

Quarternotes

Van der Aa Blank Out premiere

Michel van der Aa's new music theatre work, premiered to acclaim in Amsterdam in March, seamlessly blends music and 3D film

Blank Out, Michel van der Aa's new music theatre score, was unveiled in March at Dutch National Opera's Opera Forward festival, showcasing cutting-edge stageworks that are extending the medium. Its compact performing forces make the new work ideal for practical staging and touring: soprano Miah Persson is the solo singer on stage, while baritone Roderick Williams appears on film, with accompaniment provided by a soundtrack combining voices of the Netherlands Chamber Choir with electronics.

A house by the sea is the setting for memories of a tragic drowning told from the twin perspectives of mother and son. Texts by the composer are combined with poetry by South African writer Ingrid Jonker that explores van der Aa's key themes of psychological trauma, the unreliability of memory, mirrors and alter-egos.

"...a fascinating mixture of film, music and acting... Van der Aa creates tension between physical and digital reality and creatively investigates a variety of forms of interaction. What you see and what you hear have enormous poetic and suggestive power... Van der Aa has written a wonderful, colourful score, sublimely performed..."
Theaterkrant

"High-tech opera blends pleasure with primeval fear... In *Blank Out* Van der Aa has explored the boundaries of what is technically possible. Miah Persson films herself on stage and her images blend with earlier film material of Roderick Williams or a cottage on the dyke... the result is highly enjoyable, magical music and images..."
Het Parool

"Miah Persson's live singing combines with replayed loops of herself on film to create haunting ensembles, and at the opera's climax her lines are counterpointed with those of Roderick Williams on film too, each character locked into his or her own sense of reality. Williams sings with his usual intelligence and compelling sincerity on the film, while the live performance is an astonishing *tour de force* for Persson, meticulous in its detail, and perfectly controlled." *The Guardian*

"...a wonderfully fluent and effective piece..."

The Guardian

"Van der Aa's music is frequently not only unusually beautiful, it also succeeds in presenting a highly individual blend of a *cappella* choral music, soundtrack, lyrical vocal lines and thumping techno as a natural



Michel van der Aa's new music theatre work *Blank Out*, with Miah Persson on stage and Roderick Williams on film

amalgam... After 75 minutes one is left with questions that both tease and please." *NRC Handelsblad*

The premiere run of *Blank Out* in Amsterdam was followed by a series of performances last month at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, and the work will be staged at the Lucerne Festival in 2017. This season has also seen performances on both sides of the Atlantic of a new English version of van der Aa's *The Book of Disquiet* starring actor Samuel West, and a feature in and around Lyon including six French premieres.

A recording of two van der Aa works premiered in 2014 has recently been released on the Disquiet Media label. Janine Jansen is soloist in the *Violin Concerto* with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the performance being described as a "virtuoso showpiece for the soloist" (*NRC Handelsblad*). *Hysteresis* for clarinet and ensemble, featuring Kari Krikkku in the challenging solo role, takes its name from materials which have a 'memory' of previous states, as heard in the transformations between live instruments and soundtrack.

Strauss Danae in Salzburg



Richard Strauss's penultimate opera, *Die Liebe der Danae*, receives a new production in Salzburg this summer, adding the latest chapter to the festival's special relationship with this valedictory work that summed up the composer's operatic career.

In 1921 Hofmannsthal had proposed the fusion of two Greek myths to Strauss, the shower of gold which enabled Jupiter to seduce Danae, and Midas whose touch turned everything to gold. However, it was not until the late 1930s that Strauss returned to the project with the librettist Joseph Gregor, describing the opera as "my final embrace of Greek culture and the conclusive union of German music with the Greek soul".

Die Liebe der Danae came to light in the darkest days of the Second World War, when the apparatus for a new opera to enter the international repertoire was effectively dismantled. Strauss completed the work in 1940 and only heard the opera in a private dress rehearsal in Salzburg in 1944, yet he recognised the musical strength of his tragicomedy, 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 glowed in ancient splendour".

The official stage premiere took place at the Salzburg Festival in 1952, three years after Strauss's death, and the opera did not reappear at the festival for half a century until 2002. The new Salzburg Festival production, opening on 31 July, is conducted by Franz Welser-Möst and staged by Alvis Hermanis, with the Vienna Philharmonic and a cast including Krassimira Stoyanova as Danae and Tomasz Konieczny as Jupiter.

