

Quarternotes

February 1991

1991/1

Transatlantic success for Argento operas

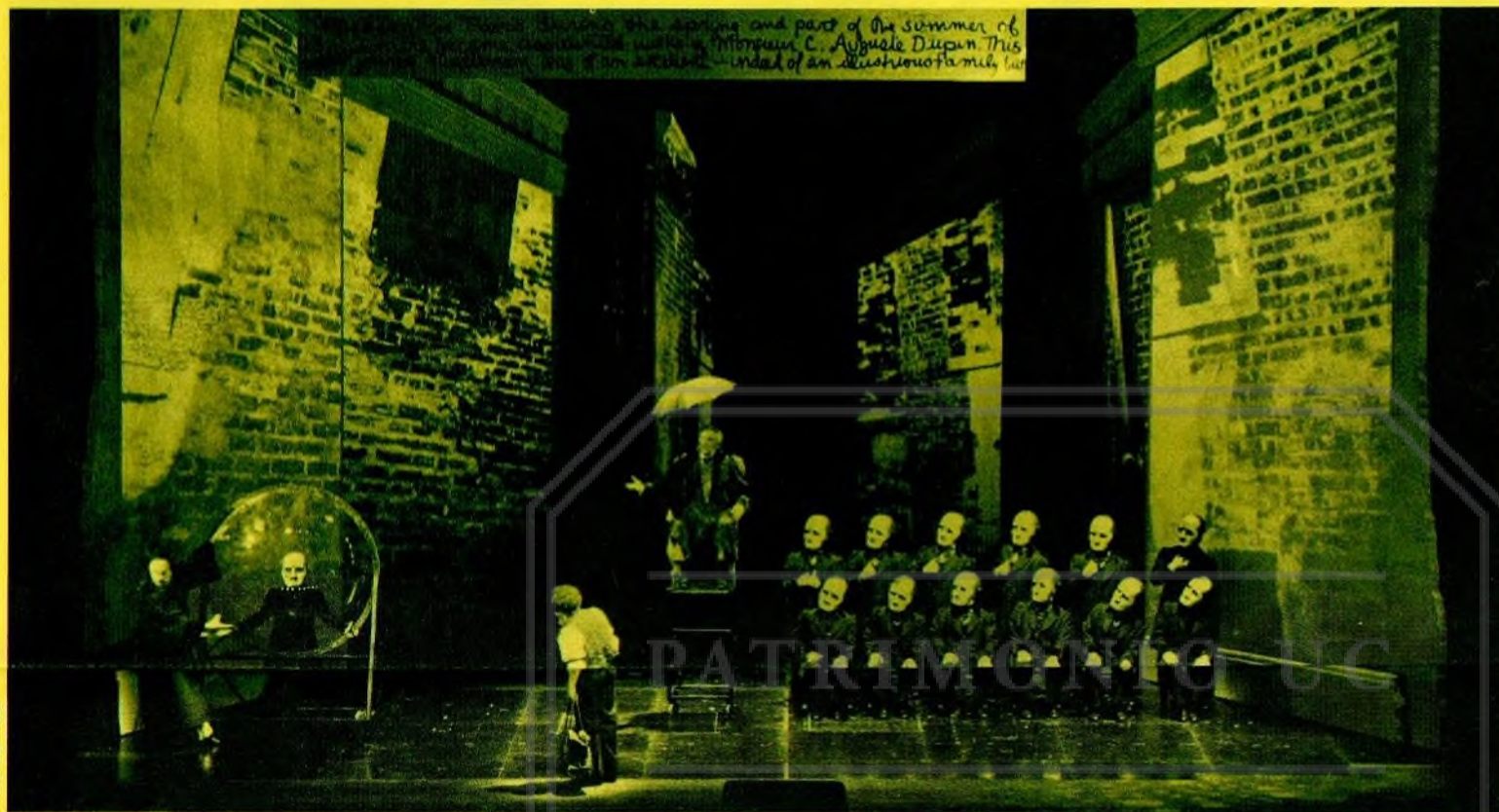


Photo: Dan Rees

Dominick Argento has been long respected in the USA as a leading opera composer, but in recent years his stageworks have been establishing an equally strong reputation in the opera houses of Europe.

The turning point in Argento's European fortunes was undoubtedly the international success of his most recent opera, *The Aspern Papers*, based on the novel by Henry James.

"Powerhouse music theater, of the sort that can mesmerize an audience not normally disposed to contemporary opera."

Chicago Tribune

It was premiered at the Dallas Opera in 1988 with a starry cast including Elisabeth Söderström, Frederica von Stade, Kristine Ciesinski and Richard Stilwell. Since then the work has been seen in a nationwide telecast in the USA, revived in Dallas and eagerly taken up by opera houses on both sides of the Atlantic, with new productions in Washington, Kassel (plus a revival), Minneapolis and this month in Stockholm.

"Dominick Argento's opera, inspired by and elaborated from a story by Henry James, is an instant classic...His orchestration is masterly, impressive for its restraint as well as its color, but some of the most effective moments in the opera are reserved for voices alone with no instrumental sound...This opera is one of the season's highlights."

