still very much performing at the age of 70, and Anthony Rolfe Johnson, silenced for some years by Alzheimer's, aged 69; and the distinguished designer Stefanos Lazaridis died at the age of 68. (For Wagner, Mackerras, Sutherland, Langridge, and Rolfe Johnson see Obituary.)

George Hall

CLASSICAL MUSIC

THE year 2010 was the bicentenary of the birth of Frederic Chopin and his music was singled out for year-long, worldwide celebration. On the concert platform and in all the recording media international attention became focused on one national tradition—the Polish—and its global spread over 200 years; on the work of one composer—Chopin—and the true aesthetics of the Romanticism that he brought to the heritage of music; even on one instrument—the piano—and its universality. What might have appeared a limitation proved to be the greatest advantage. All Chopin's music was heard in greater depth, in greater detail, in some cases in several versions which could be compared. This in turn led to a truer aesthetic understanding, both of Chopin and of music's threefold nature: composer—performer—listener.

Many labels issued sets, often making use of their very extensive archive material going back to the early days of the LP. Some covered the complete works of Chopin, such as the 16-disc sets by EMI and Hyperion, including pianists of the past like Garrick Ohlsson or Ronald Smith. Others featured particular soloists and selected works: a five-disc set by Arthur Rubinstein, and a 10-disc set by Samson François (both EMI); a five-disc set by Murray Perahia (Sony Classical), a 13-disc set by Vladimir Ashkenazy (Decca), and a 10-disc set by Tatyana Shebanova (Dux). Pride of place for the national celebration and perpetuation of the Polish tradition went to NIFC (Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina). Their 20-disc set of the complete works featured pianists who had been award winners in the Warsaw Chopin competitions over previous years: Fou Ts'ong, Dina Yoffe, Nelson Goerner, Tatyana Shebanova and Wojciech Switalah. The NIFC performances gained an additional edge, reflecting a fashionable trend of the 20th century, from their use of "period" instruments, that is, instruments which had been known to, and used by, Chopin: a Pleyel piano of 1848 and an Erard piano of 1849, both restored to full working order.

As well as sets, single discs of selected solo piano works performed by individual pianists were issued in profusion: Alexei Volodin (Challenge Classics), Nikolai Eugansky (Onyx Classics), Alexandre Tharaud (Virgin Classics), Alain Planès (Harmonia Mundi), Louis Lortie (Chandos) and Alberto Reyes (VAI Audio). All brought their individuality to bear on very familiar pieces, generally speaking with piano playing of a very high order. Comparison sharpened the listener's ability to discriminate aesthetically between different performances of the same work. Particularly illuminating was Martha Argerich (Deutsche Gram-

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mophon), whose performances revealed in one disc a change in her aesthetic perspective of the range of emotions of Chopin's compositions, for example the "multum in parvo" of the *Mazurka, Op.59, no.1*.

The Chopin bicentenary brought piano playing to the forefront of public attention. Two discs were issued in 2010 by the gold and silver medal winners from the prestigious 13th van Cliburn piano competition, held in Fort Worth, Texas in 2009: the 19-year-old Chinese, Haochen Zhang, and the 23-year-old Korean, Yeol Eum Son (Harmonia Mundi USA). Both broadened the context of the Polish tradition, the one setting Chopin's *24 Preludes, Op.28* against a 20th century classic, Stravinsky's *Three Movements from Petrushka*, the other setting six of Debussy's *Préludes* against another 20th century classic from the USA, Samuel Barber's *Sonata*. Together they showed a continuous growth of the classical piano style over the 19th and 20th centuries, spread through different national traditions.

The wider Polish tradition also benefited from the Chopin bicentenary: in 2010 the symphonic tradition was revitalised. Andrzej Panufnik, like Chopin, had been an exile from his native Poland. He lived through World War II in Warsaw, but spent the last 35 years of his life in London. He was a virtuoso conductor as well as a composer, and the greater part of his output was of orchestral music, including nine symphonies. He was passionately nationalistic. In 2010, 20 years after his death, a fresh impetus was given to the re-evaluation of his work by the initiation of a six-disc series of his symphonic works, under the direction of Lukasz Borowitz, with the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra (CPO). Two discs were released in 2010: one with symphonies (*Sinfonia Rustica, No.1, Sinfonia Concertante, No.4*), the other containing shorter works (*Tragic Overture, Nocturne, Katyn Epitaph*). They opened the way for a truer aesthetic understanding of Panufnik's style.