With its themes of material greed, financial crash and the triumph of feminine love over male power, the opera has found a new topicality in recent decades with acclaimed productions in Dresden, Berlin and Bard SummerScape and concert performances in Garmisch and Frankfurt prompting an overdue reappraisal.

Ginastera in Buenos Aires



Mónica Ferracani as *Ginastera's* Beatrix Cenci at the Teatro Colón

Centenary celebrations for Alberto Ginastera were launched in his native city of Buenos Aires in March with a new production of his third and final opera *Beatrix Cenci* at the Teatro Colón. Based on Shelley's play about the abused daughter of a Renaissance count, the opera is in the tradition of Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', relating Beatrix's rape by her father, the arranging of her tormentor's murder, and her sentencing to death by the authorities, despite the pity and sympathy of the Roman populace.

First staged in Washington in 1971 for the opening season at the new Kennedy Center, the opera was not heard in Buenos Aires until 1992. This second production at the Teatro Colón, in a staging by Alejandro Tantanian, probed the Freudian undercurrents of the dysfunctional Cenci family. Ginastera's music delves deep into the extreme psychology of the characters with a style blending lyricism and expressionism, complete with orchestral clusters, clouds and constellations.

"The intense and effective production succeeded in realising the oppressive and dramatic character of the work... The opera takes place in a single stage space, the interior of the Cenci's Tribunali Palace, guarded by real dogs, whose barks and howls summoned a sense of foreboding... The nightmarish atmosphere was also achieved thanks to a construction of mirrored prisms occupying centre-stage which amplified the psychological breakdown of the family and its fragmented grasp of reality." *Clarín*

"The staging makes a series of reflections not only on the lawlessness and violence between humans but also in relation to power and the word... This production does not unfold in the Renaissance of *Beatrix Cenci* but, as in Pasolini's *Salò*, during Fascism such as the Republic that Mussolini founded on the shores of Lake Garda... Powerful parents give their daughters to promiscuity, violations, crimes and excessive corruption... bringing out the political and social degradation of an era." *La Nación*

"...outstanding music and savage drama..."

La Nación

The Teatro Colón has also played host to a ten-concert Ginastera series by the Buenos Aires Philharmonic conducted by Enrique Diemecke and next month sees Daniel Barenboim returning to his native city to conduct performances of the *Violin Concerto* with his son Michael Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra.

Music from Ginastera's first opera *Don Rodrigo* can be heard on a new centenary disc of the composer's vocal music from Warner Classics, featuring Plácido Domingo who created the title role at the work's premiere in 1964. The 2016/17 season at the Teatro Real in Madrid includes a new staging of Ginastera's *Bomarzo* by Pierre Audi, travelling on to Dutch National Opera in a future season. The *Cantata Bomarzo*, drawn by the composer from the opera, was performed in New York in April within a series of 15 Ginastera works presented by Trinity Wall Street.

July brings Ginastera's music to Paris, with New York City Ballet touring Christopher Wheeldon's *Estancia* to the Théâtre du Châtelet.

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (1934–2016)

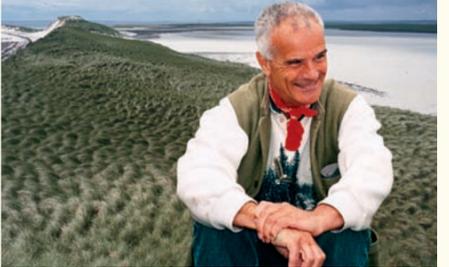


Photo: © SBC/Gunnar Moberg

We pay tribute to Peter Maxwell Davies, who died on 14 March, aged 81. The pioneering composer, whose works redefined British music in the 1960s, '70s and beyond, signed with Boosey & Hawkes in 1963, marking the start of a publishing relationship spanning five decades and encompassing major works in every genre.

The versatility of Max ranged from shocking music theatre classics such as *8 Songs for a Mad King*, through elaborate scores fusing plainsong chant with symphonic thought, to works inspired by his adopted Scotland such as *An Orkney Wedding, with Sunrise*. In addition to his prolific life as a composer, Max was a conductor, a dedicated educationalist and a fierce protester against war, environmental despoliation and the use of musak. Through the St Magnus Festival he provided a musical focus for his community and inspiration for generations of young composers.

A memorial concert to celebrate Max's life is at St John's Smith Square in London at 11.30 on 27 June. To reserve tickets contact www.sjss.org.

