

pressquotes

PAUL McCREESH, CONDUCTOR

Guest Conducting

Münchener Kammerorchester / Mendelssohn, Mozart, Schoeck

"The sensitively performed slow introduction to young Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's Symphony No.9, played without a need to over-emphasise every last detail, revealed what an exciting concert this would be.

The expectations raised in the overture were fulfilled in the sparkling first movement, and exceeded in the sharp contrapuntal Andante section. British conductor Paul McCreesh, founder of the Gabrieli Consort and conductor of Rolando Villazón's Handel CD, had prepared the Münchener Kammerorchester faultlessly.

... Mozarts' Symphony No.20 summed up the qualities of the evening: the playing was full of colour and rich variations of light and shade, without the brute force which so often takes over in historically informed performances."

Abendzeitung, 28 May 2009

"Notes appeared out of nowhere and slowly took shape; gradually overlapping and entering into every-changing rapports with one another. The introduction to Mendelssohn's Symphony for Strings no. 9 in C major had an inner tension which gripped the audience in the Prinzregententheater, and seemed to drag them right into the centre of the action. The Münchener Kammerorchester under Paul McCreesh kept this short passage hovering in the ether, held in a fragile but unbroken equilibrium."

Süddeutsche Zeitung, 28 May 2009

Teatro Real Madrid / Handel *Tamerlano* (DVD release on Opus Arte)

"Conductor Paul McCreesh calls George Frideric Handel's 1724 *Creation* one of the greatest operas of the 18th century. Here, in a year-old live performance, he makes glorious work of the orchestra of the Teatro Real in Madrid and an excellent cast that includes tenor Plácido Domingo."

John Terauds, The Star.com, 28 April 2009

"*Tamerlano*'s four-hour length is buoyed by the vigour with which Paul McCreesh conducts the meaty, non-Baroque house orchestra of the Teatro Real... A fine production of a very fine opera."

The Times, 27 February 2009

Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra / Haydn *Die Jahreszeiten*

"... Haydn, the eldest of the Viennese Classics, received a magnificent tribute from the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra under the direction of another famed early-music expert, Paul McCreesh.

... The prosaic and lengthy text can make listening to *Die Jahreszeiten* a test of patience. Conductor McCreesh cannot be faulted for this: he was able to make the performance into a dramatic experience."

Frits van der Waal, Volkskrant, 25 January 2009

"Full-blooded, brilliant *Jahreszeiten* with Paul McCreesh

... The Dutch Chamber Orchestra gave a magnificent performance of the sequel [of *Die Schoepfung*]: *Die Jahreszeiten*, conducted by Paul McCreesh.

pressquotes

...Even though this time the forces of the choir and orchestra in Die Jahreszeiten were considerably smaller than in 1801, McCreesh did not compromise on the grand and exalted, the spectacular and the brilliant. In his vision, Die Jahreszeiten are a match for Die Schoepfung. The orchestra was allowed to indulge itself under the command of orchestra leader Gordan Nikolic, one of the most high-spirited musicians on earth. And the excellent soloists - soprano Camilla Tilling, tenor Mark Padmore and baritone Andrew Foster-Williams - were allowed to use their big, expressive voices freely."

Kasper Jansen, NRC Handelsblad, 26 January 2009

"Programming around centenaries can have its pitfalls, but any excuse to perform this great oratorio is very welcome. Especially under the direction of a seasoned early music conductor like Paul McCreesh. He was able to elicit ever changing, delightful sounds from the choir and orchestra..."

...the result is overwhelming...

...With his tall stature he calmly conducted the cheerfully tinkling pianoforte, beautifully integrated with the delicate sound of the string section."

Kees Arntzen, Trouw, 28 January 2009

Basel Chamber Orchestra / Weber, Mendelssohn and Berlioz

"Much-loved and familiar though all these works may be, each was performed in the freshest possible way. The string playing was daring and virtuosic. Intonation faltered occasionally in the Mendelssohn, but it was always responsive to McCreesh's committed direction."

The Guardian, February 2008

Mozarteum Orchestra at the Salzburg Festival / Mozart and Mendelssohn

"...He has the Mozarteum Orchestra ... confidently under control; his entire body is employed in his extrovert, almost dance-like, conducting style..."

