a striking exclamation of triumph, with a rhythmic zig which (of all things) the Debussy originals never offered.’

Manchester Evening News (Robert Beddell), 8 May 2007

To coincide with the culmination of this project the Hallé released the first 12 of the Préludes on their CD label in May - the final set will be released later this year. Critics have been unanimous in the praise of this first disc, which received a prestigious Diapason d’Or award:

...brilliantly realised innovations. Matthews does not hesitate to break out of the expected, and the result is challenging – adding a few extra bars to extend the melody in ‘Brouillards’ establishing the introduction to ‘Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Ouest’; and crystallising a theme out of the piano’s left hand in ‘Les voiles’ alternating. And he more radically recomposes both ‘Bruyères’ and ‘Le vent dans la plaine’…

The Sunday Telegraph (Michael Kennedy), 11 March 2007

‘What makes this disc unmissable is the equally fine playing (and lustrous recording) in Colin Matthews’s imaginative orchestration… Forget the piano originals, there are far more than “orchestrations”, the music is completely and creatively rethought in orchestral terms.’

Gramophone (Ivan March), May 2007

‘…wilde and wonderfully transparent... avoids the flashy, garish and picturesque… He aims at “preserving the mystery”, translating their subtle nuances, their kaleidoscope and ambiguous harmony with skill, imagining unexpected blends of timbre… introducing rubbing into the texture, inserting in some cases a few invented or improvised bars…

What a success has been achieved here…

The Guardian (Tim Ashley), 10 May 2007

…making the orchestral version of the Piano Prélude ‘La fille aux cheveux de lin’ an honourable and changed in character completely. They are remarkable achievements.’

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 16 March 2007

‘At first glance this is all about La Mer… but if your experience mirrors mine, it’s what follows that will make you glad you put your hand in your pocket…

Gramophone (Francois Laurent), May 2007

Many of the world’s leading conductors are now taking up these astonishing transcriptions including Sir Simon Rattle (who recorded three of them for EMI) and Valery Gergiev, who introduced three to the London SO in June. Indeed, 15 conductors and 12 orchestras have now performed selections of the 24 works, with over 200 performances to date.

HIGHLIGHTS

Debussy/ Matthews: award for new Hallé disc
A new chamber orchestration of Britten’s late operatic masterpiece Owen Wingrave by composer and former assistant to Britten, David Matthews, was premiered in The Royal Opera House’s Linbury Studio Theatre in April 2007.

Matthews was commissioned by The Royal Opera to reduce the orchestral score for just 15 players, thus creating another Britten chamber opera bound to appeal to houses and companies the world over.

The stunning production, directed by Tim Hopkins, and with the City of London Sinfonia conducted by Rory MacDonald, received eight sell-out performances between 23 April and 5 May. It was subsequently broadcast on BBC Radio 3:

‘… a percussion orchestra that ranks as one of the 20th century’s most expressive achievements…’

… with the right treatment it can exert a fascinating grip – as it does in this new staging, part of a Britten series that the Royal Opera is presenting… Brilliantly conducted by Rory MacDonald (a real find) and staged by Tim Hopkins with cinematic projections that varied as of the opera’s TV origins, Owen Wingrave comes across as even more enigmatic than before – in no small part due to a new chamber orchestration by David Matthews, one of Britten’s former assistants. Matthews’s version is actually an improvement on the original because we hear all the essentials of the instrumental score in better profile, while we can hear every word: in my experience it was always a problem that the ensembles and even some of the solos, notable Owen’s climactic Peace aria, were overwhelmed by the surging gamelan-intensities of Britten’s orchestra. Now the woodwind motifs exert an even greater magic, the rustling percussion a more beguiling mystique… a must-see.’

Financial Times (Andrew Clark), 28 April 2007

‘…a percussion orchestra that ranks as one of the 20th century’s most expressive achievements…’

‘… with the right treatment it can exert a fascinating grip – as it does in this new staging, part of a Britten series that the Royal Opera is presenting… Brilliantly conducted by Rory MacDonald (a real find) and staged by Tim Hopkins with cinematic projections that varied as of the opera’s TV origins, Owen Wingrave comes across as even more enigmatic than before – in no small part due to a new chamber orchestration by David Matthews, one of Britten’s former assistants. Matthews’s version is actually an improvement on the original because we hear all the essentials…

Matthews’s version is actually an improvement on the original…’

PHOTO: MAURICE FOXALL

PHOTOS: BILL COOPER

A still rate it a masterpiece, and believe it to be one of the most challenging and necessary works of the late 20th century. … its closest rivals are with the War Requiem. Britten was reading James’s tale during the latter’s composition, and Owen Wingrave unfolds some of its thematic material. At the opera’s kernel is the Wingrave ballad, which presents us with the tale of the murder. We don’t hear it complete until halfway through. Scared silly by teen seer, boys’ chorus and trumpets, it resembles a sequence of War Requiem fanfares into an unforgettable melancholy melody. Much of the score’s thematic material derives from it. It seems to cascade naturally out of everything we have heard up to that point, and it looms over the remaining music.

Owen Wingrave returns to Covent Garden next month, when the Royal Opera presents a new staging at the Linbury Studios. We will, of course, be hearing it in the knowledge that yet more lives, military and civilian, have been wasted in Iraq, and that the voices of those opposed to military intervention have been ignored. “Peace is not won by your wars,” Owen tells his family, adding that he would make it a crime for any politician to send men both to slaughter and be slaughtered. Many, as they listen to this extraordinary opera once more, will doubtless be in agreement with its sentiments.

The Guardian (Tim Ashley), 30 March 2007

‘… a masterpiece… one of the most challenging and necessary works of the late 20th century. ’

‘It’s hard to imagine the result staged with greater commitment than the Royal Opera does here. Perhaps in homage to the opera’s TV origins, stage hands constantly wave round orchestral music, projecting video footage of the singers, or glowering portraits of spine-chilling ancestors, on to screens. Tim Hopkins, the director, also supplies an entertaining range of poltergeist stunts. Chairs crash over by themselves; a ghoulish boy mysteriously materialises on the dinner table…’

‘… there are fine performances to savour. The young South African tenor Jacques Imbrailo brings vocal and physical intensity to the title role. Steven Page is magisterial as his sympathetic tutor Captle: his every word crystal clear. Alison Cook radiates cold fury as Owen’s monstrous girlfriend. And there’s a steady and terrifying Miss Wingrave from Vivian Ferrary… With its misshapen bugle calls, sour textures and startling use of onstage boys’ choir, the score (here convincingly reorchestrated for 15 players by David Matthews) is one of Britten’s most fascinating…’

The Times (Richard Morrison), 25 April 2007

London audiences will have the opportunity to hear the original orchestral score of Owen Wingrave on 4 December this year, when Richard Hickox conducts a concert performance with the City of London Sinfonia and Tiffin Boys Choir in Cadogan Hall.
Jonny Greenwood comes to Faber Music

Faber Music Ltd is delighted to announce the signing of a publishing agreement with British composer Jonny Greenwood, (b. 1971)

Greenwood is best known as the lead guitarist of the band Radiohead whom he joined while still at school. He started to study psychology and music at Oxford Brookes University, but only finished his first term before leaving to sign a six-album deal with EMI, and start his recording career with Radiohead. Radiohead have realised phenomenal success over the past decade, with multi-platinum album sales and an ever growing worldwide following.

Greenwood is no stranger to classical music, though. Indeed, his early musical interests included Messiaen and Ligeti and he started out as a viola player. He plays several other instruments, too, including piano, organ, banjo, glockenspiel and harmonica, and has a particular love for the ondes martenot. To date Greenwood has penned three "classical" works. Two of these compositions have been assigned to Faber Music.

"smear" (two ondes martenots and ensemble) and "Popcorn Superhet Receiver" (string orchestra). The third, "Piano for Children" is currently under revision.

"smear", commissioned by the FuseLeeds festival in 2004 was premiered there by the London Sinfonietta in March of that year. The revised version was performed at the Ether festival in the Royal Festival Hall, London in March 2005, when "Piano for Children", a new commission for John Constable and the London Sinfonietta, was also premiered. "smear" was later released on CD on the London Sinfonietta Label as part of their Jerwood Series.

In 2004, Greenwood was made Composer in Residence with the BBC Concert Orchestra. The first fruit of this association was "Popcorn Superhet Receiver", a BBC commission, premiered by the BBC Concert Orchestra and Robert Ziegler in April 2005. The piece was inspired by radio static and the extended, dissonant chords of Polish composer Penderecki's "Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima. "Popcorn Superhet Receiver" won the BBC Radio 3 Listeners' Award at the 2006 British Composer Awards and as part of the award Greenwood received funding from the PRS Foundation towards the commission of a new orchestral work - currently in progress.

"smear reveals an ear for timbre, a gift for musical elaboration and a more sophisticated palette than anyone might have guessed. Greenwood is clearly a composer in the making."

Financial Times (Andrew Clark), 5 March 2004

"(Popcorn Superhet Receiver) for strings only, it owes up to an influence equally Penderecki. But the substance of the music is something else altogether. A slow blur of impossibly rich chords starts to let through high solo instruments, now tentative and now stronger. It is at its most captivating when big chords fade and wisps of inner detail are left floating. Unlike the rest of the programme, it paraded the primacy of feeling over guile, a stance that doesn't usually get people far in British music. Let's hope he has the strength of mind to protect this original voice."

The Independent (Robert Maycock), 29 November 2006

Works available from Faber Music as at July 2007

"Popcorn Superhet Receiver" (2005)

"smear" (2004, rev 2005)

FORTHCOMING ANNIVERSARIES

Derek Bermel – 40th birthday (14 October 2007)
Robert Simpson – 10th anniversary of death (21 November 2007)
Howard Blake – 25th anniversary of The Snowman film (December 2007)
Ralph Vaughan Williams – 50th anniversary of death (26 August 2008)
Matthew Hindson – 40th birthday (12 September 2008)
Howard Blake – 70th birthday (28 October 2008)

PHOTO: JASON EVANS
Jonathan Harvey

Harvey gains augural Giga-Hertz Award

Jonathan Harvey has won the inaugural Giga-Hertz Award from the Centre for Arts and Media Karlsruhe and the ExperimentalStudio for acoustic art in Freiburg, Germany. The award has been made in recognition of Harvey’s extensive oeuvre “at the crossroads between electronic and instrumental music.” At 15,000 it is the largest award for electronic music in the world today. The seven-member jury included two compositional giants in Pierre Boulez and Wolfgang Rihm. Harvey will collect the award at a special ceremony in Karlsruhe on 24 November this year.

Royal Philharmonic Society Award for ‘…towards a Pure Land’

“… towards a Pure Land,” Harvey’s first orchestral work written as Composer-in-Association to the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, has been awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Large-Scale Composition Award. The composer collected the award himself at a black-tie event held at the Dorchester Hotel, London on 8 May 2007.

Following its premiere in Glasgow, Ilan Volkov and the BBC SSO brought the work to the world in 2006. BBC Proms before Volkov gave the US premiere with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington DC. It received its Belgian premiere with the Orchestre National de Belgique and Matthias Pintscher during Ars Musica in March 2007.

Volkov & BBC Scottish premiere ‘Body Mandalas’

The second of Harvey’s BBC SSO commissions is ‘Body Mandalas’. Written, revised and arranged for Ilan Volkov and the BBC SSO. It was premiered on 15 March 2007. It stands in stark contrast to the ethereal qualities of ‘… towards a Pure Land’ with its lively and rhythmic brass writing, and is inspired by purification rituals witnessed by Harvey in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, as he writes:

“The famous low horns, trombones, the magnificently rasping crotale oboes, gongs, the distinctive rolmo cymbals – all these and more were played by the monks in deeply moving ceremonies full of Lama dances, chanting and ritual actions. There is a fierce wilderness about some of the purifications, as if great energy is needed to purge the bad ego-tendencies. But also great energy is expressed in prayer… The piece seems utterly long (in fact, it lasts about 15 minutes). This isn’t a criticism: it expands into eternity, in a total absence of periodicity, seriality, narrative, reprise, climax. It’s an amazing achievement.”

The Independent (Raymond Monelle), 26 March 2007

‘Angels’ – awards for new French choral CD

A stunning new disc of Harvey’s choral music by Les Jeunes Solistes and Rachid Safir has garnered praise from all quarters. Released on the French label, Soupir Editions, it includes premiere recordings of Marubi, sweetwinterheart; How could the soul not take flight? and Dow transmission Sabbath. The disc scooped two major awards in France including the Orphée d’or Olivier Messiaen for the music.

Harvey in Barcelona for festival portrait

In March, Harvey attended the Nous Sons festival in Barcelona, where performances included White as Jasmine (Anna Komma/Barcelona SO/Francois-Xavier Roth). String Quartet No 4 (Artitti Quartet). Song Offerings and Death of Light. Light of Death (BGN 216).

