

Quarternotes

MacMillan choral symphony

The premiere of James MacMillan's new Symphony No.5: 'Le grand Inconnu' provided a powerful finale to his 60th birthday feature in Edinburgh.

The Edinburgh International Festival's focus on James MacMillan in his 60th birthday year demonstrated the range of the composer's output: from the satirical organ concerto *A Scotch Bestiary*, through intimate chamber and choral works, to a new version of his large-scale cantata on themes of conception, birth and rebirth, *Quickenings*, with the solo vocal parts reimagined for the six voices of The King's Singers. The final concert culminated in the world premiere of MacMillan's new choral symphony exploring the mysteries of the Holy Spirit.

"... an otherworldly contemplation of the Holy Spirit..." *Financial Times*

Commissioned by the Genesis Foundation, *Symphony No.5: 'Le grand Inconnu'* saw the extended choral forces of The Sixteen and Genesis Sixteen joined by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Harry Christophers, attracting a standing ovation from a full capacity Usher Hall. *The Times* described how the 50-minute symphony

looks "likely to join MacMillan epics such as *St John Passion* and *Stabat Mater* in gripping the ears, spearing the heart and moving the soul... The world needs more composers like MacMillan: powerful, communicative composers who never hide where they come from, what they believe in, or what they feel."

"...a meditation on the nature of the Holy Spirit – the 'great unknown' of Catholic theology. It is cast in three sections representing breath, water and fire. The work opens on whispered breaths, the sound coalescing into chanting of the Hebrew, Greek and Latin words for breath amid mysterious rustlings in the orchestra. Later this explodes into a series of dramatic, ecstatic climaxes... MacMillan's writing for voices is utterly assured." *The Guardian*

"...there was no mistaking the outflow of ecstatic passion that drove the compositional process. It opens in surreal territory, amorphous intakes of breath that turn to specific words, eventual pitched sounds punctured by microtones and harmonics paving the way for a turbulent three-movement adrenalin rush of all that MacMillan is known for." *The Scotsman*

"At the end of the second part a memorable passage has the choir divided into 20 parts, harking back to the



Photo: Marc Marnie

Tudor era. At the end the living fire flickers and fades... The feeling lingers that MacMillan is searching his subconscious in a way he has not before... This numinous symphony will surely reward other audiences prepared to listen with the patience and concentration it deserves." *Financial Times*

The London premiere of *Symphony No.5: 'Le grand Inconnu'* takes place at the Barbican

on 14 October, with The Sixteen joined by Britten Sinfonia, coupled with the UK premiere of *The Sun Danced* written for the centenary of the Fátima shrine in Portugal. The Sixteen and Britten Sinfonia reunite in New York on 7 November for the US premiere of MacMillan's *Stabat Mater* in Lincoln Center's White Light Festival.

Sikorski joins Concord



Sofia Gubaidulina

Lera Auerbach

Under a landmark agreement, Sikorski Music Publishing has combined with Concord Music Publishing's Boosey & Hawkes division, bringing together two giants of Russian and Soviet era classical copyrights. German-based Sikorski is home to the repertoire of such major figures as Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Kabalevsky and Schnittke, plus ongoing relationships with composers including Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli and Lera Auerbach.

Sofia Gubaidulina (b.1931) is acclaimed as the leading living Russian composer of her generation. This season brings the world premiere of *God's Wrath* for orchestra, at the Salzburg Easter Festival under Christian Thielemann, the German premiere of her third violin concerto *Dialogue: I and You*, with Vadim Repin and the Leipzig Gewandhaus under Andris Nelsons on 5 December, and the UK premiere of her *Triple Concerto* by the BBC Philharmonic on 14 December. First German performances of her oratorio *On Love and Hatred* take place next year at the Hamburg Elbphilharmonie and in a Berlin Konzerthaus Orchestra residency under Christoph Eschenbach. Her 90th birthday is celebrated in 2021.

Lera Auerbach (b.1973), the multi-talented composer, pianist, poet and visual artist, was born in Russia and emigrated to the West in 1991. Her 100 compositions range from chamber music to the ballet *The Little Mermaid* choreographed by John Neumeier. Recent months have seen Auerbach's orchestral *Icarus* at the BBC Proms and Berlin Konzerthaus and a portrait concert at the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest. Her *Goetia. 72 – In umbra lucis*, built from a list of demonic names, is toured by the Netherlands Chamber Choir and Danel Quartet in the New Year.

