

Quarternotes

October 2011

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Currier Time Machines

Sebastian Currier's concerto for Anne-Sophie Mutter, premiered by the New York Philharmonic in June, was recently released by DG and travels to Europe in January.



Photo: Chris Lae/DG

Anne-Sophie Mutter and Sebastian Currier at rehearsals for the premiere of Time Machines in New York

American composer Sebastian Currier has enjoyed a creative relationship with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter lasting close on 20 years. Their latest collaboration, *Time Machines*, is his first violin concerto and was premiered in June by the New York Philharmonic under the baton of its Music Director Alan Gilbert. Their interpretation was released on disc in September by Deutsche Grammophon (0289 477 9359 5), and further performances by Mutter are scheduled in Germany and Switzerland in January.

The seven movements of *Time Machines* explore the relationship between music and time, moving far beyond the simple aspect of duration. Across the 28-minute span Currier focuses on such phenomena as reverberation, reversal and decay. What emerges to the listener is a suite of individually characterised movements, crafted for Mutter's virtuosity, with the

orchestra providing constantly shifting perspectives on the soloist's material.

"Though this work is driven by Mr. Currier's handling of rhythm and time, the music's harmonic allure and textural richness were often its most striking qualities... In the first movement, *Fragmented Time*, the violin plays a near-continuous line of buzzing, fitful notes, riffs and chords... *Delay Time* is like an eerie prolongation of a reverberating sound. *Compressed Time*, true to its title, is all wired energy and abrupt phrases, with the violin tossing off a stream of 16th notes that could be some crazed perpetual-motion toccata... With Mr. Currier's acute ear and sensitivity to color, whole passages of the piece were rapturously beautiful, especially the mystical final movement, *Harmonic Time*." *New York Times*

"Sebastian Currier is the only composer I have heard who brings our aesthetic sensibilities into the 21st century... *Time Machines* is like a holographic set of variations. Linear variations – the stuff of Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms – are easy enough to decipher. But Mr. Currier, taking a few

notes from an opening movement, eschews what is obvious, and goes straight toward a quantum leap of space and time... Like the finest of modern painters, Mr. Currier has a variety of counterpoints in the background, instruments enjoying their own dialogues and intriguing conversations, as Ms. Mutter plunged ahead." *ConcertoNet*

Currier's harp concerto, *Traces*, received its US premiere at the Grand Teton Festival in July with soloist Naoko Yoshino and conductor Osmo Vänskä. The work was composed for Marie-Pierre Langlamet and premiered in 2009 by the Berliner Philharmoniker and Donald Runnicles.

Next Atlantis, combining strings (quartet or orchestral), electronics and video by Pawel Wojtacki, receives performances in Miami and New York this autumn. The 12-minute work offers reflections on the water that is both the life-blood and nemesis for cities like New Orleans, looking towards a future when man and nature return to balance.

Time Machines in Europe

Anne-Sophie Mutter
SWR Symphony Orchestra/Michael Francis
January 2012
20 Stuttgart (German premiere) 26 Essen
23 Friedrichshafen 27 Düsseldorf
24 Basel (Swiss premiere) 28 Hamburg

Stravinsky Petrushka project

2011 is the centenary of the premiere of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and a new website explores the pioneering ballet and collects resources from a unique educational project in the city of Bochum. In 2007 the Ruhr Piano Festival and Iniativkreis Ruhr mounted a colourful event in the city's Jahrhunderthalle, creating a modern equivalent of the St Petersburg Shrovetide fair in Stravinsky's work. This combined children, young people and adults from the region, with the Bochum Symphony Orchestra and conductor Steven Sloane performing to an audience of 1500, many of whom had never experienced classical music before.

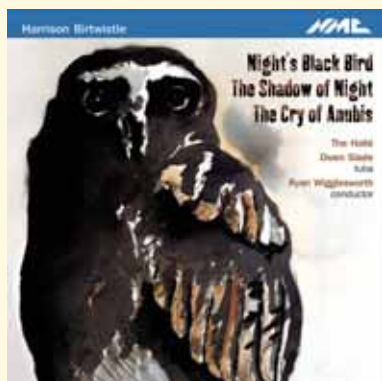
In the run-up to the performance, 130 school children participated in numerous workshops where they engaged with Stravinsky's masterpiece through music, dance and art. At the fair itself, visitors discovered street musicians, jugglers, acrobats, puppeteers and magicians. Crucial to the project was cultural interchange, realised through different theatrical traditions from Turkish shadow-theatre to Venetian carnival masks, and food stalls from many nations. Giant puppets created in the art workshops roamed the fair and the *Petrushka* choreography workshoped in schools was performed with live orchestra.



The new website, in English and German, includes an interactive score of sections of *Petrushka*, and extensive background information on the complete work in the form of texts, images, video and audio. The detailed teachers' notes and classroom materials by Richard McNicol provide an invaluable resource for future education projects.

Visit www.petruschka-klavierfestival.de

Birtwistle Gramophone award



NMC's acclaimed disc of three recent Harrison Birtwistle orchestral works has won the 2011 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Best Contemporary Recording. The disc features *The Hallé* conducted by Ryan Wigglesworth in the Dowland-inspired diptych of *The Shadow of Night* and *Night's Black Bird*, with Owen Slade as tuba soloist in *The Cry of Anubis*. The recording was supported by Roche and Arts Council England.

