Turnage Rattle conducts Remembering

Mark-Anthony Turnage’s powerful symphonic work, Remembering, reunites the composer with Simon Rattle, while his new opera Coraline is announced by The Royal Opera in London.

January saw the world premiere of Mark-Anthony Turnage’s new orchestral work Remembering: In Memoriam Evan Scolfield, performed by the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Simon Rattle, celebrating the 30th year-long special relationship between composer and conductor. The half-hour score, hailed as Turnage’s major symphonic statement of recent years, travels on for further performances with the Berlin Philharmonic under Rattle this autumn and with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a future season.

“Present and correct are the Turnage trademarks: thick, blinding orchestral textures (there are no violins) and jagged harmonies. Delivered with soulful urgency, the piece also reveals a kind of keening woodwind lines, particularly in a haunting second movement, and ghosts of baroque forms leaven a family friend (son of the jazz guitarist John Scofield) was written after the death of a long special relationship between composer and conductor, political...” — The Times

The Royal Opera has announced Turnage’s new stage work Coraline, an opera for family audiences due for premieres at the Barbican Theatre in March 2018. Adapting the much-loved classic fantasy tale by Neil Gaiman, the new opera is staged by Alanta Collins with Simon Edwards conducting the Britten Sinfonia. This co-production travels to Opéra de Lille, Victorian Opera in Melbourne and Theater an der Wien.

The composer observes that “the fundamental massage beneath the story is that we shouldn’t be afraid to do what we believe is right. Coraline is brave, but not because she doesn’t cry or get scared, but because despite those things she still tries her best and doesn’t give up. That’s why I wanted to write Coraline, because here’s a message well worth telling; through opera or in any other way.”

Recant Turnage works have included the Japanese-themed Hikari, receiving its UK premiere at the BBC Proms on 14 August, and Martland Memorial giving its first performance in April with percussion soloist Colin Currie, the Britten-Pears Orchestra and Martin Atkinson.

The 2017/18 season includes the first performance of Turnage’s new double violin concerto, Shadow Walker, for Vadim Repin, Daniel Hope and the Bonnian Philharmonic Orchestra under Sascha Goetzel, touring in October to Essen, Ljubljana, Vienna and Zürich.

Fjellheim Cantus CD

The unique soundworld of Norwegian composer Frode Fjellheim is familiar around the world thanks to the opening track of the Disney animated film Frozen. This employs his choral work (Hibiki) – a traditional form of song from the Sami people of the Nordic countries. Comparable to the chanting of some of the Sami people of the Nordic countries. Comparable to the chanting of some, the sounds of nature, as heard on the new disc.

The new disc contains 12 tracks composed by Fjellheim around the ‘yok’ - a traditional form of song from the Sami people of the Nordic countries. Comparable to the chanting of some of the Sami people of the Nordic countries.

Composer, yodler and keyboard performer Frode Fjellheim (b. 1959) is a Lapp from the Northern Lights (Lappland). His disc Fjellheim: “With this new album, we hope to expose the world to the rich heritage and music in Norway. I’m so proud of the choir, who’ve worked tirelessly on the recordings.”

As a theatre composer, Bernstein and his collaborators brought us such outstanding shows as On The Town, Wonderful Town, West Side Story and Candide. As a composer for the concert hall, Bernstein’s scores boldly united diverse musical elements at a time when it was frowned upon to do so. His courage in mixing genres paved the way for future generations of composers to take similar risks.

Bernstein’s compositions embraced the world he lived in. For example, his Symphony No. 2: The Age of Anxiety, explored the troubled times of the 1940s. His musical Candide was devised as a protest against the évil of McCarthyism in the 1950s. West Side Story confronted head-on the belligerent ramifications of bigotry and prejudice. His prophetic Mass from 1971, which expresses a war-torn nation’s crisis of faith, brings together musical styles as diverse as America itself.