Jenkins Miserere premiere and CD

Karl Jenkins's latest work for chorus and orchestra, *Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption*, is revealed this month on disc and in concert. Selections from the score are included in the composer's sold-out 75th birthday concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 13 October, and the complete 45-minute work is unveiled by lestin Davies, Polyphony and the Britten Sinfonia under Stephen Layton at Grayshott Concerts on 29 November with a broadcast on Classic FM. The same line-up features on the first recording of *Miserere*, released by Decca Records to coincide with the Royal Albert Hall concert (481 8580).

Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption is scored for countertenor (or mezzo soprano), mixed chorus, solo cello, strings, harp and percussion, which includes instruments indigenous to the Middle East: riq, darbuca, zarband, bendir. Also heard are the mey, an ancient double reed oboe-like instrument from the region, and the qanun, a kind of large zither from the Arab world.

The composer writes that "*Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption* is dedicated to all who have suffered or perished during the tragic conflicts of the Middle East over the last 70 years. As we are only too well aware, the violence, horror and destruction have not been limited to that geo-political area. *Miserere* is the Latin imperative for 'have mercy' and is often used as a title for Psalm 51, which provides a focus for the work as a whole."



The text is largely sung in Latin and English but the word 'mercy' (in the sense of compassion) is also heard in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek (the languages of the Holy Land of Biblical times), as well as present-day Arabic. The final movement sets a text by Carol Barratt drawn from sayings on 'mercy' by Rumi, the admired 13th century Muslim and Persian poet and philosopher.

In addition to *Miserere*, Decca Records also releases this month a collection of classic Jenkins recordings including *Stabat Mater*, *The Peacemakers*, *Gloria* and *Te Deum*, and *Stella Natalis*. *Miserere* receives its North American premiere at Carnegie Hall on 20 January, with Distinguished Concerts International New York under the baton of Jonathan Griffith.

Glanert total immersion



The BBC Symphony Orchestra presents a Total Immersion day devoted to Detlev Glanert on 6 December at the Barbican in London, culminating in the UK premiere of his largest concert work to date, the *Requiem for Hieronymus Bosch*. Created for the 500th anniversary of the Dutch painter in 2016, the apocalyptic work imagines the artist facing his judgement day accused of the seven deadly sins.

Scored for speaker, soloists, chamber choir, full chorus and orchestra, the score combines the Latin Requiem Mass with texts drawn from the *Carmina Burana* collection. BBC forces are conducted in London by Semyon Bychkov, a committed advocate of Glanert's music, who directs three further performances in Prague in March with the Czech Philharmonic.

The summer saw the world premiere of Glanert's new *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra*, written in tribute to Oliver Knussen, at the Tanglewood Festival under the baton of Andris Nelsons. The concerto featured the Boston Symphony's principal trumpet Thomas Rolfs as soloist and "grabbed the listener by heart and mind and never let go" (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*).

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Whitacre The Sacred Veil travels to Europe

Eric Whitacre introduces his new large-scale choral work *The Sacred Veil*, receiving first European performances in London and Amsterdam this season.



Photo: Marc Royce

What led you to create a work based on the themes of love, loss, grief and solace?

I have worked with the historian, poet, artist and my good friend Charles Anthony Silvestri (Tony) many times, but this is our largest project to date and our most sensitive and intimate. Tragically, Tony's wife Julie died of ovarian cancer. Julie, Tony and their two beautiful young children had to cope

with her illness, her passing and the unbelievably challenging years that followed. Some ten years after her death, Tony was staying with me and left a poem on my piano. He had finally been able to speak about his grief in the best way he knows how, through poetry. That poem, 'The Veil Opens', is the first of twelve movements that deal with their life, love and loss. The piece is undeniably personal, but Julie is unnamed in the text as the story is universal.

Unusually, you crafted the text in tandem with poet Charles Anthony Silvestri. How did this collaboration work?

We have tried just about every possible combination of working together you could imagine. We've worked side by side like a song-writing team and have even tried exchanging roles, with Tony writing the music to one of my poems! This time I was moved to start writing almost the second I saw his first poem – the music was there in Tony's text. We started to talk about the ribbon of energy between the world of the living and those who have passed beyond, and how very thin that ribbon or veil becomes at moments of birth and death. This text for *The Sacred Veil* is more collaborative than any other we've worked on before: Tony created poetry, I wrote some of the material and we even included some of Julie's blogs, taking her powerful posts word for word.

How did you build, order and vary the 12-movement work?