BBC Music Magazine summed up the NMC disc as "an essential release... these are among the most powerful orchestral pieces of recent years", while the *New York Times* observed how "the music is a gripping procession of half-lighted swirls, plaintive melodic gestures and stark, violent outbursts". *The Shadow of Night* has emerged as one of Birtwistle's most frequently programmed orchestral works, with 30 performances over the decade since its premiere, conducted by maestros including Christoph von Dohnányi, Franz Welser-Möst, Ingo Metzmacher and Jonathan Nott.

2011 is proving to be a vintage year for Birtwistle, including first performances of his new *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* in Boston, New York and London and the UK premiere of his cantata *Angel Fighter*, retelling Jacob's wrestling with the divine. His new work for the London Sinfonietta, *In Broken Images*, unveiled at the MITO festival in Italy in September, is due to receive its UK premiere at the Southbank Centre next May, conducted by David Atherton.

At the BBC Proms *The Telegraph* described Teztlaff's remarkable performance in the violin concerto: "There are moments of eye-catching bouncing-bow virtuosity, passages where the violin flings itself heroically against the orchestra, and long-breathed melodies, tinged with the deeply melancholy hue that is Birtwistle's hallmark... The BBC Symphony Orchestra under David Robertson captured all the different colours – the ticking, chiming mechanisms, the horn chorales and the deep slow string polyphony – with riveting clarity."

Birtwistle on Birtwistle

View a new 13-minute Birtwistle web documentary, filmed at the composer's home, by scanning the code with your smartphone or visiting www.boosey.com/av



Download the scan app from www.i-nigma.com.

Britten Pagodas in Japan

Benjamin Britten's only ballet, *The Prince of the Pagodas*, travels back to its roots in the Far East this autumn with its first Japanese staging. The new choreography by David Bintley is unveiled on 30 October at the New National Theatre in Tokyo with Paul Murphy conducting the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra. The staging is a co-production with Birmingham Royal Ballet, who will present the ballet in the UK in January/February 2014 as one of the closing highlights of the Britten centenary (2013).

David Bintley's choreography of *The Prince of the Pagodas* will be the third the ballet has received. The three-act work was first created by John Cranko for the Royal Ballet in London in 1957, and was newly choreographed by Kenneth MacMillan in 1989, emphasising the narrative elements of Princess Rose's journey to Pagoda Land, searching for her long-lost brother transformed into a golden salamander. MacMillan created the lead role for the 20-year-old Darcey Bussell, launching her career, and the production did much to revive interest in Britten's colourful score. The MacMillan choreography is revived by the Royal Ballet in London in June 2012.



The new Bintley version combines an updated plot with all-new choreography, drawing inspiration from the visual world of Japanese ukiyo-e paintings by Kuniyoshi and the gestural language of Noh theatre to complement Britten's Balinese gamelan soundworld. David Bintley has been considering a new version of *The Prince of the Pagodas* for more than 30 years, prompted by a suggestion from Dame Ninette de Valois. As director of both National Ballet of Japan and Birmingham Royal Ballet he is realising a dream of creating "a fusion of British and Japanese culture and mythologies".

Other plans for worldwide celebrations of Britten's centenary in 2013 are gathering momentum. In the operatic sphere, far-flung territories are planning first Britten stagings, including South America, China, Russia, Israel, Japan and New Zealand. Repertoire is extending beyond *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd* and *The Turn of the Screw*, to rarer operas such as *Gloriana*. Please let us know of your centenary plans by contacting composers.uk@boosey.com.

The Britten-Pears Foundation has announced that plans are approved for a new purpose-built archive centre in the grounds of The Red House in Aldeburgh, where the composer lived and worked. The landmark building by architects Stanton Williams will enable the collection to be housed in a single location for the first time. The building project will commence on 22 November, Britten's birthday, and is due to open in the centenary year.

Dean Fire Music



Photo: Mark Coulson

Brett Dean discusses his new work Fire Music, forming the centrepiece of a Stockholm festival devoted to his music, taking the stage with Australian Ballet, and featured in a Total Immersion day in London.

How were the starting points of Fire Music rooted in the natural world?

When first considering writing a piece of music in response to the disastrous 'Black Saturday' bushfires of 2009, I set about learning more of the science of fires. I corresponded with Dick Williams, a scientist from the national science research institute, CSIRO. The material which developed even included specific musical evocations of the event; for example, the extended electric guitar solo about half way through the piece evolved as a musical interpretation of the momentous, dizzying heat that greeted Victorians on the morning of February 7th, 2009.

How did you balance descriptive and abstract concerns?

As the composition progressed I moved beyond the original trajectory of the fire itself and the piece started to follow its own internal, music-based logic. Nevertheless, the character of the force of destruction and ultimately rebirth that comes from such a fire remained the energetic source of material. It's not an uncommon working process for me; strong extra-musical ideas, after providing an initial stimulus, then recede into the background as the piece evolves in purely musical terms. The remnants of original 'programmatic' ideas become a point of reference only.

From the onset you knew that Fire Music would also be choreographed. How did this affect your composition?