Kronenzeitung, August 2005

Beethovenhalle Orchester, Bonn / Schubert and Haydn

"...Paul McCreesh ... knows how to motivate the musicians: the music sparkles, has tempo, excitement and humour ... McCreesh ... was attentive to every detail of the score and accorded as much suspense to the slow introduction as he did depth to the adagio. The horns graced the extremely lively finale with elegant flourishes. The audience of this practically sold-out concert reacted with enormous applause."

General-Anzeiger, June 2005

Musikkollegium Winterthur / Gluck, Mozart and Beethoven

"...a feast for every ear ... the conductor shaped the orchestra's dynamics with marvelous skill..."

Neue Züricher Zeitung, June 2005

San Francisco Symphony / Haydn and Mozart

"...this approach yielded readings that sounded wonderfully peppy and lithe ... The orchestral textures came through with almost angular transparency, but there was a soft, inviting feel to the instrumental playing as well, and McCreesh balanced these impulses skilfully..."

San Francisco Chronicle, May 2005

Orchester der Beethovenhalle Bonn/ Mendelssohn, Haydn & Schubert

"McCreesh demands virtuosic vitality and strength from the orchestra ... The conductor emphasised razor-sharp details in the finale, without hindering the fascinating interlocking and dynamic growth of the movements – a true success. "

General Anzeiger, February 2005

pressquotes

Komische Oper / Handel *Alcina*

“...Best of all was Paul McCreesh’s sensitive handling of Handel’s magnificent score...”

Die Welt, March 2004

“...His musical conception is precise, clear and above all full of spirit...”

NDR-Kultur, March 2004

Welsh National Opera / Handel, *Jephtha*

“...Paul McCreesh’s conducting of this rich and thrilling score was full of vitality, colour and fire...”

The Daily Telegraph, May 2003

Deutsche Symphonie Orchester Berlin and Andreas Scholl / Haydn, Handel and Mozart

“...He is passionate about all kinds of music and gave a performance of Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony as it has never been heard before ... full of life, temperamental and free. The molto allegro of the final movement shot forth with the expected aggressive accelerandos, so much so that one feared the orchestra would explode and not be able to stand by the end of it ... he is a poet with the baton: understanding and forceful at the same time...”

Berliner Morgenpost, December 2002

Welsh National Opera / Gluck *Orphée ed Eurydice*

“...This is a dazzling debut for McCreesh ... such instinctive theatricality...”

The Sunday Times, October 2000

pressquotes

Gabrieli Consort and Players

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Handel *Jephtha*

"...at last week's performance of the oratorio *Jephtha*, Handel's last major work, it was the drama at the heart of the music that set the evening alight... McCreesh, as always, was a galvanising force ... fortified by additional singers from the Wroclaw Philharmonic Choir, his excellent Gabrieli Consort and Players had extra punch."

Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times*, June 2009

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Haydn *The Creation* (Archiv)

"Informed speculation, inspired direction and a collective sense of occasion combine to make this recording amongst the most compelling Creations in the discosphere.

This is no routine run out of a choral warhorse. Rather, Paul McCreesh and company dare to let Haydn's vivid score off the leash to pursue its joyful take on created nature.

Above all, McCreesh conjures up a cogent, highly personal reading that sounds refreshingly alive and genuinely struck by the wonder of Haydn's creativity."

Classic FM Magazine, opera and vocal disc of the month, June 2008

"This recording of Haydn's great oratorio is sung in English, but with a difference. Paul McCreesh has made changes to the standard English text, ironing out its awkward or obscure moments, and has also altered Haydn's recitatives to fit.

One of the perennial delights of the work is the illustrative detail of the results of God's creation – the beasts, birds, creeping things and so forth – that Haydn depicts with such imagination and yet an almost childlike sense of wonder.

Most important of all is McCreesh's own commitment, which combines a keen sensitivity to sonority – the Representation of Chaos is awe-inspiring – with an ear for detail and a firm yet flexible approach to tempo. The results are exceptional, overtaking even John Eliot Gardiner's striking version on the same label."