Recent Turnage works have included the Japanese-themed Hikari, receiving its UK premiere at the BBC Proms on 14 August, and Martland Memorial giving its first performance in April with percussion soloist Colin Currie, the Britten-Pears Orchestra and Martin Atkinson.

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Gruber Ax launches new concerto

John Adams introduces his new opera set in the 1850s California Gold Rush, premiered in San Francisco in November.

HK Gruber’s new Piano Concerto for Emanuel Ax enjoyed first performances with the New York Philharmonic under Alan Gilbert and the Berlin Philharmonic with Simon Rattle. As travels with the concerto for further performances in November from co-commissioners the Tonhalle Orchestra in Zurich and the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic and next March reaches Gruber’s home city with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra and Paris with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France.

The composer’s customary skill at blending genres was noted by the Financial Times’s reviewer in New York, describing how the concerto “toys knowingly with jazz, swing, pop, serialism and even a touch of old-fashioned romanticism…” Soloist Emanuel Ax was praised for his vigorously at negotiating the oddly dissonating chords with infectious aptitude supported by calm energy… The composer, clearly odd zigzagging chords with infectious aplomb of old-fashioned romanticism…” Soloist Emanuel Ax, who played the concerto with great cool.”

HK Gruber: Piano Concerto

“... the Romantic solo concerto is bypassed with a raised eyebrow…”

...this is an intricate and provocative score, a 24-minute single movement concert that unites with inexorable sweep and rhythmic perambulation… Dark passages of pointillist writing in the piano trio wild, like avant-garde jazz instrumentations. The piano continues to toggle and turn, with dreamy harmonies seething into frenetic, locutory-like evocations. The orchestra sometimes soars with ethereal and expansive sonority. Yet for all the gnashing harmonies and splintered phrases, the music is run through with hints of Kurt Weill. Ax deftly navigated the concerto’s mercurial quick-cuts in his declamatory and colourful performance…” New York Times.

Rouse Symphony No.5 in Dallas

Christopher Rouse’s latest symphony, referencing Beethoven’s own fifth, was premiered by the Dallas Symphony under Jakub Hrůša in February. Further performances are planned at this summer’s Aspen Music Festival and by the Nashville Symphony in October, conducted by Joshua Weilerstein and Giancarlo Guerrero respectively. “The new 25-minute symphony from Rouse’s life-long love of Beethoven’s music, with an overt evoking of the familiar tote-motif theme of the fifth symphony as well as other alluded references.”

“Rarely does a brand-new piece of music grab you, and keep you completely engaged in your first hearing. But the world premiere of Christopher Rouse’s latest exciting and at times hauntingly beautiful Fifth Symphony had that effect. Judging by the roaring ovation after the Dallas Symphony Orchestra performance, lots of others were similarly affected.” DallasNews.com

Rouse’s orchestral work Olinda’s 72nd is performed in September by the Kansas City Symphony and November brings the world premiere of his new work for Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony, Barcarolle Infinite, written as a memorial tribute to the new composer and Cornell alumnus Steven Stucky.

Borowski Barenboim premieres

Berlin-based composer Johannes Boris Borowski is enjoying collaborations with Daniel Barenboim this year including two major premieres. His ensemble work Encore was commissioned for the opening season of the new Blaue Concert Hall at the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin and was premiered last month under Barenboim’s baton. November brings the first performance of Borowski’s Stretta, with Barenboim as soloist and the Staatskapelle under Zubin Mehta at the Berlin Philharmonic.

It is rare for a composer to have two substantial works for piano and orchestra premiered so close, but this year also introduced Borowski’s earlier Piano Concerto. Composed in 2010-11, the work was commissioned by Wergo with Florian Boesch as soloist, who returned for the belated concert premiere in Cologne in March with the WDR Symphony Orchestra under Kent Nagano. Both works explore the dramatic relation of soloist and orchestra: in the Piano Concerto the keyboard acts under reflex like a marionette seeking emancipation, while in Stretta the music moves from monumental structures to playful character episodes. Borowski quoted Bartók: “Music is not about being safe. Music is about courage, and courage means risk.” This month brings a further premiere with Borowski’s new String Quartet No 2 in Stuttgart.