‘Sprechgesang’ – new oboe concerto

Sprechgesang, a new oboe concerto was unveiled on 15 April in Cologne. It is the result of a three-way commission from MusikFabrik, Klangforum Wien and ASKO Ensemble. Peter Rundel was the soloist with Peter B undocumented MusikFabrik. The concert also included Wheel of Euphony and Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco.

Sprechgesang was later performed at the Agora Festival in Paris, the Holland Festival (part of a Harvey portrait by ASKO). It will be performed at the Strasbourg MUSA fest in October, at the Venice Biennale and at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

Diotima and Artitti Quartets tour

The Artitti and Diotima Quartets have both championed Harvey’s 36-minute String Quartet No4, a masterpiece of the integration of live acoustic instruments and real-time electronic treatments. In recent months both quartets have toured the work in Europe with dates in Barcelona, Monaco, Marseilles, Breslau and Metz. The Diotima present the work at the Festival BCLAT in Stuttgart on 17 February 2008.
Torsten Rasch

‘Rotter’ – Cologne Opera commission premières in 2008

Rasch’s first opera, Rotter, a commission from Cologne Opera, is to be premiered on 25 February 2008. The two act opera is based upon an allegorical ‘everyman’ play by Thomas Brasch (1945-2001), the deceased partner of German actress Katharina Thalbach with whom Rasch collaborated on his epic song cycle Mein Herz brennt in 2003. Thalbach herself will direct the opera, and has written the libretto in tandem with Christoph Schwandt. The principal character, Rotter, journeys through recent German history from the 1920s-70s ending his life as a high-ranking East German politician.

The production will be conducted by Enrico Dovico, with the title role of Rotter being taken by Martin Gantner.

There are further performances on 29 February, 2, 8, 14, 16, 18 March and 5, 11 and 13 April.

Tansy Davies

BCMG & Thomas Adès premiere ‘Falling Angel’

Falling Angel is a 21-minute commission from the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group’s Sound Investment scheme. Scored for an ensemble of 17 players, Davies was inspired to write it by a painting by German artist Anselm Kiefer. It was premiered in Birmingham on 3 February 2007 by BCMG and Thomas Adès. The same forces then gave Falling Angel its French premiere in Paris on 24 February, part of the Présences Festival:

‘Falling Angel’ by Tansy Davies is scored for only 17 players, but the impact of its sound palette makes them seem at least double that number. There is so much colourful activity within this 21-minute piece, varying combinations of instruments creating tensions and resolutions, that resources seem infinite.’

Birmingham Post (Christopher Morley), 5 February 2007

‘Davies is genuinely gifted.’
The Times (Geoff Brown), 7 February 2007

‘neon’ in UK, Israel & Poland

One of Davies’s most performed works is her neon for 7 players. It has already been released by the London Sinfonietta on its own Jerwood Series label and in recent months has been heard in the USA, the UK and Israel. Next stop is Poland, where neon will be performed as part of the Warsaw Autumn Festival on 27 September, by the Israel Contemporary Players and Zsolt Nagy.

City of London Sinfonia premiere ‘kingpin’

On 20 and 22 April the City of London Sinfonia premiered kingpin, a 6-minute commission for chamber orchestra. Douglas Boyd conducted the performances in Southampton and Chatham:

‘…one of the best and liveliest of the young Brits… We heard a new commissioned piece, “Adagio”, named after the only part of the Model T engine that Henry Ford supposedly never wore out. Opening lurchings in the bass suggested Frankenstein’s monster up the Colosseum steps. But the rhythmic machinery never collapsed as the music wheeled round at conflicting speeds and instrumental climaxes, skidding, halting and surging away until the final upbeat “kerplunk”.

With Davies, contemporary music never lies in an airtight box. It’s out on the street, friendly-aggressive, mingling with rock without ever losing the poise that stems from the right number of notes in the right place.’
The Times (Geoff Brown), 26 April 2007

Philharmonia Orchestra portrait concert

Davies is the subject of a Philharmonia Orchestra ‘Music of Today’ portrait on 17 April 2008. The Royal Festival Hall concert will feature her in discussion with the Artistic Director of the series, Julian Anderson, whilst members of the orchestra will perform three of her works: neon, salt box and Inside Out II.

Selected Forthcoming Performances

neon

neon premiere
27.9.07, Warsaw Autumn Festival, Poland: Israel Contemporary Players/Zsolt Nagy

‘neon’ in Poland

neon

neon premiere
27.9.07, Warsaw Autumn Festival, Poland: Israel Contemporary Players/Zsolt Nagy

Streamliner
8.10.07, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, UK: CBSO/Simon Halsey

Composer Portrait - Philharmonia Orchestra’s “Music of Today”
neon; salt box & inside out 2
17.4.08, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK: members of Philharmonia Orchestra/Peter Rundel

Selected Forthcoming Performances

Rotter

Rotter premiere
23.2.08, Cologne Opera, Germany: Cologne Opera/dir. Katharina Thalbach/cond. Enrico Dovico

Also perfs 29 Feb; 2, 8, 14, 16, 18 Mar; 5, 11, 13 Apr 2008

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Thomas Adès

"Powder Her Face" Suite: Aldeburgh premiere

In his 9th year as Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival, Adès was once again participating as composer, conductor and pianist during its two weeks. One of the 2007 highlights was the first performance of his Overture, Waltz & Finale from Powder Her Face, commissioned jointly by the Festival, and the Philharmonia and Cleveland Orchestras - an orchestral translation of some of the scintillating instrumental music from his 1995 chamber opera. The programme with the Philharmonia Orchestra also included works by Lutosław and Busoni before culminating in an astonishing and rare performance of Respighi’s Feste Romane.

The key to victory was Adès himself. “Without fear or shame he hurked himself into the opening Overture, loving the music’s physicality and exes. From there it was only the shortest jump to the 11-minute Powder Her Face-dissolution (I wanted it larger), a mini-masterpiece of scored writing and faked jazz, punctuated by large but conventional horns, pulsing with sleazy drama.”

The Times (Geoff Brown), 20 June 2007

Violin Concerto at Edinburgh Festival…

Adès made his much-anticipated debut at the Edinburgh Festival this year, when he conducted the Chamber Orchestra of Europe in two programmes on 13 and 14 August.

The first included his Violin Concerto (soloist Anthony Marwood) together with works by Beethoven, Stravinsky and Sibelius, whilst the second included his Three Studies from Couperin with works by Rameau, Berlioz and Ravel.

…and on disc

To coincide with the Edinburgh Festival performance, in a first for their label, EMI Classics released the Violin Concerto as a download only, in performance by COE with Adès and Marwood. The recording will feature on a future CD release.

"The Tempest" revisited at Covent Garden

Three years after its triumphant premiere at the Royal Opera House, Adès three-act opera The Tempest, was revisited at Covent Garden in March 2007. The composer himself conducted the six performances, revived at Covent Garden in March 2007. The Independent (Edward Seckerson), 14 March 2007

‘…returns to Covent Garden as an assured, fully matured work. Meredith Oakes’s libretto is lucid and clear, with Adès adding lyrical and dramatic through vivid scoring, memorable for volleys of chorale-like brass and bewitching use of bells… No longer the mesmerised boy wonder, this 36-year old has proved he’s the real thing…

Sunday Telegraph (John Allison), 18 March 2007

‘…it now has the bearing of a modern classic. With a second, or in my case, third visit, you really start to appreciate the ingenuity with which Oakes adles to Shakespeare without necessarily quoting him. Then there is Adès’s instinctive linking for the pulse of the drama, his serving sense of the music that may provide the key to “a brave new world” where the sins of the parents might not be resisted in the children. Adès is like Prospero. His score is not governed by any expectations save his own. The wonderful present of scoring begins with a kernel of bodily so pure, simple and English that it might be John Dowland. This is says it burgum into something lofty and operational says more about the possibilities of new beginnings than anything I know in contemporary music.”

The Independent (Edward Seckerson), 14 March 2007

‘…the opening storm music is fit to be mentioned in the same breath as Grieg or Britten’s Sea Interludes. And it adds enormously to the sense of the performance that Adès himself is such a powerfully engaged conductor.”

The Mail on Sunday (David Mellor), 18 March 2007

"Adès’s powerful and distinctive voice, discordant yet seductive, searing and lush. And he is still only 35!… This is a true evening of music theatre. A well-deserved triumph.”

Daily Mail (David Gillard), 16 March 2007

It’s a genuine bit, and you can’t say that about many recent British operas!’

‘…popularity, as well as hammering critical approval, has brought Thomas Adès’s magical musical take on Shakespeare’s magical musical tale back to Covent Garden just three years after the Royal Opera premiere… It’s a genuine hit, and you can’t say that about many recent British operas… confirmed what the premiere had suggested that this work is an ingenious melding of the lyrical and the shockingly original…”

…if it’s the same, any music that reaches the senses and drives the drama forward. Here too there are recognisable things: old-fashioned arias, cunningly woven ensembles – none better than a sumptuous, Purcellian passacaglia of reconciliation and renunciation near the end. But they exist in new sound-worlds that define characters and contexts with clarety. Best of all, the music seems to blaze in symbolic reflection of the redeemer line opening through the play, at least as interpreted here.

After the jagged shards of brass in the storm, the baleful orchestral grunts under Prospero’s vengeful lines, and the bizarre, atmospheric squeaking of Cyndia Sieden’s brilliantly demented stick-insect Ariel, Adès conjures a succession of melancholy, brocaded sets. This is a show which gives one hope that an art form as old as The Tempest itself has been astonishingly recreated for the 21st century…”

The Times (Richard Morrison), 13 March 2007

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TUNING IN

Oliver Knussen

‘Requiem’ in London, New York & Aldeburgh

Knussen’s most recent work, the Requiem: Songs for Sue, moved audiences in London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall, and at the Aldeburgh Festival in the past few months.

In London, fellow composer George Benjamin conducted the London premiere on 13 March, with the London Sinfonietta and soloist Claire Booth:

‘… the deepest love of its sequence of open, perfectly judged.’

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 16 March 2007

‘Valestruza are Knussen’s trademark, here personal feelings rob away ghMr. darkening textures, stowing sorrow… a sounding leaving only reinforces its strength.

A packed house were hom Which

The Times (Geoff Browne), 15 March 2007

‘… the pace was as touching in its restraint as personal in its harmony.’

The Independent (Rory McAuley), 19 March 2007

Knussen included the Requiem in a concert he gave with The Zankel Band in New York’s Zankel Hall on 15 April. Soloist was Susan Narucki.

‘… remembered both his wife and the kind of horizontal, heart-on-sleeve melodist that the rest of the evening seemed studiously to avoid. Mr. Knussen’s musical language here stretches beyond old ideas of trend agreement and weighs its ensemble sound toward winds and keyboard instruments, elements that are anything but Romantic.’

The New York Times (Bernard Holland), 17 April 2007

At the Aldeburgh Festival, Knussen himself conducted the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (with Booth again the soloist) on 15 June.

The same forces present the work at the BBC Proms in London’s Royal Albert Hall on 29 August, a programme that also includes Knussen’s Ophelia Dances: Booth and Knussen then join the Scottish CO to give performances in Glasgow and Edinburgh on 14 and 15 December this year.

Meanwhile, the Finnish premiere of the Requiem took place at the Porvoo Summer Festival on 29 June, when Ryan Wigglesworth directed the virtuoso Avanti Chamber Orchestra with soloist Rosemary Hardy.

Continued success for ‘Violin Concerto’

Knussen’s Violin Concerto is becoming a contemporary classic, being championed by an increasing number of the world’s finest violinists and conductors.

Festival Hall signature concerts

On 12 June, Christian Tetzlaff joined the Philharmonia Orchestra and its newly announced Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, Esa-Pekka Salonen. They presented the work in one of the opening ‘signature’ concerts in the Royal Festival Hall, revelling in the acoustic charms of the recently refurbished building.

‘… this 17-minute score is a brilliant little work, and a penguin-suited Christian Tetzlaff brought it to its furred, sincere sense of classical refinement. With the spiky ring that forms the finale, the dance rhythms help make this an unmissably British piece: yet there is no hint of parochialism, and Tetzlaff’s elegance and energy were irresistible.’

The Guardian (Erich Jentsch), 14 June 2007

‘Kron’s compact concert, played with passion, finesse and brilliance by Christian Tetzlaff, was actually the more rewarding portion of the concert. In edition of seemingly art Stravinsky’s dance crystal-clear in these improved acoustic circumstances, and its elements of fancy were shot out spiritedly by soloist and orchestra alike.’

Daily Telegraph (Geoffrey Norris), 18 June 2007

Leila Josefowicz takes up the challenge

US virtuoso, Leila Josefowicz has taken the work firmly into her repertoire, and joined Knussen and the BBC SO for a performance at the BBC Proms on 17 August, a programme that also included works by Schoenberg, Henze and Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring. Reviews to follow in next issue.