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MacMillan A European Requiem and Stabat Mater

James MacMillan introduces two new works for choir and orchestra, premiered at the Oregon Bach Festival and a Barbican day of his music in London.



Photo: Richard Campbell

What aspects of the Requiem led you to compose the new work?

The concert form of the Requiem, as it developed from the 19th century, is a particularly European phenomenon that composers have turned to when they identify with a sense of loss, often as much within themselves as prompted by a

specific death. That's the case with my work, which is not a memorial for a loved one but rather a general response to the realism and vivid colours of the text.

Why do you call it A European Requiem?

I was thinking about what cultural heritage other composers have tried to capture in their Requiems. For instance Brahms stepped out of line to use German texts overtly in *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and in some respects I wanted to go the other way, from vernacular back to Latin as a *lingua franca*. It was the language used by the European founding fathers, whether in Roman times or in the Church, and provided a source of common identity for a millennium and a half, in international relations, education and the sharing of ideas.

So, do you see the use of Latin today as counter-cultural?

Setting texts in a 'dead' language may seem that to many, but for me it is very much alive and represents the ideal rediscovering of shared roots. I also wanted to capture a certain wistfulness that the echoes of these deep cultural resonances are becoming less distinct as the centuries pass and we're challenged by questions about our European identity as never before.

Do you view the composition in a liturgical context?

No. I may write a liturgically focussed Requiem in the future, but this is much more symphonic in concept. I've largely avoided building the material

from Gregorian plainsong, though allusions to chant inevitably surface as we approach the final *In Paradisum* (*Chorus Angelorum*). It's cast in a single, continuous movement, moving between the sections of text via linking orchestral episodes.

The Stabat Mater seems a text you've been circling in preparation for your new work.

That's true. In my *St John Passion* it crops up where Mary addresses her Son on the Cross – we hear both the sound of a mother comforting her new-born son and her cry of pain as she watches him die. I also quote the *Stabat Mater* at the beginning of my opera *Inês de Castro*, where the Portuguese people are gathering for prayer under the threat of war with the Spanish. So there are twin aspects to this 13th century hymn: on the one hand the very human relationship of parent and child and, on the other, Mary as an intercessor between Man and God.

Were there particular models you had in mind?

I seem to have grown up with the *Stabat Mater*, singing it as a boy, and having my perception of the Crucifixion coloured by its beauty and sadness, with great examples stretching from Josquin and Palestrina to 20th century settings by Szymanowski, Poulenc and Arvo Pärt.

You've composed a cappella works like *O Bone Jesu* and *Miserere* for *The Sixteen* but this is your first large-scale score for them.

Yes, they also sang *Seven Last Words from the Cross* with me in Amsterdam in 2009, and that was the springboard for composing a substantial hour-long work. I've set the complete *Stabat Mater* text with 20 verses cast into four movements: the challenge for the composer

is the similar sorrowful mood throughout, so I've teased out the differences provided by words and imagery.

Have your working relationships with *The Sixteen* and the *Britten Sinfonia* shaped the composition?

Knowing the musicians personally had a major impact. For instance I was aware that *The Sixteen's* singers often perform as soloists as well as chorally, which has allowed me to move from tutti to solo sections, with divisi sopranos tumbling over each other, or a section highlighting the four tenor voices alone. Harry Christophers and the performers also understand my style intimately, so the premiere of *Stabat Mater* should be ideal from a composer's perspective.

MacMillan

A European Requiem (2015) 30' for counter-tenor (or alto) and baritone soli, mixed chorus and orchestra

Commissioned by the Oregon Bach Festival

2 July 2016 (world premiere)

Silva Concert Hall, Oregon

Christopher Ainslie/Morgan Smith/Berwick Chorus and Oregon Bach Festival Orchestra/Matthew Halls

Stabat Mater (2015) 60'

for chorus and string orchestra

Commissioned by the Genesis Foundation for Harry Christophers and *The Sixteen*

15 October 2016 (world premiere)

Barbican, London

The Sixteen/Britten Sinfonia/Harry Christophers

Turnage Strapless premiere at Royal Ballet



Photo: Royal Ballet/Bill Cooper

Natalia Osipova and Edward Watson in Christopher Wheeldon and Mark-Anthony Turnage's new ballet *Strapless*

Mark-Anthony Turnage's fourth ballet score, *Strapless*, was unveiled by the Royal Ballet in London in February, seeing the composer working again with choreographer Christopher Wheeldon, following the success of their Titian-inspired ballet *Trespass* in 2012.