The opening movement, 'The Veil Opens', is structurally germinal for the entire work. The poem has thirteen lines within it that are the seeds for each movement that follows, either rhythmically, melodically or mystically. Some of the movements came more easily than others. 'Home' is the moment that describes the start of Tony and Julie's relationship when they were at the beach having a picnic and Tony looked at her and said, "you feel like home". 'You Rise, I Fall' paints the moment of Julie's passing in such an honest and raw way.

I had imagined having a soloist, percussion and other instrumentalists but, as I wrote, I realised that the work was becoming so intimate that the forces and soundworld needed to reflect that, and it's scored for just chorus, piano and cello.

Did the subject matter and the work's scale lead you to explore new areas of expression?

Absolutely, but it's hard to define how. *The Sacred Veil* is a story for us all – everyone has a place of pain that we can hardly bear to touch. It's our hope that through the piece we help people go to that place, face it, cope with it and support them in coming to terms with it. So many examples of music that help us deal with grieving involve singing, from hymns through to the great Requiems. It can create the common sense of sharing the experience and opening ourselves up to these feelings. If *The Sacred Veil* helps just a little we would be humbled.

When you compose, do you have an idealised choir in mind?

It's almost inevitable that I have the choirs and performers in mind when I write, and there's no doubt that *The Sacred Veil* is written for talented, sensitive singers and ensembles, led by the Los Angeles Master Chorale who became lead commissioner, gave the premiere and will record the work. Other pieces I've written have been deliberately crafted to be performed by choirs of all ages and abilities but *The Sacred Veil* – perhaps a little like *The City and the Sea* or *When David Heard* – needs a little more experience and skill. The subject matter is very demanding too, of course.

What projects do you have coming up?

And now for something completely different. I'm currently 'in the cave', working on a chamber opera based on the story of *The Gift of the Magi* and a new, sparkling orchestral piece called *Bounce* for premiere in 2020/21.

Whitacre

The Sacred Veil (2018) 52'
for SATB chorus, solo cello and piano

Commissioned by Los Angeles Master Chorale, Monash University and NTR ZaterdagMatinee for the Netherlands Radio Choir

25 October 2019 (European premiere)
St John's Smith Square, London
Jeffrey Zeigler, vic/Christopher Glynn, pft/
Eric Whitacre Singers/Eric Whitacre

28 March 2020 (Dutch premiere)
Concertgebouw, Amsterdam
Netherlands Radio Choir/Eric Whitacre

Shostakovich ballets by Ratmansky

Dmitri Shostakovich may today be largely acclaimed as a symphonist but he was also an instinctive man of the theatre, most apparent in the early decades of his career. Alongside operas, operettas, incidental music and music-hall shows, he was actively engaged as a ballet composer between 1929 and 1935 working with experimental choreographers such as Fyodor Lopukhov, and his fascination with dance music continued even when he withdrew from stage composition. Russian choreographer Alexei Ratmansky has explored the legacy of Shostakovich's ballets, leading to a special engagement with his music and the creation of new choreographies drawing upon his stage and concert works.

In 2003 Ratmansky first revived *The Bright Stream* for the Bolshoi Ballet, composed by Shostakovich between 1934 and 1935 but banned the following year. The title of the ballet is that of the collective farm deep in the Soviet countryside, where the workers are entertained by a visiting ballet troupe, with inevitable romance, intrigue and a humorous denouement. Ratmansky's new choreography successfully captured the work's poster paint colouring as well as its satirical edge, providing the Bolshoi with a production that has toured to the Met in New York and the Royal Opera House in London, most recently this summer.

Following the success of *The Bright Stream*, Ratmansky worked as artistic director of the Bolshoi between 2004 and 2008. It was in this period he restored Shostakovich's *The Bolt*,

composed in 1930-31, with a new two-act choreography. Centred around a Soviet factory, the ballet describes the struggles between the heroic working class and counter-revolutionary figures including a saboteur, a priest and a petit-bourgeois clerk. Shostakovich's music is rich in parody and dance numbers, progressing with a cartoon-like energy.

"...a fascinating, thrilling, bewilderingly, ambiguous evocation of life in Shostakovich's Russia."

New York Times on Shostakovich Trilogy

In 2009 Ratmansky joined American Ballet Theatre as Artist in Residence, soon being hailed in New York as the finest Russian choreographer since George Balanchine. He created three new Shostakovich ballets, *Symphony #9* (2012), *Chamber Symphony* and *Piano Concerto No. 1* (2013), which have been combined to acclaim as *Shostakovich Trilogy*. This award-winning triptych has also been staged by San Francisco Ballet, touring to Sadler's Wells in London this summer, and by Dutch National Ballet. Though without a narrative, the three ballets together offer a portrait of Shostakovich and what he represented to the Soviet people, in emotional and political terms, embedding a form of resistance deep within his works.