Looking ahead, Josefowicz has forthcoming performances of the work with the Indianapolis SO and Mario Venzago (9-10 November), Chicago SO and Esa-Pekka Salonen (24-27 January 2008) and Detroit SO and Knussen (08-10 February).

‘Wild Things’ in Atlanta & Liège

Knussen’s fantasy opera Where the Wild Things Are has been revived by Opera Royal de Wallonie in Liège, Belgium. They originally staged the work in November 2005 and have now revived it giving performances (in French) between 27 February and 2 March.

Meanwhile, the work has gained much success as a concert work. Indeed, Knussen conducts two such performances with the Atlantic SO on 22 and 24 February next year.

Tilson Thomas revives Symphony No 3 with San Francisco SO

Michael Tilson Thomas has long been an advocate of Knussen’s music, conducting a number of his works with orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic. It was he who conducted the first complete performance of the Third Symphony at the 1979 BBC Proms. He now returns to that early masterpiece when he programmes five performances of it with the San Francisco Symphony from 9-13 January next year.

Selected Forthcoming Performances

The Way to Castle Yonder & Finale with Fireworks

Two Organs

Violin Concerto

Songs without Words

Violin Concert & Proms with Fireworks

Where the Wild Things Are

PHOTO: BETTY FREEMAN

Term 1 (Winter Term) 2008

MusicNow/Esa-Pekka Salonen

SO/Esa-Pekka Salonen

SO/Oliver Knussen

Two Organs

Violin Concert

Songs without Words

Violin Concert & Proms with Fireworks

Where the Wild Things Are
David Matthews

Symphony No 6 premieres at BBC Proms
Matthews's Symphony No 6 received its world premiere at this year's BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall, London. The 35-minute, three-movement work for large orchestra was commissioned by the John S Cohen Foundation to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2005.

Dutch conductor Jac van Steen, who has previously recorded Matthews's orchestral music for the NMC label, conducted the BBC National Orchestra of Wales on 2 August.

The symphony is connected in different ways to two other Sixth Symphonies, important to Matthews during his early career. A homage to Mahler's Sixth towards the end of the first movement incorporates an Alpine cowbell actually purchased from the town where Mahler wrote his own symphony! Vaughan Williams's Sixth was an early influence and the inspiration for Matthews's own symphony was the former's well-loved hymn-tune "Down Ampney", which is hinted at throughout and blossoms into a full statement at the very end of the work, albeit reharmonized by Matthews.

Reviews to follow in next issue.

‘Terrible Beauty’ premiered in UK and USA
Terrible Beauty is the result of a commission from the Nash Ensemble, lasts 13 minutes and is scored for mezzo-soprano and seven players. It was premiered by the Nash and Susan Bickley in London’s Wigmore Hall on 6 March:

‘… a beautifully wrought operatic scene. Bickley’s mezzo moved orderedly between simple recitative and sensuous aria… The instrumental playing seemed to echo both the light dancing metre of the Greek pedal (an extract from Homer’s Iliad), and to commemorate the oscillation of water and oar-strokes in a shimmering, harp-gilded barcarolle.’

The Times (Mary Treacy), 6 March 2007

The same performers then gave the US premiere in the Kennedy Center, Washington DC on 20 March:

‘… a textured delightfully interwoven vocal line and yearning wood tone. The instrumental recitative seemed to find just the right balance between textual and thematic interest… the audience showed genuine, sustained appreciation.’

The Washington Post (Robert Battey), 22 March 2007

Dutton Epoch release Matthews orchestral disc
An all-Matthews orchestral disc "From Sea to Sky" has been released on the Dutton Epoch label. The disc features premiere recordings of Movement of Autumn, A Congress of Passions, From Sea to Sky, Aubade, Goodnight Song, The Sleeping Lord, Y Deryn Du and Total Tango.

Darlington premiere
A new piano piece was premiered at the 2007 Darlington International Summer School when Helen Reid performed Teo Dionysus Dithyrambs. Matthews has added another movement to his earlier Dionysus Dithyramb, making an 8-minute piece.

Derek Bermel

“Voices” premiered in Beijing
Bermel travelled to Beijing in May to be soloist in his clarinet concerto Voices. The performance was part of the Beijing Modern Music Festival and Bermel joined forces with the Tianjin SO, who later gave a performance in their home city.

Celebrated Danish art museum hosts premiere
The Danish group Ensemble Figura have commissioned a song-cycle from Bermel for a number of performances at the famed Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, outside Copenhagen. Bermel has transcribed several of his songs for the group, who will give eight performances between 4 and 26 August. The composer will be in attendance at some of the performances.

‘Mulatsash Stomp’ comes to UK
The 2007 Soundwaves Festival in Brighton staged the UK premiere of Bermel’s Mulatsash Stomp in June. Members of the highly innovative local orchestra, Talkestra, performed this along with works by Tansy Davies and Matthew Hindson, all under the guidance of their founder and Artistic Director Steve Dummer.

‘Soul Garden’ – new version launched in Australia
Australian viola player Kathryn Lockwood premiered a new version of Bermel’s Swoon, aka Soul Garden in Brisbane in June, when she joined the Camera of St John’s. The expanded version for solo viola and string orchestra looks set to bring Bermel’s composing talents to an even wider audience.

‘Etudes’ for electric guitar commissioned for Amsterdam festival
Bermel has recently completed a set of Etudes for solo electric guitar, to a commission from the Output Festival in Amsterdam. They will be premiered at the festival by UK guitarist Alan Thomas, on 30 September. Bermel anticipates to the series in the future to create something somewhat akin to Bartok’s Mikrokosmos.

‘Natural Selection’ revived in Liverpool
Bermel’s Faber Music Millennium Series commission, Natural Selection, is to be revived by the ensemble who originally premiered it, Ensemble 10.10, which comprises members of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Clark Rundell conducts with Julian Tovey the baritone soloist in the concert on 16 January 2008 in Liverpool.
Peter Sculthorpe

Prestige Festival – Featured Composer

Sculthorpe was in the UK in August this year when he was Featured Composer at the Prestige Festival in Radnorshire, one of the jewels of the UK’s summer festivals.

Artistic Director George Vass paid tribute to Sculthorpe by programming a number of his works including the world premiere of a new saxophone version of Songs of Sea & Sky (Amy Dickinson & Catherine Milledge), the Second Sonata for Strings and Concerto for Dreaming (Alice Neary and the Festival Orchestra), Requiem for cells alone (Alice Neary) and String Quartet No 8 (Papilos Quartet).

Acclaim for ‘Requiem’ CD

The UK release of the ABC Classics premiere recording of Sculthorpe’s Requiem for didjeridu, chorus and orchestra has prompted particular appreciation from critics for one of the composer’s most important works:

‘The heartfelt new Requiem is the crowning glory of the Sculthorpe set. The magnificently scored Sculthorpe Requiem brings a further jewel to a glory of this Sculthorpe set. The eagerly awaited Requiem brings a further jewel to a wide audience, his first major choral work Sculthorpe Requiem brings a further jewel to a wide audience, his first major choral work…’

‘This is an impressive and moving work, decisively coloured by didjeridu solos, simple drone-ming and close-fretted harmonic writing for chorus… the Australian spirit is authentic and intriguing.’

The Times (Geoff Brown), 13 April 2007

Barton premieres ‘Memento mori’ in Germany

Sculthorpe’s association with the didjeridu virtuoso William Barton continues to bear fruit. On 22 March, Barton was in Germany where he joined the Jena PO and Nicholas Milton in the first performance of a new version of Memento mori for didjeridu and orchestra. The concert also included a performance of Ichabod IV for violin, strings and percussion.

Huntington Estate Music Festival stages ‘Requiem’ premiere of 17th Quartet

Sculthorpe’s premiere of 16 string quartets is one of the high points of his oeuvre. His quartets have been commissioned and championed by some of the great quartets of our time, including the Kronos, Allegri, Tokyo, Petersen, Brookly and Australian Quartets. Sculthorpe has enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the Goldner Quartet, who have recorded two volumes of his string quartets for the Tall Poppies label, and who have premiered a number of his recent works.

They premiere the latest of these in November this year when String Quartet No 17 is launched at the highly prestigious Huntington Estate Music Festival in Mudgee, New South Wales.

‘...another remarkably original work from Sculthorpe that will only confirm his status as arguably the finest composer Australia has ever produced.’

International Record Review (Robert Levett), March 2007

TUNING IN
George Benjamin

**Los Angeles Philharmonic take up ’Palimpsests’**

One of Benjamin’s most recent orchestral successes is to be taken up by the Los Angeles PO.

Under the baton of David Robertson the LAPO give performances of Palimpsests on 10 and 13 January 2008. Robertson is no stranger to these works, or any other of Benjamin’s. In recent months he has conducted Sudden Time with the St Louis SO (both in St Louis and Carnegie Hall, New York). In February 2008 he conducts Dance Figures with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, and, also in 2008, with the St Louis SO in St Louis. In Britain, audiences have heard Robertson deliver a stunning account of the work at the 2006 BBC Proms.

**Dance Figures in Europe and USA**

Elsewhere, there have been numerous other performances of Dance Figures with a variety of conductors.

On 17 May, Ilan Volkov conducted the German premiere in the Philharmonie, Berlin with the Deutsches Symphonie Orchester. Benjamin himself conducted performances with the Netherlands National Youth Orchestra (see below), and includes the conducted performances with the Netherlands Deutsches Symphonie Orchester. Benjamin himself was the subject of a Composer Portrait in New World Symphony on 2 February 2008. Meanwhile, Oliver Knussen directs his first performance of November (also below). Meanwhile, Aimard continues to champion Piano Figures, and virtuoso French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard gave the US premiere of Piano Figures in New York’s Zankel Hall on 29 March 2007.

**Zankel Hall portrait includes US premiere of ’Piano Figures’**

Benjamin was the subject of a Composer Portrait in New York’s Zankel Hall, on 29 March 2007.

Benjamin conducted The Zankel Band in his *At First Light*, whilst Misha Amory and Hsin-Yun Huang performed Viola, Viola and virtuoso French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard gave the US premiere of Piano Figures, together with the earlier Shadowlines—both written for his talents.

For George Benjamin at 47 is one of the most formidable composers of his generation. A multi-talented artist, he composed a violin concerto at 17, and is now working on an opera. His *At First Light*, whilst being a masterful piece, shows a maturity and depth of understanding that is quite remarkable.

**Philharmonia portrait in Royal Festival Hall**

Benjamin was the subject of a Philharmonia Orchestra ‘Music of Today’ portrait on 24 June in London’s newly refurbished Royal Festival Hall.

Before a large audience, he was interviewed on stage by the Artistic Director of the series, Julian Anderson, with members of the Philharmonia Orchestra, under Frank Ollu. Aimard performed *At First Light*, *Uprising Silence* (soloist Gudrún Olafsdóttir) and Three Miniatures for Solo Violin (Maya Iwabuchi).

**Netherlands Youth Orchestra residency**

Benjamin has always taken a great interest in music education, and in working and performing with young players. In July and August this year the Netherlands National Youth Orchestra welcomed him as their guest composer/conductor for their summer course. Initially, they worked on several Benjamin works (*At First Light, Three Inventions for Chamber Orchestra, Viole, Viola & Three Figures*). Meanwhile, Aimard continued to champion Piano Figures, elsewhere. He gave the Belgian premiere as part of Ars Musica in Brussels on 17 March (together with Shadowlines). The US premiere was part of a Benjamin portrait concert given on 29 March in Zankel Hall, New York that also included Shadowlines, Viole, Viole and the composer conducting At First Light. On 18 June Aimard gave the German premiere of *Piano Figures* at the Klassikfestival Ruhr, where a highly successful education project (devised in tandem with Richard McNicol and Tobias Bleek) took place in May and June, in Essen, Cologne and Düsseldorf, in which Aimard worked on Piano Figures with four pupils from the Cologne High School for Music.

On 1 August, Aimard gave the eagerly-awaited French premiere at the prestigious International Piano Festival of La Roque d’Anthéron in Provence. Then a week later on 8 August, he presented it at the Tanglewood Festival in the USA.

**Benjamin records with BBC Symphony Orchestra**

Benjamin is to conduct and record an invitation concert of his music with the BBC SO on 20 November this year in the orchestra’s Maida Vale studios in London. The programme comprised his Dance Figures and Sudden Time.

**‘Uprising Silence’ at Edinburgh Festival**

At First Light: Benjamin’s stringing setting of WB Yeats will have its Scottish premiere in the Festival’s ‘Uprising Silence’ strand, and is also part of its ‘Music of Today’ strand. The Philharmonia Orchestra will perform Benjamin’s Piano Figures, conducted by Frank Ollu. The premiere will take place at the Festival’s opening concert on 6 August, with six other performances scheduled throughout the programme.
Julian Anderson

Guildhall appointment
Julian Anderson has been appointed to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as Professor of Composition and Composer in Residence. He returns to the UK takes up this newly devised post this Autumn. He was previously Funny Mason Professor of Music at Harvard University (2004-7).