Washington Post

Argento's music has built up a strong following in Sweden, thanks largely to Eskil Hemberg, who presented the European premiere of the composer's chilling psychodrama *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe* at the Stora Teatern in Gothenburg in 1986. This month, Hemberg (who is now Intendant of the Royal Opera in Stockholm) mounts the Swedish premiere of *The Aspern Papers* with Elisabeth Söderström repeating her acclaimed portrayal of the role of Juliana. She is joined by Curt Appelgren, Birgitta Svenden and Per-Arne Wahlgren in the new

Lyric Opera of Chicago's new production of Argento's *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe*, with Donald Kaasch (foreground) in the title role and Richard Stilwell as his nemesis Griswold (seated).

production by Ingrid Rossell which opens on 23 February.

In addition to the impressive number of new stagings of *The Aspern Papers* in the three years since the opera's premiere, there has been a parallel upsurge of interest in Argento's earlier operatic works. In 1989, *Casanova's Homecoming* received its European premiere in Osnabruck. This season unveils two new productions of *The Voyage of Edgar Allan Poe*. The Lyric Opera of Chicago launched its 'Toward the 21st Century' project with the work in October, attracting excellent reviews and an advance sell-out at the box office for all eight performances. The German premiere of *Poe* takes place in Dortmund next month, and the Dallas Opera has programmed the opera for its 1991/92 season.

Americans in Paris and Brussels

The Spring sees a wealth of American music at two major European festivals. Barbara Kolb's new work for piano and chamber orchestra, *Voyants*, was commissioned by Radio France for premiere in Paris on 23 February, as part of a concert series of American music at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. Jay Gottlieb is piano soloist and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France is conducted by Joel Revsen. This programme also includes Elliott Carter's *In Sleep, In Thunder* with tenor Jon Garrison.

Jacob Druckman's new orchestral work, *Shag*, again commissioned by Radio France, is to be premiered by the Orchestre National de France conducted by Zoltán Pesko on 21

"The voyage of *Poe*, as devised by Argento and his fellow Minnesotan, librettist Charles Nolte, is a nightmarish journey undertaken by the writer into the depths of his troubled soul. The plot is a whirl of incidents from Poe's life, his stories and poems, presented as if through the delirium of his final days. Did he unconsciously bring about the deaths of the women in his life to feed his morbid muse? Was he his own "imp of the perverse"? Fascinating questions, fascinating opera. Argento is an experienced craftsman, a sensitive musician and a talented man of the theater." *Chicago Tribune*

Chicago Opera Theater follows up on the success of the Lyric Opera's new *Poe* production with a revival of Argento's one-act opera *Postcard from Morocco* in May – one of three stagings of the work in the USA this season. The German premiere of his monodrama, *Miss Havisham's Wedding Night*, takes place in Paderborn in April.

February. Other concerts within the American week include a performance of Steve Reich's *Variations for Winds, Strings and Keyboards* on 2 March, conducted by Arturo Tamayo, programmed together with music by John Adams.

The following month in Brussels, 'Ars Musica' also features an American theme, planned to co-incide with the world premiere of John Adams's *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie on 19 March. The creative team for the new opera is the same as that for Adams's highly successful *Nixon in China* – libretto by Alice Goodman and production by Peter Sellars – joined in Brussels by Kent Nagano as conductor.

'Ars Musica' also features works by Elliott Carter: the Belgian premiere of the *Violin Concerto* on 16 March with Ole Böhn as soloist and the Orchestre National de Belgique conducted by Lukas Vis, and *Penthode*. Other American composers represented include Steve Reich and Barbara Kolb.

Gruber's Cello Concerto sings

H K Gruber's *Cello Concerto* received an outstanding European premiere at the London Sinfonietta's Queen Elizabeth Hall concert on 19 November. Christopher van Kampen drew unanimous praise for his performance of the taxing solo part, whilst Lothar Zagrosek conjured up to perfection the past and more recent sounds of Vienna, depicted within the orchestral accompaniment. David Murray described the work in his review for the *Financial Times*:

"The heart of the concert lay in HK Gruber's *Cello Concerto*, written last year for Yo-Yo Ma but here given its UK premiere – superbly – by Christopher van Kampen. It sings, continuously, though rarely in the old familiar ways. There is a strong sense that some very good pop song is at the bottom of it (as becomes explicit at the end of his *Violin Concerto No. 1*), but if so it is perpetually, mischievously refracted. Gruber's trick of letting musical ideas seem to vanish suddenly in puffs of smoke, only to be found going blithely on somewhere else, has never been so brilliantly developed.

"In fact the orchestra itself seems a white witch's simmering cauldron of ideas, with sudden bright eruptions amid the generally ravishing sound, not just Gruber's beloved vibes and dance-percussion, nor his glowing grids of soft strings, but a sound with an uncanny depth that permits several distinct events at once to proceed in perfect lucidity – and never hiding the solo voice. The chamber-orchestration is masterly; Gruber used, after all, to play bass in the ensemble Die Reihe.