Photo: San Francisco Ballet/Erik Tomasson

Piano Concerto No. 1 from Alexei Ratmansky's Shostakovich Trilogy with San Francisco Ballet.

Monk ATLAS returns to the stage

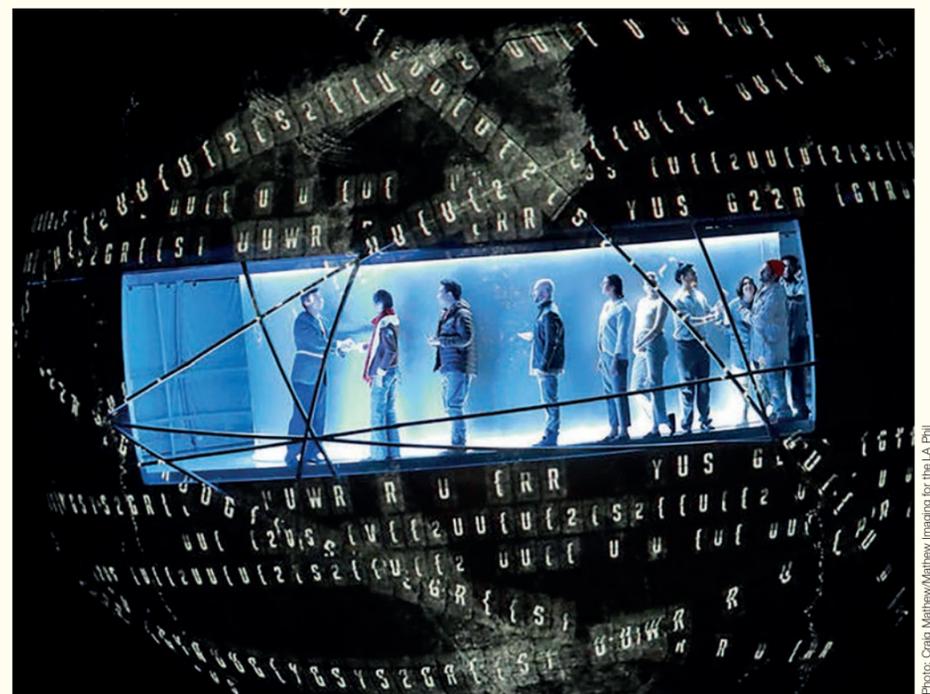


Photo: Craig Mathew/Matthew Imaging for the LA Phil

Meredith Monk's *ATLAS* in Yuval Sharon's new production in Los Angeles.

Meredith Monk's 1991 opera *ATLAS* enjoyed a spectacular revival in Los Angeles in June – its first staging in over a quarter century – in a landmark new production by Yuval Sharon. Paolo Bortolameo conducted the LA Phil New Music Group, with a specially selected cast chosen by Monk and Sharon. The significance of the staging was also that it was the first time Monk has allowed another artist to produce her work but, as the *San Francisco Chronicle* noted, "the truth is that *ATLAS* is strong enough to withstand many different approaches and performances. In the future, if the world proceeds as it should, this is a piece that will be done again and again."

In Sharon's re-telling of *ATLAS*, the character of Alexandra takes a metaphorical journey through her imagination and is drawn into a quest through inner space, uncovering truths about herself and the world. The centrepiece of the production was a large sphere designed by Es Devlin that functions not only as a projection screen but also as a vessel for the performers to interact within – it was the largest set piece ever to grace the stage of Walt Disney Concert Hall.

Substantial work on the 28-year-old opera included revising and reconstructing the performing materials to match the 1991 production in Houston and New York. Monk also re-orchestrated the score, which now features a larger roster of instrumentalists, to create a definitive edition of *ATLAS* which should encourage future performance.

"Monk's elaborate style of vocalization, be it squeaks and grunts or crystalline song, express what words only hint at. Her mastery of rhythmic pulse, of natural melody that sounds less composed than plucked from the air, and imaginative vocal and instrumental character from the chamber orchestra provide a remarkable degree of communicability... *ATLAS* here achieves a new glory." *Los Angeles Times*

"...a combination of sophistication and childlike wonder... radiant."