Edward Gardner conducts ‘Symphony’
Taking its inspiration from a painting depicting a frozen lake by Sibelius’s artist friend Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Anderson’s one-movement Symphony packs a great deal of incident into its concise structure. London audiences finally got to enjoy its splendours when Edward Gardner conducted the BBC SO in the Barbican on 12 May this year. The performance was later broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

‘Like many of his pieces, this one had a lovely paradoxical presence. The rustling, radiant opening was like seeing the dawn of the world, with birds and animals peeping through the foliage like a Douanier Rousseau painting. Later, we got a hint of humankind, in a sudden swirl of folk song. But it is Anderson’s vision, humanity never leaves Eden. If this is17

Selected Forthcoming Performances

Imagin’d Corners (Portuguese premiere) 14.07.07, Casa da Musica, Porto. The London Contemporary Music Group in a late-night event on 29 August. Reviews to follow. They repeat the work in Birmingham on 24 November.

… in Carnegie Hall
Book of Hours received its New York premiere on 13 April this year, when Knussen this time steered The Stations of the Sun… in Carnegie Hall… the highlight… is the breathtaking two-part…

‘Book of Hours’ at BBC Proms…
The title track of NMC’s release, Book of Hours, was one of the highpoints of this year’s BBC Proms. It was performed by Oliver Knussen and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group in a late-night event on 20 August. The work was repeated in Birmingham on 24 November.

… in Paris
The work is given its French premiere on 18 January, when Susanna Mälkki conducts Ensemble Intercontemporain in the Cité de la Musique, Paris.

O’Donnell premiere in Westminster Abbey
A beautiful and concise new choral piece, My Beloved Spake has been taken up by James O’Donnell and the Choir of Westminster Abbey. They included it in their Choral Evensong on 8 July. Faber Music Ltd will shortly publish this new work as part of its Faber New Choral Works series.

‘Imagin’d Corners’ in Porto
Already broadcast on Portuguese radio, Anderson’s Imagin’d Corners for five horns and orchestra will be given its Portuguese premiere on 16 October when Cesario Costa conducts the Orquesta Nacional do Porto in the Casa da Musica, Porto.

computer freezing and expanding his prodigious talents. The highlight is the breathtaking two-part Book of Hours. A remarkably extended development, presenting solo passage for electronics is the climax of the piece, in the wake of which a intensely human jig starts up fleetingly on viola, like some lone human voice in a post-apocalyptic world.

The Symphony, from 2003, dominates Anderson’s purely orchestral works… Compact and organically conceived, this one-movement work forms an intense energy with Zen-like stillness. Impressively self-contained, it most obvious antecedent is Sibelius’s Seventh… Salons Oramo is the perfect conductor to bring out the Sibelian resonances in this symphony of groove-like stringy and measured intensity… Imagin’d Corners’ incisive and freezing, this is the composer’s most inventive creation and it gets the exhilarating performance it requires. Anderson is rightly regarded as one of the finest composers of his generation and the range and diversity of material on this release is stunning.”

Tempo (Paul Conway), April 2007

Photo: Mauricio Varela

The rustling, radiant opening was like seeing the dawn of the world, with birds and animals peeping through the foliage like a Douanier Rousseau painting.
Carl Vine

Fifth Quartet commissioned by Huntington Estate Festival

Carl Vine’s string quartets have been taken up by ensembles world over and performed and recorded widely.

His String Quartet No 5 will be premiered by the Goldner String Quartet at the 2007 Huntington Estate Music Festival, where Vine is Artistic Director. His Third Quartet will also be heard during the festival, as will the Australian premiere of his Piano Sonata No 3 (see below).

Graeme Murphy signs off with new Vine ballet

After 50 years at the helm, choreographer Graeme Murphy is leaving the Sydney Dance Company. In a farewell retrospective programme that ran at the State Theatre of the Melbourne Arts Centre in July, Murphy included a brand new work using Vine’s The Anne Landa Preludes for solo piano. The new dance work takes its name from the first Prelude, “Short Stories”, with the complete evening’s entertainment named “Ever After Ever” in homage to the fourth Prelude.

Third Piano Sonata launched in USA

Vine’s Third Piano Sonata has been premiered by US pianist Elizabeth Schumann, the result of a commission from the Gilmore International Keyboard Festival and the Colburn School, with assistance from the Australia Council.

The premiere of the four-movement, 22-minute work took place in Los Angeles on 11 May, and Schumann will also give the Australian premiere on 1 December as part of the Huntington Estate Music Festival in New South Wales.

Australian String Quartet tour Third Quartet

The newly branded Australian String Quartet (formerly the Tankstream Quartet) toured Australia with Vine’s Third Quartet earlier this year, with seven performances in 12 days in most of the major cities.

Acclaim for Tall Poppies piano disc

Pianist Michael Kieran Harvey has long been associated with Vine’s music having premiered his Piano Concerto, and the Piano Sonatas 1 and 2. Newly released on the Tall Poppies label is a setting for chorus and orchestra of Psalm 65, a setting for chorus and orchestra of Psalm 65 and Five Bagatelles, The Anne Landa Preludes and The Red Blues:

‘Among the piano music of the past quarter-century, Carl Vine holds a considerable place through his scintillating technique and far from facile immediacy.’

‘The Piano Music 1990-2006’ which includes all these works premiers in 2008.

‘Among the piano music of the past quarter-century, Carl Vine holds a considerable place through his scintillating technique and far from facile immediacy.’

If you’re familiar with Vine’s orchestral music you won’t be surprised to find that his piano music comes with a similar charge of high-voltage rhythmic energy. The two-movement Piano Sonata No 1, explicitly modelled on Elliott Carter’s Piano Sonatas of 1946, starts steeply, though steeply, between chords suggesting languorous summer heat, but the piano soon erupts into a building intensity, something like the Mysterious Precursors before it subsides back into its weary calm. The second movement is a breathless moto perpetuo built on motorically repeated phrases, dying into a chorale section that seems to hint at the sunken cathedrals under a rather Celtic decorated melody in the treble, the most rare thing to come. The Third Piano Sonata, again in two movements, offers the same mix of wildly racing motoric rhythm offset by passages of angular melody and chordal calm.

Both these works here are built from series of miniatures: the Five Bagatelles date from 1994, Red Blues (four pieces for young performers) from 1999 and The Anne Landa Preludes – 12 of them, nearly 24 minutes in length – from 2006. They show in microcosm the same kinds of contrasts as you find in the sonatas. Lyrical, bluesy, forest, music box wongies.

Michael Kieran Harvey plays like a man possessed: he flies at Vine’s breakneck explosions of energy like a pocktet at a pinata, maintaining absolute technical clarity whatever the tempo.

‘The Anna Landa Preludes’ (1995) explore modest but characterful qualities — culminating in a firmly sustained “Threnody”. Expressively more diverse, The Anne Landa Preludes (2004) are deftly achieved evocations whose individual titles offer possible points of reference, moving intently towards a “Chorale” whose profundity is achieved without overt religious connotations. Clearly Vine is as able looking inwardly as he is projecting dynamic assurance.

... excellent release — with, informative notes by composer and pianist, is strongly recommended.’

International Record Review (Martin Anderson), January 2007

‘They Shall Laugh & Sing’ — choral commission

Vine has recently completed a setting for chorus and orchestra of Psalm 65 entitled They Shall Laugh & Sing. It is the result of a commission from his alma mater Hale School in Perth, who will present the premiere in 2008.

Among the piano music of the past quarter-century, Carl Vine holds a considerable place through his scintillating technique and far from facile immediacy!
**Matthew Hindson**

**Lara St John records ‘Violin Concerto’**

Canadian virtuoso Lara St John has recorded Hindson’s Violin Concerto for future release on her own label, Ancalagon.

Sessions took place in London, in June this year with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sarah Loizides. The disc will also include a premiere recording by Corigliano and a new arrangement of Liszt’s ‘Totentanz’ by US composer, Martin Kennedy.

**San Francisco Ballet premiere ‘The Rave and the Nightingale’**

Hindson travelled to California in April 2007 to attend the premiere performance of a ballet set to his string orchestra works *The Rave and the Nightingale* and *Technologic I* (a newly commissioned arrangement). It was choreographed by the Canadian Marjath Mrozewski as part of a triple-bill:

> The piece explores the confluence of weird, experimental stuff vs. dancing that is razor-honed, in-the-bones, school-drilled classical. Two couples jarring to austere, from sweet and melodic to jokey and edgy. Hindson’s pieces, *The Rave* and the *Nightingale*, and *Technologic* (go from jarring to austere, from sweet and melodic to playful and edgy. Hindson does intelligent ‘pretty’ with an edge. He may not be as flashy as Christopher Wheeldon or William Forsythe, but he’s just starting out. Masaccio makes dances that work just right in San Francisco.

**Camden Haven Festival portrait**

Hindson was featured in a Composer Focus Concert at the Camden Haven Festival in New South Wales on 21 April.

The concert included two world premieres: the Piano Trio (given by James Caddeloff, Tosh O’Brien and Stephen Emerson) and Song of Life for solo violin (James Caddeloff). Other works performed were Little Christisettina’s Magic Fantasy, Night Pieces, Lament and Always On Time.

**‘LifeSPEED’ in Switzerland**

Long-time Hindson advocate Andrey Boreyko gave the Swiss premiere of *LifeSPEED* on 30 June, when he conducted the Berner Symphonic Orchestra in their Die Nacht der Musik – “Klassik unter Strom” concert at the Kultur-Casino in Bern. *LifeSPEED* was the opening item in a marathon 5½ hour concert that included performances from the Kronos Quartet, rappers, sound installation and a theremin.

**Sydney Dance Company revive ‘Ellipse’ in farewell gala**

Sydney Dance Company has bid farewell to Artistic Director Graeme Murphy after 30 years at the helm of Australia’s leading contemporary dance company. To mark this extraordinary artistic partnership the SDC staged a tribute programme in Melbourne that drew on several of Murphy’s biggest successes, including *Ellipse*, the full evening work he set to Hindson’s music. An 8-minute extract of Homage to Metallica was included in the show that ran at The Arts Centre in Melbourne from 7-14 July.

**‘Comin’ Right Atcha’ visits festivals in USA & UK**

Both the 8-player and 14-player versions of the witty and uplifting *Comin’ Right Atcha* have featured at summer festivals in the USA and UK recently.

The Soundwaves Festival in Brighton gave the UK premiere of the 8player version when the innovative Talkestra were directed by Steve Dummer on 24 June, in a programme that also included Hindson’s *Nintendo Music*. On 17 July the Aspen Festival in Colorado gave the US premiere of the 14-player version of the piece, with the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble conducted by Sydney Hodkinson.

**LPO programme ‘Boom-Box’ in schools concerts**

The London Philharmonic Orchestra, who premiered Hindson’s flute concerto *House Music* in December 2006, are to include his orchestral opener *Boom-Box* in their schools concert in London’s Royal Festival Hall on 4 December. Hindson’s music is a hit with young audiences as the LPO know – they have previously programmed his RPH in their educational programme. Meanwhile, the LPO have commissioned Hindson to write a 20-25 minute orchestral suite for their FunHarmonics series of family concerts.

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**Selected Forthcoming Performances**

**RPM**

- 11.09.08, Delaware Hall, UK: Royal Scottish National Orchestra
- 14.09.08, London, UK: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Daryl Pratt

**Technologic 145**

- 17.07.07, Melbourne, Australia: Symphony Hall
- 20.07.07, Sydney, Australia: Sydney Opera House
- 22.07.07, Melbourne, Australia: Benaud Trio

**Boom-Box**

- 4.07.08, Royal Festival Hall, London, UK: London Philharmonic Orchestra/Daryl Pratt
- 14.08.08, Italian Festival, Italy: Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

**Lament for violin and piano**

- 19.11.07, Collins St Baptist Church, Melbourne: Benaud Trio
- 25.03.08, Sydney, Australia: Sydney Conservatorium of Music, NSW, Australia: Sydney Piano Trio
- 31.10.07, City Recital Hall, Sydney, Australia: Sydney Conservatorium of Music Ensemble/Daryl Pratt
- 19.10.07, Verbrugghen Hall, Sydney, Australia: Sydney Chamber Music Ensemble/Daryl Pratt
- 17.9.07, Lane Cove Public School, NSW, Australia: Lane Cove Public School, NSW, Australia: Cove YO/Mark Brown
- 24.3.08, Carnegie Hall, New York, NY, USA: Cameron St John

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**TUNING IN**

Hindson’s pieces, ‘The Rave and the Nightingale, and Technologic I, go from jarring to austere, from sweet and melodic to jokey and edgy.”
John Woolrich

BCMGB and Knussen premiere “Going a Journey” in UK and Spain

Going a Journey is a commission for large ensemble from Birmingham Contemporary Music Group’s Sound Investment series. The 25-minute work for 16 players was premiered by BCMGB with Oliver Knussen on 23 March in the CBSO Centre, Birmingham. It was later toured to Madrid on 7 May (with Pierre-André Valade conducting) before Knussen joined the group once more for a performance at the Aldeburgh Festival on 15 June that was recorded for future broadcast on BBC Radio 3’s “Hear and Now.”

