Chin Alice and Mannequin

Unsuk Chin has enjoyed a busy spring, with a multimedia staging of Alice in Wonderland and first performances of her new orchestral work Mannequin.

In the 150th anniversary year of Lewis Carroll’s classic book, performances of Unsuk Chin’s opera Alice in Wonderland drew packed houses in Los Angeles and London. Following productions in Munich, Geneva, Bielefeld and Saint Louis, the new staging by multimedia artist Netia Jones was presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic at Disney Hall and the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican.

“...aflame with staggered, pulsing chords and desire...” The New York Times

Chin’s newest work is Mannequin, a collection of ‘tableaux vivants’ forming an orchestral choreography inspired by a surrealist short story by E. T. A. Hoffmann. Following performances by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and Ilan Volkov on a UK tour including the Southbank Centre in London, the 25-minute work travels to the Bastion Symphony, Danish National Symphony and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras.

“...Chin’s glittering, rattling, whirring sequence to the Boston Symphony, Danish National Symphony and Melbourne Symphony Orchestras...” The Observer

Unsuk Chin’s Alice in Wonderland in Netia Jones’ new staging at the Barbican in London.

Andriessen new opera

Louis Andriessen’s new opera, Theatre of the World, has been announced with first performances of the world premiere in Los Angeles and at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam in May and June 2016. The production by Pierre Audi is to be designed by the German-Spanish designer, Reinbert de Leeuw will conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Dutch National Opera with the AlteSchongeborg ensemble. The cast includes Leigh Melrose, Lindsay Kesselman and Christina Zavalloni.

The opera is inspired by the German-Jewish scholar Althansas Kercher (1601-1693), who was known as the last true Renaissance man: Egyptologist, Sincologist, mathematician, physicist, volcanologist, music theoretician and a composer. One of the tasks of the Jesus was to “seek God’s presence everywhere, bringing the results being shown visually in a ‘theatre of the world’.

In Andriessen’s opera Kercher travels through time and space with a twelve-year-old boy, recapturing the memories of a lifetime of learning and experience.

As well as the world premiere of Theatre of the World, the Los Angeles Philharmonic also presents the premiere of Andriessen’s orchestral work Mysteries, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on 15 October. In London Andriessen is celebrated next season at the Barbican with the series M for Man, Music & Mystery. (13 February).

Offenboch

Fantast returns to stage in Offenboch Edition Keck

Dean summer festivals

Brett Dean’s trumpet concerto Dramatis personae is on a festival journey this summer, performed by Swedish virtuoso Håkan Hardenbergh. Since its premiere at the Gratefulness Festival in 2013 the work has received 30 performances – to date or scheduled – in 12 countries.

The concerto is toured by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in August from the Tanglewood Festival to the BBC Proms in London and the Lucerne Festival, with a further performance at the Cologn Philharmonie, all conducted by Andris Nelsons. Also at the Proms, Dean’s new Pastoral Symphony is paired with Schubert’s, performed by the Aurora Orchestra under Nicholas Collon.

As voted, Dean travels widely in Europe this June, with a series of performances for string quintet and for classic chamber repertoire. Performances are scheduled in Cologne, Brussels, the Wigmore Hall in London and the West Cork Chamber Music Festival. Back in his native Australia, Dean’s arrangement of Debussy’s Ariettes oubliées is premiered in Sydney on 29 July under the baton of Simon Mordant, with Magdalena Kožená and the Australian World Orchestra. Next season sees Dean as soloist in his Violin Concerto, performed by the Royal Northern Orchestra, the Toronto Symphony, and in London within his three-year Artist in Association contract with the BBC Symphony Orchestra.
Carter final premiere

March brought the last Elliott Carter premiere – not his last Elliott Carter premiere, either, for 2015 was another year following his death in 2012 – but the only one of his late scores awaiting a first performance, his song cycle for baritone and ensemble The American Sufi, James Levine, who did much to champion Carter’s music during his lifetime, conducted the MET Chamber Ensemble at Carnegie Hall with baritone Simon Keenlyside. The set of five poems by Wallace Stevens, set by the baritone Evan Hughes. This setting of five poems by champion Carter’s music during his 90s, conducted by Oliver Knussen and the BBC Symphony Orchestra, performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, the ZadarJazzMatiere series in Amsterdam and the BBC. The premiere is announced for June 2016 at the Kennedy Center in Washington conducted by James Gaffigan.