New York Times

"After all this time, the piece emerged once again with all its artistic virtues – its expressive generosity, its unmistakable musical lexicon, the gentle tug of its dramatic arc – gloriously intact... Her musical language, a suavely ingratiating blend of quasi-minimalist repetitions and vocal techniques rooted in body work, is unlike anything else on the musical landscape." *San Francisco Chronicle*

"*ATLAS* is one of the great operas of the late twentieth century, and it deserves to travel as widely as its heroine." *New Yorker*

"...an opera that's somehow simultaneously bustling and meditative, calm at its core as action and music swirl... an operatic masterpiece." *New York Times*

Reich Praise for Reich/Richter



Photo: Stephanie Berger, Courtesy The Shed

Reich/Richter in its premiere run of over 200 performances at The Shed in New York.

"Steve Reich has responded to the art of Gerhard Richter with a wonderfully lively yet melancholy new composition." So wrote the *Sunday Times* reviewing the premiere of the new collaboration between composer and artist, which travels to Europe for the first time this season. The world premiere in April was a highlight among opening events at The Shed, a stunning new interdisciplinary arts space in New York, with over 200 performances of *Reich/Richter* shared between Ensemble Signal and International Contemporary Ensemble.

"...tender energy, and an undercurrent of melancholy..."

New York Times

Scored for six winds, two percussionists, two pianos and string quartet, *Reich/Richter* receives its European premiere in two concerts at the Barbican in London on 23 October with Britten Sinfonia conducted by Colin Currie. Performances follow in Luxembourg, Paris, Tallinn and Oslo with Ensemble Intercontemporain, the Estonian National Symphony and the Oslo Philharmonic.

Reich created his 37-minute work to be heard alongside a new film by Gerhard Richter and Corinna Belz, based on Richter's *Patterns* series.

Using a computer image of a 1990 abstract painting, Richter progressively divided and mirrored the canvas. The result is an image that becomes a series of increasingly dense patterns, and eventually solid bands of colours. The film reverses the order of the book (starting with solid bands of colours and moving towards the complete painting).

As Reich describes, "what really got me involved was the very beginning of the film with the pulsating, color shifting, glowing stripes. Instead of dividing, mirroring, and repeating, the film was *multiplying* and repeating. In computer terms, the initial stripes were made with 2 pixels. Then they gradually grew to 4, 8, 16, 32, and so on... The *structure* of the music would be tied to the *structure* of the film. That was the basic idea... I think that they're very much mutually reinforcing."

"A two-note motif builds to complex, rhythmically agile brightness, then gradually recedes back into blur as we watch Richter's bands seem to rush by at light speed, fervently oscillating, at the finale." *New York Times*

"With each change on screen, the music responds: As the colors differentiate into intricate shapes, thunderous piano basses and descending clarinet melodies emerge... As the visual changes ramp up, Mr. Reich's music becomes more raucous and syncopated... The effect is exhilarating." *Wall Street Journal*

Clyne Scottish residency



Photo: Jennifer Taylor

The Scottish Chamber Orchestra launches Anna Clyne's new Associate Composer role on 7 November with two of her pieces performed in Edinburgh, the city where she was a music student. The first commissioned score is *Sound and Fury*, a 15-minute work for chamber orchestra, to be premiered under the direction of Pekka Kuusisto. The programme also includes Clyne's double violin concerto *Prince of Clouds*, with Kuusisto joined as soloist by Benjamin Marquise Gilmore.

The title *Sound and Fury* is drawn from the famous soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* starting "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow", which is heard during Clyne's work. Her other source of inspiration was Haydn's music for the play *Le Distract*, which found its way into his 60th Symphony 'Il Distratto', also on the SCO programme. Elements from the Haydn are viewed through Clyne's lens, with "layering, stretching, fragmenting and looping".

The composer describes how her "intention with *Sound and Fury* is to take the listener on a journey that is both invigorating – with ferocious string gestures that are flung around the orchestra with skittish outbursts – and serene and reflective – with haunting melodies that emerge and recede".

Sound and Fury receives further performances by co-commissioners the Orchestre National de Lyon under Leonard Slatkin next January, and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta in a future season. Other Clyne highlights this autumn include the Australian premiere of her arrangements for *The Nico Project* at the Melbourne Festival featuring actress Maxine Peake.

This season sees an explosion of performances for Anna Clyne across four continents. *This Midnight Hour*, an orchestral exploration of nocturnal imagery, is programmed 23 times, while her dance-inflected concert-opener *Masquerade* receives 17 performances in seven countries.