"Yet there is a rigorous, cunningly disguised economy of material, and Gruber's unmistakable way with diatonic harmony, as if viewing it from a sceptical but affectionate distance. Suffused with wit and sentiment though it is, this is seriously modern music."

"Gruber refracts the essence of musical Vienna – not only Schoenbergian chromaticism but also the tang of cabaret society and traditional Viennese luxuriance." *Daily Telegraph*

Gruber as Mad King

Gruber travelled to Scotland in January for an intriguing programme with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra conducted by Peter Maxwell Davies, heard in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The first part of the concert featured the UK premiere of Gruber's 2nd violin concerto, entitled *Nebelsteinmusik*, with leading Austrian violinist Ernst Kovacic as soloist. After the interval, Gruber donned costume for his renowned assumption of the protagonist's role in Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*.

Gomorra for Vienna

Gruber is currently completing a large-scale operatic work, *Gomorra*, set to an appropriately apocalyptic libretto by Richard Bletschacher. The premiere is scheduled for January 1993 at the Vienna Volksoper.

B&H on the record

A round-up of 1990 recordings

Awards and lauds

Boosey & Hawkes composers were well represented in the record industry's 1990 awards ceremonies. Top of the list was Virgin Classics's recording of Prokofiev's *The Love for Three Oranges* (VCD7 91084-2) which won the prestigious *Gramophone* Record of the Year, summed up in the magazine as follows:

"This splendid performance of a brilliantly colourful score that bristles with vivacity, invention and mordant wit cannot but give delight to discriminating listeners..."

The Lyon Opera performance of *The Love for Three Oranges*, conducted by Kent Nagano, is now also available on Video from Virgin Vision (VVD 805).



Gramophone's Engineering award went again to Virgin, this time for the first complete recording of Britten's *Prince of the Pagodas* with the London Sinfonietta conducted by Oliver Knussen (VC CD 791103-4). Gubaidulina's *Offertorium* performed by Gidon Kremer with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Charles Dutoit (DG 427 336-2) was pipped at the post for the Contemporary award, but the Readers Poll made amends by naming it as first choice.

Last year got off to a good start across the Atlantic with Boosey & Hawkes works winning 7 out of the 11 classical prizes in the 1989 Grammy Awards, including the Best Contemporary Composition Award for Steve Reich's *Different Trains* performed by the Kronos Quartet on Nonesuch.

The launch of *Classic CD* magazine with its free sampler disc has given new music the chance to be heard on the home stereo of those readers who may have experienced the

proverbial 'fear of the unknown' in the record shop. The December sampler included an extract from Panufnik's *Sinfonia Sacra* in the Nonesuch recording of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the issue contained extensive coverage of the composer and his works. Coupled with *Sinfonia Sacra* is the premiere recording of *Arbor Cosmica*, performed by the New York Chamber Symphony (979 228-2).

Earlier last year, *CD Review* selected the Conifer disc of Panufnik's *Violin Concerto*, *Hommage à Chopin*, and *Bassoon Concerto* as Classical CD of the Month whilst *Classic CD* chose it as a Favourite Record of the Year. The recording features soloists Krzysztof Smietana, Karen Jones and Robert Thompson with London Musici conducted by Mark Stephenson, and was sponsored by Technics.

The year which saw the sad loss of Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein also celebrated the release of first recordings of several of their works. Copland's *The Tender Land* proved to be a major success for Virgin Classics (VC 791113-2), in the performance by the Plymouth Music Series conducted by Philip Brunelle. Sales have exceeded all expectations, particularly in the States, proving that the opera's lyrical charm and simple depiction of adolescence in the Midwest are close to the heart of the American nation.

Etcetera Records added two significant Copland discs to the CD catalogue. His late orchestral work *Inscape* appears on disc for the first time, coupled with *Symphony No. 1* and the *Piano Concerto*, in a live recording conducted by Copland himself in 1971 (KTC 1098). Roberta Alexander devotes the latest of her acclaimed series of American song recitals to Copland (KTC 1100).

Bernstein's recent song cycle *Arias and Barcarolles* appeared on disc in both of its versions: the original with two piano accompaniment on Koch 3-7000-2 and the orchestral version with the Seattle Symphony conducted by Gerard Schwarz on Delos DE 3078. Robert Shaw conducted the first recording of Bernstein's *Missa Brevis* on Telarc CD 80181, coupled with his ever popular *Chichester Psalms*.

1990 saw a remarkable growth of interest in the music of Reich and Adams in France,

CLASSICS DIGITAL PROKOFIEV
L'Amour des 3 oranges
Chœurs et orchestre de l'Opéra de Lyon
KENT NAGANO
Gabriel Bacquier
Jules Bastin
Catherine Dubosc
Georges Gautier
Jean-Luc Viala
OPERA DE LYON
SARIS CONSEIL S.A.
Premier enregistrement de la version française originale
Primiera recording of the original French version
Ersteinspielung der französischen Originalfassung

Max on disc

1990 saw the release of two premiere recordings of works by Peter Maxwell Davies. His chamber opera *The Martyrdom of St Magnus* is on Unicorn Kanchana (UK CD 9100) in a performance by Music Theatre Wales conducted by Michael Rafferty. The recording was made after a highly successful tour of the opera last year, including a guest appearance at the South Bank Centre's Maxwell Davies festival.