I was approached almost simultaneously by both the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic for a new orchestral work (co-commissioned by the BBCSO) and the Australian Ballet for a new score for Australian master-choreographer Graeme Murphy as part of the company's 50th anniversary celebrations in 2012, and it was my suggestion to combine these two projects into one. In first discussions with Graeme, he stressed to me that he wasn't planning a narrative ballet and didn't want its dance use to influence how the work might unfold. This was liberating as choreographers often come to composers with very specific ideas of subject matter and even timings. The accompanying thought that the music I was writing was destined to determine the unfolding of a new ballet and its language of movement helped shape and inform *Fire Music's* energy flow and dramaturgical nature.

Your music vividly captures mood or situation. Where do you sit between Strauss and Stravinsky on the expressive potential of music?

The ability "to describe a teaspoon" (Strauss) on the one side, and "nothing whatsoever" (Stravinsky) on the other! That's a very interesting question. The original stimulus for writing *Fire Music* came from my

emotional response to an event and my own desire to respond to those emotions. But in order to do so, I had to step back and deal with musical material. So as Stravinsky said, "to be put into practice, music's indispensable and single requirement is construction".

In their comments about musical expressivity Strauss and Stravinsky obviously had vastly diverging ideas, but listening to their works actually tells a different story. I've found it interesting to observe how and when both of these masters choose to turn an emotional tide, often by the use of large 'brushstrokes'. In a contemporary music scene which is perhaps at times unwilling or afraid to embrace large, emotional musical gestures, I draw conviction from composers like Strauss, Stravinsky and others, who didn't shy away from this fundamental potential of music.

How have your experiences as a violist with the Berlin Philharmonic and in the electronic studio influenced your individuality as a composer?

I think my early apprenticeship – working in electronic music studios and live improv clubs in Berlin in the late '80s – was the ideal counterbalance to any potential influence my 'day job' with the Berlin Philharmonic might have had on the originality (or otherwise) of my own compositions. Despite the enormous amount of orchestral repertoire that I have played, these early experiences helped keep my ears open to sound in any form as a possible compositional source. The orchestral years taught me about shape, breath, gesture, energy, whereas improvising and playing around with embryonic ideas in a studio allowed me to discover my own way of handling musical material. My lifelong immersion in the Western canon is certainly part of who I am as a musician but I hope I'm able to impart something of my own voice and personality to how I make, organize and respond to sound. Electronic sound is in itself nothing new nowadays, but it is a colour palette that knows no bounds and has always been an important tool for me to stretch the possibilities of my own sonic world.

As a performer you're aware of practical barriers. Does this help or hinder composition, for instance in your concertos?

Schoenberg apparently wrote upon completing his violin concerto, "There we are, another unplayable work for the repertoire!" I see my practical experience as a performer as of huge benefit in my day-to-day work as a composer but it's true it can make one overcautious. Nevertheless, no performer of my concertante works has ever complained to me of the pieces being too easy, nor do I see much point in consciously writing music that I know to be physically unplayable. For string works at least, I can check

myself if something is workable. What has also helped me is the wonderful assistance of colleagues willing to show me the possibilities of their instruments and how well or not a passage may 'sit'.

You actively swap musical roles and perspectives. Does this help explain the creative tension between composer, performer and listener?

These tensions can indeed be creative, and I find the greater the knowledge base, the more constructive they'll be. For example, I always encourage young composers to involve themselves, wherever possible, in the act of performance; if not at a sufficient level as an instrumentalist or singer, then as a conductor. Similarly, it's hugely beneficial for performers to try their hand at composing or improvising and for all musicians to be able to articulate thoughts through written or spoken words; in short, we all need to be more flexible and well-versed in other aspects of the art-form, and avoid building a rigid comfort zone around ourselves.

With Fire Music joining Water Music and Pastoral Symphony, is there a series emerging?

This brings us back to the opening question, the extent to which the natural world influences my work. I guess there is a series emerging, but in an occasional and coincidental way as the ideas present themselves, not as part of a planned cycle of works. *Shadow Music*, *Winter Songs* and my "Night" pieces could also be included in such a list, and it may of course continue to grow, as my own elemental experiences of the physical world influence my musical expression.

Dean

Fire Music (2010-11)

for orchestra

Duration: 20 minutes

10/12 November (world premiere)

Konserthuset, Stockholm

Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra/

Sakari Oramo

Brett Dean Composer Festival (10-16 November)

24 February (Australian premiere)

Arts Centre, Melbourne

Australian Ballet/Orchestra Victoria

Choreographer: Graeme Murphy

17 March (UK premiere)

Barbican, London

BBC Symphony Orchestra/David Robertson

Brett Dean Total Immersion day

Strauss Danae returns

Richard Strauss's penultimate opera, *Die Liebe der Danae*, is rarely staged, particularly in the USA which has not experienced the work professionally since the Sante Fe production in 1982, so the new staging at the Bard SummerScape counted as a major revival. The production prompted a wholesale reassessment of the opera, with the *New York Times* refuting the received view that *Danae* is uneven, unstageable and uncastable and *Opera Today* praising the resurrecting of "an incredibly powerful 20th century work". The Bard production also offered a modern take on the work's conflict between love and wealth, with Pollux's bankrupted court seeking the Midas touch amidst Wall Street skyscrapers.

"Richard Strauss's forgotten gem..." *Opera Today*

Die Liebe der Danae came to light in the darkest days of the Second World War, when the apparatus for a new work to enter the international repertoire was effectively dismantled. Strauss only heard the opera in a private performance in 1944, and the official premiere did not take place until 1952, three years after his death. Yet the composer knew the dramatic and musical strength of his creation, noting in a letter to his biographer how Act III contained "some of the best stuff I have ever written" and how his "orchestral colours once again glimmered in ancient splendour". This 'cheerful mythology' clearly heralds the composer's valedictory Indian Summer including *Capriccio*, *Metamorphosen* and the *Four Last Songs*.