Simpson Clarinet Concerto



Photo: Sim Canetty-Clarke

Mark Simpson was in the spotlight in June, both as composer and soloist, at the world premiere of his *Clarinet Concerto* in Manchester conducted by Ben Gernon. This vivid new work was the latest in a series of commissions within Simpson's ongoing Composer in Association role with the BBC Philharmonic.

Cast in four compact movements, the 18-minute concerto is a showcase for Simpson – as much in the expressive as the technical realm. The composer was fully aware the clarinet "is very adept at performing tricks and flips" so focused instead on exploring the "inner depth of the music", drawing upon his wide repertoire experience. This demonstrates a similar approach to that in his recent *Cello Concerto* for Leonard Elschenbroich, which receives its German premiere next March with the Bremen Philharmonic.

Simpson's ghostly oratorio *The Immortal* gained its US premiere at the Cincinnati May Festival conducted by Juanjo Mena, following his performances at the Manchester International Festival and BBC Proms. Baritone Rod Gilfry sang the role of protagonist Frederic Myers, reaching out via the paranormal to contact his long-lost childhood sweetheart, with Roomful of Teeth and the May Festival Chorus summoning up the spectral forces.

"...the vocal octet sang swooping, overlapping, disembodied phrases representing messages from those who have departed this earth... a sudden pianissimo *Lacrimosa* was a stunning touch." *Classical Voice North America*

Mark Simpson combined dual duties as composer and clarinetist at the Leicester International Festival last month where Nicholas Daniel led the *Oboe Quartet*, and has also completed a clarinet test piece for the prestigious ARD Competition in Munich. This season sees him touring with the Danish National Symphony in the Nielsen concerto and continuing composition of a new concerto for Sean Shibe as electric guitarist.

Turnage Coraline opera abroad



Photo: Astrid Karger

Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline* in Saarbrücken.

Recent seasons have brought performances of all four of Turnage's full-length operas, including *Greek* in Edinburgh, London, Munich and Boston and an acclaimed concert performance of *The Silver Tassie* presented by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London. Following its German premiere in Dortmund, *Anna Nicole* was staged in Nuremberg last year and a new production opens in Wiesbaden in February 2020.

His most recent opera, *Coraline* for family audiences, has been travelling widely in Europe with The Royal Opera's original production by Aletta Collins receiving German and French premieres at Theater Freiburg and Opéra de Lille

and with first Swedish performances scheduled by Folkoperan in Stockholm next February. A new production featuring conservatoire singers was presented in Saarbrücken in April and Zürich Opera gives 14 performances in a new staging by Nina Russi opening in November.

"For this dark tale, somewhere between *Alice in Wonderland*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Turnage responds with a consonant but personal style, creating a modern classicism that is not afraid to sully the score with popular contributions, including jazz with muted brass and dances..." *Diapason*

"*Coraline* deserved its energetically celebrated premiere... it tells of adolescent needs, overbusy parents and childish curiosity, inventiveness, courage, ultimate trust and the overcoming of fears – timeless themes embedded in comfortably age-old and bizarre horror." *Saarbrücker Zeitung*

"Typical of Neil Gaiman is a mixture of irrational imagination, excitement and eccentric humour. Turnage has found an idiosyncratic language for *Coraline* that transcends the boundaries of jazz, classical and popular music." *SWR 'Kunstscht'*

Last month saw first performances of Turnage's *Refugee* by tenor Allan Clayton and Britten Sinfonia, at the George Enescu Festival in Bucharest and the Barbican in London. The new 25-minute song cycle combines poetry by Emily Dickinson, Benjamin Zephaniah, W.H. Auden and Brian Bilston.

Van der Aa akin double concerto



Photo: Marco Berggreve

Michel van der Aa's new double concerto was summed up as "mysteriously beautiful and wonderfully exhilarating" by the reviewer in *De Trouw* at its first Dutch performance in May. This followed the work's world premiere at Cologne's 'Eight Bridges' festival by the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Peter Eötvös, introducing the latest commission under Van der Aa's composer residency with the orchestra.

The new work, titled *akin*, was written for violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja and cellist Sol Gabetta,

building upon the composer's experiences working with both soloists in the past. Van der Aa writes of how he "was drawn to an image of identical twins, inseparable and thinking in a related manner to all outward appearances but perhaps with different personalities beneath".