Collins Classics has brought out the first recording of *Seven in Nomine* with Aquarius conducted by Nicholas Cleobury (Collins 10952). The work, dating from 1965, is scored for ten instrumentalists and draws upon the music of Taverner, the subject of the opera



upon which the composer was then working.

Unicorn-Kanchana has reissued on CD its recording of Maxwell Davies's widely-admired sextet *Ave Maris Stella* performed by the Fires of London (UK CD 2038).

US classics & discoveries



reflected in glowing record reviews in the French music magazines. *Le Monde de la Musique* wrote of Reich: "C'est à partir des années 1970 que Steve Reich s'affirme peu à peu comme le meilleur compositeur de l'école minimaliste, et probablement l'un des plus grands de notre époque... *The Desert Music* (1982-1984) marque un sommet de son œuvre et figure probablement parmi les chefs-d'œuvre de notre époque."

Such wholesale adoption of the music of Reich and Adams illustrates how sections of the French press are now openly proposing an alternative to the cultural establishment, often with polemical directness, as in the following review from *Harmonie Diapason*:

"L'art de John Adams est solaire, lumineux, indiscutable. Devant lui, toutes les théories s'effacent. De plus, et ce des la première écoute, cette musique paraît indiscutablement plus 'neuve', plus convaincante, en un mot plus 'moderne' que presque toutes les œuvres des compositeurs néo-sériels que la France persiste à prendre pour le fin du fin de l'avant-garde."

New releases exploiting the popularity of minimalist styles continued unabated last year. The Nonesuch recording of John Adams's *Fearful Symmetries* and *The Wound-Dresser* was selected by both *The Guardian* and *Gramophone* as a Record of the Year. New Reich recordings included *Eight Lines* performed by the London Chamber Orchestra on Virgin (VC 791168), *Electric Counterpoint* played by David Tanenbaum on New Albion (NA 032), and *Six Pianos* on Argo from Piano Circus (430 380-2).

Elliott Carter's music was well served in 1990, with the re-release of the Ensemble InterContemporain's 80th birthday tribute on Erato, now distributed under the Warner Classics banner (2292-45364-2). The disc includes the premiere recording of the *Oboe Concerto*, together with *Penthode* and *Esprit rude/Esprit doux*. The latter miniature is also included along with *Enchanted Preludes* and *Canon for 4* on New Albion 019, and with *Riconoscenza* and the only currently available recording of *Triple Duo* on ECM 839 6172.

Torke's Argo triumph

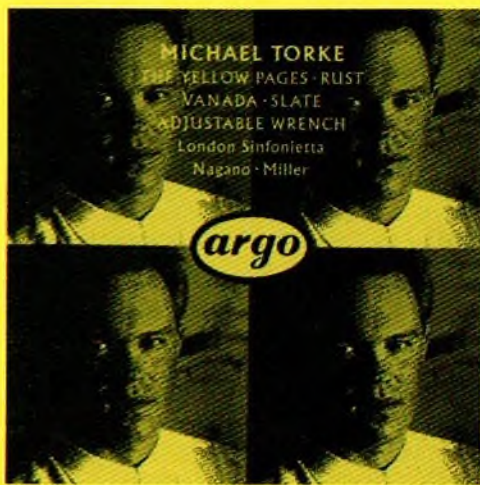
The first issue in Decca's Michael Torke series on the Argo label has been met with a highly enthusiastic response. The musical significance of the new recording was summed up by *CD Review*: "Michael Torke may well be the first composer to achieve stylistic 'cross-over' without actually intending or even knowing it! Five of his immensely attractive, hyperactive chamber works are gathered together on Argo 430 209-2 and reveal a vivid sense of colour, pulse and melody."

"Prospective purchasers be warned: Michael Torke's music can be addictive, and it will probably be well into 1991 before the next fix is available on disc." *Gramophone*

In a review article in the *Financial Times* entitled 'Minimalism and more', David Murray posed the question "Has anything developed from Minimalist music?" provoking the answer "Yes: the work of Michael Torke (Dutch-American, raised in Wisconsin, not yet 30 but laden with commissions). For several weeks I've been listening to the new Argo compact disc of Torke pieces with immoderate frequency, and continuing pleasure."

The compelling nature of Torke's music took hold of *Gramophone's* reviewer, Michael Stewart, in a similar fashion, prompting him to choose the new disc as one of his Records of the Year:

"I've a hunch that the name Michael Torke will



become a familiar buzz-word in musical circles over the next few months, for he is a gifted young American composer who has already made a considerable impact in the States, and if this disc is anything to go by seems set to repeat his success here.