Shepherd Concerto for Ensemble

The new Ginastràs ballet Elandria, drawing on Dances from Estancia and Pampasana No.3 and choreographed by Darre Tóton, part of a South American thematic triple bill Malambo! at the Graz Opera premiered in March. The new concerto for Ensemble is Shepherd’s first major orchestral work of 2015. The composer describes the work as a “triumphal” piece, exploring image, mood or landscape. Shepherd explains how he has always been attracted to so-called absolute music, or music for music’s sake” and how in planning the work “I thought it paramount to find a way to feature both the individuals and the group as a whole” while avoiding emulating the many concerto examples where sections and solos are invited into the spotlight as circus acts which “can be like listening to a grocery list read out loud”.

Gruber into the open...

HK Gruber introduces his new work for percussion and orchestra, performed at the BBC Proms and Wien Modern by Colin Currie.

Ensemble Intercontemporain conducted by Matthias Pintscher, The DC commission follows the success of Shepherd’s Blur for ensemble which the group toured in 2012 from Paris to Cologne and Lucerne. The new Concerto for Ensemble is Shepherd’s largest-scale work to date, running for 35-minutes and an expansive and contrasted as is the case with open space. “I wanted to capture the sense of his spirit going out here and the rest of the orchestra it has to be done intelligently, this is a problem I have with a lot of pop or light music”.

What do you know about percussion in general?

Colin Currie has worked at refining and rationalising the instrumentation, substituting percussion where necessary for practical reasons while retaining the overall colour and function. I’m grateful for Colin’s specialist expertise, so this means that the piece is performable in terms of the percussion layout on stage, could be more readily transportable, and further down the road should be more attractive for a range of soloists. The finalised collection ranges from conventional percussion, through mallet keyboards, to more exotic instruments including Chinese gongs, Caribbean concerns and South American cajón.

How do you view the concertos genres in the 21st century?

Much the same as I viewed it in the 20th century. I’m drawn to concertos that are instrumental in conception, for instance the Stravinsky Violin Concerto, or the concerto of Prokofiev, or even pieces like Britten’s Our Hunting Fathers or Serenade which I view as concertos for the violin. I always really wanted to write symphonic works, but it was a well-kept secret of fate that I was approached by fellow musicians, such as Elinor Friedje, Gerald Finzi, Yo-Yo Ma and Håkan Hardenberger, to write concertos. In my early career, when I was a total neophyte, I was not so unfashionable, I would rather write a concerto for a friend who would love a piece, than a symphonic work for public audience when you realize that if you have an engaged performer there is a special chamber music intimacy that goes beyond virtuosity and this inspires the orchestra in turn – then you have the best conditions for an ideal concerto performance.
Mark Simpson’s new orchestral concert-opera Israel trumpets was premiered in April by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in Glasgow, conducted by Andrew Litton. The 10-minute piece is named after the fiery angel of Koranic and Judeo-Islamic tradition, and the title’s play on words refers to the ‘twins’ that are also Israel’s symbols in the Bible. 

Simpson’s work explores the obsession with death that lies at the heart of the human experience. For most of our history religion provided a clear explanation for life and the afterlife. But in the late 19th and early 20th centuries this framework came under relentless pressure as new ideas — from psychiatry to evolution to Communism — seemed to suggest possible new ways of looking at the world. The world premiere of The Immortal is paired in Manchester with Bizet’s Requiem, a further reflection in death and the beyond. 

The opera’s text was written by Melanie Challenge who is bretet for Simpson’s forthcoming opera Please. The premiere production starring Llywn Garret is staged for Opera North at Tim-Abi Abbey, touring in August/September 2016 from Leeds to the composer’s native city of Liverpool, then to Aberdeen and the Lucca Harmsmehl presented by The Royal Opera.

The Angel Israel in the Wonders of Creation of al-Qazwini

...26-year-old wunderkind Mark Simpson is clearly an enor-mous talent. — Daily Telegraph

...a good piece, ambitious in its canvas, short, but of epic dimensions, wide-screen in its tale, but with a metaphysical spirit at its heart.

The Manchester International Festival presents the world premiere of Simpson’s largest-scale work to date, a ‘modern-day oratorio’ entitled The Immortal. The 30-minute score for orchestra and voices is performed at the Bridgewater Hall on 4 July by baritone Mark Stone, the choral voices of EXAUDI and the BBC Philharmonic, when Simpson’s new Composer in Association role with the orchestra is launched by the betaon of Chief Conductor Jukka-Matti Mehta. The new work was commissioned by Manchester International Festival with support from the MIF Commissioning Office and Sky Arts Academy Scholarship in association with Ideas Tap.

