

# DVD & BLU-RAY

A documentary on *Gubaidulina* as she composes her violin concerto for *Anne-Sophie Mutter*; an intense Mahler Nine from *Claudio Abbado*; and *Christian Thielemann* shows his qualities in Beethoven and Wagner



## BEETHOVEN

### Missa solemnis, Op. 123

Krassimira Stoyanova (soprano), Elina Garanča (mezzo-soprano), Michael Schade (tenor), Franz-Josef Selig (baritone); Saxon State Opera Choir, Dresden; Staatskapelle Dresden/Christian Thielemann

**C Major** – DVD: 705408 (NTSC system;

dts 5.1; 16:9 picture format) 90 mins;

**Blu-ray**: 705504 (1080P HD; dts HD

Master Audio 5.1; 16:9 picture format)

BBC Music Direct (DVD) £17.99

BBC Music Direct (Blu-ray) £29.99

Beethoven expected no applause for his *Missa solemnis*. Its initial impetus, at least, was as a liturgical work, to be heard within a church service. Although it is the only work on this DVD, and the performance is in a concert hall, something of that spirit is present here. This was no ordinary concert, but the annual memorial commemorating the bombing of Dresden. 2010 was the 65th anniversary of that event, and 25 years since the re-opening of the Semperoper. As is traditional at these events, there is no applause, only a minute's silence at the end.

It can be difficult to capture such a special atmosphere, but the controlled, keenly felt emotion of this 2010 concert is patent. Christian Thielemann generally favours lively tempos and a lightness of touch. Details are clear and he elicits a remarkable luminosity from the substantial forces, making this a deeply engaging account. Try the hushed stillness of 'et sepultus est' in the Credo, Thielemann waiting so that the scintillating joy of 'Et resurrexit' bursts forth with even greater verve. The chorus is impressive and the soloists well-matched. It is true that the sopranos occasionally lose a little focus in Beethoven's extremely demanding vocal-writing, and tenor Michael Schade's Latin has its idiosyncracies, but such minor caveats do not detract from such a warm, heartfelt performance. Blu-ray brings the expected crispness of picture, and the sound is wonderfully natural, a point thrown into relief by the DVD version, where the soloists' voices are very forward and are strangely resonant. That there are no extras seems appropriate since nothing needs to be said. *Christopher Dingle*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★  
 PICTURE & SOUND (DVD) ★★★  
 (BLU-RAY) ★★★★★

## MUSIC DVD CHOICE

# Weinberg's first-class Voyage

David Nice welcomes the premiere of this emotionally fraught opera



## WEINBERG

### The Passenger

Michelle Breedt, Roberto Saccà, Elene Kelessidi, Artur Rucinski, Svetlana Doneva; Vienna SO/Teodor Currentzis; dir. David Pountney (Bregenz, 2010)  
**Neos** – DVD: NEOS 51006 (PAL system; dts 5.0; 16:9 picture format) 190 mins (2 discs); **Blu-ray**: NEOS 51005 (1080i HD; dts HD Master Audio 5.0; 16:9 picture format) 190 mins

BBC Music Direct (DVD) £29.99

BBC Music Direct (Blu-ray) £29.99

If it is true that only those who directly suffered the consequences of Auschwitz have the right to turn it into blood-stained art, then Mieczysław Weinberg, a Warsaw-born Jewish composer who owed his life to Soviet Russia before Stalin threatened to take it away again, and Zofia Posmysz, the Polish author on whose *roman à clef* *The Passenger* is based, are among this number.

Weinberg, who died in 1996, would have been proud of this world premiere staging at Bregenz, and the 86-year-old Posmysz was there to take a curtain call. David Pountney's direction, his most focused for years, and Johan Engels's sets perfectly encapsulate the dazzling white ship on which former SS guard Lisa hopes to escape her conscience and the not-quite-real Auschwitz below it to which she descends when brought face to face with the woman whose destiny she controlled.

Is it a rediscovered masterpiece? I'm still not sure; for that, Weinberg



DAZZLING EXTERIOR: darkness lurks beneath the ship's bright decks

would surely have had to come out more consistently from under the shadow of his father-figure and mentor Shostakovich. His loud music is very *Babi Yar*-ish; but in the quiet moments, he's closer to Britten at his sublime

### In quiet moments Weinberg is close to Britten in humanity

simplest. They're either frozen in horror – the Prague Philharmonic Choir's *sotto voce* is superb – or melting in simple, unsentimental humanity; it's plausible that a Russian inmate would have sung a consoling folksong, so we melt at Svetlana Doneva's mesmerising

delivery of Katja's unaccompanied number. The two leads match more-than-acting with top vocal quality; Michelle Breedt's mezzo Lisa contrasts superbly with Elena Kelessidi's soprano Marta – heartbreaking when this 'madonna of the camp' recognises her lover (baritone Artur Rucinski, a real discovery). Teodor Currentzis conducts with a focus brilliantly rendered in the Neos sound. **B**

The accompanying documentary is essential and could have been even longer, marred only by the fact that there's no subtitles when the German narrator talks over the English-speaking interviewees.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★  
 PICTURE & SOUND ★★★★★  
 EXTRAS ★★★★★

See an excerpt of this recording at [www.classical-music.com](http://www.classical-music.com)