"The items presented cover a five-year period from 1984 (*The Yellow Pages*) to 1989 (*Rust*) and reveal Torke's preoccupation during this time with minimalism. If, however, you're expecting another Glass, Reich or Adams then you'll be sadly disappointed. Torke's use of minimalist techniques, combined with his ability to create cross-over music *par excellence*, produces an entirely new genre: indeed, he breaks down the barriers between pop, jazz and so-called 'serious' music so well that it's almost impossible to know where its true affiliations lie. But then I suspect that's the secret of its success; this isn't serious music trying to be jazz or pop, but simply the result of a young composer revelling in the rich resources of his generation..."

London enjoys a wide range of Prokofiev's orchestral music over the coming months. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra presents 'A Centenary Celebration of His Music and Influences' at the Royal Festival Hall (23 January - 23 April), with a selection of the composer's most celebrated works together with those of his teachers and contemporaries, conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy, the orchestra's Music Director, and Yuri Temirkanov.

The RPO series overlaps with the South Bank Centre's Russian festival (6 April - 2 May) with a concert on the composer's actual birthdate being a joint collaboration. The South Bank's festival also includes a complete cycle of the Prokofiev symphonies played by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra under Edward Downes.

The Philharmonia provides its own anniversary tribute in the form of the first performance of a new version of Prokofiev's *Ivan the Terrible* on 28 February. The score was originally composed for Eisenstein's film, and was subsequently arranged into an oratorio by Stasevich, not without its 'problems' in live performance. Christopher Palmer's new version for contralto and baritone solos, SATB chorus and large orchestra, eliminates the narrator, reinstates certain key scenes such as 'The Murder in the Cathedral', and arranges the music into a logical sequence to match the narrative of the film.

In the autumn, the London Symphony Orchestra follows up on the success of its recent Shostakovich symphony cycle with a Prokofiev series at the Barbican Hall and Royal Festival Hall conducted by Mstislav Rostropovich. Included in the programmes with the complete symphonies are the two violin concertos with Itzhak Perlman as soloist and a staged version of *Romeo and Juliet*. A series of chamber music events, films, foyer performances and lectures is also planned.

A Prokofiev Centenary Festival is scheduled for April centred in Scotland, including a touring Prokofiev programme by the Georgian State Symphony Orchestra, and performances of the composer's piano music and works for children.

In terms of printed material, Boosey & Hawkes celebrates Prokofiev's anniversary with the first publication of his early opera *Maddalena*. The work was abandoned in short score by the composer in 1911 when no prospect of a premiere materialised, but was later orchestrated for performance by Edward Downes. In the coming months, Faber Books publishes Prokofiev's *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, edited by Oleg Prokofiev and Christopher Palmer, which contains a wealth of previously unavailable or repressed information penned by the composer.

Reich on dance tracks

The first choreography of Steve Reich's *Different Trains* in a new ballet by Siobhan Davies proved to be the highlight of the Dance Umbrella season in November. The score was given a thrilling performance by the young string players of the Smith Quartet, the first of many groups queuing to play the work following the expiry of the Kronos Quartet's exclusivity.

After the run at Sadler's Wells, the Siobhan Davies Dance Company and the Smith Quartet toured *Different Trains* to Bristol, Exeter, Worthing, Newcastle and Coventry, and returned to London for a performance at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Audiences received the new ballet with enthusiasm and critics counted the new dance work to be Davies's finest achievement to date:

"One of the many extraordinary qualities of Siobhan Davies's *Different Trains* is the intoxicating variety and sharpness of its choreography. Open-mouthed, you watch her six astonishing dancers riding twists, angles, balances and falls within a single impulse - flipping from a sensuous glissando to a staccato pulse.

"The richness of the movement is matched by the work's ambitious concept. It's set to Steve Reich's score of the same name where music for string quartet is overlaid with sounds of trains and taped monologues, weaving in six characters' experience of travel (riding the Express to New York, the trucks

to the Nazi camps). David Buckland's designs and Peter Mumford's lighting powerfully evoke the glare of stations, the shapes of wheels and track and, in two sets of rotating sails, the passage of scenery and time.

"Stylised deaf and dumb gestures partly connect the dancers to Reich's score but Davies's movement celebrates the quality of each dancer while giving them a distinctive world to inhabit. A frightened solo, a weary duet, an exhilarated flurry of steps carry the extra dimension of people living their lives - threatened, exhausted, and alert."

The Independent

Rambert counterpoints

Richard Alston has recently choreographed Steve Reich's *New York Counterpoint* and *Electric Counterpoint* as a single dance work for Rambert Dance. Live musical accompaniment was provided by Roger Heaton (clarinet) and James Woodrow (guitar) respectively.