It’s strangely compelling.

“… takes its title from William Hazlitt, whose 1822 essay “On Going a Journey” entailed the memoirs of his own idiosyncratic and melancholy experience. Hazlitt’s concern was the appreciation of nature in solitude, but his idea applies equally to works of art.

The quirky bottom-heavy instrumentation – there’s no violins or upper wind among the 16 players, but both a contrabassoon and a tuba – generate a darkly mysterious atmosphere in which the musical journey itself matters more than the arrival. It’s strangely compelling.”

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 27 March 2007

Valade tours ‘A Leap in the Dark’ in France

Pierre-André Valade returns to Woolrich’s music later this year when he tours the string orchestra piece A Leap in the Dark with the Orchestra of Rouen Opera. The September tour takes in five French towns in all.

‘In the Mirrors of Asleep’ - Dartington commission

This summer saw Woolrich’s return to the Dartington International Summer School where, for a number of years in the 1990s, he regularly taught.

This year he directed the Advanced Composition Course together with fellow composer Tansy Davies.

There were a number of performances of his works as part of the programme, including an ensemble commission, In the Mirrors of Asleep, given by the US ensemble New Century Players under David Roseboom on 22 August, together with Adagissimo.

Elsewhere, William Howard played a selection from the Pianobooks on 19 August, Ensemble Bash repeated Marichon on 21 August and Blue Dreaming with the Trinity College of Music String Ensemble and Nic Pendlebury on 22 August. In addition, Woolrich’s Fanfare for brass and percussion was performed by members of the Festival Orchestra in Plymouth on 24 August.

“The Elephant from Celebes’ comes to London

Woolrich’s orchestral music has benefited in recent years from the advocacy of the Kensington SO and its music director, Russell Keable.

The relationship bore further fruit on 26 June when they gave the London premiere of The Elephant from Celebes, a 20-minute work inspired by a Max Ernst painting:

‘… his orchestral piece isn’t (or doesn’t appear to be) programmatically representative of the painting, rather it is more of a starting point for a powerfully emotional symphonic creation that is “raw and wild… and finds magical places of stillness.” (To borrow from Russell Keable’s spoken introduction). It’s a dark, sunny work that unleashes waves of sound and is also lightly nimble (in unexpected ways) as well as being no stranger to beauty… some ecstatic lyrical string writing结束 (I am not sure the right English translation of ‘cabinet’ is ‘world’).

The relationship bore further fruit on 26 June when they gave the London premiere of The Elephant from Celebes, a 20-minute work inspired by a Max Ernst painting:

‘… his orchestral piece isn’t (or doesn’t appear to be) programmatically representative of the painting, rather it is more of a starting point for a powerfully emotional symphonic creation that is “raw and wild… and finds magical places of stillness.” (To borrow from Russell Keable’s spoken introduction). It’s a dark, sunny work that unleashes waves of sound and is also lightly nimble (in unexpected ways) as well as being no stranger to beauty… some ecstatic lyrical string writing

Meridian release wind chamber disc

A new all-Woolrich disc of wind music has been released on the Meridian label in performance by the New London Chamber Ensemble.

The disc comprises premiere recordings of A Cabinet of Curiosities (piano and wind, soloist Julian Jacobson), A Book of Studies Nos 1-5 (wind quintet), Durker Still (Op/pno) and Favola in Musica 1 (ob/c/v/pno).

“Woolrich’s individual voice and the unerring craftsmanship with which he constructs and scores each item bind those epigrammatic movements into a cohesive whole. Even the briefest studies sound complete, with nothing essential left unsaid… though much of the music on this disc is open and free, Woolrich also knows how to pull out the stops. When he calls for something more raucous the NLCE responds with a power that belies its small forces.”

BBC Music Magazine (Barry Witherden), Proms edition 2007

‘Violin Concerto’ commission

Woolrich’s next orchestral work will be a Violin Concerto, commissioned for German talent Carolin Widmann to perform with the Northern Sinfonia.

The premiere will take place at the 2008 Aldeburgh Festival with a subsequent date at The Sage Gateshead.
Colin Matthews

‘Alphabicycle Order’ – childrens’ song-cycle

Alphabicycle Order is a 50-minute song-cycle for narrator, children’s voices and orchestra. Setting 26 witty poems by Christopher Reid it was premiered by the Halle Youth Choir and Orchestra with Henry Goodman, conducted by Edward Gardner, as part of the Manchester International Festival on 11 July. The piece was a hit and looks set to be one that will be taken up widely by other choirs. A CD will be released on the Halle’s own label in January 2008.

The Editorial of Gig magazine was devoted entirely to a glowing tribute to the piece in its 17-30 July issue:

‘…a textbook example of how to write for diverse forces in a meaningful, inclusive yet unmistakably individual way.’

‘Amidst all the hype that surrounded Manchester’s first international showcase of original new work, one festival event slipped quietly under the PR radar last week, the premiere of Colin Matthews’s astonishing Alphabicycle Order.

As composer in residence of the city’s Halle Orchestra, Matthews has been producing works of real profundity and imagination. Phile — his imaginative addition to Holst’s Phile-O-rama — was a hit on the first day and for a composer whose music has always been distinctive and distantly communicative, Alphabicycle Order (a setting of wonderfully punning children’s rhymes by Christopher Reid) might not be Matthews’s most serious work but it is an extraordinarily accomplished one.

Brilliantly diverse in its musical language, sympathetic to the wit and wisdom of Reid’s texts and superbly well set for young voices, Alphabicycle Order is a textbook example of how to write by diverse forces in a meaningful, inclusive yet unmistakably individual way.

It’s shameful that the festival’s PR machine couldn’t be bothered to earmark the piece correctly in its own literature and programme notes — nor promote the premiere widely enough to ensure a more than half-empty Bridgewater Hall.

The brand is Making on Sunday. The impression left is that — in its championing of ‘new’ classical composers such as William Gibil and Damon Allen (whose opera Awhow was the headline event of the festival) — ‘contemporary classical creation have been given very little attention.

But quality will always speak out and the quality of Matthews’s latest work, for me, at least, made the inaugural Manchester International Festival worthwhile.’

Gig magazine editorial (Paul Cutts), 17-30 July 2007

‘One of the least promoted of Manchester International Festival world premieres… may well be one that will have a future beyond a first performance… Alphabicycle Order is definitely for children to sing to the rest of us… it is great fun for all concerned and requires rhetorical precision rather than silty voice quality from the singers.

The youngsters (and a few oldsters) of Cantores Roborienses and girls of Eyeland (a country entirely surrounded by triple-forte scored for party poppers.)

‘Matthews’s suite is an ABC of nonsense in which he creates individual sound worlds to describe clock-work chickens or the topography of Eyeland (a country entirely surrounded by one).

One can narrate by other means (footsteps, other strange movements, shushes for the excellent youth choir, which enthusiastically participates in a climactic triple-forte scares for party peepers.)

‘The Guardian (Alfred Hickling), 13 July 2007

John Adams to give London premiere of ‘Reflected Images’

Commissioned by the San Francisco SO, ‘Reflected Images’ is one of Matthews’s most recent orchestral works.

As the composer acknowledges, it doffs a cap to Debussy, in that it was composed at a time when he was also beginning his orchestration of the complete Debussy Preludes. The French composer’s shadowy presence is never far away in this four-movement work that is now to receive its London premiere in a concert being given by the BBC SO and John Adams in the Barbican Hall on 26 October.

‘Berceuse for Dresden’ premiered in Manchester

Berceuse for Dresden was originally a commission from the Friends of Dresden Music Foundation, who sought a suitable occasion to mark the restoration of the beautiful Frauenkirche. so tragically destroyed by Allied bombing in February 1945. The 10-minute Berceuse was premiered on 17 November 2005, by the combination of a British composer, a German cellist (Jan Vogler) and an American orchestra (New York Philharmonic under its music director Lorin Maazel).

Berceuse for Dresden received its UK premiere as part of the Manchester International Cello Festival when Raphael Wallfisch joined the BBC PO and Garry Walker on 2 May.

‘… pitting the solo instrument against garrulously rich textures in the orchestra… but what magic those textures hone, exploring the sound of bells and their overtones, being based on the bells of the Frauenkirche. It is a moving and masterfully written meditation on wartime pain.’

Manchester Evening News (Robert Beadle), 7 May 2007

‘But quality will always speak out and the quality of Matthews’s latest work, for me, at least, made the inaugural Manchester International Festival worthwhile.’

Manchester Evening News (Robert Beadle), 12 July 2007

Selected Forthcoming Performances

Reflected Images

Debussy: Images

16.12.07, Barbican Hall, London, UK

Dobash:

Memminga & S. Fischman, Trump, London, UK: Royal Festival Hall

Dobash:

General Lavine;

Nonpacket Bag, La Grande Dame de lin, La vent dans la plaine

Elegans:

Chaconne

13.10.07, Britten Sinfonia, Barbican Hall, London, UK

Elegans:

String Quartet No 2

23.10.07, BBC, Birmingham, UK: St Paul’s Cathedral

The Journey:

Erik Parnes, Conductress

Fauré: Piano Quintet & Bach/Brahms: Chaconne

4.12.07, BBC, Birmingham, UK: St Paul’s Cathedral

TUNING IN
Nicholas Maw

String Sextet premiered in New York and at Aldeburgh Festival

Nicholas Maw has completed a 25-minute String Sextet, a commission from the celebrated Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York. It was premiered by them in Alice Tully Hall, New York on 27 April 2007.

Subtitled ‘Melodies from Drama’ the single-movement work contains materials from Maw’s opera Sophie’s Choice:

- The product of an accomplished mind, and a mind not enslaved by modern compositional orthodoxies.’ The New York Sun (Jay Nordlinger), 30 April 2007
- ‘... players took turns unfurling long arpeggios over rich, ambiguous chords. Memorable themes returned and collided as the music progressed through a series of dark, ruminative episodes and spirited outbreaks... the finale’s unresolved calm was powerful.’ The New York Times (Steve Smith), 30 April 2007

Maw was in attendance to see the work receive its European premiere as part of the 60th Aldeburgh Festival, when the Aronowitz Ensemble performed it in Aldeburgh Parish Church on 25 June. Their accomplished performance was recorded and later broadcast on BBC Radio 3:

‘It’s a substantial (30-minute), single-movement piece subtitled Melodies from Drama. Four of the most important themes are taken from Maw’s Covent Garden opera Sophie’s Choice, first seen in 2002, where they are associated with the principal characters – Sophie, Norah, Stingo and the Narrator – while two of the opera’s orchestral passages are transcribed and incorporated into the sextet as well.'

The themes are warmly expressive and lyrical, another reminder of Maw’s declared musical aim of picking up the threads of late European romanticism from the point before they morphed into modernism, and developing them. The musical world of the sextet is closer to the Richard Strauss of Metamorphosen or the Schenkerian of Webern’s World than anything else, though there is also something curiously English about the music too, with an echo of Vaughan Williams in the opening moments, as the first theme is announced over earhis, Schubertian-like harmonies. The string writing is rich and sonorous, every theme is supported and carried on detailed textures that must be a delight to play.

The Guardian (Andrew Clements), 25 June 2007

The Aldeburgh Festival also included a performance of Maw’s Romanes Canticum, given by members of the Britten Sinfonia and Anna Dennis on 9 June.

Julia Fischer performs Violin Concerto at Aspen

Maw’s Violin Concerto is held by many to be one of his finest orchestral works. Through its initial performances by Joshua Bell, and his subsequent Sony Classical recording, it gained Maw admirers the world over.

It now has a new champion. German violinist Julia Fischer played the work for the first time at this year’s Aspen Festival, on 29 July, with David Zinman conducting the Festival Orchestra.

German premiere of ‘The World in the Evening’


Sloane conducts the German premiere of The World in the Evening with the Bochumer Symphoniker on 6 and 7 December this year.

Acclaim for Hyperion choral disc

Maw’s choral music has often taken a back-seat in respect to his orchestral output. However, a recent Hyperion Records release looks set attract a new generation of admirers to some of these almost forgotten gems. Included on the disc are One foot in Eden, still I stand and the premiere recording of Three Hymns for SATB chorus and organ.

‘Why so little, and so under-performed? These are the questions begged by this overdue survey of Maw’s choral music, covering a 32 year span. Regenerative and Romantic, his music asks for a totally fresh look at Britten, Vaughan Williams and Berkeley who felt strongly “Englighted youth of my own” “Swete Jesu”, “One foot in Eden still I stand”: these should be amongst the set pieces of English choral music, and I’d be delighted if this disc nudged them into this position.