New music highlights

Harrison Birtwistle
Deep Time (UK premiere)
31 July 2017
Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim
Mark Simpson
The Immortal (London premiere)
27 July 2017
Christopher Panazov/London Voices/Colón Festival Orchestra;
BBC Philharmonic/Juanjo Mena
James MacMillan
An Euphoniam Requiem (London premiere)
30 July 2017
Ilyana Davids/Jacqueline Imbrailo
BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra;
CBSO Chorus/BBC National Chorus of Wales;
Xian Zhang

Do you integrate music from the 1850s with your own idiom? I looked at whatever available music from the Gold Rush era I could find. Most of it was in the form of bland parlor music – dance music such as galsips, ecossaises, etc – none of which had the kind of zing andlassiness of the written texts, so I decided it wouldn’t be interesting to try to incorporate it. But instead I invented a kind of punchy music that matches the people and the way they spoke and acted.

It must be a pleasure to compose a stage work that originates in the California you’ve observed and traveled love.

Indeed. Over the past two years, as I’ve worked on the opera, I’ve been aware of many social and historical parallels exist between the get-rich-quick mood of the Gold Rush and our current mad obsession with wealth and material acquisition. The premiere in San Francisco will take place only a few miles from Silicon Valley, where extravagant fortunes and hyperbolic overvaluation is a way of life.

Adams Girls of the Golden West

Operas in two acts
Libretto compiled from original sources by Peter Sellars Commissioned by San Francisco Opera, The Dallas Opera and Dutch National Opera

21 November 2017 (world premiere) 24/25/29 November, 20/27/10 December
Memorial Opera House, San Francisco
Director: Peter Sellars Conductor: Geshen}

BBC Proms 14 July - 9 September 2017

Mark-Anthony Turnage
Hibiki (UK premiere)
14 July 2017
Sally Matthews/Mihoko Fujimura/Pinnicello Children’s Music Group/New London Children’s Choir
BBC Symphony Orchestra/Kazuki Osa

John Adams
Lola: Moses in the Spider Dance (London premiere)
9 September 2017
BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sakari Oramo

www.bbc.co.uk/proms

Drawing of San Francisco in the 1850s at the time of the Gold Rush
Willems Impressing the Czar

The music of Thom Willems, inextricably linked with the classic choreography of William Forsythe, continues to travel the world as their collaborations enjoy frequent revivals or are added afresh to the repertoires of ballet companies. One of their largest-scale achievements, the full-evening Impressing the Czar, was restored to the stage by the Samper Ballet in Dresden in 2015, toured to Antwerp last year and Paris this January, and will return to Dresden in January next year.

“...William Forsythe’s 1988 masterpiece, Impressing the Czar, a notable deconstruction of ballet’s history, technique and performance practices... The first part, Potemkin’s Signature, is an absurd collage of characters and references that turns ballet history on its head. Lush historical costumes cohabit with sleek leotards and a fan-like figure, as phrases from Raymnidai suddenly morph into stretching neoclassical lines...”

“Forsythe’s real trick is to combine postmodern disruption with a thorough understanding of the classical technique, and the second act, in the Middle, ‘Somehow Elevated continues to enjoy an independent life as one of Forsythe’s most popular ballets for triple bills, returning to English National Ballet at Sadler’s Wells in March and scheduled for Zurich Ballet in November. The Daily Telegraph described it in London as ‘a bold regeneration of the classic dance vocabulary and instantly recognised as a contemporary masterpiece. It’s a dazzling spectacle, performed with fierce intensity by the company...’”