Simpson dressed

Offenbach Fantasio on stage

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Fantasio was premiered at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre on 5 September. Taking the theme of ‘stage and screen’, the programme features music by and from Leonard Bernstein’s Broadway musicals, including On the Town, Wonderful Town and West Side-Story, together with songs from Cendelle and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, plus the suite from his only film score On the Waterfront – soon to be available for live performance as part of the Young Euro Classic festival. 

Classic Proms repertoire includes all five Prokofnik piano concertos and music by Bartók, Stravinsky, Walton, Haydn and Handel. The Proms also build a legacy upon a flute recital, Bulerio-through a sequence of variations, and is a tribute to Chen’s son Yun, who died tragically in a car crash aged 29.

As the composer described in an interview with the South China Morning Post, the loss of his only child hailed his creativity for a year and the long gestation of the new work marked the depth of grief to be overcome: “I wanted a breakthrough of my musical identity, which tended to be reflected naively and softly. So I chose the filial elements in China’s long theatrical tradition that is strong in rhythm and melodious dyanmics... The overall tone of Luan Tan is energetic and happy, and that’s my key personality... my son and I co-exist in the music, which is very dynamic and full of life.”

...tone clusters, fluttering motifs and effective passages for the harp and the brass, many of them disjoined and fragmentated, ‘no hard to discern elements of both warfare and morting in the IS-2000...” — South China Times

Currier premieres last month included the virtuosic piano concerto, written for the trailer music for the film The Philharmonic and unveiled at De Doelen in Rotterdam, and Glow, a pianistic exploration of the image of the piano — first performed in the night theatre, at a performance by Yehudi Menuhin that is now travelling most widely.

Of all the Panufnik works discovered afresh in the 19th and early 20th centuries this framework came in a ‘division’ of troops. After an opening of disjunction and fragment, the piece finally settles down into a set of counterpoint of the Chinese cymbals.”

—by Oliva Fuchs, with Stephanie Corley in the title role

centuries in a more discernible form. The polyphony is muted and muffled, literally in the distance as it is played delicately by the back desks of the violas, cellos and double basses.

Following its London premiere, Symphony No.4 will travel to the US for performances in future seasons by the Pittsburgh Symphony with Manfred Honeck and by the Berkeley Symphony under Joana Carneiro. American highlights this summer include two performances in June of MacMillan’s Vischer instrumental ideas” while the early work. Olivia Fuchs as director offered a powerful female production by Scottish Opera in January, employing the thematic threads into the material. It glitters, it slithers, it richly embroidered musical robe, weaving a complex of

“Síppt, wet, iron, motor energy and explosive political power.” So wrote the Stuttgarter Zeitung

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**Boosey & Hawkes continues to mine its British music archive and collaborate with composer estates to publish hidden gems by leading 20th century British classics. Hot off the press is the first publication of *Music Behind Death and the Powers* (979-0-060-12766-3), an instrumental ensemble work composed in 1970 as part of his entry application for the 1971 International Composition Competition. The work materialises through recitation and chant as well as song.

Ginastera considered the hour-long Turbae ad Introit/Interlude/Romance/Diabelleries/Gerald Finzi

**British classics**

- *String Quartet No.2* by Gerald Finzi
- *For St Cecilia* by Robin Holloway
- *Blue Towers/Diversions for Orchestra/Symphony* by Richard Deutsch

Recent Gerald Finzi publications include a new edition of the moving *Miserere* for unaccompanied choir (979-0-060-12978-0), a setting of John 4:16-18, a text by the composer that was added in 1966. In this new score, the composer has sought to bring to life the 17th-century choral tradition, a rich and varied musical heritage that has influenced many of the leading composers of the 20th century. The edition is published by Boosey & Hawkes and is available on disc (EMR CD0119/31).

**Recordings**

- *Sinfonia Don Rodrigo* by Richard Deutsch
- *Turbae ad* conducted by Markus Stenz

**Publications**

- *Turbae ad* published by Boosey & Hawkes (979-0-060-12242-2) and *Study score* (979-0-060-12223-1)
- *Turbae ad* for ensemble and 11 percussionists

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**New Recordings**

- *Turbae ad* recorded by Richard Deutsch and Klangforum Wien conducted by Enno Poppe.