Schola Cantorum, Oxford’s premier mixed choir connect deeply with Maw’s Romanticism, and gives a rich, sound-driven account... Here Now, says BBC Music Magazine (William Whitehead), June 2007.

‘... a superb example of choral writing performed by a first-class choir. Maw’s choral miniatures... The composer illuminates a text with a rich and resonant array of colour; the occasional accompaniment adds another dimension to the overall sound. Schola Cantorum of Oxford gives an excellent performance and is obviously enjoying every minute. A totally enjoyable experience.” Choir & Organ magazine, May/June 2007
Malcolm Arnold

Malcolm Arnold Festival news
Following the success of last year’s inaugural Malcolm Arnold Festival at Northampton, this year’s event looks to be equally enticing. It will take place over the weekend of 6-7 October and will culminate in a recreation of the famous Deep Purple/Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Royal Albert Hall concert of 1969 that featured Arnold’s Sixth Symphony alongside the first performance of Jon Lord’s Concerto for Rock Group and Orchestra. In Northampton, Paul Mann will conduct the RPO with Jon Lord himself playing keyboards in his own concerto.

Elsewhere in the festival, musicians from the Royal College of Music will perform all the brass Fantasies, and the Oboe Quartet, whilst the Northamptonshire County Training Orchestra perform the Anniversary Overture.

‘The Three Musketeers’ comes to Sadler’s Wells
Northern Ballet Theatre’s highly successful ballet to Arnold’s music, The Three Musketeers, reached the London stage on 5 June this year, following a UK tour. David Nixon is cornering the market with his strong reputation for delivering narrative ballets of the highest order and this is no exception:

‘This feather-tipped, sword-swinging romp is light and sunny, with spilling sets, a composite score by Malcolm Arnold, and crisp, neat dancing. There are good baddies and great moustaches, and sword fights that will knock socks off.’

Evening Standard (Sarah Frente), 7 June 2007

‘This is ballet with “accessible” written all over it. The music is taken from Arnold’s music, Northern Ballet have done it justice.’

Manchester Evening News, 10 May 2007

A CD of the complete ballet score is now available on the Quartz label (see p25).

The Return of Odysseus across the UK
Following the recent premiere CD recording of Arnold’s cantata The Return of Odysseus on the Divine Art label, there has been a resurgence of interest in the 30-minute work.

On 18 March the Leicester Grammar School Choral Society and Orchestra gave a performance; whilst on 7 July the Maidstone Choral Union under Jeffrey Vaughan Martin presented the work in the Mote Hall, Maidstone.

Praise for Maggini Quartet’s Naxos disc
The Maggini Quartet continue to champion British composers for the Naxos label with a new release that surveys the quartet output of Sir Malcolm Arnold. The disc includes both his numbered quartets and the Phantasy ‘Vita abundans’.

‘… makes one realise that these fine works are not far better known. They demonstrate Arnold’s gift of bringing out whatever medium he is using sounds that are utterly original…’

Gramophone (Edward Greenfield), May 2007

‘His second quartet dates from the end of his compositional life, and is quite moving. Certainly his ability to write strikingly memorable tunes sets him far apart from most of his contemporaries, and we can find here in his second quartet, music of real power and substance. It is high time for his reputation to be reassessed.’

Limelight (Australia), July 2007

Decca’s ‘Malcolm Arnold Edition’
Critics have been quick to praise Decca’s new ‘Malcolm Arnold Edition’ – a set of three boxed sets (comprising 17 CDs) that bring together all of the earlier Conifer recordings with performances from the Decca and BMG back catalogues to provide a comprehensive survey of Arnold’s orchestral works, including the complete eleven symphonies, seventeen concerti and selected orchestral, brass and piano pieces with many of the performances conducted by Vernon Handley and Mark Stephenson.

‘A concert suite (arranged by David Elliff) from the little-known ballet Swanway Field is a major rediscovery, however, and well deserves to have a concert existence of its own…’

Manchester Evening News, 10 May 2007

‘For all its extremes of pained introspection and manic exuberance, the Philharmonic Concerto is also a display piece of the finest rank – as Handley’s charged account makes plain.’

International Record Review (Richard Whitehouse), January 2007

‘… music of real power and substance. It is high time for his reputation to be reassessed.’

Selected forthcoming Performances

Peterloo
4.10.07, Muswell Hill Jazz Club, London
5.10.07, Royal Festival Hall, London

Four Cornish Dances
11.10.07, Royal Albert Hall, London
17.10.07, Birmingham Royal Hall, Birmingham

Four Cornish Dances, Peterloo
3.10.07, Union Chapel, London
5.10.07, Portsmouth, UK
10.10.07, Birmingham Royal Hall, Birmingham

Concerto for Trumpet
15.10.07, Sidney, UK
30.10.07, Guildford & Edzell North Church

Malcolm Arnold Festival (6-7 October)

Fantasia for Horn
15.10.07, Town Hall, Southport

Tale, Bruc Quatuor No. 2
15.10.07, Theatre Royal, Norwich

Sanctuary
1.10.07, St John’s College, Cambridge

La Verdi
2.10.07, Brighton & Hove Symphony

Day of the Dead: Malcolm Arnold Centenary
20.10.07, Royal Festival Hall, London

Concerts for Two Pianos (3 Hands)

Forthcoming

Bach: Brandenburg Concertos
22.10.07, Clifton College, Oakham
26.10.07, Royal College of Music, London
27.10.07, Royal Festival Hall, London

A Marriage of Convenience
2.11.07, Royal Festival Hall, London

Concerts for London No. 2

14.10.07, Union Chapel, London
15.10.07, St John’s College, Cambridge

23
In recent years Carl Davis has produced what he fondly refers to as his ‘Ring cycle’ – namely silent film scores to Charlie Chaplin Mutuals set of 12 films, considered by many aficionados to be the pinnacle of Chaplin’s output. The 12 films last between 20 and 25 minutes and Davis has scored all 12 for identical line-ups of 16 (or 17) players.

From 15-18 August this year Davis conducted the first ever performance of the complete cycle of 12 films, spread over four evenings in London’s Cadogan Hall, including the UK premieres of his scores to The Vagabond and The Floorwalker. He was joined by the Royal PO and each evening was presented by a celebrity guest including Richard Briers and Michael Chaplin (Chaplin’s son). All the films were screened on DVD but are also available in their original 35mm format, and on Digibeta.

English National Ballet revive ‘Alice in Wonderland’

The early part of 2007 was a busy period for Davis. Not only was his David Bintley ballet Cyrano premiered with Birmingham Royal Ballet, but his 1995 ballet for Derek Deane and the English National Ballet, Alice in Wonderland, was revived by the ENB on a UK tour that included a number of performances at the London Coliseum.

’... more than just another children’s ballet... Alice in Wonderland is a ballet full of charm and timeless treasure that may restore the faith of those disappointed by ENB’s previous family ballets.’

Dance Now (Katie Phillips), Spring 2007

Harold Lloyd comes to Canary Wharf

Following last year’s successful open-air performance of several of the Chaplin Mutuals in Canary Wharf, Carl Davis returned to London’s Docklands on 25 July this year for a performance of the Harold Lloyd feature, Safety Last.

The film is one of Lloyd’s most celebrated and includes the famous scene where the hero climbs a skyscraper unaided and is left clinging precariously to a clock-face.

Leeds Castle extravaganza

Davis made perhaps his most elaborate entrance ever onto the concert platform prior to his pops concert at Leeds Castle, Kent on 7 July. In-keeping with the concert’s James Bond theme, a Davis look-alike parachuted into the arena, only to be replaced by Davis himself on the podium.

The concert, given with the Royal Liverpool PO also included a performance of Chaplin’s The Immigrant.

‘Ben Hur’ tours Germany

The German conductor Helmut Imig has championed Davis’s silent film scores for a number of years now. He will tour the epic 141-minute score for Fred Niblo’s Ben Hur (1925), starring Ramon Novarro with the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen. It will tour to seven German towns and cities between 19 September and 26 October.

Naxos film music disc

Following the success of Davis’s ballet Aladdin, released on Naxos in 2006, the label are to release another Davis disc later this year.

This time it is a disc of film music, recorded with the Royal Liverpool PO and including Davis’s own Champions: Theme & Grand National, originally written for the film starring John Hurt as jockey Bob Champion, and now forever associated with the Grand National race run annually at Liverpool’s Aintree racecourse.
Benjamin Britten
Two new productions of ‘Death in Venice’ in London & Aldeburgh excite critics

The UK has blessed in recent months with two very contrasting but very successful new productions of Britten’s late masterpiece, Death in Venice.

English National Opera premiered their lavish Deborah Warner production on 24 May, a co-production with La Monnaie (Brussels) and Oper Leipzig. ENO’s new Music Director Edward Gardner took the helm and Ian Bostridge was cast in the leading role of Aschenbach for the first time.

‘… the company’s ongoing Britten series is strengthened by Deborah Warner’s powerfully atmospheric and articulate production, which shows her on superb form… All in all a great night for ENO, and for Britten.’

The Stage (Steven Hall), 25 May 2007

‘… an extraordinary success for ENO… a magnificent achievement.’

The Independent on Sunday (Anna Pickard), 3 June 2007

‘Gardner coaxes the richest palette of colours from his orchestra. These are some of the most telling sounds Britten committed to manuscript. The phrasing of them, at every level, is magnificent… Bostridge gives a performance of deep anguish, pain and passion well up in those aching melismas, and when he does try to utter the three telling words – “I love you” – the sheer effort of will required to get them out, let alone believe them, is heart-rending.’

The Times (Richard Morrison), 4 July 2007

‘You won’t see a more heart-rending production of Benjamin Britten’s swansong opera… It’s an extraordinarily beautiful as Venice itself, and no model of life slipping gently under the waves.

It’s the perfect setting – seductive, Knowing, and impermanent – for his Britten’s touring portrait of Aschenbach.

Making a highly auspicious debut as ENO’s music director, Edward Gardner conducts Britten’s magical score – singing with percussion and allowing harp-pipes, but also underpinned by sonorous, shimmering harmonies – with admirable deftness.

The Times (Richard Macnab), 26 May 2007

‘… the most exquisitely beautiful opera production of either London’s more companies for many a season. This is one of the most-missed operas of the London opera season, and one of ENO’s most compelling in years.’

The Sunday Times (Hugh Canning), 3 June 2007

A few weeks later, the 60th Aldeburgh Festival launched Yoshi Oida’s minimalist production (co-produced with Bregenz Festival and Prague State Opera) in Snape Maltings on 8 June. With Paul Daniel conducting the Britten-Pears Orchestra and Alan Oke a memorable Aschenbach:

‘I don’t recall an operatic event of this august address that has made a fraction of the impact of Yoshi Oida’s magically extreme realisation of Britten’s operatic seas song. The Japanese theatre director has continued a vision of Britten’s late masterpiece both deep in understanding of the text and a brilliant stimulus to the audience’s imagination… an unforgettable operatic evening.’

The Sunday Times (Hugh Canning), 12 June 2007

‘… the beauty and cunning of Britten’s music continues to inspire admiration and wonder… Oke is confirmed as one of the most nakedly musical and intelligent operatic tenors of our day.’

The Times (Hilary Finch), 12 June 2007

We’ve been waiting over a decade for a staged production of Britten’s last opera. Now, within a month of each other, along come two magisterial new, both of them evoking Death in Venice’s dream to rank as his last masterwork – a summation of his slyric art and a profound exploration of the conflicts in his personality, compound under the shadow of mortality. At ENO, Deborah Warner’s staging is cinematographic, fluent and visually sumptuous, more focused on the themes of ageing and creativity than on the tragedy of infatuation with an unattainable object. At Aldeburgh, Yoshi Oida, best known as an actor closely involved with Peter Brook’s production of Curlew River, takes a different but complementary view.

Both productions were the most moving of the season, and they reinforce the claim to rank as his valedictory opera. Now, within a month of each other, along come two magnificent ones, both of them vindicating Britten’s decision from many years ago to hundreds of his own desire for a beautiful teenage boy.

How moving it was to experience this opera in the hall where it received its première. I guess that this superb performance 34 years later will have made Britten’s ghost very happy.

Daily Telegraph (Rupert Christiansen), 11 June 2007

‘What director Yoshi Oida has given us is no less a re-styling for the 21st century. Tuning nervously into a virtue, he has used the limited facilities of the stage at the Maltings just as they are – a bare brick wall at the back, no sets, few props, with water and fire acting as the only elements to illustrate the atmosphere… Only the original production has ever been more moving.’

Financial Times (Richard Fairman), 12 June 2007

‘Britten’s score – thrillingly and sensitively interpreted by Paul Daniel, who conducts the Britten-Pears Orchestra using an unlimited range of shimmering colour and dynamic intensity – shines a copious, from the top, and written-out, at the top of his game, in music that is intense, extraordinary, magical.