"With gorgeous music and a plot seemingly tailor-made for our troubled times, it is one of those operas that make you resent the stubborn smallness of the standard repertory... But an opera needs to be able to catch fire onstage, and in the SummerScape production, *Danae* certainly does... Exhilarating and moving, *Danae* has found its moment." *New York Times*

"It turns out the champions were right. The performance made a persuasive case for the opera as a piece well worth staging... From its agitated opening chords to its elegiac conclusion, the score contains long passages of gorgeous music... And the whimsical mythological plot has some surprisingly effective dramatic moments... Strauss saved the best for last. The final 30 minutes ... show the composer at his most inspired." *Associated Press*

Adams Klinghoffer



Photo: Margareta Michel

John Adams's opera *The Death of Klinghoffer*, a dramatic reflection on the issues surrounding the 1985 terrorist hijacking of the cruise liner *Achille Lauro*, received a powerful new production at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in June, which has prompted a reappraisal of the work in North America. Though the work

has received regular European productions, with 70 performances in nine countries since its premiere in 1991, the St Louis staging was the first full US production in 20 years.

To prepare its audience for the production, OTSL invited the formation of a 12-member interfaith steering committee to work with the company on education and outreach, including a public panel discussion and a project with Jewish and Muslim teenagers. *Musical America* noted how James Robinson's production avoided polemics, instead focusing "on the human tragedies that shaped both Palestinians and Israelis and led to the *Achille Lauro* incident and other collisions. The balanced staging makes it easier to focus on Adams' score, alternately lyrical and tension-filled, and on Alice Goodman's richly meaningful text."

"The controversy surrounding *The Death of Klinghoffer* will probably never go away, nor should it, given that the work deals openly with political and spiritual crises that are still very much a part of everyday life. But what the opera has to say is worth hearing; here, an immediate ovation reached its thunderous apex when Mr. Adams took the stage for an unambiguous hero's welcome." *New York Times*

"OTSL's thoughtful and sensitive staging should go a long way toward opening minds about *Klinghoffer*. More an oratorio than an

The Captain of the Achille Lauro is confronted by the hijackers in The Death of Klinghoffer



Photo: Ken Howard/OTSL

MacMillan Clemency

James MacMillan's new one-act chamber opera *Clemency* was premiered at The Royal Opera's Linbury Studio Theatre in London in May, attracting excellent reviews. *The Observer* praised it as "the best MacMillan score I've heard... as densely coloured and detailed as the Russian Orthodox icon which in part prompted it. Its starting point is the Old Testament story of Sarah and Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. One can imagine that MacMillan and his librettist, Michael Symmons Roberts, wrote in a white heat of intensity."

Clemency saw composer and librettist reunited with director Katie Mitchell for their third operatic collaboration, following *The Sacrifice* and *Parthenogenesis*. The staging revealed an iconic triptych, in which the third panel is a mirror image of the second, allowing us to witness dialogues from both sides, crucially Abraham's pleas to the avenging travellers for forgiveness. Following its London premiere, *Clemency* is staged by Scottish Opera next August and receives its US premiere from Boston Lyric Opera in February 2013.

"Subtly haunting and quietly powerful..." *Daily Telegraph*

"...in James MacMillan's music, every note counts. And never more so than in *Clemency*, which packs questions powerful, emotional, philosophical and religious into just 45 minutes... MacMillan has created a terrifically intense, focused and inspired musical work on a thought-provoking parable, updated to the present day." *The Independent*

"*Clemency* introduces the most complex of subjects in the most direct musical language... The branches of an oak tree



Photo: Tristram Kenton/Copyright: Guardian News & Media Ltd 2011

Katie Mitchell's production of Clemency at The Royal Opera

reach through a broken window into the room where Abraham offers food and shelter to three travellers. They enter as workmen and leave as assassins, an otherworldly dazzle of righteous triads in rhythmic unison... Abraham's pleas for mercy are ignored, leaving Sarah to contemplate motherhood with 'gratitude and terror', as well she might, given this baby's future role as putative sacrifice."

Independent on Sunday

"*Clemency's* economical treatment of a slice of scripture, its casting for just five voices, four of them male, and its quasi-ritualistic manner of proceeding evoke the Britten of the church parables. MacMillan's restlessly inventive string-writing – biting, resonant, athletic, but with an expressionistic edge – sounded terrific." *Sunday Times*

"...the idiom harmonically is intense, the mood bleak, solemn and impassioned, often evoking threnodic Orthodox chant. This is an opera which leaves a lasting effect, and I want to hear it again soon." *Daily Telegraph*



Photo: Tod Norwood

Meagan Miller in Strauss's Die Liebe der Danae at Bard

ffer in St Louis

opera, the piece does not take sides (which to some people means that it is taking sides). Rather, it explores the theme of exile, and demonstrates how historical resentments fester and explode in modern individuals ... Mr. Adams's music, some of his most beautiful and passionate, follows the same arc, with dreamlike, flowing passages interrupted by sharp, dramatically etched moments of fury and fear." *Wall Street Journal*