Art was once more the centre of focus in the new 45-minute one-act narrative dancework, examining the rise and fall of celebrity status, as in Turnage's opera *Anna Nicole*. *Strapless* will return to Covent

Garden next season and will travel to Moscow thanks to co-producers the Bolshoi Ballet.

"*Strapless*, inspired by Deborah Davis's book of the same name, recounts the social ascent of the glamorous New Orleans-born Amélie Gautreau in Belle Époque Paris, and her fall from grace when 'Madame X', John Singer Sargent's revealing painting of her with a strap falling down a bare arm, is shown at the 1884 Paris Salon. It fascinates as a tale of ambition, social mores, hypocrisy and humiliation..." *New York Times*

"*Strapless* is a superb piece of stagecraft... Paris in the 1880s is vividly evoked throughout: in the clash and colour of Mark-Anthony Turnage's score, in the sets and costumes, and in the small character detail... Amélie – danced with a marvellous air of careless entitlement by Natalia Osipova – is a blatantly amoral heroine." *The Guardian*

"...richly textured and full of orchestral colour..."

The Independent

The 2016/17 season sees Turnage's long-standing musical relationship with Simon Rattle continuing with performances of *Remembering* with the London Symphony Orchestra and Berlin Philharmonic in early 2017, and his *Martland Memorial* pays tribute to the late composer with percussionist Colin Currie and the European Youth Orchestra under Marin Alsop. The Barbican feature on Turnage also includes the UK premiere of *Håkan* written for the eponymous Swedish trumpeter.

Overseas premieres include a new commissioned work for the 30th anniversary of Suntory Hall in Tokyo in November, scored for two solo voices, children's chorus and orchestra. A new Turnage string quartet *Shroud*, commissioned by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center for the Emerson String Quartet, will be toured internationally following its premiere in October.

Holloway organ concertante

Robin Holloway's new score for organ and orchestra, *For Ever Singing as they Shine*, received a dramatic premiere in April from soloist Bernhard Buttman with the Neue Philharmonie Westfalen in Gelsenkirchen. Part of a science and space programme, the new work was coupled effectively with Ligeti's *Atmosphères* and Holst's suite *The Planets*.

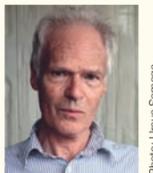


Photo: Unisue Samaga

"The hymn *For Ever Singing as they Shine* from the English Enlightenment era, which refers to the planets, was the inspiration for this lucid work... The six part score is shaped in an artful reversed image – from an ear-piercing dissonant tutti outburst at the opening to a mighty crescendo at the end... The solo part demonstrates a clear turning away from traditional religious organ writing through the composer's juxtaposition of the irrational noise of the universe with reasoned thought." *Recklinghäuser Zeitung*

"...the exciting highpoint to the concert. Holloway's reflections on the firmament were dominated by the sound of the organ which set the stars and planets dancing and shining..." *Westfälische Allgemeine Zeitung*

A new web documentary on Holloway and his music can be viewed at www.boosey.com/HollowayVideo

Chin Stardust in Seoul



Photo: Pihleka Keittner

Unsuk Chin's new work commissioned by the Lotte Group will be premiered on 18 August within the inaugural concert at the new 2000-seater hall in Seoul, built as part of the Lotte World Tower complex. Scored for choir, children's choir and orchestra (including an orchestral organ part), *Le Chant des Enfants des Étoiles* offers

poetic reflections on our physical relationship with the cosmos, as described by the composer:

"The title of the work refers to the idea that 'humans are stardust'. It is based on the scientific fact that almost everything in the universe and on earth was formed in cosmic explosions billions of years ago, including our bodies which are made of remnants of stars. In astronomer Carl Sagan's words: "We are star stuff pondering the stars, star stuff which has taken its destiny into its own hands. The cosmos is within us, we are a way for the cosmos to know itself." Seen from such a 'cosmic

perspective', all national, ethnic or religious chauvinisms are foolish and ludicrous indeed.

"Accordingly, the poems I've set to music – mainly by various 20th century poets including Fernando Pessoa, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Octavio Paz, Eeva-Liisa Manner, Vicente Huidobro and Inger Christensen – are about cosmic and other natural phenomena. However, while both poetry and cosmology were important associations in the composition process, my approach is neither 'scientific' nor speculative in an esoteric sense. Stylistically, I attempted to write a music that is not rooted in any particular time or place."

