della legge debuted in Wuppertal and his *Superflumina* at Mannheim, while Philip Glass's *Kepler* received its premiere in Linz. Birtwistle's short *The Corridor*, another of his returns to the Orpheus theme, opened the new Britten Studio at Snape during the Aldeburgh Festival. Patricia Racette starred in the Bette Davis role of Leslie in the Somerset Maugham-based *The Letter*, composed for Santa Fe Opera by Paul Moravec. Eleanor Alberga's *Letters of a Love Betrayed* opened at Covent Garden's Linbury Studio Theatre to a generally negative set of reviews.

George Hall

MUSIC

THE demise of Viennese serialism by the close of the 20th century (see AR 1999, p. 505) was an important turning point in the history of Western music. It had proved to be a passing trend, if a long-lasting one, in the continuum of music, more or less coeval with the century itself. Beginning experimentally in the early 1900s with Schoenberg's radical, if negative, hypothesis that "tonality was dead", it swept through Europe and America between the wars, gaining many adherents, and spread after 1950, with the "total serialism" of Boulez, Stockhausen and the European avant-garde, only to diminish gradually until, by the 1990s, it ceased to be a creative force. It had come to be perceived not as a continuation and enrichment of the classical tradition but as what it was: a radical philosophical idea, which, if followed through logically, would lead to the subversion of the musical language itself by total self-propagating complexity. Tonality was to music what words were to language. Therefore, to say that tonality was dead was to say that words had no meaning. Yet the opposite was true. Just as the power to communicate was seen to be stronger when people could speak in a common language, so when composers and performers shared the language and idiom of music, a living tradition was created and music became truly a unifying bond.

The historian A.J.P. Taylor once went so far as to define "Europe" as those countries and nations united by a common music: that based on the diatonic scale. The search in the 21st century for a fresh aesthetic understanding of music and a new tonal order continued to be much in evidence in 2009 among leading musicians: composers, performers, writers. Projects were brought to fulfilment, which had been initiated with a long-term, visionary objective, whether to re-work an existing tradition or to discover a new one. In Birmingham a four-year "IgorFest" was completed in 2009 by the Birmingham Royal Ballet and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, which included all Stravinsky's ballets and orchestral works. In San Francisco the performance and recording of the complete cycle of Mahler symphonies, the first to be recorded by a top orchestra on its own label, was concluded in 2009 with a scintillating performance of Mahler's *Symphony No. 8, The Symphony of a Thousand*, by the San Francisco Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas.

The discovery of new traditions and a response to new visions was always something more strongly felt among American musicians than among their European or British counterparts. Composers-in-residence were to be found with every major American orchestra; therefore, it was not surprising that living composers initiated much new work, and particularly those Chinese-American composers associated with the Silk Road Project (see AR 2001, p. 507). New orchestral work in 2009 included Richard Danielpour's *Souvenirs*, heard in Vienna in June, which revisited classical territory explored by Philippe Entremont and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra; new songs by the same composer, *A woman's life*, were also performed in 2009. Peter Lieberson's *The world in flower* was heard in New York in May, which was a vision of the compassionate world view; also *The coming of light* by the same composer was heard in Chicago in September. New concertos for solo instruments included three by the Korean composer, Unsuk Chin. Her *Cello Concerto* was heard in London at a Promenade Concert in August; her *Sheng Concerto* was heard in Tokyo and Los Angeles also in August; and her *Violin Concerto: Rocaná* was released on CD (Analekta). The *Piano Concerto* by Qigang Chen, for the virtuoso Lang Lang, was another such exploratory piece, heard in New York in September.

It was a good year for piano music. The tradition of French piano music was celebrated by Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, whose fourth and final volume of the complete piano works of Claude Debussy (Chandos) proclaimed him to be among the leading interpreters. Other composers have enlivened the piano music tradition with works inspired by Bach's *The Well Tempered Clavier*. In 2009, Francis Routh's *24 Preludes: The Well-Tempered Pianist* was first heard in London in October, premiered by Charles Matthews; and the *24 Preludes and Fugues* of Dmitry Shostakovich were brilliantly recorded by Jenny Lin (Hänssler Classic).

New operas in 2009 included in May an exciting production—in the Russian grand tradition—by Perm Opera, conducted by Valery Platonov, of Alexander Tchaikovsky's *Ivan Denisovich*, with a libretto by the composer and the director, George Isaakyan, taken from the book by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. In the USA a notable, revised production of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* was given in St Louis, Missouri in June. Recordings of the year featured the second recording of Aribert Reimann's complex and experimental opera *Lear*, in which the composer transcended the strict dogmas of serialism and freely exploited the tonal spectrum. The 1979 recording by the Bavarian State Opera of this work, written for the German baritone, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, had been seen as definitive, until 30 years later a version by Frankfurt Opera, from a live performance with Wolfgang Koch as Lear, interpreted Reimann's work afresh in the light of the continuing tradition of German opera (Oehms Classics).

Several historic recordings were made in 2009, consisting of outstanding performances which, for whatever reason, had slipped out of reach or had never been properly released in the first place. Two such recordings were of performances dating from 1955: the first, Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* from Bayreuth with Martha Mödl as Brünnhilde (Testament); the second, Hans Pfitzner's *Palestrina*, given by the Vienna State Opera at the Salzburg Festival, with Paul Schöf-

fler as Borromeo and Jean Madeira as Silla (Walhall). Another notable release almost qualifying as historic, certainly archival at 25 years of age, was the recording of the Elgar and Sibelius violin concertos, played by Ida Haendel with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra under Simon Rattle (Testament).

