

# Scotland

By David Kettle

Hot on the heels of Edinburgh's August festival madness comes the **Lammermuir Festival** (14-23 September), now in its third year and more than living up to its slogan of 'Beautiful music in beautiful places', with performances throughout the dramatic East Lothian countryside. And there are few more dramatic sites than Tantallon Castle; a remarkable, ruined edifice perched on the North Berwick coast. The site will play host to the festival's site-specific music and light event 'Tantallon! These Lands, This Wall', with a newly-commissioned score by William Sweeney performed by the **Red Note Ensemble**. Elsewhere in the festival's enterprising programme, there are four recitals tracing the seasons in song, a Handel Day from La Serenissima, and an evening of Scottish song and dance music at the Glenkinchie Distillery – with a dram of whisky included, naturally.

Also in September, the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's** chief conductor Donald Runnicles launches the ensemble's highest-profile offering of the season: a traversal of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* split across three concerts (September, November and April). He is just the man to put real passion into big, late-romantic scores, and the trilogy stands as an interesting contrast with the strong Polish flavour of much of the rest of the BBCSSO's programme. Principal guest conductor Ilan Volkov's all-Polish concert of Lutoslawski and Szymanowski (January) is another highlight.

It is the first season for the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra's** new music director Peter Oundjian, and he is launching it with a bang, with Shostakovich's massive Symphony No 11 (The Year 1905) in October. He has got a tough act to follow in the much-loved Stéphane Denève,

the previous incumbent at the RSNO helm who made French music such a strong focus of the orchestra's programmes, but Oundjian is making his mark with a two-concert American series (February and April), and even a performance of Smetana's *Má Vlast* with specially-commissioned visuals by artist James Westwater (March).

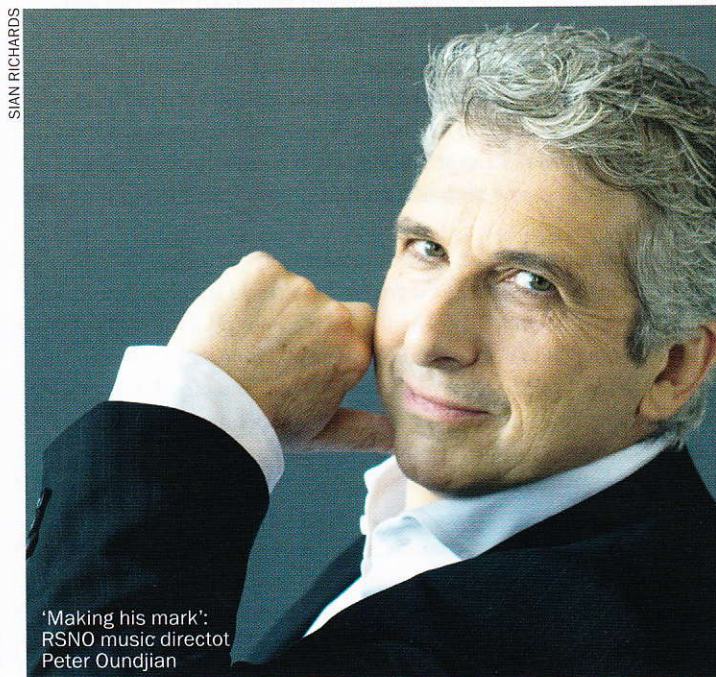
And even in October, the festivals keep on coming. **St Andrews Voices** is a brand new event launched in the historic university town, with, you've guessed it, a special focus on vocal music, including Ian Bostridge in Schubert's *Winterreise*. And the **Sound festival** marks out north-east Scotland as a focal point for contemporary music. As well as a sound map of Aberdeen and an audio-acoustic piece linking the city with Bergen and St Petersburg, at the heart of the festival is a weekend of opera in a lighthouse, a bus, a flat and a pub, with works by John Harris, Pippa Murphy, Stephen Deazley and Scottish Opera's recently appointed composer in residence Gareth Williams.