Recent Chin performances have included the chamber orchestra work *Graffiti* in Montréal, Paris, Bergen and Melbourne and the *Clarinet Concerto* in London, Glasgow, Malmö, Miami, Helsinki and Amsterdam with Kari Kriikku and Jérôme Comte as soloists. Future projects include a new work for the Acht Brücken Festival in Cologne in May 2017 and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, commissioned by The Royal Opera in London for its 2018/19 season.



Unsuk Chin's new commission *Le Chant des Enfants des Étoiles* opens the Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul

Photo: Kohn Pedersen Fox

Floyd Prince of Players staged in Houston



Photo: Houston Grand Opera/Lynn Lane

Houston Grand Opera in Carlisle Floyd's new opera *Prince of Players*, set in the world of Restoration theatre

The world premiere of *Prince of Players*, the new chamber opera by 90-year-old Carlisle Floyd, brought a rousing ovation for the composer at Houston Grand Opera in March. The production by Michael Gielata, conducted by Patrick Summers, featured singers from Houston Grand Opera Studio, co-founded by Floyd 40 years ago. The new opera sees the composer exploring gender identity during the reign of Charles II, as a leading actor is cast adrift by the tides of theatrical change.

"...it is the story of Edward Kynaston, one of the last men to play women's roles on the stage in Restoration England. Charles II's edict that female parts must henceforth be played by women means that the 26-year-old actor, once the toast of London, is not only out of work, but his whole being, including his sexuality, is called into question... The emotion of a man living the wrong life is carried in the autumnal, transparent orchestration, in which wistful woodwind solos evoke the protagonist's feminine world."

Wall Street Journal

"During Kynaston's transformative journey from artifice to realism, he goes from being Villiers, Duke of Buckingham's lover to becoming passionately involved with his former dresser Peg; and from the most celebrated 'female' actor of the era to performing in drag at a bawdy pub..."

Opera Now

"...a remarkable achievement for this 90-year-old composer..."

Opera Now

"*Prince of Players* shows that Floyd still can champion the lyrical American opera aesthetic that he largely created... the score has evocative touches: the bustling, staccato woodwinds that describe the theater's backstage activity; the mournful, simple music for oboe and drum that accompanies a bit of *King Lear*; the ominous tones of Desdemona's death scene."

Classical Music Review

"Floyd's telling of the story has its eyes wide open to some cruelties beneath its exotic, period-piece exterior. Oppressive gender roles, rigid social prohibitions, and the arbitrariness and damaging consequences of absolute power all leave their scars on Kynaston, so that we are as much awakened to his condition as uplifted by his triumph... an intimate, moving performance."

Opera News

The creation of *Prince of Players* was surveyed in a series of talks with the composer hosted and streamed by Opera America. The first CD of Floyd's *Wuthering Heights*, based on the impassioned novel by Emily Brontë, is released this month featuring Florentine Opera on the Reference Recordings label.

Kalitzke Pym premiere



Photo: Heidelberg Theater/Annemone Taake

Johannes Kalitzke's *Pym* at the Heidelberg Theater

Johannes Kalitzke's new opera *Pym*, premiered at the Heidelberg Theater in February, draws on Edgar Allan Poe's only complete novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. This was a source book for Melville's *Moby Dick* and Hollow Earth science fiction writers such as Jules Verne, taking a decidedly surreal turn in its final pages as Pym disappears into a world beyond the South Pole. The production by Johann Kresnik, blending opera and dance, featured a remarkable performance by countertenor Kangim Justin Kim in the title role.

"Johannes Kalitzke and his librettist Christoph Klimke have found a theatrically compelling shape... The score includes ever more surreally distanced sounds, enriched with electronics and a vocal quartet enveloping the dramatic singing with an aura of meanings..."

Die Deutsche Bühne

"Kalitzke's music evokes not facts but fictions, not reality but, by means of sampled sounds used in a consciously dramatic way, the surreal within psychotic worlds of desire and delusion."

Opernwelt

"As Pym disappears at the end of the final 'maelstrom' scene into the outstretched wings of the ominous white figure, Kalitzke allows his sweeping, expansive music to disappear as if into a black hole. Before that, over the course of 90 minutes, a hellish trip has unfolded with such considerable orchestral energy and varied diversions that it could be a musical representation of the world of Hieronymus Bosch... With its strong pull, it's clear how effective this music is."