A further example of a performance made long after a composer's death, yet leading to a new and fuller aesthetic perception of the immensity of his conception, was the recording of two choral works by Vaughan Williams in 2010: *Sancta Civitas* and *Dona nobis pacem* (Naxos), with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Bach Choir, under their own conductor David Hill. The huge scale of the performance aptly matched both the visionary nature of the holy city—S*ancta Civitas* (1926)—and the angry cry of pacifism—*Dona nobis pacem* (1936). Vaughan Williams's music was shown to have many layers and to presage later developments in the British choral tradition, such as the use of a timeless Latin text interspersed with the vernacular, an idea taken up by Peter Fricker in *The Vision of Judgement* and Benjamin Britten in *War Requiem*.

The fusion of trends within national traditions marked new works in 2010. Brett Dean's new opera *Bliss*, based on Peter Carey's novel and given a spectacular première in Sydney before proceeding on tour to Melbourne, Edinburgh and Hamburg, was a fusion of the musical extremes in the Australian tradition: hard-edged modernism and electronics, opposed to an expansive lyricism. John Adams's new work in 2010, *City Noir*, was orchestral not operatic: a celebration of the city of Los Angeles, symbolized for Adams by a characteristically American fusion of jazz and symphonic music, recalling the 1920s and the music of Gershwin, Copland, Stravinsky, and Bernstein.

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The fusion of East and West, following the pioneering days of the Silk Road Project (see AR 2001, p. 507), came to find its best expression in the blending of traditional Chinese instruments with the harmonic style of Western symphonic music. A festival in 2010, "Ancient Paths, Modern Voices", opening in New York, then moving on to Toronto and Shanghai, featured two new works by Qigang Chen: *Er Huang* for piano and orchestra, with piano soloist Lang Lang, and *Iris Dévoilée* for the erhu (a two-stringed fiddle), the pipa (a 4-stringed lute), and the sheng (a mouth organ with 12 or more reed pipes). The Korean composer Unsuk Chin continued her exploitation of this vein of oriental musical colour. Her piece *Sû*, for sheng and orchestra, was heard first in Tokyo, then in Los Angeles, Amsterdam and Essen; *Gougalŏn* consisted of the free recollection of "scenes from a Korean street theatre" and was scored for standard Western instruments. It was toured in Germany by the Ensemble Moderne.

The British musical tradition flourished in 2010. Notable choral recordings included James MacMillan's opera *The Sacrifice* (Chandos) (see AR 2008, p. 491), and his Easter cantata, *Visitatio Sepulchri* (Bis). He was given an "orchestral profile" by the LSO, which resulted in several performances over the concert season, culminating in May with the première of his new *Violin Concerto,* played by the Russian virtuoso Vadim Repin with the London Symphony Orchestra under Valery Gergiev. There could be no doubt where MacMillan's interpretation of the national tradition led him: to Scottish folk song and folk dance, to fiddle tunes and Scottish reels. A notable piano recording by Charles Matthews was of Francis Routh's *The Well-Tempered Pianist* (Redcliffe), in which 24 preludes were based on a scale of extended tonality, in the same way that Bach had based *The Well-Tempered Clavier* on the diatonic scale. To the classical pianistic tradition was added contemporary virtuosity.

Musicians who died in 2010 included the composers Henryk Górecki (Poland), Jacques Hétu (Canada), Arne Nordheim (Norway), Benjamin Lees (USA); the conductors Rudolf Barshai (Russia), Charles Mackerras (Australia), Ole Schmidt (Denmark); the pianists Yvonne Loriod (France), Earl Wild (USA); the dramatic soprano Joan Sutherland (Australia), the tenor Philip Langridge (UK), and the jazz clarinettist John Dankworth (UK). (For Górecki, Mackerras, Sutherland and Langridge see Obituary.)

BOOKS OF THE YEAR. Studies of composers: *Benjamin Britten: new perspectives on his life and work*, ed by Lucy Walker; *Journeying boy: the diaries of the young Benjamin Britten, 1929-1938*, ed by John Evans; *György Kurtág: three interviews and Ligeti homages* by Bálint András Varga; *James MacMillan: a conversation and commentary*, by Richard McGregor; *Composing in words*, by William Alwyn.

Aesthetics of music: *History of the world in 100 objects*, by Neil MacGregor; *Musical modernism at the turn of the twenty-first century*, by David Metzer; *Adolf Busch: the life of an honest musician*, by Tully Potter; *Understanding music: philosophy and interpretation*, by Roger Scruton; *Britpop and the English Music Tradition*, ed by Andy Bennett, Jon Stratton; *A descriptive catalogue of the musical manuscript collection of the National Library of Greece: Byzantine Chant and other music repertory recovered*, by Diane H. Touliatos-Miles.

Francis Routh

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