It has taken a long time for ‘Death in Venice’ to be revived in the setting for which it was written, but performed with such conviction as this, it has been worth the wait.’

The Independent (Jane Hallatt), 4 July 2007

“Paul Bunyan” in Bregenz
In addition to staging the Yoshio Oida production of Death in Venice (see above) the Bregenz Festival also mounted a new production of Paul Bunyan this season, a co-production with Volksoper Wien and Opernhaus Luzern. It opened in Bregenz on 27 July, directed by Nicholas Broadhurst and conducted by Stuart Bedford.

The Sunday Times (Jonas Borchert), 30 July 2007

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The Sunday Times (Jonas Borchert), 30 July 2007

PHOTO: NEIL LIBBERT

WE BOSTRIDGE AS ASCHENBACH IN THE ENO PRODUCTION OF ‘DEATH IN VENICE’

Selected Performances

Cabinet Songs 3-22 June, Linz, Austria

Curtewiner, Verdi, modern, USA: Seattle SO/Gerard Schwarz

29.9.07, Groenmarktkerk, Leuven: The Young Apollo suit on English Folk Tunes

The Company of Heaven

The Burning Farm/Furioso & The Prodigal Sun

Johnson Over Jordan Suite

Russet Funeral

Owen Wingrave

Paul Bunyan

The Company of Heaven

Curtewiner

Death in Venice

Paul Bunyan

The Company of Heaven
SPOTLIGHT ON…

BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Phaedra Op 93 (1975)

Dramatic cantata for mezzo-soprano & small orchestra

‘For Janet Baker’

Duration 15 minutes

Words from Robert Lowell’s translation of Racine’s Phèdre

Instr: timp - perc(2) cymb/tam-t/TD/BD/susp.cym - harpsichord - strings

FP: 16.6.76, 29th Aldeburgh Festival, Snape Maltings, UK: Janet Baker/English Chamber Orchestra/Steuart Bedford (harpsichord)

Full score 0-571-51099-X, vocal score 0-571-50521-X on sale, parts for hire

About the work

Phaedra was written as a vehicle for the remarkable talents of Dame Janet Baker. Modelled on the Italian Baroque cantatas of Handel, the series of arias for voices and strings and recitatives for voice with continuo result in an extraordinarily taut and economical work, both intense and emotionally charged. Containing enough drama to sustain a full-length opera, Phaedra is a microcosm of that form, a remarkable scena, and Britten’s final vocal masterpiece.

Press Comments

… a work of overwhelming force and certainty, perhaps even his most brilliant achievement since Curlew River.

The Observer (Stephen Walsh), 20 June 1976

A stunning experiment in the field of dramatic music.

The Daily Telegraph (Peter Staniford), 17 June 1976

In effect Britten has been inspired to create an opera in microcosm… its concentration in four tautly-drawn sections, ending in a powerful Pavanello death scene, speaks in a recognisably individual Britten voice, marvellous to the art of a great singing actress.

The Guardian (Edward Greenfield), 17 June 1976

… has an extraordinary bleakness, the cold shine in waterweight. The instruments, mainly strings and percussion, are systematically drained of color, yet the focal moments offer some of the most delicate orchestration ever written.

The New York Times (Bernard Holland), 19 February 1994

Selected Recordings

- Dame Janet Baker/English Chamber Orchestra/Steuart Bedford. Decca 00289 475 6029 (10-disc set); Decca 00289 475 1612 (5-disc set); Decca 00289 475 6662

- Ann Murray, English Chamber Orchestra/Steuart Bedford. Naxos 8.557199


- Joan Rigby/Ensemble/Lionel Friend. Hyperion CDH55235

- Felicity Palmer/Ensemble Ensemble/John Whitfield. BM Classics CDC 74225/2

- Christina Esa-Piecre/Ensemble Instrumental Audax/John-Walter Audax. Aeon ARM 438824

Selected singers who have sung ‘Phaedra’

Dame Janet Baker; Sarah Walker; Jill Gomez; Felicity Palmer; Sally Burgess; Lorraine Hunt Lieberson; Susan Bickley; Jessye Norman; Ano Murray; Della Jones; Pamela Helen Stephen; Joan Rigby; Jane Irwin; Louise Winter; Christiana Esa-Piecre; Catherine Wyn-Rogers; Sarah Connolly; Alice Coote.

Staging

Given its dramatic nature it is, perhaps, unsurprising to find that on several occasions Phaedra has actually been staged.

Programming ideas

Phaedra was premiered at the Aldeburgh Festival in June 1976, alongside Mozart’s Symphony No 33 in Bb K.319, the UK premiere of Doria (1975) by Arne Nordheim and Richard Strauss’s suite Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme.

Some other programming ideas for Phaedra include:

Benjamin Britten: Young Apollo (1939) (solo piano, string quartet and string orchestra) 10’

Benjamin Britten/C Matthews: Temporal Variations (1936/arr 94) (solo oboe and string orchestra) 15’

Georg Benjamin: Upon Silence (1990) (mezzo-soprano and string ensemble), 10’

Hector Berlioz: La mort de Cléopâtre (1829) (Phaedra has been performed alongside Berlioz’s cantata several times, most notably, by Jessye Norman) 22’

Jonathan Harvey: Songs of Li Po (2002) (scored for exactly the same forces as Phaedra) 15’

Gustav Holst: Soudi (1909) (Holst’s chamber opera was performed with Phaedra and Harvey’s Songs of Li Po at the 2002 Aldeburgh Festival) 30’
SELECTED MUSIC FOR VIOLA

VIOLA & ORCHESTRA

Hansalekhar, Oranga, Meditation, Reflection, Meditation, Meditation, Meditation. FP: 16.11.97, City of London Sinfonia, David Atherton.

Benjamin Britten: Reflection Op 21 (1920)
3 movements. FP: 17.2.71, BBC SSO, Sir Colin Davis (viola, 2nd mvt). Score & parts 0-571-50567-8 on sale.

VIOLA & PIANO

Peter Sculthorpe: Tailitnama Song (2000)
viola & piano, or solo viola. 6 minutes. Solo viola version 0-571-56568-9 (fp) on sale.

viola and strings. 13 movements. FP: 20.11.00, BBC SSO, Peter Sculthorpe (viola). Score & parts for hire.

Peter Sculthorpe: Sonata for Viola and Percussion (1960)
viola & 6 percussion. 12 minutes. FP: July 1960, Attingham Park Summer School. Score 0-571-521275 on sale.

JOHN WOOLRICH

Through a Limbeck (2002)
viola concerto. FP: 3.7.02, The Court Hall, Eaton, Cumbria, Jonnie Atkinson. Score 0-571-52069-5 on sale.

VIOLA & ENSEMBLE

SOLO VIOLA

Benjamin Britten: Elegy for Solo Viola (1930)
viola solo + piano. FP: 16.11.30, Aldeburgh Festival. Score 0-571-50484-8 on sale.

Jonathan Harvey: Chant (1992/94)

David Matthews: Darkness Draws In Op 192 (2006)
31 minutes. FP: 7.8.06, the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, Isle of Man. Compete.

VIOLA & PIANO

3 movements. FP: 12.11.93, The Court Hall, Eaton, Cumbria, Jonnie Atkinson. Score 0-571-52069-5 on sale.

viola concerto. FP: 3.7.02, The Court Hall, Eaton, Cumbria, Jonnie Atkinson. Score 0-571-52069-5 on sale.

VIOLA DUO

George Benjamin: Viola, Viola (1997)
viola concerto. FP: 12.11.97, BBC SSO, Sir Colin Davis. Score 0-571-521275 on sale.

viola & 3 players + piano. FP: 13.8.91, Detroit International Summer Music Festival. Score 0-571-52293-4 on sale.

VIOLA PLUS ONE

Sir Malcolm Arnold: Duo for Flute & Viola Op 10 (1945)

Peter Sculthorpe: Sonata for Viola and Percussion (1960)
viola & 3 players + piano. FP: 12.11.60, Milton Road School. Score & parts for hire.

VIOLA & ORCHESTRA

viola concerto. FP: 16.11.97, City of London Sinfonia, David Atherton.

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3 movements. FP: 17.2.71, BBC SSO, Sir Colin Davis (viola, 2nd mvt). Score & parts for hire.

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NEW WORKS FROM THE PERFORMANCE DEPARTMENT

Stage Works

BENJAMIN BRITTEN/ARR D MATTHEWS

Owen Wingrave (1971/arr 2007)
Annoyance of three voices and orchestra for soloist, narrator and accompaniment of 3 players by David Matthews. Duration: 15 mins. World premiere by Noyes Pipe [Eng]. OXFORD UNIVERSITY CHOIR, RICHARD FOOKES (bass) (arr D. Matthews), TIM RITTET (cello), ANNE MATHIESON (tuba), AMANDA POWELL (concertina), GRAEME SMITH (percussion). FP: 25.5.07: Cartmel Priory, Cartmel, Cumbria. (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 14.6.07.)

Orchestral

THOMAS ADÉS

Overture, Wool & Finale from Powder Her Face (2007)
Orchestras: Darton 12 mins. (rev) (2=picc. 2=fl. 2=cl. 2=cor. 2=trb. 2=tpt. 2=ten. 2=bar. 2=cel. 2=trp. 2=tb. 3.1. perc. harp 4-3-3 strings). Commissioned by the Hallé Concerts Society. FP: 11.7.07: Bridgewater Hall, Manchester: Hallé Youth Choir/Cantores SATB chorus and large orchestra. Duration c30 mins. Text: Christopher Reid (Eng).

JONNY GREENWOOD


MATTHEW HINDSON

Postlude – M.Croche (2007)
Chamber/orchestral work for violin and 11 players. Duration 15 mins. Commissioned by the Birmingham Symphony Hall, funded with the assistance of the Arts Council England. FP: 28.4.07: Birmingham Symphony Hall, Birmingham: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 21.4.07.) Commissioned by the Musica Viva Festival, Bendigo (Australia) and by the RPO, Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia) Commissioned by the RPO.

Chamber/Instrumental

ALKACI (2007)
Sinfonia concertante for two ondes martenot and chamber ensemble of 12 players. FP: 27.3.07: Epiphany Festival, St John‘s Smith Square, London: City of London Sinfonia/Rory MacDonald.

JONNY GREENWOOD

Sprechgesang (2007)
For solo voice and chamber ensemble of 13 players. Commissioned by the Royal College of Music, London. (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 21.4.07.) Commissioned by the Birmingham Symphony Hall, funded with the assistance of the Arts Council England. FP: 28.4.07: Birmingham Symphony Hall, Birmingham: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 21.4.07.) Commissioned by the Musica Viva Festival, Bendigo (Australia) and by the RPO, Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia) Commissioned by the RPO.

MATTHEW HINDSON

Light Music (2007)
Wind quintet. Duration 20 mins. Commissioned by the Birmingham Symphony Hall, funded with the assistance of the Arts Council England. FP: 28.4.07: Birmingham Symphony Hall, Birmingham: Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 21.4.07.) Commissioned by the Musica Viva Festival, Bendigo (Australia) and by the RPO, Melbourne (Australia), Sydney (Australia) Commissioned by the RPO.

JOHN WOOLRICH

In the Mirrors of Asleep (2007)
Chamber ensemble of 12 players. Duration 9 mins. Commissioned by Dartington International Summer School. FP: 23.8.07, Dartington Hall, Devon: (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 23.8.07.)

VOCAL/CHORAL

JULIAN ANDERSON

Macbeth (2007)

COLIN MATTHEWS

Alphabetsic Order (2007)
Chamber, children’s chorus and orchestra. Duration 15 mins. Commissioned by the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester. FP: 25.5.07: Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester: (Recorded for BBC Radio 3, broadcast 14.6.07.)