Online Musik Magazin

Lindberg at the BBC Proms



Photo: Hanyia Chhala/ArenaPAL

Magnus Lindberg's new orchestral work is premiered at the BBC Proms on 24 July, positioned to lead directly into the London Philharmonic Orchestra's performance of Beethoven's *Symphony No.9* conducted by Vladimir Jurowski. The composer's residency with the LPO will see a further performance with Christoph Eschenbach in May 2017, and performances by co-commissioners will follow at the Helsinki Festival and the Casa da Música in Porto.

Lindberg describes the challenge of paving the way for Beethoven: "If I was really pressed to choose just one composer from the classical canon it would have to be Beethoven, because he stands out as an example of what it is to be a contemporary composer – just as much as figures like Xenakis in my own lifetime. I've re-examined his late works with fresh ears in preparing for this composition, to create music that leads naturally to the amazing opening of the Ninth Symphony but which can also have an independent life of its own."

"My music falls naturally into two distinct sections: one is linked to the massive impact of the first movement with its immense tutti writing, full of bold sounds and energy, while the second is closer to the beauty of the slow movement and acts as a bridge towards the open fifth A and E and its D minor destination. For obvious reasons I've kept well away from all references to Beethoven's finale which has to leap out on its own terms."

"Rather than quotations, I've embedded a number of Beethovenian allusions, so there are clear aural links, and the orchestration matches the symphony, so it will have a period colour without harp, piano and exotic percussion that feature in many of my works. The harmonic world will naturally be much later than Beethoven's, though it is the outcome of where he was heading. I've returned to the sequencing of harmonies I was exploring in works like *Kinetics* in the late 1980s, trying to find a modern equivalent of classical functional harmony built from the spectral series."

Simpson Pleasure on tour



Photo: Opera North/Robert Workman

Lesley Garrett and Steven Page in Mark Simpson's new chamber opera *Pleasure*

Mark Simpson's new chamber opera *Pleasure*, a powerful drama of personal tragedy amidst the abandon of a gay nightclub, won plaudits on its premiere tour to Leeds, Liverpool, Aldeburgh and London. Jointly commissioned by Opera North, Aldeburgh Music and The Royal Opera, the work is compactly scored for four singers and ten instrumentalists. As staged by Tim Albery with Psappha conducted by Nicholas Kok, *Pleasure* demonstrated the 27-year-old composer's vivid theatrical imagination, developed across an eight-year gestation with librettist Melanie Challenger.

"Simpson says that his inspiration came from his experiences on the Liverpool club scene, in which he and other young men sought emotional solace from a sybil-like toilet attendant. Yet it turns out to be the perfect operatic subject: squalid and earthbound yet imbued with a radiant, almost mythic quality... At the start of what one hopes will be a long operatic career, Simpson has pulled off a genuine coup."

The Guardian

"Simpson's self-confessed aim is that his music should supply those qualities of intimacy, beauty, warmth, pain and suffering that he sees lacking in much contemporary opera. He does this with skill, variety and strong dramatic impulse... With a sterling cast led by Lesley Garrett – powerfully eloquent, suppressing her natural glamour and embracing dowdiness – and Steven Page brilliant as a cynical drag queen, all angles and bones and bling and slap, it has the makings of a hit."

The Observer

"Don't be misled by the title. Though just 75 minutes long, this gripping new opera is a potent cocktail of incident and emotion – but far more about pain than pleasure... Though written for just ten instrumentalists, the score is virtuosically varied, with the strings generating tenderness or lyrical fervour in contrast to the predominantly churning, dark-hued wind writing. Although there is no direct pastiche of club music, Simpson slips in enough hints of techno to suggest the hedonist escapism of the dance floor we never see."

The Times

"...the score radiated warmth and zest..."

Sunday Times

"The very first instrumental notes are dark and sombre, and they prepare us for a scenario which is essentially disturbing and, for two of the four characters, ultimately tragic... Psappha brought out the great variety of colours and textures in Simpson's brilliant score. *Pleasure* makes a powerful impact..."

The Independent

The first all-Simpson disc, featuring chamber and ensemble works, has just been released on the NMC label, and this summer brings his orchestral opener *Isra'el* to the BBC Proms and first performances of a new trio at the Edinburgh and Salzburg Festivals, with the composer as clarinetist joined by Pierre Laurent-Aimard and Antoine Tamestit.