"...a gripping and eerily beautiful work" *Associated Press*

"Adams and his librettist, Alice Goodman, crafted a nuanced meditation on Middle East violence and religious intolerance, examining the complex social, economic and political conditioning that drives acts of unspeakable inhumanity... At the performance I attended last weekend, there were no protests, only cheers. *Klinghoffer's* time has come. We can now see it for what it is, a landmark in late 20th century American opera." *Chicago Tribune*

English National Opera will present the first London staging of *The Death of Klinghoffer* in a new production by Tom Morris in February. Another European opera highlight this season will be the Finnish premiere of *Doctor Atomic* in Helsinki in November. In the US, following *Nixon in China's* long-awaited arrival at the Metropolitan Opera last February, a further new production has been announced at San Francisco Opera next June. *A Flowering Tree*, in an admired new staging at Cincinnati Opera this summer, was described as "Adams' most sensuous, spacious and evocative score" (*Cincinnati Enquirer*).

Death of Klinghoffer at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis



Carter Conversations

The Aldeburgh Festival played host in June to the premiere of Elliott Carter's *Conversations*, a compact seven-minute double concerto for piano, percussion and chamber or full orchestra. Oliver Knussen was joined at Snape Maltings by soloists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Colin Currie with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. *Conversations* will also be performed by the New York Philharmonic and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Paris.

"...a beautifully engineered series of encounters between the piano and the array of percussion, who match and swap registers and sound worlds. The ensemble supplies terse punctuation until, in a brief, dazzling climax, it too gets swept into the soloists' figuration, before the piece ends with a last metallic aside." *The Guardian*

"True to its title, the piece is more about response and reaction – everywhere quick, brittle, witty – than about solo virtuosity... A brief moment of suspended animation, as heavy pedalled piano chords fuse with the long blur of a gong, give way to a moment of near rhapsody – and then a single piano note, the ting of a tiny bell, and it's all over." *The Times*

"...mercurial impulses and ricocheting resonances." *The Times*

"When marimba or vibraphone calls the tune, the conversation sounds harmonious. When gongs or drums take their turn, the soloists seem at odds. As in any civilised argument, they refrain from interrupting each other... Carter pulls off another of his succinct musical metaphors for social interchange." *Financial Times*

The lead-up to Carter's 103rd birthday on 11 December includes a major feature at the Slowind Festival in Ljubljana in November with Slovenian premieres of *Three Occasions*, *Flute Concerto*, *Triple Duo*, *Mosaic* and *Tempo e Tempi*. Forthcoming premieres are *Double Trio*, commissioned for the inauguration of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' Bourgie Concert Hall (11 October), his new *String Trio* at a 92nd Street Y birthday concert in New York (8 December) and *Three Explorations* for baritone and ensemble at Lincoln Center, setting texts by TS Eliot (12 December).

Mackey concertos



Gustavo Dudamel and Leila Josefowicz in Beautiful Passing

The emotional depth of Steven Mackey's violin concerto for Leila Josefowicz, *Beautiful Passing*, has been moving audiences on both sides of the Atlantic since its first performances in 2008 by the BBC Philharmonic and St Louis Symphony. Its Dutch premiere by the Radio Kamer Filharmonie followed last year (with Anthony Marwood as soloist), Gustavo Dudamel conducted the Los Angeles Philharmonic in performances in May, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington under Hannu Lintu performs the concerto in January, all with Josefowicz.

"This is fresh, rapturous violin writing." *Los Angeles Times*

In Los Angeles the Mackey concerto was paired with Brahms's *German Requiem*, both works offering an intense response to the death of the composer's mother. The *Los Angeles Times* noted how "in an effort to cheat tragedy, both composers searched long, hard and deep for comfort. And both wrote scores that did much to bolster their reputation for gravitas." Mackey's creative life spans activities as seemingly diverse as electric guitarist, pop improviser and composition professor at Princeton and the writer observed how "*Beautiful Passing* is the piece in which he puts it all convincingly together..."

"The title comes from Mackey's mother's last request to her son: "Please tell everyone I had a beautiful passing"... Mackey's concerto has the quality of blowing up the small things in life while grappling with the grave ones of existence

Holloway fifth concerto



Photo: Charlie Troman

Robin Holloway's new *Fifth Concerto for Orchestra* received a resounding premiere at the BBC Proms on 4 August. Donald Runnicles conducted the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in the 28-minute score, compact and densely concentrated in contrast to Holloway's often expansive scale. This links the work back to the composer's early constructivist output, embracing the *First* and *Second Concertos*. Rather than telling stories or depicting places or events the five movements are abstract realisations of colour. As the *Telegraph* observed, this distinguishes the concerto "from the more narrative, often quotation-based structures that have become his hallmark."