It is also a big year for **Scottish Opera**, which is celebrating its half-century with an eclectic season that seems determined to demonstrate the company's versatility. Thomas Allen returns to direct *The Magic Flute* (October-November), his third Mozart opera with the company; there is a return to Wagner with *The Flying Dutchman* (April), the company's first staging of the composer since its ill-fated *Ring* cycle in 2004; and the season ends, surprisingly, with *The Pirates of Penzance* (May-June). But most intriguing is Gareth Williams' first full-length opera as composer-in-residence. *The Elephant Angel*, with a libretto by novelist Bernard MacLaverty, tells the story of a zookeeper protecting his trunked and tusked charge in wartime Belfast, and it relies on input from local schoolchildren to develop their own version of the piece. The opera tours Scotland and Northern Ireland in October and November.

Two of Scotland's finest new-music groups make waves in November, with ambitious pieces by two honorary Scots. *The Intoxicating Rose Garden* is a new setting of Persian love songs by the eighth-century poet Hafez from Sally Beamish. The piece will be performed by the **Red Note Ensemble** in a multimedia performance combining music with dance, video and live calligraphy that tours Scotland. And the **Hebrides**



The Red Note Ensemble



'Making his mark': RSNO music director Peter Oundjian



## SONICA

In one of Scotland's most intriguing musical offerings this season, Glasgow-based arts producer Cryptic is launching *Sonica*; a programme of sonic arts (8-18 November) that combines music with visual art, film, theatre and multimedia. Claudia Molitor's *Remember Me* promises an opera inspired by *Dido and Aeneas* inside a desk, complete with an orchestral pit, film projections and interval refreshments. Netherlands-based ensemble 33 1/3 Collective reimagines Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* using a digital visualisation and an improvised score, and in Kathy Hinde's *Piano Migrations*, a flock of small birds are let loose to flutter around the strings of an old piano in a secret venue. And there is plenty more where that came from, with electronics, installations and lasers making music throughout the city.

[sonic-a.co.uk](http://sonic-a.co.uk)

Ensemble tackles Peter Maxwell Davies' extraordinary *Eight Songs for a Mad King* with vocalist Marcus Farnsworth in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness and Newcastle.

The **Scottish Chamber Orchestra** has a typically rich season, with a concert performance of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and the world premiere of Lyell Cresswell's triple concerto for piano trio and orchestra (both October) among many other highlights. But it is bringing the remarkable pianism of Maria João Pires to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Perth audiences (November) in Mozart's Piano Concerto K453, under the graceful control of SCO principal conductor Robin Ticciati, that is sure to be one of its most memorable offerings this year.

The keyboard is also the focus for **Glasgow Concert Halls' Piano Month**, which delivers a week of intense digital activity in mid-November from such contrasting figures as Richard Goode, Daniil Trifonov and Elisabeth Leonskaja. Silent-movie pianist Neil Brand accompanies a selection of soundless shorts in a family concert, and there is also an evening devoted to piano music by Philip Glass and Michael Nyman.

Finally, the Britten centenary year of 2013 sees countless performances of his music throughout Britain, and Scotland is no exception. The SCO has three concerts in April next year bringing together key Britten works with Purcell, Schubert and contemporary composers. But it is the **Scottish Ensemble** that really takes the celebrations to heart, with something by Britten in each of its concerts from October right through to June. The stand-out event is its December candlelit Scottish tour that brings together two seminal sets of variations: Britten's *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* and Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, in the string arrangement by Dmitri Sitkovetsky. **CM**

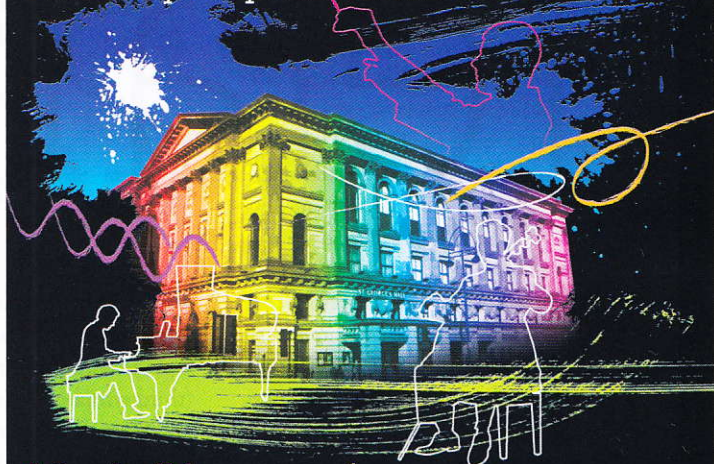
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