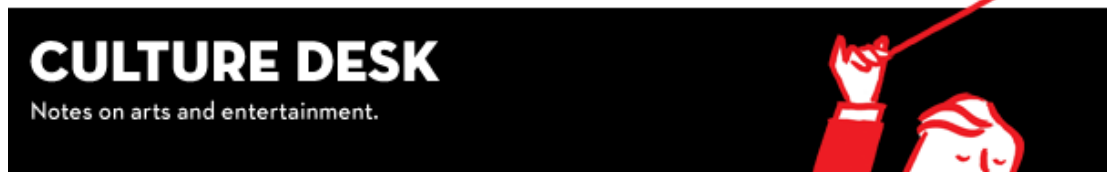


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December 20, 2012

## Ten Memorable Classical Performances of 2012

Posted by *Alex Ross*

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*January 21st and September 23rd:* “Einstein on the Beach” in Ann Arbor and Brooklyn. The long-awaited revival of Philip Glass and Robert Wilson’s minimalist-surrealist masterpiece, after a twenty-year hiatus, was the musical event of the year. Transcending its seventies origins, “Einstein” proved to be a creation of timeless artifice, like some grand Baroque entertainment whose meaning is now lost but whose beauty blazes on.

*March 26th:* A John Cage Celebration at Zankel Hall. Amid dozens of centennial tributes to the master of noise and silence—Third Coast Percussion’s outdoor concert at MOMA and Symphony Space’s day-long mini-festival come to mind—this event with So Percussion, Matmos, and Dan Deacon stood out for its anarchic, joyous spirit.

*March 28th:* The San Francisco Symphony’s “American Mavericks” festival at Carnegie, with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting. One of the most fabulously brazen programs ever to have been presented in a New York concert hall: Carl Ruggles’s “Sun-Treader,” Morton Feldman’s “Piano and Orchestra” (with Emanuel Ax), and Henry Brant’s orchestration of the Ives “Concord Sonata,” adding up to a six-movement super-symphony of American modernism.



*March 31st:* The St. Matthew Passion at Alice Tully Hall, with Philippe Herreweghe, Julian Prégardien, Michael Nagy, Damien Guillon, and the Collegium Vocale Gent. Herreweghe goes deeper into Bach’s sacred world than any conductor now working.

*May 31st:* “The Gospel According to the Other Mary” at Disney Hall, with Gustavo Dudamel, Kelley O’Connor, Russell Thomas, Tamara Mumford, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the L.A. Master Chorale. John Adams’s telling of New Testament stories through the eyes of Mary Magdalene is an imperfect work, but its strongest passages—the raising of Lazarus, the extended evocation of Golgotha—shake the heart. The L.A. Phil will present a revised version, with a Peter Sellars staging, at Lincoln Center in March.

*June 29th:* The New York Philharmonic’s “Philharmonic 360” event at the Park Avenue Armory, with Alan Gilbert conducting. Another feat of imaginative programming, flamboyantly executed in the Armory’s cavernous space: Giovanni Gabrieli’s Canzon XVI, Boulez’s “Rituel in Memoriam Bruno Maderna,” the Act I finale of “Don Giovanni,” Stockhausen’s “Gruppen,” and Ives’s “Unanswered Question.”

*August 22nd:* Stockhausen’s “Mittwoch” at the Birmingham Opera. A chic international public at an abandoned chemical factory in Birmingham eagerly awaited the famous scene in which a string quartet flies around in helicopters; uplifting as it was, it proved to be one of the *less* spectacular effects in Graham Vick’s triumphantly bonkers production of the last unperformed installment of Stockhausen’s “Licht” cycle. The final portion of Andrew Connington’s kiddie-pool trombone solo has been immortalized on video.

*October 20th:* Stefan Prins's "Generation Kill" at the Donaueschingen Music Days. This blistering study of video-game culture and drone warfare showed a composer at the front lines of his art.

*November 18th:* Joyce DiDonato's "Drama Queens" program at Carnegie Hall, with Il Complesso Barocco. The simple fact about DiDonato is that she loves to sing and sings supremely well. The two qualities don't always go together. What's more, there's an edge to her work, an agitating passion, which sets her apart from the general run of feel-good, isn't-it-wonderful opera stars.

*December 13th:* Michael Gordon's "Timber" at BAM, with Mantra Percussion. Six players, six two-by-fours, one hour of aural hypnosis.

Other notable new scores: George Benjamin's "Written on Skin," Steven Stucky's "Silent Spring," Lisa Streich's "PIETÀ," David Lang's "love fail," Missy Mazzoli's "Song from the Uproar," Tristan Perich's "Dual Synthesis."

*Previously: Ten Notable Classical Recordings of 2012.*

*Photograph by Stephanie Berger.*

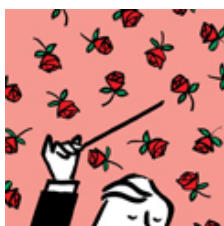
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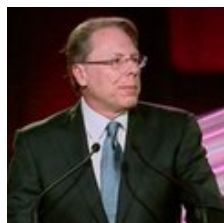
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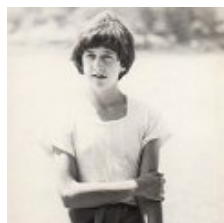
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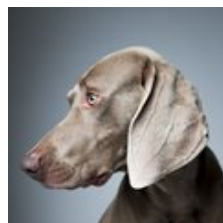
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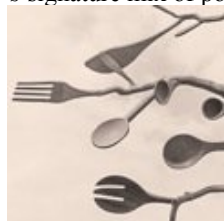
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