"And colourful the piece certainly is, in the way it relishes orchestral textures, superimposing them in densely woven layers. Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces* are an acknowledged influence. But rather than the confrontationalism of that gritty masterpiece, the idiom is closer to the post-impressionism of Ravel, Zemlinsky and even Bax. That makes for five aurally beguiling studies... a richly rewarding set of orchestral tableaux, and a fine vehicle for the BBC Scottish to show its agility and refinement." *Daily Telegraph*

"...lustrous and glitteringly orchestrated." *The Observer*

"To enter Holloway's imaginative world is to delve into an encyclopaedia. There's a large (and acknowledged) debt to Schoenberg here, but also echoes of Strauss, Ligeti, even Holst. Similarly, the harmonic spectrum veers from dark atonality to perky major-chord endings." *The Times*

"Holloway describes the *Fifth Concerto* as a kind of 'colour symphony' beginning with a black first movement and progressing through an airy green scherzo, brief adagio in rainbow shades, a limpid blue andante and ending with a pillar-box red finale. Texturally and harmonically, the music also moves from complexity to clarity, passing through some sumptuous and vividly evocative territory en route." *The Guardian*

Robin Holloway retired this summer from Cambridge University, and a concert celebrating his 35 years of teaching and mentoring composers, including Judith Weir, Robert Saxton and Thomas Adès, takes place there on 12 November. For the programme Holloway has chosen his reworking of Bach for two pianos, *Gilded Goldbergs*, to be performed by ex-pupils Huw Watkins and Ryan Wigglesworth. The work's stylistic expansions, from baroque to post-modern, described as "intriguing, witty and wholly engaging" (*Gramophone*), offer a suitably grand summing-up of Holloway's wide-ranging skills and imagination.

and consciousness. The concerto starts with the violin holding a serene A for several measures, while the percussion aggressively and vainly attempts to interrupt... Josefowicz grows ever more startlingly intense. The higher purpose (and higher pitches) of her slow moving melody remains oblivious to clamor. She seduces the orchestra...

"A stunning cadenza in the middle is the turning point... full of swirling harmonics, as if played by an electric guitar transformed by a choir of particularly musical angels into something heavenly. After that, violin and orchestra dance together... Josefowicz's performance was spellbinding." *Los Angeles Times*

Turning from the end of life to a child's first faltering steps, Mackey's new piano concerto, *Stumble to Grace*, was premiered in September by Orli Shaham and the St Louis Symphony conducted by David Robertson. Future performances are planned by co-commissioners the Los Angeles Philharmonic and New Jersey Symphony. The five stages of the concerto chart the development of a child, as the piano writing moves from stumbling thumbs to the fluent sophistication of a fugue.

Jenkins in New York



The 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy saw Karl Jenkins in New York for a commemorative concert at Lincoln Center, including *For the Fallen* with Jessye Norman as narrator and a complete performance of *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. The event combined voices from both sides of the Atlantic, with Distinguished Concerts International New York joined by The Really Big Chorus from the UK, with both choirs under the baton of the composer.

The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace. The event combined voices from both sides of the Atlantic, with Distinguished Concerts International New York joined by The Really Big Chorus from the UK, with both choirs under the baton of the composer.

The New York concert was one of a series of events in the *Global Sing for Peace* in which choirs were invited to join voices around the world during the commemoration month of September. *The Armed Man* was one of the selected scores, and performances of music from Jenkins's work took place in 11 countries in four continents, including across 10 states of the USA. 40 further performances over the coming months are equally international, ranging from Coventry Cathedral to Puerto Rico, Winnipeg in Canada, Perm in Russia, Salzburg and the Meistersinger Hall in Nuremberg.

For the Fallen, which received its US premiere in New York, is a setting of Laurence Binyon's famous ode honouring the war dead, familiar from Remembrance Day services, including the lines "At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them". The poem is allotted to narrator and choir, and *The Last Post* is incorporated into the score, either for solo trumpet, or heard in the accompaniment (organ, symphony orchestra or concert band). The five-minute work has been recorded by EMI with soprano Hayley Westenra and Bernard Cribbins as narrator (2172962). The score is dedicated to the composer's uncle, Alfryn Jenkins, who lost his life as captain of a Lancaster bomber over Berlin in 1944.

Jenkins returns to New York on 16 January for the world premiere of his latest work, *The Peacemakers*, at Carnegie Hall with DCINY. UK performances are planned to follow in May and an EMI recording will be

von Einem revisited

The music of Gottfried von Einem (1918-96) is a welcome feature on programmes conducted by his pupil HK Gruber. Over recent years with the BBC Philharmonic Gruber has performed episodes from Einem's ballet *Turandot* and recorded a BBC Radio 3 concert also including *Capriccio*, *Symphonic Scenes* and the *Ballade for Orchestra*. In Gruber's BBC Philharmonic programme on 2 December at Bridgewater Hall he introduces Manchester audiences to Einem's *Concerto for Orchestra* and gives a pre-concert talk about his mentor. Gruber has previously conducted the work with the Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna and the Cleveland Orchestra.

The concerto is one of a group of radical early scores which launched Einem's career following his studies in Berlin with Boris Blacher. It was composed during the Second World War and, following its premiere in 1944 by the Berlin Staatskapelle under the young Herbert von Karajan, was denounced and banned by Goebbels for its use of 'degenerate' jazz elements. The score demonstrates the influence of Stravinsky, Hindemith and Blacher, while pushing new boundaries with its futuristic motor-music and metrical ingenuity. The work was highly influential on the young Gruber who quoted from it in his violin concerto *Nebelsteinmusik*, also on the BBC Philharmonic programme on 2 December.

Golijov in Spain



The Spanish premiere of Ainadamar at the Granada Festival

The music of Osvaldo Golijov is familiar to Spanish-speaking audiences in the Americas, but recent years have brought a new awareness in Spain itself. In February the Orquesta Nacionales de Espana devoted its Carta Blanca festival to Golijov with two weeks of events ranging from chamber to orchestral. Highlights included the cello concerto *Azul* with soloist Alisa Weilerstein, the song-cycle *Ayre* with Dawn Upshaw and The Andalucian Dogs, selections from *La Pasión Según San Marcos* and *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind* with clarinetist David Krakauer in a concert conducted by Leonard Slatkin.