BBC Music Magazine, disc of the month, May 2008

"McCreesh, conducting his Gabrieli Consort and Players, has fine-tuned the English libretto to remove its oddities, but otherwise steers a faithful course through Haydn's great celebration of divine order: Part 3 (The Garden of Eden) is wondrously done."

The Financial Times, 12 April 2008

"Sung in English, this is an exhilarating performance of a breathtaking masterpiece. Paul McCreesh relishes all the illustrative detail and is not averse to broad tempi, as some period-practice conductors are."

The Sunday Telegraph, 30 March 2008

"With period instruments tripled in number here and professional singers augmented by Chetham's Chamber Choir, Paul McCreesh's reading of 'The Creation' adumbrates tenderness, innovation (the libretto has been tweaked), and spectacle... strong singing from the chorus and soloists make this a highly persuasive performance."

Independent on Sunday, 23 March 2008

"Forget the notion that "authentic" automatically equals small-scale. Haydn relished large forces when he could get them; and for the triumphant Viennese public première of *The Creation* in 1799,

pressquotes

he pitted a choir of around 80 against a Mahlerian-sized orchestra of 120. Paul McCreesh follows suit in an English-language performance that, uniquely on disc, combines sonic splendour, athleticism and tangy period detail.

While yielding to none in joyous exhilaration, McCreesh gives full value to the mystery and awe of creation. Unlike most period practitioners, he often favours broad tempos, whether in a wonderfully creepy evocation of the primeval slime in "Chaos" or the most majestic of sunrises.

McCreesh's five soloists (Haydn himself never used more than three) are ideally chosen. In "With Verdure Clad", Sandrine Piau's smiling, limpid tone and graceful phrasing combine deliciously with the woody clarinet and buzzy bassoon."

The Daily Telegraph, CD of the week, 15 March 2008

"The German-language recordings by Gardiner (Archiv) and Harnoncourt (Harmonia Mundi) have their strong claims. But if you want a Creation in English, this new version - sonically thrilling, marvellously sung and characterised - sweeps the field.

It's an awesome sound – the first climax, with antiphonal drums and trumpets bringing light to the depiction of Chaos that opens the work, is ear-splitting – and McCreesh maintains that theatrical level of drama...a performance that really does reinvent one of the greatest works in the choral canon."

The Guardian, 14 March 2008

Gabrieli Consort and Players / *The Road to Paradise* (Deutsche Grammophon)

"As always, the Gabrieli Consort's singing is of the highest quality."

The Financial Times, June 2007

"There are riches here, superbly sung by the Gabrielis."

Sunday Times, June 2007

Gabrieli Consort and Players / *Handel Acis and Galatea*

"Handel conceived this work for a tiny group of singers plus a small ensemble, and this was how Paul McCreesh and the excellent Gabrieli Consort presented it... Ninety minutes never passed so fast."

The Independent, May 2007

"McCreesh and his players kept the score light on its feet."

The Guardian, May 2007

Gabrieli Consort and Players / *Haydn The Creation at Barbican Hall*

"Is The Creation really Haydn's masterpiece? String quartet lovers might disagree; so might anyone who has heard a mediocre performance. However, Paul McCreesh's performance with his Gabrieli Consort and Players was extraordinary... McCreesh had tweaked the clunkier parts of the text slightly, just as Haydn probably would have, had he had better English... McCreesh's upcoming studio recording is something anyone who has ever doubted this piece should listen out for."

The Guardian, 31 October 2006

"McCreesh has also taken the bold step of reassessing the English libretto...McCreesh has kept the spirit of the original but fine-tuned it to go better with the notes. It certainly enabled his soloists for this performance to convey the sense of awe and drama in Haydn's music... The massed choral voices were incisive, too, while the vast orchestra made an impressive sound... but McCreesh's bold, demonstrative conductive style kept everything together and conveyed the dramatic sweep and ever-freshed joyousness of Haydn's masterpiece."

The Telegraph, 31 October 2006

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pressquotes

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Mozart Symphonies at London's Mostly Mozart Festival

"...Paul McCreesh and his period-instrument Gabrieli Consort & Players lavished as much care upon it as if it had been a late masterpiece ... so packed with intense nuance that, for once, one welcomed the taking of every possible repeat..."