"Although *akin* is a purely instrumental composition, it also contains theatre... Van der Aa's musical universe is one of reflections and splits, in which instruments develop into each other's alter egos through clever interchanges of motifs and gestures. In *akin* Van der Aa drives this duplication process with a compelling tension that leads to a blistering battle of strings to the rhythm of pounding toms and sharply striking percussion... High-quality, vintage Van der Aa." *NRC Handelsblad*

"Jubilant was sparked by the world premiere of Michel van der Aa's two movement double concerto... this is not about a contest between the soloists to command the airspace above the orchestra, but rather a portrait of two intertwining concertante instruments working in harmony... With appropriately explosive soloists this piece has what it takes to join the repertoire." *Neue Musikzeitung*

The North American premiere of *akin* was given in June by the Vancouver Symphony and a further Canadian performance follows in March with the NAC Orchestra in Ottawa. This month brings high profile performances of Van der Aa's clarinet concerto *Hysteresis*, for soloist, ensemble and soundtrack, at the Venice Biennale and the Beijing Music Festival.

Vivier Paris to Amsterdam



Photo: J.A. Billard

This season brings Claude Vivier's music to major European cities including Paris and Amsterdam. Following the success of last year's Festival d'Automne Vivier feature, a second series of Paris concerts has been planned for 2019, launched last month with the French premiere of *Hiérophanie*. This 40-minute music theatre work received a spatial staging at the Philharmonie from Silvia Costa, with soprano Marion Tassou and the Ensemble Intercontemporain conducted by Matthias Pintscher. The same forces travelled to the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin for a second performance.

Further events at the Festival d'Automne include chamber works with Trio Catch and a programme combining *Journal* performed by Les Cris de Paris, *Shiraz* for piano and a screening of the opera *Kopernikus*, staged by Peter Sellers and filmed at last year's festival. *Journal* was composed in 1977 following Vivier's journeys to the Orient, but as the composer notes, rather than being a travel diary, the 45-minute work for choir, soloists and percussionist records the "attracting forces of my childhood (or maybe better, the one I always wanted to have!)", passing through four phases: Childhood, Love, Death and After Death.

The other-worldly and visionary nature of Vivier's music makes it ideal for imaginative theatrical

presentation, and a new combination is offered at Potsdam Winter Opera in November. Frederic Wake-Walker stages *Lonely Child* in tandem with Schubert's oratorio fragments *Lazarus* with Kammerakademie forces conducted by Trevor Pinnock.

The Asko|Schönberg ensemble, which has enjoyed a long association with Vivier's music spearheaded by conductor Reinbert de Leeuw, presents a series of concerts from February in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Arnhem. Highlights include a ZaterdagMatinee programme with *Wo bist du Licht!* and *Lonely Child* and a concert built around the urban colours of Vivier's last completed work *Et je reverrai cette ville étrange*.

Kats-Chernin Whiteley in Sydney

Elena Kats-Chernin's music took the most prestigious Australian stage in July for the premiere of her opera *Whiteley* at the Sydney Opera House. Charting the turbulent life and death of iconic artist Brett Whiteley and his vivacious wife Wendy, the opera saw Leigh Melrose and Julia Lea Goodwin in the leading roles with Opera Australia conducted by Tahu Matheson.



Photo: Euribia Hammer

In a *New York Times* interview Kats-Chernin described how she wanted to create "something modern, something that people can still relate to – somebody who has actually lived, somebody who people have actually met." At the opera's close, after the artist's tragic death, a *Rosenkavalier*-like trio of female voices including the artist's wife offered a reflective finale, made all the more poignant at the curtain call when a spotlight picked out the real-life Wendy Whiteley in the audience.

"Kats-Chernin's finely-crafted score of variegated mood, texture, tone and style... an opera not only about genius but also about the troubled birth of something new in Australian artistic consciousness, in which it became relaxed in its sensuality, transfigured by its beauty and deeply troubled by inner contradictions... This was an opera about Sydney..." *Sydney Morning Herald*

"The opera proceeds through a series of fragmentary episodes in the artist's life, a fragmentation mirrored in the linguistically condensed libretto by Justin Fleming, and with spectacular success in David Freeman's direction... He saturates the stage space with Whiteley's paintings, often fracturing even these by superimposing them on moving flats, and thus immerses the audiences

in the artist's world... Kats-Chernin's score is delicate, always allowing the singers to shine effortlessly over it..." *Australian Stage*

"...inventive orchestration, kinetic rhythms, evocative yet slightly astringent sound-world and quirky character... the dazzling succession of images reminded us of the sheer brilliance and imaginative breadth of Whiteley's talent... a stimulating, rewarding and moving tribute to a remarkable Australian artist." *The Australian*