The Spanish premiere of Golijov's Lorca-inspired opera *Ainadamar* followed at the International Music and Dance Festival of Granada in June. These performances were particularly significant, as it was in Granada that Lorca had his family home and where he was arrested a month after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and executed allegedly at a solitary place nearby known in Arabic as *Ainadamar* – the fountain of tears. The new staging by Luis de Tavira was planned as a co-production with the festivals of Santander and Oviedo.

"Golijov's work [*Ainadamar*] emerges powerfully... a beautiful song of liberty... this Spanish premiere left nobody unmoved." *Granada Hoy*

"an opera that is already among the most successful new works of the 21st century." *ABC Córdoba*

"...a scenic wonder that will remain etched in the record books... an opera of bold music with a suggestive, evocative text..." *Ideal de Granada*

A second Spanish staging for *Ainadamar* has been announced by the Teatro Real in Madrid for a ten-performance run in July 2012 in the Peter Sellars production.

available following the premiere, featuring the Rundfunkchor Berlin, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Youth Choir and the Really Big Chorus, together with violinist Chloë Hanslip, soprano Lucy Crowe and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by the composer.

The hour-long work is scored for choir, flute, guitar, percussion and string orchestra (with optional brass and keyboard). Jenkins sets texts by Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer and Shelley, as well as drawing upon the Bible, Qur'an and Hinduism. One line from Rumi, the 13th century Persian mystic poet, sums up the ethos of the score: "All religions, all singing one song; Peace be with you".



The Visit of the Old Lady at the Stadttheater Giessen

Einem's operatic setting of the remarkable Dürrenmatt play *The Visit of the Old Lady*, remains one of his most performed stageworks. The lead role of the multi-millionaire Claire Zuchanassian, who returns to her old town to wreak a cruel revenge on the male lover who discarded her, 45 years and seven husbands earlier, is a gift for great singing actresses. Following its premiere at the Vienna State Opera in 1971 it was quickly taken up by Zürich, Berlin, Mannheim, Graz and Glyndebourne and appeared at New York City Opera in 1997. It continues to feature in the repertoire of German-speaking opera houses, including Giessen and Götting this season.

Floyd Of Mice and Men



Photo: Opera Australia/Branco Galica
The Australian premiere of Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*

Carlisle Floyd's opera *Of Mice and Men*, based on the Steinbeck novella, received a standing ovation at its Australian premiere in July. Film director Bruce Beresford discovered the opera when staging Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* in Houston in 2000 and was struck by the poignancy of the doomed dreams of the Depression-era characters. He was determined from that point to introduce the opera to Australian audiences, 40 years after its premiere. At the curtain call in Sydney, as reported in *The Australian*, "Beresford hushed the audience and introduced the 85-year-old composer. The outpouring of applause

was fully justified. *Of Mice and Men* is a fine opera that has been given an outstanding production."

"The ovations owe much to the principals - Lennie, (Anthony Dean Griffey) and his protector George (Barry Ryan) - drifting workers in the Depression bound by an unlikely bond of love and hope. Beresford and the singers have established an endearing chemistry in this relationship, creating the conditions for a closing scene that is emotionally powerful and universal in its themes... Floyd has used music to counterpoint emotions and create intensity and transcendence, things at which opera uniquely excels..." *Sydney Morning Herald*

"Lennie's curse is heavy-handedness - he crushes everything he loves - but Griffey touches soft, high notes with the gentlest caress... [Griffey's] Lennie was no hulking caricature of idiocy but a tortured, uncomprehending man-child whose confused longing for a better life was genuinely moving... Like an innocent animal, Lennie is unaware of the vicious, predatory powers that surround him... compelling stuff and a worthy addition to Opera Australia's repertoire." *Sydney Central Courier*

"Carlisle Floyd's aim was to capture the novella's tautness and 'spareness' in his music. He has succeeded admirably. Astringent dissonances, arresting woodwind and brass figures and passages of haunting, sparse textures spice up his melodic inspirations to create a score that cleverly blends poignant lyricism and dramatic intensity." *The Australian*

Following its July run at the Sydney Opera House, *Of Mice and Men* travels to the Arts Theatre in Melbourne on 26 November. Floyd's classic *Susannah* remains the most performed opera in America by a living composer and a new German staging opens in Hagen in March. *Wuthering Heights*, Floyd's 1958 opera based on the Emily Brontë novel, receives its European premiere at the Freiberg Opera in February.

Oehring POEndulum

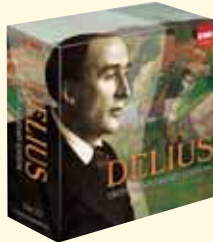


Photo: Astrid Ackermann
Helmut Oehring's new monodrama, *POEndulum*, commissioned by the BBC, was premiered in Glasgow in May with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ilan Volkov. Playing a central role in the 30-minute work was the extraordinary vocal artist David Moss, going beyond the role of narrator to fully conjure up the claustrophobia and terror of Edgar Allan Poe's vision. The *Glasgow Herald* noted how "Oehring successfully captured the dark, depressing and harrowing nature of war and existential dread" and praised Moss for "the vast and strange array of noises coming from his mouth, as well as his poignant recital of the poetic text".