Clyne Hindemith Prize

Anna Clyne, the British-born and New York-resident composer, has won the 2016 Hindemith Prize, worth 20,000 Euros, with a unanimous decision from the prize jury. The award will be made at a concert in the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival on 12 July including a performance of Clyne's *Rest these hands* performed by violinist Baiba Skride. Established in 1990, the prize's previous recipients include Olga Neuwirth, Matthias Pintscher and Thomas Adès.



Photo: Javier Ochoa

Clyne is currently composer-in-residence with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and the Orchestre National d'Île de France and her previous residencies have included the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (2010–15), the Cabrillo Festival in California and the Festival Internacional de Inverno de Campos do Jordão in Brazil. Music from her orchestral work *Night Ferry* was selected as one of the *Ten Pieces* in the BBC's classical music initiative for UK secondary schools.

Last month brought two world premieres of music by Anna Clyne. The 20-minute orchestral work *Abstractions*, a suite of movements inspired by five contrasting contemporary artworks housed at the Baltimore Museum of Art, was given its first performance under the baton of Marin Alsop with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Clyne's *Threads & Traces* was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the Piatigorsky International Cello Festival, with the premiere at Walt Disney Concert Hall featuring an ensemble of 100 cellos.



Jack and Jackie Kennedy at their Fort Worth hotel in David T. Little's opera JFK

Little JFK's last night in Fort Worth

David T. Little may be best known for his hard-hitting, post-apocalyptic music theatre piece, *Dog Days*, but his first full-scale stagework, premiered in Fort Worth in April, reveals new dimensions to his operatic art. *JFK*, again created in collaboration with librettist Royce Vavrek, reflects on the presidential couple's final twelve hours in the Texan city, before Kennedy's assassination in Dallas. Past, present and future collide as dreams and fateful premonitions blur reality, with Little switching musical gears between outrageous satirical comedy and intimate reflections.

"An opera operating on many levels, it has something for everyone. While not mythologizing JFK and Jackie as *Nixon in China* does its protagonists, the new opera begins in the world of mythology. Jackie's hotel maid and Jack's Secret Service agent also represent the ancient Greek Fates, who spin and measure the thread of life. Through them, we enter the drama uneasily aware of the president's destiny." *Los Angeles Times*

"...the drama and ideas flowed seamlessly, thanks not only to a beautifully structured libretto that pulls these ideas together, but a score in which a smooth quasi-minimalism provides a foundation for frequent journeys into radiant neo-romanticism. The constant inventiveness and musical impetus recalls Puccini, while the solid characterizations of both Kennedys evoke the fate-driven personalities of Verdi. And, the several grand choral scenes suggest both of

those Italian masters... a musical and visual spectacle well worth the attention of any opera lover." *Dallas Observer*

"Through surreal dreamscapes, Jack and Jackie revisit formative events in their lives... Little's best music comes in Part II, when we follow Jack and Jackie to a breakfast hosted by the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce. Jackie arrives late, because in her hotel suite she is visited by the apparition of Jackie Onassis, who helps her younger self slip into the pink dress and coat. The scene flows from a haunting duet into a rapturous trio when joined by Clara, the hotel maid. Diffuse pungent orchestral harmonies, with pitches that split and chords that slide, cushion the tender vocal writing." *New York Times*



Photo: Merril Orr

JFK was commissioned by Fort Worth Opera and American Lyric Theatre with Thaddeus Strassberger's production travelling on to the Montréal Opera in a future season.

Little and Vavrek's *Dog Days* has recently received its first European performances with two German stagings in Bielefeld and Schwerin. *Die Deutsche Bühne* praised Little's "distinctive musical language: energetic, wild and rough-edged in equal measure, found in vibrant cantabile lines, with fascinating often magical sound mixtures". *Neue Musikzeitung* described how "David T. Little is regarded as one of the great hopes of modern music theatre for good reasons. *Dog Days* is sure to continue its success in Europe..."

multiple versions since its premiere in 1956 with an impressive roll-call of contributing writers. The work captures Voltaire's depiction of the cynicism of society expressed through Candide's education in optimism to seek *The Best of All Possible Worlds*, banishment from his beloved Cunegonde, picaresque travels around the globe, and his final acceptance of simple hope in *Make Our Garden Grow*. As well as enjoying stage productions, *Candide* is a favourite with orchestras in concert form with narration.