"...a major artistic triumph for underappreciated composer Elena Kats-Chernin. And with the vibrant visual palette that brings Whiteley's arresting work to life, it's a piece of theatre at once utterly fresh and refreshingly familiar... It moves at breakneck speed, possessed by Kats-Chernin's craggy orchestrations and jagged rhythms. The music, so smartly, is like a Whiteley canvas: vividly coloured with latent power." *Daily Review*

"...there are riches to be found in Kats-Chernin's score, colourful and propulsive..." *Limelight Magazine*

Following her operatic success in Sydney, Kats-Chernin travels to Berlin in November for the premiere of her new children's opera commissioned by the Komische Oper, based on the award-winning book by Michael Ende, *Jim Knopf and Lukas the Engine Driver*. Her new operatic version of Kenneth Grahame's classic *The Wind in the Willows* receives its premiere at the Staatstheater Kassel in June 2020.



Opera Australia's premiere production of Elena Kats-Chernin's *Whiteley* at the Sydney Opera House.

Piazzolla 2021 centenary tango



The centenary of tango master Astor Piazzolla falls in 2021, and a number of his works are now available for programming in new orchestral versions, including the concert-opener *Milongón Festivo* and his music from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Born in Mar Del Plata in Argentina, Piazzolla grew up as a migrant in Manhattan's Lower East Side where he learnt the bandoneon and immersed himself in the jazz and classical music the city offered. At the age of sixteen he returned to Argentina, performed with tango orchestras in Buenos Aires and eventually earned enough to take composition lessons from Ginastera. In the 1950s he studied in Paris where Nadia Boulanger encouraged him to focus on his unique bandoneon-centred compositions. He developed the *tango nuevo* style, infusing traditional tango

with jazz and classical elements, which made him a highly controversial figure in his homeland, while winning him acclaim in the USA and Europe.

Milongón Festivo is an effervescent six-minute orchestral work, ideal as a concert-opener, with high-octave and vibrantly coloured outer sections surrounding seductive dance music at its centre. It shows Piazzolla effectively blending tango with Stravinsky, Bartók and jazz. The original version is with three bandoneons, and alternatives are with a single bandoneon or orchestra alone. The work is recorded by Chandos with Gabriel Castagna at the helm of the Württemberg Philharmonic.

Piazzolla created incidental music for an acclaimed 1986 staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Comédie-Française in Paris by Jorge Lavelli, which was recorded with Richard Galliano as bandoneonist. A new 17-minute tango-infused orchestral suite has been arranged by Hywel Davies, leading from an overture through a sequence of dances and music for Puck and Oberon. Also available are stage versions for a quartet of accordion, guitar, piano and double bass or for a quintet of clarinet, alto saxophone, guitar, piano and double bass.

Other Piazzolla from Boosey & Hawkes includes two arrangements by John Adams for violin and chamber orchestra – originally created for Gidon Kremer – of the *Tango from La Mufa* and *Todo Buenos Aires*. Publications include arrangements of tangos for piano or solo instrument and keyboard, and collections titled *Vuelvo al Sur* and *La viaje*.

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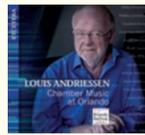
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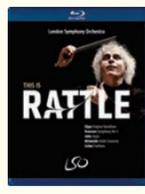
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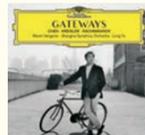
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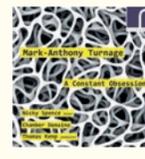
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MacMillan & Andriessen New books

Two new James MacMillan books were released this summer to co-incide with his 60th birthday. The first in-depth study of the composer's life and works, written by Phillip A Cooke, is published by Boydell Press (9781783273706). *The Music of James MacMillan* traces his development from early successes through to his current position as one of the most prominent British composers of his generation.



Birlinn has published a collection of MacMillan's writings bearing the title *A Scots Song: A Life of Music* (9781780276175), including a range of articles on artistic, political, social and theological issues.

A further MacMillan book, collecting essays on his music by leading writers and musicologists, is in preparation by Cambridge University Press.

Writing to Louis Andriessen by Rose Dodd, published by Idea Books in celebration of his 80th birthday, collects perspectives on his aesthetics and oeuvre. Commentaries and archive material are combined with contributions from composers and performers of the next generation influenced by Andriessen including Donnacha Dennehy, Julia Wolfe, Christopher Fox, Richard Ayres and Ian Pace (9789462263079).