
Stop, Look, and Listen!

Musical Diversions and Commentary — by Rodney Flora

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Issue 03



What is this? Well, at the moment, this is still an experiment. Now that I am retired here in Castine, it is an outlet for the skills that I have developed during my career, and in this period of social isolation to open up a wider world of classical music to my readers, giving all of us something to focus on other than dreadful news and the tedium of isolation. Besides, music is itself a healthy preoccupation and a source of enjoyment and fulfillment. I hope this will make a small contribution to that.

Who am I? I've spent my 40+ year career as a professional classical music broadcaster, more than 15 of those years as Music Director for a Boston classical radio station and the last 10+ years as music director for a classical network that distributes programming to stations around the country. My role was very much a curatorial one, finding and evaluating music and recordings that fit our format and identity as a serious yet accessible source of classical music, and then creating appealing programs that showcased that music to best advantage.

FEATURED Music - Holiday Programming

This issue is just a quick version of the newsletter to highlight some of the holiday programs I've found and can recommend to you. Bit of a bare-bones treatment I'm afraid. I will return to the usual format in January.

Please note that I do not intend to promote or advocate any particular flavor of religion, and although I will admit to being an anglophile I am not an Anglican. If there seem a preponderance of programs here of a particular

flavor it is for 3 simple reasons and only these. I am interested in English history, the BBC produces many excellent musical and historical programs, and they are generally in the English language, which I view as something of a prerequisite.



Just a note about the photo to the left. It is of course Notre Dame de Paris. I made my very first trip to Paris last September, and naturally a visit to Notre Dame was high on my list. Alas, the fire occurred just six months before our arrival and although it was wonderful to see that much of the facade had survived it was closed off, with much stabilization work underway. Notre Dame still needs contributions to her restoration. If you are interested here's how to contact the charity:

<https://www.friendsofnotredamedeparis.org/>

In our house, as in many others, the "official" beginning of Christmas is the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols broadcast from King's College, Cambridge on December 24th. As I understand it, as of this date, it will again be broadcast live this year, locally on Maine Public Radio, and on many public radio stations around the country. The only difference is that their live audience in the Chapel this year will consist only of members of the Cambridge community and not the general public.

A very nice program booklet/Order of Service will be available to download after Dec. 18th here:

<https://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/chapel/a-festival-of-nine-lessons-and-carols>



As for New Year's Eve, we are not "Midnight People" anymore, and perhaps you're not either. For us, when Big Ben "bongs" in the new year in London (at 7 pm EST) that's good enough for us, and frankly better than a ball dropping in Times Square.

You can watch Big Ben bong and the ensuing fireworks live on Sky News Live either on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Aug9mYxFEE>



If that link doesn't work just try searching for Sky News Live on YouTube.

Alternatively try the Sky News website:

<https://news.sky.com/story/watch-sky-news-live-10315632>

For a preview here is last year's coverage from the BBC:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ks1U-8bojU&t=122s>

Note that the musical accompaniment may not be to your taste (I know it's not to mine) but you can turn the sound down low (after Big Ben) or even mute it altogether, and just watch the fireworks.

Having declared that English language is a prerequisite, naturally this first program is in French (although it is mostly music).

Notre Dame de Paris. Concert de Noël 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoXEmo6-soc>

And here's another one from Notre Dame. Unfortunately the video quality is less than ideal.

Christmas Concert at Notre Dame with Jessye Noman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QArZS9u4d-U&t=908s>



In order to get this out to you in a timely way the following is simply a list of the things I have found that I think are worthwhile, mostly without commentary from me. They are in no particular order. Let me know which ones you like the most.



Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker Ballet - Dresden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHZokYsB1pI>

Tchaikovsky: Nutcracker. Russian State Ballet and Opera House

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tR_Z1LUDQuQ

Carols from King's (BBC TV) 24 December 2006

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYvqu-Zb4Qc>

Harvard Memorial Church The 108th Annual Christmas Carol Service (Dec 2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0nDPFnCDRA>

Advent Carol Service live from Trinity College Chapel - Sunday 1 December 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrUqjNqyloo>

William Henry Fry - Santa Claus, Christmas Symphony

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkoDYsrNUyI>

Adam Václav Michna of Otradovice - (1600-1676) Czech Christmas Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5MN5EZ30HM>

Lovely festive stuff for brass and organ.

A year at King's - A year inside the Choir of King's College, Cambridge | BBC One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBNQz6cruSY>

Lucy Worsley's 12 Days of Tudor Christmas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDREWMdU8Rg>



Christmas at St Paul's Cathedral

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lt7yI6neya4>



Christmas in Vienna 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xT8aDuWrwe4>



Christmas Midnight Mass from Cologne Cathedral 2019 HD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8iRfyNwfWs>

Christmas Carols - The Choir of St. John's College, Cambridge - Live Concert HD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwlAig-5e0w>

Bach: Christmas Oratorio BWV 248, part 1/2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpaNo4mWRBE&t=90s>

Berlioz : L'Enfance du Christ (the Childhood of Christ)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7c-gGIC5kc>

Don't be discouraged by the 30 seconds of blank screen at the beginning.

Kiri Te Kanawa - Carols from Coventry Cathedral

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNyk9n9FoGI>

Dallas Symphony Christmas Celebration 2014

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a23NrT2fKgI>

A Child's Christmas in Wales read by Dylan Thomas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC3AnDL1ic8>

Messiah at the Foundling Hospital

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3RRsi6cOPM>

Handel: The Messiah - The Academy of Ancient Music and The Choir of King's College, Cambridge

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAaqIAEPgP8>

Hanukkah: Songs of Celebration

Joyous, celebratory music no matter your background or beliefs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBeAKt4FJvo>



For a holiday travel video this one has become something of a classic since first broadcast in 2014.



Rick Steves' European Christmas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEqCJmOPCik>

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 1 Gm "Winter Daydreams"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PVLBWGcd9M>

Rimsky-Korsakov: The Snow Maiden - Suite

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lANKe2J3sQ>

Vivaldi The four seasons - Winter - Julia Fischer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1qNOfdMyGA>

NEW YEAR'S EVE and 2021

2020 New Year Concert - Vienna Philharmonic

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyLS_gIrpK4

If you just cannot get enough of this, here is the 2019 version

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hASfv0mLgiw>

Die Fledermaus - complete performance (in English!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4iuAVDvJE4>

Something of a New Year's tradition.

Again, this was all somewhat quickly assembled in the hope that it will prove useful to you as a holiday resource. Pay attention to the other recommendations that YouTube shows when you look at these and you just might come up with some discoveries of your own. Please let me know of any you think are particularly worth sharing.

Please send me your opinions and reactions to this newsletter and its contents. Also share your own discoveries.

You can reach me at enigmavars1899@gmail.com Note that any reply you might receive from my gmail account will say it's from Edward Elgar, but that's really me.

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