DAVID MATTHEWS

### SELECTED NEW PUBLICATIONS & RECORDINGS

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  - String quartet
  - B-571762

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  - Orchestra. Score B-571-52247-5 £16.95
- **Dance Poem; Dance Rhapsody; Unfinished Symphony**
  - Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Conductor Sir Roger Norrington
  - Lyrita SRCD.243

**FRANK BRIDGE**

- **Isabella**
  - Orchestra. Score B-571-52247-5 £16.95
- **Dance Poem; Dance Rhapsody; Unfinished Symphony**
  - Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Conductor Sir Roger Norrington
  - Lyrita SRCD.243

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- **Sinfonietta**
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**DEBUSSY/COLIN MATTHEWS**

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  - Orchestra. Scores B-571-52412-5, B-571-52410-9, B-571-52428-1 £7.95 each

**MATTHEW HINDSON**

- **Rave-Elation (Schindosnki Mix)**
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  - SATB unaccomp. Score B-571-52961-5 (Faber New Choral Works) £2.95

**NICHOLAS MAW**

- **Voices of Memory**
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**SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY**

- **Ecce Cor Meum**
  - Mezzo-soprano, SATB chorus & orchestra. Vocal score. Score B-571-52947-X £24.95
- **Ecce Cor Meum: Choral Suite**
  - SATB unaccomp. & SATB/org. Score B-571-52084-7 £tbc

**TORSTEN RASCH**

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  - Piano trio. Score B-571-52349-4 £24.95

**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**

- **Heroic Elegy & Triumphal March**
  - String quartet. Score B-571-52274-9 £24.95
- **Two Part Songs**
  - Two part songs for two voices (pp. 22-77). Score B-571-52685-6 £7.95

**JONNY GREENWOOD**

- **smear**
  - London Sinfonietta/Martyn Brabbins
  - London Sinfonietta Jerwood Series SINF CD2-20060

**KENNETH HESETH**

- **Diagiblit’s Dances**
  - Royal Northern College of Music Wind Ensemble/Clark Rundell
  - Chandos CHAN 1049

**JOEY GOODWIN**

- **Winter Remembered**
  - Soprano/brass ensemble/chorus/George Vass
  - Delphian CD DDL 2006

**DAVID MATTHEWS**

- **From Sea to Sky; A Congress of Passions; Movement of Autumn; Total Tango; The Sleeping Lord; Goodnight Song; Aubade**
  - Delphian CD DDL 2006

**JOHN WOODRUFF**

- **A Book of Studies Sets 1-3; Darber Still; A Cabinet of Curiosities**
  - Julian Bradshaw/New London Chamber Ensemble
  - Delphian CD DDL 2006
Carl Davis
Carl Davis composed the score for the new drama series *The Cranford Chronicles*, one of the highlights of the BBC’s Autumn schedule. Based on three novels by Elizabeth Gaskell, the 5-part series stars Dame Judi Dench and was created by Sue Birtwistle and Susie Conklin. Sue Birtwistle was the force behind the BBC’s immensely-successful *Pride and Prejudice*, for which Carl also composed the music.

Adrian Johnston
Talkback Thames are producing two new dramas by the acclaimed Stephen Poliakoff this year, destined as usual for BBC1 transmission. The first, *Capturing Mary*, was shot earlier in the year and the composer for both, as for all of Poliakoff’s earlier dramas, is Faber Music’s Adrian Johnston. The latest film score to come from Adrian is for *Sparkle*, a film by Neil Hunter and Tom Hunsinger which stars Bob Hoskins, Stockard Channing and Lesley Manville. It is being released this Autumn.

Simon Lacey
The feature film *Good*, first reported in Fortissimo in 2005 but which then ran into difficulties, has now (we are delighted to say) successfully completed its shoot in Hungary.

Simon Lacey provided arrangements of Mahler for this film based on the stage play by C.P. Taylor, which examines how “good” people could be sucked into the evils of German national socialism. Directed by Vicente Amorim, the film stars Viggo Mortensen and Lesley Manville. It is being released this Autumn.

Evelyn Glennie
During the months of June and July, music by Evelyn Glennie (originally composed for a different commercial) was used in a television commercial for Sky services on RTE in Ireland.

Marc Sylvan
Meanwhile Marc Sylvan continues to enjoy success in the world of entertainment television. Recent commissions include the quiz show Pay Day for Channel 5 and ITV’s highly-successful *Goldenballs*.

Simon Rogers
Simon Rogers has been busy this year composing four further episodes in SMG Productions’ long-running *Rebus*, based on the Ian Rankin stories. Additionally, the latest *Dalziel & Pascoe* episode (BBC) for which he composed the music was broadcast on 21st June.

Robert Neufeld
Congratulations are due to Faber Music Media’s Robert Neufeld, who has been nominated for an Emmy Award (new and documentary film category) for his work on the documentary film *Titanic’s Final Moments: the Missing Pieces* (made for The History Channel in the US)
discussion of the final years, when Coltrane lost many of
much enduring music and one crossover hit, the ecstatic
recordings of Coltrane's classic quartet, which produced
of passage for every virtuoso since. He discusses the
Giant Steps
through his breakthrough recordings for Atlantic, notably
unforgettable collaborations with Miles Davis, and on
journeyman outings in the early 1950s to his
the astonishing diversity of Coltrane's work, from the
prose what musicians actually do. He applies that gift to
does something much more valuable: he writes about the
gives an elegant narrative of Coltrane's life. Instead, he
attempting to present a full biography here, though he
controversial musical pioneer. Ben Ratliff is not
documented on record.
musicians have had their work so obsessively
years has been able to escape his influence, and few
of fascination. No young saxophonist of the past forty
Armstrong or Ellington, nor even Charlie Parker –
contributors to the history of jazz. No one – not
one of half a dozen truly fundamental
John Coltrane, who died aged forty in 1967, is
Ben Ratliff
Coltrane
Zahrádka.
Dr Stephen Lock and Janácek's finances by Dr Jirí
volume 1 including discussions of Janácek's health by
Janácek's operas and continue other topics explored in
late works. Contextual chapters examine aspects of
Stösslová, whom he saw as the inspirer of many of his
elderly composer wrote most of his best-known works.
to the magnificent creative flowering in which the
Jenufa
. This led to international fame and fortune and
outbreak of the First World War and at the time of
Janácek's lowest ebb. Within two years, however, his
fortunes were transformed by the Prague production of
Jenufa. This led to international fame and fortune and
to the magnificent creative flowering in which the
elderly composer wrote most of his best-known works.
his personal life was affected by his public affair with
Gabriela Horvátová and his friendship with Kamila
Stošková, whom he saw as the inspirer of many of his
late works. Contextual chapters examine aspects of
Janácek's operas and continue other topics explored in
volume 1 including discussions of Janácek's health by
Dr Stephen Lock and Janácek's finances by Dr Jiri
Zahrádka.
Volume 1 (The Lonely Blackbird)
opens at the
Janácek -Volume 2
(Tsar of the Forests)
John Tyrrell
John Tyrrell's biography of the Czech
composer Leos Janácek is the culmination
of a life's work in the field. It stands upon
his existing documentary studies of Janácek's operas
and translations of other key sources and his
examination of thousands of still unpublished letters
and other documents in the Janácek archive in Brno.
Together it provides the most detailed account of
Janácek's life in any language and offers new views of
Janácek as composer, writer, thinker and human being.
Volume 2 (Tale of the Forests) opens at the
outbreak of the First World War and at the time of
Janácek's lowest ebb. Within two years, however, his
fortunes were transformed by the Prague production of
Jenufa. This led to international fame and fortune and
to the magnificent creative flowering in which the
elderly composer wrote most of his best-known works.
his listeners, and Philip Larkin accused him of ugly
noisemaking, is a model of critical
intelligence.
Ben Ratliff, son of American and
British parents, is the jazz critic of the
New York Times and is the author of
Jazz: A Critic's Guide to the 100 Most
Important Recordings.
The Complete Book of Aunts
Rupert Christiansen
"Knowledgeable and chatty, occasionally briskly acerbic, rather
like an ideal aunt itself."
Sunday Telegraph
Lovable aunts, exotic aunts, seductive
aunts, sad, mad and bad aunts, aunts in
jail and aunts on the razzle - here is a
delightful and entertaining guide to the
most misunderstood of relatives. Taking his
own beloved aunt Janet as a starting point,
Rupert Christiansen embarks on a
celebration of aunts and their influential role
throughout history.
"A wonderful treasure hunt to discover the
best, worst, naughtiest, nastiest and most
glamorous aunts in twentieth-century life
and literature."
Kathryn Hughes, Guardian
"Many an aunt, or even uncle, will be
extremely pleased to find this pocket-sized
book in their Christmas stocking."
Geordie Greig, Literary Review
Coltrane
Ben Ratliff
John Coltrane, who died aged forty in 1967, is
one of half a dozen truly fundamental
contributors to the history of jazz. No one – not
Armstrong or Ellington, nor even Charlie Parker –
inspires quite the same mystique or continuing intensity
of fascination. No young saxophonist of the past forty
years has been able to escape his influence, and few
musicians have had their work so obsessively
documented on record.
Coltrane is the first book to do justice to this great and
controversial musical pioneer. Ben Ratliff is not
attempting to present a full biography here, though he
gives an elegant narrative of Coltrane's life. Instead, he
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saxophonist's unique sound.
Ratliff has an unrivalled ability to explain in literate
prose what musicians actually do. He applies that gift to
the astonishing diversity of Coltrane's work, from the
journeyman outings in the early 1950s to his
unforgettable collaborations with Miles Davis, and on
through his breakthrough recordings for Atlantic, notably
Giant Steps - whose fiendish title track has become a rite
of passage for every virtuoso since. He discusses the
recordings of Coltrane's classic quartet, which produced
much enduring music and one crossover hit, the ecstatic
A Love Supreme. Ratliff's sober and sympathetic
discussion of the final years, when Coltrane lost many of
By Kathryn Knight, Publishing Director at Faber Music Ltd

It was 20 February, 2007. The day began like many others a deluge of emails, back-to-back meetings and several books going off to print. But then a colleague appeared at my doorway: “don’t leave your desk; Paul McCartney’s going to ring you in five minutes!” Five minutes later, I was indeed talking to one of the “Fab Four” about a project that was very close to his heart: *Ecce Cor Meum.*

*Ecce Cor Meum* started life in 1998, stemming from an invitation to compose it from Anthony Smith (President, 1998-2005, of Magdalen College, Oxford) who wanted to celebrate the opening of the college’s new concert hall. McCartney and his wife subsequently visited the college, savouring the diverse choral repertoire led by Bill Ives. The project was just getting underway, thanks to the encouraging support of John Harle, when Linda died of cancer in April 1998.

The five-movement work became McCartney’s tribute to Linda, in particular the yearning Interlude – the central movement and heart of the piece – which he wrote in the midst of his grief for her. But this impetus for the work wasn’t immediately clear to McCartney himself. To begin with, he did what he does best – crafting a series of wonderful lyrical melodies – but needed to be inspired to write the ‘right’ text. It was only when he saw a statue depicting the Crucifixion, under which was inscribed *Ecce Cor Meum* or “Behold My Heart” that he realised this was the starting point he needed.

A first version of *Ecce Cor Meum* was performed at the Sheldonian Theatre three years later. Following more work and revisions, the 5-minute work was finally recorded in March 2006 with EMI Classics. Kate Royal was soprano soloist, with the Boys of Magdalen College Choir Oxford, and King's College Cambridge, London Voices and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Following the premiere in November that year, the work was hailed as a phenomenal success, and the recording was awarded the Album of the Year Classical BRIT award in May 2007.

But McCartney had now caught the bug for choral music, many people had said that they loved the rich seam of melodies in the oratorio, and had asked him if he could create an a cappella version of the work reduced for more practical resources. McCartney had a vision of a condensed work that choirs across the land and beyond could enjoy. He wanted to maintain the five-orchestra a professional choir and a boys’ choir – a practical resource. McCartney discreetly arrives at the Chapel and sits under the organ by Christopher Whitton. After the concert McCartney stays on for half an hour chatting enthusiastically to the star-struck teenagers surrounding him, as they poster him with questions about his days with the Beatles... joking the students about the experience: “I speak (with smiles they just can’t wipe off their faces) of meeting McCartney as ‘awesome’ and a ‘living legend’; they loved the piece, one saying ‘it was a challenge, but it was so singable.’ It was a very special occasion and not one person there would ever forget the day they had the chance to partake in the premiere of *Ecce Cor Meum* Choral Suite in the presence of Britain’s greatest national treasure, Sir Paul McCartney.

*Ecce Cor Meum: Choral Suite* (Faber Music Ltd in association with MPL) 0-571-04076-3. A beautiful, sunny day on 18 July: the Chapel at Eton College. The students on the Eton Choral Course have been rehearsing the *Choral Suite* for several days as a part of an informal programme devised and conducted by Parry. Despite a hectic schedule, McCartney has agreed to attend this premiere performance – and the students are buzzing with anticipation. Having got there early to share tea with the choir, McCartney discretely arrives at the Chapel and sits under the organ.

The performance is a huge success: the ‘Interlude’ is beautiful, and the last movement ‘Ecce Cor Meum’ (vibrant, celebratory and life-affirming) is brilliantly accompanied on the organ by Christopher Whitton. After the concert McCartney stays on for half an hour chatting enthusiastically to the star-struck teenagers surrounding him, as they poster him with questions about his days with the Beatles... joking the students about the experience: they speak (with smiles they just can’t wipe off their faces) of meeting McCartney as ‘awesome’ and a ‘living legend’; they loved the piece; one saying ‘it was a challenge, but it was so singable.’ It was a very special occasion and not one person there would ever forget the day they had the chance to partake in the premiere of *Ecce Cor Meum* Choral Suite in the presence of Britain’s greatest national treasure, Sir Paul McCartney.

The choral-orchestral work *Ecce Cor Meum* is also available in a a cappella edition (Faber Music Ltd in association with MPL) 0-571-04075-5, 15% of royalties from all printed and electronic sales will be donated to a breast cancer care charity.