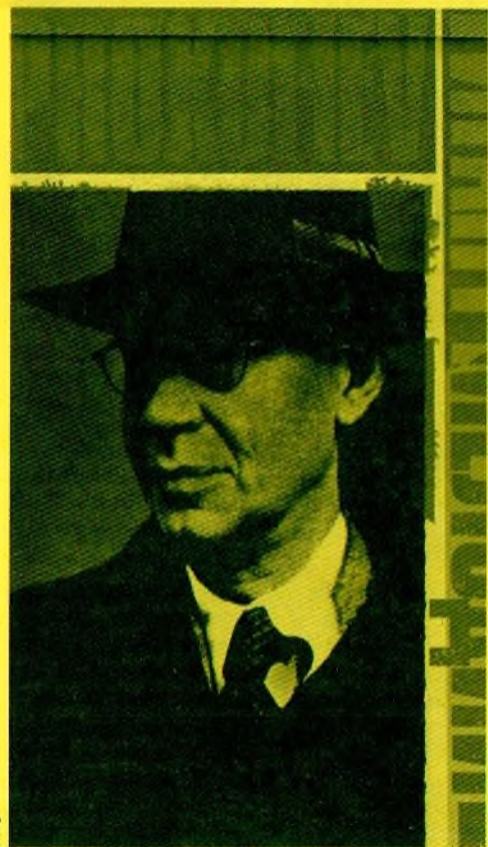
The new ballet, titled *Roughcut*, was premiered in Newcastle on 7 December, with performances the following week in Glasgow. The company travelled to the French towns of Bayonne and Blagnac in January, before continuing its extensive UK tour which lasts through to June. Ports of call are scheduled in Bath, Mold, Nottingham, Southampton, London (Riverside Studios), Bradford and Bristol.

Siobhan Davies's new ballet Different Trains, choreographed to music by Steve Reich. The close of the 'War' section, with Gill Clarke and Scott Clark.



Photo: David Buckland

Prokofiev centenary



RPO

1991 brings a plentiful supply of Prokofiev performances in honour of the centenary of his birth on 23 April. Of course, the composer's music is rarely absent from the concert hall - a recent UNESCO statistical survey revealed that Prokofiev is the most widely performed classical composer of the 20th century - but the anniversary year gives audiences the opportunity to gain a wider understanding and appreciation of his enormous oeuvre in the perspective of his life and times.

Anniversary celebrations got off to an early start in Duisburg and the Nordrhein-Westphalia district of Germany last year with an ambitious festival entitled 'Serge Prokofiev and Contemporary Music from the Soviet Union'. The festival extends throughout the duration of the 1990/91 season, consisting of a comprehensive programme of concert, opera and ballet events, accompanied by a series of lectures, exhibitions and films.

Panufnik in Poland



Photo: Camilla Jessel

Andrzej Panufnik with Ewa Pobłocka and Wojciech Michniewski at rehearsals for the Piano Concerto at the 1990 Warsaw Autumn Festival.

Andrzej Panufnik made a momentous return visit to Poland (his first since 1954) for the 1990 Warsaw Autumn festival, conducting his *Symphony No. 10* in the opening concert on 14 September. In recent years, Panufnik has been regularly invited by the festival committee, but only felt that the time was right to accept last year, because of the rapid political changes in Poland and his support for the Solidarity government. Panufnik was met with a celebrity welcome at the airport, and this warm reception was main-

tained throughout his time in Warsaw, making the festival a most joyous and moving occasion.

"Elegantly, if pensively, Panufnik reached the rostrum to conduct the National Philharmonic Orchestra in the European premiere of his 10th Symphony and the audience erupted in a spontaneous standing ovation. Television cameras, radio, distinguished Polish and international composers, publishers, producers, even friends from his home in Twickenham were there to witness the moment." *The Independent*

Panufnik's performance of *Symphony No. 10* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra was granted the Orpheus Prize - the critics' award for the best performance in the festival. This opening concert also included the composer's *Tragic Overture*, *Autumn Music* and the *Piano Concerto* with Ewa Pobłocka as soloist (who is soon to record the work for Conifer), conducted by Wojciech Michniewski. Mark Stephenson and Panufnik shared the conducting of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's programme on 16 September, which featured the European premiere of his *Poem for Chamber Orchestra* *Harmony*, the *Violin Concerto* with Wanda Wiłkomirska as soloist, and *Arbor Cosmica* for 12 solo strings.

Knighthood for Panufnik

"If ever a composer's knighthood was earned with blood, toil, tears and sweat, it is that bestowed on the Polish-born Andrzej Panufnik in the New Year's Honours." *Daily Telegraph*

Aaron Copland

1900-90

Aaron Copland who has died at the age of 90, was the first important American composer of modern music, and the first to win wide and enduring popularity. It is no exaggeration to say that Copland's influence has been felt in almost every branch of 20th-century American music.

Of immigrant Jewish stock, Copland grew up in Brooklyn, in circumstances comfortable but unlikely to foster outstanding musical talent. But early studies under Goldmark encouraged him, at the age of 20, to leave for Paris and to become one of the earliest American students of Nadia Boulanger.