Ginastera Bomarzo in Madrid

The Spanish premiere of Alberto Ginastera’s opera Bomarzo was a fitting close to the special events staged for the composer’s centenary. The production by Pierre Audi, conducted by David Afkham, featured tenor John Dacorda probing the complex psychology of the title role. El Mundo described how the opera’s “presentation here in Madrid, almost half a century after its composition, has been brilliant... A real achievement and a triumph for the Teatro Real that deserves to be applauded.”

“...Bomarzo is a potion that disturbs the senses...”
- La Nacion

MacMillan Trombone Concerto

James MacMillan travelled to Amsterdam in April for the world premiere of his Trombone Concerto, the latest in an admired series of recent works for solo instrument and orchestra. Written for Dutch trombonist Jörgen van Rijen, whose solo career has introduced a number of concertos by leading contemporary composers, the 25-minute work was launched by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Ivan Fischer. Further performances see the Trombone Concerto journeying with van Rijen to orchestras in Antwerp, Geneva, Oulu, Cottbus and Dallas.

“The new work proved to be vintage MacMillan. There’s a wonderful mixture of timbres, social glooming melodies, rich chording and unblinking eruptions of sound – all in a kaleidoscopic form with a unifying hymn theme... It works in MacMillan’s hands, perhaps because of the magical orchestration, in which liquid woodwinds drip through a fine sordino mesh of harp and vibraphone. Or where one school follows one another in strings, piano and harp. Or when sudden apocalyptic cacophony emerges from percussion, brass and a violin.”
- NRC Handelsblad

“...this magnificent concerto enriches the repertoire...” - De Trouw

“...the trombone sang, sang, sang... Then suddenly a spectacular mating dance of four trombones la Stravinskian. At the very end van Rijen and MacMillan struck me down completely; between the serene harmonies which came to a moment of rest, the trombone once more arised into a heart-breaking eruption... the wonderful beauty of despair... It is a concerto for stamina, and trombone players could use one.” - De Trouw

This autumn brings the world premiere of a new MacMillan work for soprano, choir and orchestra, commissioned by the Shrine of Fátima as part of the pilgrimages site’s centenary programme. The celebrations remember the story of Marian apparitions to three children in 1917 culminating in the prediction of a divine visitation on 13 October which attracted over 50,000 to travel to the town, many seeing the sun dancing across the heavens. The composer describes how “The Sun Danced” will receive its premiere in the Basilica at Fátima exactly 100 years after the Miracle of the Sun. The miraculous events made this unremarkable little Portuguese town famous throughout the world, and provided the focus of an amazing ongoing spiritual phenomenon.” Two days after the Fátima premiere, the Gabankan Orchestra and Choir conducted by Joana Caramis perform the 15-minute work in Lisbon.

MacMillan has recently transcribed his Missa mirae for orchestra alone and the new version entitled Larghetto will be premiered by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Manfred Honeck on 27 October.

Ginastera’s opera Bomarzo in Pierre Audi’s production for the Teatro Real in Madrid

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Simpson Immortal returns

Mark Simpson’s oratorio exploring aspects of the afterlife, The Immortal, is heard at the BBC Proms on 27 July, following its successful premiere at the Manchester International Festival in 2015. The 30-minute score attracted critical plaudits with The Times hailing it as “the most thrilling new choral work I have heard for years” and The Guardian describing it as “a blissfully original oratorio”. This first London performance features soloists Christopher Purves, massed choirs and the BBC Philharmonic under Juanjo Mena. Melanie Challenger’s text for The Immortal delves into the Late Victorian world of sciences and breathless vet. Paul Bartlett’s clever animations blend stop-motion, paper dolls and collage and magic in a visual aesthetic that recalls Eastern Bloc children’s films from the 1980s, but with naughty bits. Financial Times... a riot of continuous animation by the brilliant Paul Bartlett, combining stop-motion and collage with techniques drawn from 3D animation, Petrushka entitled as an umpthing carnival... a constantly churning furioso of a production. Opera News