The Independent, 19 June 2006

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Mozart C Minor Mass

"Paul McCreesh's new recording of Mozart's unfinished C minor Mass matches Gardiner..Christie..and Hogwood in exhilaration and sensitivity, and arguably surpasses all-comers in the crucial choice of female soloists."

The Daily Telegraph, January 2006

"Paul McCreesh and his forces provide a fine sense of vigour and sensitivity, revealing the music's power and constant ingenuity, as well as its many passages marked by a sense of uncertainty..."

BBC Music Magazine, December 2005

"McCreesh propels his period-instrument band and incisive choir with feverish energy. There's never a dull moment. Yet he also has the imagination and control to conjure up delectable oases of calm..."

The Times, October 2004

Gabrieli Consort and Players/ Bach's B minor mass

"Lucid, vibrant and engrossing these are the kind of superlatives hurled about when the Gabrieli Consort tackle Bach – and usually when their director Paul McCreesh is unravelling the mysteries at the heart of the John or Matthew Passion, laying bare their gripping stories with his unshakeable focus on clarity of vocal and instrumental colour."

The Times, May 2005

"The sound was lithe and full of detail; the singing was always a tapestry of individually coloured vocal strands rather than a homogenised mass, and lines could be followed in even the densest passages."

The Guardian, May 2005

"...exemplary flexibility of line and transparency of texture...he drove his forces, topped by three brilliant trumpets, to exhilarating heights of virtuosity."

Evening Standard, May 2005

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Handel Saul

"...McCreesh conjures a performance of unusual power and glory ... McCreesh keeps a level head about speeds and general deportment; the result is one of the most roundly satisfying Handel oratorio performances for some time..."

The Times, March 2004

"...This ... makes the strongest possible case for Handel's masterpiece. ...McCreesh ... has an exemplary track record in this repertoire..."

Classical CD of the Week, *The Sunday Times*, March 2004

"...the performance of *Saul* under McCreesh is arguably the finest available ... a sumptuous affair ... Paul McCreesh giving the score the mixture of spacious grandeur and sharp-edged drama it really demands."

The Guardian, March 2004

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Gabrieli Consort and Players / Handel *Belshazzar*

"...conducted with infectious energy by Paul McCreesh ... the Gabrielis made a compelling case for the piece ... But the real achievement was McCreesh's. He paced the three-hour work with fluidity and insight..."

The Guardian, December 2004

"...If the church had received a thorough overhaul, that was nothing to what Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort & Players did for the music, excavating its foundations, scrubbing its textures, chiselling its rhythms and polishing its surfaces, until the work sounds like a new piece..."

Financial Times, December 2004

"...Both composer and conductor demanded equal virtuosity from the chorus as from the soloists. And the Gabrieli Consort swept all before them, in highly charged yet supple part-writing, as McCreesh propelled plot and counter-plot forward."

The Times, December 2004

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Gluck *Paride et Elena*

"...one of the most thrilling evenings I have spent in the theatre in many years...a conductor of genius..."

The Spectator, November 2003

"...one of the happiest evenings of the operatic year..."

Opera, December 2003

Gabrieli Players / Bach *St Matthew Passion* on Deutsche Grammophon

"...the results are amazing. Indeed, everything about this recording is wonderful: the instrumental playing, McCreesh's supple and sensitive direction; and a superb octet of soloists ... the crisp sound of the Gabrieli Consort takes on a nimbus of majesty."

The Times, April 2003

"...a compelling directorial vision, a dramatically cohesive whole which stands alone without the need for slogan... McCreesh's account has an unremitting singularity of purpose ... A memorable and vitally conceived new account."

Gramophone, May 2003

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Bach *Christmas Oratorio*

"...Paul McCreesh is a past master at setting both mood and pace in baroque music such as this ... he has the knack of giving impetus to what he is conducting without making it sound rushed. There was rhythmic propulsion, lilt and buoyancy..."

The Daily Telegraph, December 2002

Gabrieli Consort and Players / Handel *Solomon* on Deutsche Grammophon

"...It's hard to imagine anyone conducting or playing it better than Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort and Players. McCreesh gets right to the heart of its pomp and circumstance, its opulent pageantry, its sudden swerves into darkness (the judgement scene is very tense) and its moments of eroticism and lyricism..."

The Guardian, April 2001