The crystallisation of his personality as a composer was a direct result of exposure to her distinctive, rigorous teaching method, with its roots in Bach and Stravinsky. Copland's

first notable compositions were *Music for the Theatre* (1925) and the *Dance Symphony* (1930); his interest in jazz and other forms of popular American music was only a part of that genuine sense of American-ness which set Copland apart from all other earlier American composers of importance with the exception of Charles Ives (in whom Copland has showed an early interest).

In the mid-1920s Copland had returned to New York, where he was to become a powerful force of encouragement of American composers and the dissemination of American music. In the following decade he commenced on a series of ballet scores, the most famous of which was *Appalachian Spring* (1944) for Martha Graham; in them his blend of modern constructional procedures and

open-spaced, American-accented texture and melody made an enormous impact throughout western music.

Alongside his popular scores, which included *El salón Mexico* and several film scores, Copland continued to compose in more serious, 'difficult' vein (such as was demonstrated in the three remarkable works – *Variations*, *Sonata*, and *Fantasy* – for solo piano). But even here his peculiarly succinct, fresh-air compositional character was never lost. In later years, as sources of creative inspiration began to dry up, Copland was content to fill the role of Grand Old Man of American Music – teacher, ambassador, writer, conductor – and he did so with a unique laconic humour and charm.

More ambitious and more powerfully 'intellectual' composers such as Elliott Carter – who has several times admitted his debt to Copland – may subsequently have pushed serious American music to higher degrees of complexity than Copland could ever have contemplated; but the best of Copland's music has ensured him an unshakeable place in the history of 20th century music.

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This obituary first appeared in the Financial Times on 4 December 1990

Brisbane Musica Nova

David Del Tredici, Kurt Schwertsik and Sofia Gubaidulina were featured composers at Brisbane's Musica Nova in August, billed as the longest and most significant festival of new music ever to be held in Australia. The 14 broadcast concerts performed by Queensland forces conducted by David Porcelijn and the festival's Artistic Director, Richard Mills.

Highlight of the Del Tredici works performed was *Adventures Underground*, described by the Sydney Morning Herald as "one of Del Tredici's obsessive Lewis Carroll pieces, vivaciously sung by the amplified soprano Meryn Quafe, teasing a vociferous orchestra containing a concertante group with an accordion, banjo and other folk-flavoured devices; here was sophistication manipulated with native cunning." Other Del Tredici scores heard in Brisbane included the recent orchestral work *Tattoo*, the James Joyce setting *Night Conjure-Verse*, *Haddock's Eyes*, and *Virtuoso Alice* with the composer as pianist.

Much of the media attention was focussed on Sofia Gubaidulina, one of the few contemporary Soviet composers to have visited Australia in recent years. She disconcerted the more down-to-earth members of the local press by stating that the trappings of Australian affluence had made little impact upon her, but that she had however been impressed by the Southern Hemisphere night sky! Few, though, remained in doubt of the strength of her spiritual convictions when confronted with the performances of *Hommage à T S Eliot*, *Introitus*, and *Offertorium* with Charmian Gadd as soloist.



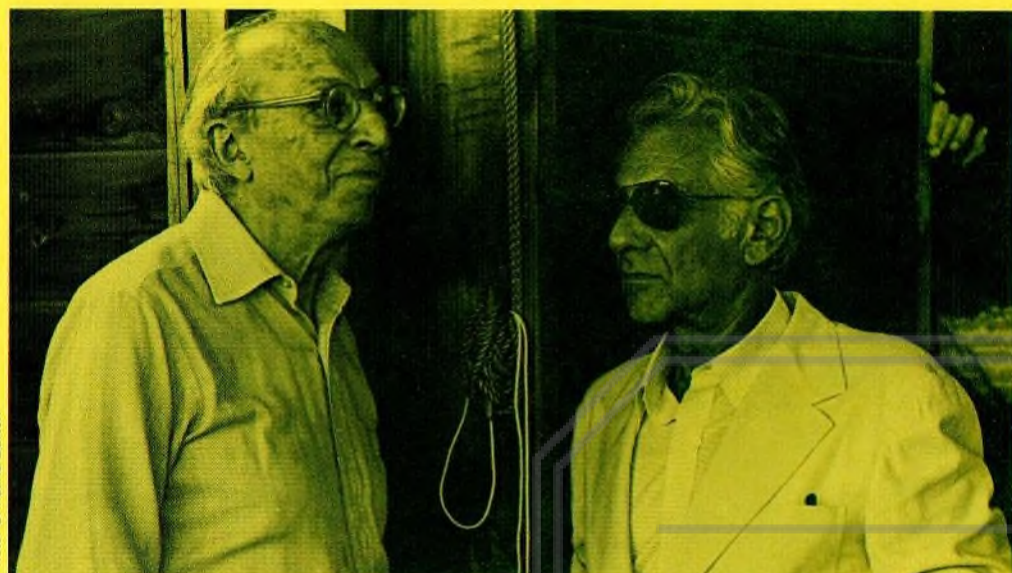
The four featured composers at Brisbane's Musica Nova festival (from left to right): Corigliano, Gubaidulina, Del Tredici and Schwertsik.