MacMillan Trombone Concerto

A starting new production of Stravinsky’s Petrushka, combining mime, acrobatics, cartoon and video, was premiered in Berlin in January. This saw the return of the British performance collective 1927 that had worked with Barrie Kosky on his hit Magic Flute in Paris and its premiere at the Komische Oper in Berlin, staged by Paul Bartlett with animators by Paul Bartlett, combining stop-motion and collage with techniques drawn from 3D animation, Petrushka entitled as an umpthing carnival... a constantly churning furioso of a production. Opera News

Stravinsky Petrushka is animated

Petrushka at the Komische Oper in Berlin, staged by 1927 with animations by Paul Bartlett

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Messianos from the beyond were reputedly received by the psychical researcher Frederic Myers, who was tortured by a secret love affair with magical consequences. The composer writes that “the huge space of the Royal Albert Hall is a perfect setting for this larger than life oratorio.” I’m looking forward to hearing the music echoing around the hall – the wave of voices, human and orchestral, should be enveloping and perhaps even supernatural.”

This summer unveils Simpson’s new commission for the Gould Piano Trio, After Avedon, whose movements are responses to four portraits by the influential American photographer. The composer is currently working on a new cello concert for Leonard Elschenbroch as part of his Composer in Association role with the BBC Philharmonic.
Offenbach Fantasio in Paris

Jacques Offenbach’s Romantic opera Fantasio, currently enjoying a revival of interest thanks to the Offenbach Edition Keck published by Boosey & Hawkes and the Opera Flite recording conducted by Mark Elder, has returned to the Parisian company that premiered it in 1872. The new Opéra Comique production, directed by Thomas Jolly and staged by Marianne Chubbessa in the title role, is preparing to travel onwards to the Grand Théâtre de Genève, Opéra de Rouen, Opéra National de Montpellier and the National Croatian Theatre in Zagreb.

Offenbach composed Fantasio during a turbulent period when, as a result of the Franco-Prussian War, he was revised as a German-born adoptive Frenchman and took refuge in Spain. As Luá Fernandez noted, Fantasio is a “political masque which delivers an astonishing paean in which the autonomy is held up to ridicule: the people are only liberated from waging war when the ‘decision-makers’ have to risk their own lives…” This milieu for the lovelorn student Fantasio, seeking romance within a morally bankrupt kingdom, encouraged the composer to extend his musical range. As Opéra commented: “the score of Fantasio, closer in spirit to Lully’s Comus (+44 020 7054 7200)

full range – not just its famous growly, grumpy side but a surprising vein of lyricism as well – paints a pastel-coloured narrative out of Greek mythology” (San Francisco Chronicle). As the Financial Times noted, “the spotlight is rarely off the tuba, which is now a leading instrument and piano. A selection of MacMillan’s most ambitious early works for full orchestra, including the fourth and most recent symphony, juxtaposing images of wintry desolation, while eight new study scores covering James MacMillan’s four symphonies and a selection of his concertos, have recently been released in the Hawkes Pocket Scores series.

John Adams
Splitting Adams
Chamber Symphony
Son of Chamber Symphony
Night Will Sound (after John Anderson)
Cantiloupe CA211208
This recording includes a new version of the chamber version of the piece. As the Mercury News noted, “the orchestra has featured more attention to Robin Holloway than to his past colleagues”.