Two prominent recordings of British opera in 2009 were neither completely successful. A DVD of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Opus Arte), taken from a live performance at Covent Garden, suffered from impoverished string tone from the "period" instruments used by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment; and Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* (NMC) was no more successful in 2009 than at its premiere in 1972. It suffered aesthetically from the serial obliteration of tonality and tonal order, which resulted in the sameness of each of the singers' melodic lines, and the impossibility of such a static idiom to sustain the attention over an extended structure.

A notable recording was made on DVD of Olivier Messiaen's only opera, *Saint François d'Assise*, with the Netherlands Opera under Ingo Metzmacher (Opus Arte). It was a visual as well as an aural feast, and Messiaen's celebrated birdsong turned Act II into 40 minutes of characteristic self-indulgence, interspersed with moments of the purest stillness. It was stillness of a different sort—the theme of remembrance itself—that was forcibly expressed by four leading composers of the Jewish tradition: Leonard Bernstein *Halil*, Ernest Bloch *Baal Shem*, Arnold Schoenberg *Kol Nidre*, Eric Zeisl *Requiem Ebraico*, played by the Sao Paulo Symphony under John Neschling (Bis).

The British musical year was chiefly focused on James MacMillan. Following the exceptional success of his *St John Passion* in 2008 (see AR 2009, p. 506), further performances were given in Berlin, Amsterdam, and Boston. Then, the release of the original performance on CD in 2009 (LSO Live) enabled the new work to reach a wider audience and allowed the aesthetic validity of a new tonal idiom matching a new structure, yet within the established tradition, to be better heard. The year also marked MacMillan's 50th birthday, and new works performed included orchestral pieces, both in concert—*Symphony No. 3: Silence*, and *The World's Ransoming*, with the BBC Philharmonic in Manchester (with whom MacMillan had a nine year residency as composer/conductor)—and on disc: *Three Interludes* from *The Sacrifice*, and a choral cantata, *Quickening* (Chandos).

Other contributions to the MacMillan year were made by the London Symphony Orchestra (*From Ayrshire*, and *Trumpet Concerto: Epiclesis*); by the Royal Opera (a concert performance of *Parthenogenesis*); by the De Doelen Centre in Rotterdam (a series of instrumental and choral performances, culminating in *Who are the angels?*); and by several record labels: *O bone Jesu* and *Mairi* (Hänssler Classic), *The confession of Isobel Gowdie* (Chandos), *Seven Last Words from the Cross* (Naxos), *Padre Pio Prayer* (Coro), *Fourteen little pieces* (Wigmore Hall Live). Choral music made up the greater part of MacMillan's music heard in 2009, whether in concert or on disc. His motets developed a many-layered texture, calling for virtuosity on the part of the singers for their adequate realisation. One such group of professional singers, The Sixteen, under Harry Christophers, performed and recorded some, paired them with music by Purcell, whose 350th

anniversary fell in 2009, and took the programme on a "choral pilgrimage" round 21 cathedrals and churches of Great Britain. Thus the revitalisation of the choral tradition was powerfully demonstrated.

Those who died in 2009 included the composers Richard Arnell, Lukas Foss, Edward Harper, Nicholas Maw; and the conductor Edward Downes (see Obituary).

BOOKS OF THE YEAR. Studies of composers: *Leonard Bernstein: the political life of an American musician*, by Barry Seldes; *The Cambridge Companion to Shostakovich*, ed. by Pauline Fairclough and David Fanning; *The Music of Chou Wen-chung*, by Eric C. Lai.

Aesthetics of Music: *The art of French piano music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier*, by Roy Howat; *Gabriel Fauré: the songs and their poets*, by Graham Johnson; *Jonathan Harvey: Song Offerings and White as Jasmine*, by Michael Downes; *Leonard Bernstein : West Side Story*, by Nigel Simeone.

Francis Routh

BALLET AND DANCE

THE year 2009 was overshadowed in the world of dance by the deaths of two choreographic giants: Merce Cunningham based in the USA and Pina Bausch in Germany. Both had worked to great acclaim internationally and both were active to the end. Cunningham died three months after his company had premiered *Nearly Ninety* on his 90th birthday, while Bausch was diagnosed with cancer five days after taking a curtain call with her company and died five days later. Cunningham's own company was scheduled to wind down after his death, although his choreography will continue to be performed; the future of Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal was less clearly provided for, but tours continued.

The other widely resonating event was the centenary of the first performances of ballet presented by Sergei Diaghilev in Paris. The 1909 season had been performed by dancers and singers on their summer break from the Imperial Theatres of Russia— Diaghilev's year-round company did not begin performing until 1911—but the lasting impact of his whole enterprise resulted in a large number of performances and conferences in 2009 in celebration of the Ballets Russes. Related exhibitions were mounted in Boston, Canberra, Hartford, London, Monte Carlo, Moscow, Munich, New York, Paris, St Petersburg, Stockholm, Vienna, and Washington, DC. The most interesting were *Dance of Colours: Nijinsky's Eye and Abstraction* at Hamburg's Kunsthalle; *Diaghilev. The Beginning* at the Russian Museum, St Petersburg; and *Opéras russes, à l'aube des Ballets Russes* at the Costume Museum, Moulin sur Allier, France, all of which took individual and original approaches to aspects of Diaghilev's work. Significant festivals were held in Boston and in St Petersburg, where the sight of posters for *Diaghilev P.S.* throughout the city made a striking impression.

Worldwide, companies either dusted down their relevant repertoire or had new reconstructions staged, with varied respect for the originals. Balancing the