"There was not a superfluous note in the writing of Gubaidulina. Each piece drew the audience with a compelling power. Her *Offertorium* was a festival highlight, an extraordinary essay that stirred intellectual and oral resonances as no other work did. With string glissandi and serial techniques to distort and juxtapose, she created a texture that seemed poised on the edge of space and time."

The Australian

Kurt Schwertsik's music, relatively unknown in Australia, made a big impression on audiences, but divided critics with its gentle understatement and references to a very distant Viennese musical culture. *The Australian* summed up the underlying currents of the composer's music in a review of his *Nature Pieces*: "The perspectives of Schwertsik were short and sharp as darts... throughout his writing his simple, deft imagery reaffirmed the value of nature, and his belief that 'art, as a human utterance, is second only to nature'.

The 'popular' side of Schwertsik's music was most apparent in a highly successful 'Liederabend' presented at the Cremorne Theatre with his wife Christa, and in the *Verwandlungsmusik*. "His *Transformation Scenes* from *The Wondrous Tale of Fanferlizzy Sunnyfeet* was a masterly mosaic of contrasting musical mood pictures – lots of fun." *The Australian*



Leonard Bernstein with Aaron Copland at Wolf Trap, Washington on Bernstein's 60th birthday

Leonard Bernstein

1918-90

Leonard Bernstein, the man of two worlds, the man who bridged the worlds of popular and classical music. It's irritating, in a way, to hear him described everywhere today as "the composer of *West Side Story*". He was, but he also composed the operetta *Candide*, two operas, three symphonies, two Masses, a *Serenade*, a *Divertimento*, numerous song-cycles and much, much more.

My first encounter with Bernstein was when I was still a schoolboy: I saw the film of *On the Town* (*New York New York, It's a helluva Town*) and I was hooked on his music from then on, his melodies and his swinging high spirits.

When I came to work in television – 30 years ago now – Bernstein's was already a media name to conjure with. It was through his American *Omnibus* programmes, which he started in 1954, that I realised how television could be used as a powerful medium for education. The essays he did in the 50s and early 60s were a beacon for programme-makers worldwide, and models for BBC2 TV when it started in 1964.

"Through his young people's concerts, Bernstein used television to educate several generations of Americans to a love of classical music." Exaggeration? Hyperbole? I don't think so. He had a relaxed low-key style as a speaker which was in stark contrast to the hell-for-leather conducting style we know from more recent decades, but he knew how to communicate without condescension, finding eloquent language which put nobody off, because he knew how to talk directly to the audience. He always used autocue, and kept to it, slavishly, but it was as if the camera didn't exist as an intervening factor: to use Beethoven's phrase he went "from the heart to

the heart", and he was quite unabashed in his use of emotive words like 'love' and 'freedom' and 'heaven'. Emotion was in fact his password, but emotion (the Koussevitzky in him) was coupled with discipline, the discipline of his other great conducting teacher, Fritz Reiner.

Bernstein's own career as a teacher never stopped. To tell the truth it was not a career, it was a vocation. Even an obsession. On a formal level he taught conducting for many years at Tanglewood, the summer home of the Boston Symphony. More recently he brought the Tanglewood concept to Europe for summer schools in North Germany and to Japan, where he was conducting just a couple of months before his death. His pupils have included Abbado, Ozawa, Tilson Thomas, Mauceri – over the years literally dozens were inspired by him.

As a teacher Bernstein reached his peak in the mid 70s with the Norton Lectures, delivered at Harvard University and recorded the next day at the local educational TV station. In these programmes he raised the status of television itself. To enormous audiences by university standards, he explored a simple idea with vast ramifications. Could Chomsky's linguistic theories find a parallel in musical language? Does music have a 'deep structure'? Yes, came Bernstein's answer, and it is rooted in ineluctable laws of tonality. This was a brave position to take in the early 70s but Bernstein did it with customary confidence and with a riveting selection of examples chosen from the last century of music.

Bernstein the communicator extraordinaire – this is what we've lost at a cruelly early age: 72 is positively young for a conductor to pass on but Bernstein was more than a conductor:

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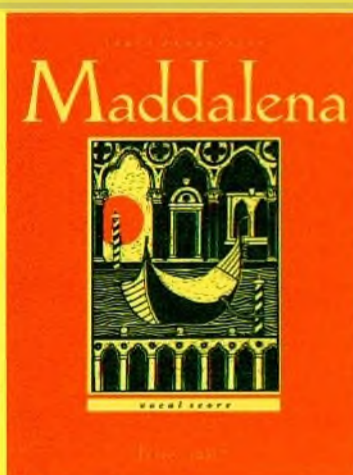
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he'd squeezed a double life into every one of those 72 years. One has to feel sad, and cruelly robbed, but at least we know in consolation that we have an almost complete archive of the recordings of Bernstein the composer – an underestimated force, I believe, in contemporary music – as well as the concert videos which are eloquent proof of his power as a communicator, whether as a conductor or as a composer.

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David J Plumb ARCA PPSTD Designer

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