Trouble in Tahiti is a witty one-act opera popular in double-bills, with its wry commentary on American society following a suburban couple struggling with commitment and communication. Their family story is continued in *A Quiet Place*, Bernstein's only full-scale opera, first staged in Houston and Milan, which has enjoyed a reappraisal over the past decade including performances in New York and Berlin. These interlocking works are both available in versions for larger or reduced forces. The Bernstein stage canon is completed with his genre-blending *Mass*, a popular choice in recent years for a series of high profile community outreach projects, and his incidental music and songs for *Peter Pan*.

Jerome Robbins shares Bernstein's centenary in 2018, and their partnership yielded a sequence of major ballets. *Fancy Free* dating from 1944 was a pre-cursor to *On the Town*, blending male gymnastics, vaudeville and cartoons with modern ballet, while *Facsimile* created two years later explored more complex emotional responses to romantic entanglement. The duo explored Yiddish folk drama in *Dybbuk* in 1974 and, in a further dancework for New York City Ballet, Robbins choreographed the *West Side Story Suite* in 1995. As with the numerous orchestral suites from the theatre works, Bernstein's ballets are ideal for programming in the concert hall.

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Photo: © Alfred Eisenstaedt

The centenary of Leonard Bernstein in 2018 offers the opportunity to explore his works for the stage, which energetically break down traditional barriers between theatre, musical, opera and dance. His most famous score, *West Side Story*, was premiered in 1957 thanks to the composer's collaboration with writers Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim and choreographer Jerome Robbins. Fusing jazz, Latin dance and symphonic through-composition, the stagework became an instant hit, transporting Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to Manhattan's Upper West Side.

Two earlier Broadway musical comedies by Bernstein were also coloured with the sights and sounds of New York, seeing him work with lyricists Betty Comden and Adolph Green. *On the Town* was based on an idea by Jerome Robbins in which three young sailors make the most of 24-hours shore-leave in the Big Apple. Hit numbers including *New York, New York*, *Come up to My Place* and *Some Other Time* follow their pursuit of love and excitement. *Wonderful Town* is a feminine counterpart with two small-town sisters determined to find success in New York City with songs including *A Little Bit in Love* and *One Hundred Easy Ways to Lose a Man*. In addition to theatrical staging, both works have proved successful in concert presentation with linking narration.

Bernstein's sparkling operetta *Candide* has established itself as a repertoire classic through

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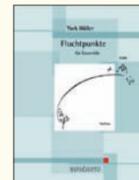
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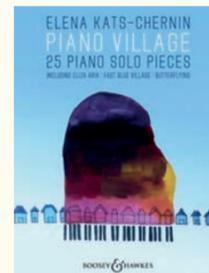


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Kats-Chernin Piano Village



Photo: Bridget Elliot



The new collection of piano pieces by Elena Kats-Chernin, *Piano Village*, offers a wide range of her keyboard music collected into a single volume. Popular hits such as *Eliza Aria* (familiar from the Lloyds TSB advert), *Russian Rag* and *Butterflying* are joined by a selection of rags, tangos and waltzes from across her output. The cosmopolitan composer, who was born in Uzbekistan, studied in Moscow, Sydney and Hanover, and is now resident in Australia, explains why piano music holds a special place in her life:

"The piano was always like a best friend to me and even now I probably feel most comfortable sitting at the keyboard. As a child in the Soviet Union my parents tried to encourage me to go outside – they insisted I took intense ice skating

training until I was fourteen. I remember carrying the heavy skates through the snow and counting the minutes until I could get back to the music and what I loved. Other people have commented on the balletic quality in my works and I sometimes think about all that ice skating and whether it shaped my perceptions of movement and rhythm in music.

"All the pieces in *Piano Village* are special to me in some way: they are moments in my life, feelings, people or ideas. When I am at the piano I try to let my hands travel wherever they will and through this improvisation all my pieces get born. In 1996 I wrote my first ragtime and it reminded me of my life working in the theatre creating soundtracks for drama and dance projects. I wrote tangos, waltzes and any other genre music that was needed to support the productions on stage. I sometimes like the challenge of adding to an accepted form and, after all, writing harmony and melody is fun!"

Kats-Chernin's piano music can be heard on a new ABC Classics disc, *Butterflying*, with solos and duets performed by Tamara-Anna Cislowska and the composer. Her latest work is *The Witching-Hour*, a new concerto for eight double basses for premiere by the Australian World Orchestra in September.