POEndulum takes as its starting point Poe's famous short story *The Pit and the Pendulum*: a torturous scenario set against the back-drop of the Spanish Inquisition and the Spanish War of Independence against Napoleon. A prisoner faints as he is condemned to death and wakes in a dark chamber. A sequence of psychological tortures are revealed: a central pit, a descending bladed pendulum, and fiery walls closing in and forcing the prisoner towards the abyss.

Poe's Gothic nightmare is described by the vocal narrator as protagonist, painted by Spanish music from the time of the Inquisition, and represented by percussion which takes on a dramatic role. Oehring's monodrama is also linked to his *GOYA-Cycle* of works which relate the artistic-political documentaries of the 19th century with those of the 20th. Poe's texts interlock with settings of verse by Lorca, prompting parallels with themes of imprisonment, torture and execution across the ages.

Delius 150th



29 January 2012 is the 150th anniversary of Frederick Delius's birth, with celebrations on disc, in the concert hall and the opera house. As an impressive upbeat EMI is releasing an 18-CD box set of Delius in November, drawing on the recorded legacy from 1929 to the present, with performers including Beecham, Menuhin, du Pré, Tortelier, Baker and Bostridge. The classic recording of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* with Elizabeth Harwood and Robert Tear has been re-released in EMI's new opera series. EMI has also collaborated with the Delius Trust on a new website, *Frederick Delius: Apostle of Nature*, to be found at www.frederickdelius.com.

Anniversary events are launched in January with a new production of *A Village Romeo and Juliet* in Karlsruhe conducted by Justin Brown. On the birthday itself, the Southbank Centre in London hosts a Philharmonia Orchestra concert conducted by Andrew Davis and a screening of Ken Russell's Delius film *Song of Summer*. A Delius Festival follows in Paris and the composer's home town of Grez-sur-Loing in Hereford in July includes *Sea Drift* with Roderick Williams as soloist. The British Library hosts a study weekend in September, and Chetham's School of Music presents a Delius Celebration in October with concerts in Manchester and his birth city of Bradford.

Elgar Payne award

Anthony Payne has been awarded the Elgar Society Medal in recognition of his major contribution to the Elgar legacy. This prestigious award honours those whose activities, musical or scholastic, have helped Elgar's music to reach out internationally. Payne's greatest achievement was his 'elaboration' of the sketches of Elgar's incomplete *Third Symphony*, premiered to great acclaim by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1998. Payne also completed and orchestrated the sixth *Pomp & Circumstance March*, premiered at the BBC Proms in 2006, and scored the John Massfield setting, *So Many True Princesses*, for chorus and orchestra, first performed at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2002.

Symphony No.3 has travelled the globe in Payne's realisation, with 175 performances to date in 26 countries and five recordings in the catalogue. The work has been embraced by leading Elgar conductors around the world and cycles of the three Elgar symphonies are now regularly programmed by leading orchestras. However, some territories are still awaiting premieres of *Symphony No.3*, including Austria, Portugal, Poland, a number of Baltic states, Central and South America, South Africa and mainland China. For those wanting to explore the symphony, the full score is on sale and can be viewed at www.boosey.com/onlinecores.

Schwertsik on Chandos

A new disc of Kurt Schwertsik's orchestral music has been released by Chandos, featuring the BBC Philharmonic conducted by HK Gruber (CHAN 10687). The *Sunday Times* describes how "these pieces well convey Schwertsik's mercurial, ironic sensibility and his dextrous juggling of Romantic tonality and modernist impulse." *International Record Review* rated the disc 'outstanding' and encouraged repeated listening due to the composer's witty sleight of hand: "much to catch the ears, and to go beyond them, and too many allusions to digest on a single playing".

The most recent work on the disc is *Nachtmusiken*, commissioned by the BBC Philharmonic as a partner to Mahler's *Symphony No.1*. The spirit of Schwertsik's home city hovers over the 24-minute score, summed up in *The Guardian's* review of the disc as "a sequence of Viennese nocturnes, elegies and reminiscences", but whereas the title may hint at the 'night music' heard in Mahler's *Symphony No.7*, Schwertsik draws on memories from the 1940s. As a child he hid from the bombing raids and after the war loved to take



New Recordings

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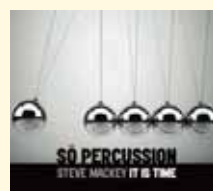
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nocturnal walks around the streets, as candlelight emanated from houses on the darkened streets.

Herr K entdeckt Amerika is described by the composer as a sonatina for orchestra, and the K of the title is the young man Karl, who travels to the New World in Kafka's unfinished novel *Amerika*. The four movements offer a road trip through a sequence of bewildering situations, ending with the Oklahoma circus that represents the limitless potential of America. The disc is completed with *Baumgesänge (Tree Songs)*, in which Schwertsik gives orchestral voice to the forests, sometimes majestic, sometimes serene, finally offering an agitated response as a minimalist juggernaut rampages through the woods.

Schwertsik's new stagework, *Eisberg nach Sizilien*, a 50-minute youth opera based on FK Waechter's *The Ice Princess*, was premiered at the Mannheim Nationaltheater in April, and a second production opens at the Dortmund Opera in February. Colin Currie continues to tour as soloist in *Now you hear me, now you don't*, Schwertsik's recent mini-concerto for marimba and strings, which reaches Zürich on 7 December.

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