In his 22 years on the San Francisco Symphony podium, master of stage Michael Tilson Thomas has paid more attention to Robin Holloway than to his past colleagues. As the Mercury News noted, “the spotlight is rarely off the tuba, which is now a leading instrument...”，

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New recordings

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“Fantasio is a work in which love, humour and politics mix” (Les Échos)

Holloway in San Francisco

“In his 22 years on the San Francisco Symphony podium, master of stage Michael Tilson Thomas has paid more attention to Robin Holloway than to his past colleagues.” —The Mercury News

Robin Holloway’s 75th birthday is celebrated in October 2018, offering the opportunity to explore the full range of his output. Moving from a crisis with modernism to forge a new relationship with the past, Holloway developed a style which anticipated post-modernism, redefining the language of Romanticism and the early 20th century into musical visualised through wild orchestral colours. Alongside his original works, including the opera Clásica, a sequence of five Grieg scores for the Orchestra, a dyed to amoral content for the orchestra, four Serious Songs/ refusing to be the transformed Zio, the orchestra for the mezzo-soprano shines in this role Full highlights her acting talent. Le Monde.

“If the production made a sensation, then it was through the rediscovery of the music – the music of an underestimated Offenbach. Gentle, dreamy. Like in the first measures of the overture, where the orchestra mumbles from flutes to brass. Or in Fantasio’s first aria. Vivid orchestral writing, four parts of incidental melancholy. Offenbach undoubtedly saw a likeness of himself in the figure of a disillusioned commoner with fluctuating moods and displeased as a court jester – entirely trapped in the costume of a laugh-maker for his audience.” —Le Figaro.

Alongside the success of Fantasio, the Offenbach Edition Keck has in recent years provided new materials for Les Fées du Rhin, Geneviève de Brabant, La princesse de Trébizonde and La princesse de Trébizonde. A new edition of Offenbach’s youthful piano works Les Fées du Rhin is now available on sale and Jean Christophe Keck is preparing the score for the three-act opera Blanka.

Offenbach composed Fantasio during a turbulent period when, as a result of the Franco-Prussian War, he was revised as a German-born adoptive Frenchman and took refuge in Spain. As Luá Fernandez noted, Fantasio is a “political masque which delivers an astonishing paean in which the autonomy is held up to ridicule: the people are only liberated from waging war when the ‘decision-makers’ have to risk their own lives…” This milieu for the lovelorn student Fantasio, seeking romance within a morally bankrupt kingdom, encouraged the composer to extend his musical range. As Opéra commented: “the score of Fantasio, closer in spirit to Lully’s Comus than to opéra comique, shows Offenbach at the top of his game.”

Holloway’s remarkable new works include a Third Symphony (which references Schumann and orchestrations of Debussy) and the opera En blanc et noir, which the Financial Times described as “lyricism as well – paints a pastel-coloured narrative out of Greek mythology” (San Francisco Chronicle).

“Take the form of a tuba concerto, the North American premiere.”

The Orchestra has featured more attention to Robin Holloway than to his past colleagues. As the Mercury News noted, “the spotlight is rarely off the tuba, which is now a leading instrument...”

MacMillan new scores

Eight new study scores covering James MacMillan’s four symphonies and a selection of his concertos, have recently been released in the Hawkes Pocket Scores series.

Symphony “Vigil” (1997), one of MacMillan’s most ambitious early works for full orchestra, was composed for the London Symphony Orchestra and Matsali Rostropovich and travels on a spiritual Easter journey from darkness to light. The smaller-scale symphony Symphony No.2 (1999) for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra grew from images of wintry desolation, while Symphony No.3 “Silence” (2002) was inspired by Shubuki Endo’s novel about missionaries in Japan, recently made into a feature film by Martin Scorsese. The fourth and most recent symphony, juxtaposing images of wintry desolation, while eight new study scores covering James MacMillan’s four symphonies and a selection of his concertos, have recently been released in the Hawkes Pocket Scores series.

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Scores have also been released for four MacMillan concertos, from the early violin concerto through to recent clarinet and percussion concertos. The viola concerto “Son of Chamber Symphony” (2014) was written for the talents of Nicholas Hunt, a clarinetist and percussionist, coming of age during the Scottish founding fathers, through to works composed in the past decade. The Olso Concert 2009-10, (16) was premiered at the BBC Proms in 2015 and recorded by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra for Onyx Classics.

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