

Peter Maag (1919 - 2001)

Peter Maag was born into a musical family: his mother, a violinist, had played with the Capet Quartet, and his father was both a musician and a distinguished theologian. He studied literature, philosophy and theology at the universities of Geneva, Zürich and Basle, as well as music with the conductor Franz von Hösslin, between 1942 and 1946. His first appointment (1943) was as a répétiteur and chorusmaster at the civic theatre at Biel-Solothurn in Switzerland where he quickly progressed to the post of first conductor. Having left Biel-Solothurn in 1946, Maag spent the following years studying opera in Paris and Rome, assisting Ansermet and Furtwängler, and conducting concerts with various

orchestras including the Suisse Romande Orchestra. He continued to work with Ansermet following his appointment in 1952 as first conductor at Düsseldorf, where he stayed for three years before moving on to the position of chief conductor at Bonn. Here he extended the repertoire by introducing unfamiliar operas such as Cavalieri's *La rappresentazione di Anima, e di Corpo*, Dvořák's *Rusalka*, and Schumann's *Genoveva*, as well as works by Hindemith, Martin, Martinů, and Toch. In 1959, the year in which he left Bonn, Maag made his debuts at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden with *Die Zauberflöte* and at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera with *Le nozze di Figaro*: he then withdrew from performance, entering a Buddhist monastery in Hong Kong in order to reassess his life and musical career.

Returning to conducting in 1961, Maag led *Così fan tutte* at the Chicago Lyric Opera, and became active as a guest conductor throughout Europe, North and South America and Japan. Between 1964 and 1968 he served as chief conductor at the Volksoper in Vienna, followed by short appointments at the Teatro Regio in Parma during 1972 (the year in which he made his Metropolitan Opera debut with *Don Giovanni*), and at the Teatro Regio in Turin during 1974. He was especially popular in Italy, where he taught at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena from 1968 onwards and conducted frequently at La Scala, Milan. He was awarded the Toscanini Medal (Parma) in 1969, the Verdi Medal in 1973, and the Toscanini Presentation Baton in 1975. Maag was a frequent conductor of the various Italian radio orchestras, and was also active in Spain where he conducted the Spanish National Orchestra; he was chief conductor of the Berne Symphony Orchestra between 1984 and 1991, and of the Orchestra of Padua and the Veneto from 1983 until his death, recording extensively for the Arts Music label with the latter ensemble.

Maag's international reputation was founded initially on his interpretation of Mozart, to whose music he brought a combination of drive and elegance which was highly refreshing: his early recordings, for Decca, fully reflect these twin characteristics. He went on to make several early stereophonic recordings for Decca of music by Mendelssohn and Mozart with the London Symphony Orchestra which were very highly praised, and which have continued to hold an admired place in the catalogue. During the 1960s he recorded further music by Mozart as well as the complete symphonies of Schubert for the Vox label. After several assignments with the Deutsche Grammophon, Supraphon and Westminster labels, during the 1970s he made two significant opera recordings which were released on the Decca label: Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, and Paer's *Leonora*. Several live opera performances from this period have also been released which attest to Maag's vitality in the theatre. His discography with the Orchestra of Padua and the Veneto, created during the 1990s, was large, and included all the Beethoven and Mendelssohn symphonies, as well as the major symphonies of Mozart. Maag was a conductor of considerable musical taste whose career, particularly towards the end of his life, may have reflected his personal priorities rather than his full potential.



MOZART

CLARINET CONCERTO IN A MAJOR HORN CONCERTO NO.1 IN D MAJOR HORN CONCERTO NO.3 IN E FLAT MAJOR

Peter Maag • London Symphony Orchestra
Gervase De Peyer (Clarinet)
Barry Tuckwell (Horn)

The Mozart concerto, one of the first works that really established the clarinet as a classical instrument, was a result of the composer's friendship with a clarinetist, Anton Stadler (1753-1812), who invented the basset clarinet. This instrument includes added notes at the bottom of the clarinet's already wide range, and it was for this instrument that Mozart wrote his Clarinet Concerto, one of the 1 Barry Tuckwell and the Mozart Horn Concertos enjoy a discographical partnership that dates back nearly half a century. Like Schubert's equally beautiful Arpeggione Sonata in the following century, it was composed for an instrument that never attracted many players, and it was neglected for a long time. For about half a century, critics (including me) have been calling Gervase de Peyer the greatest living clarinetist. I hadn't heard him in a few years, except on his recordings, but I caught him live last weekend and all the old superlatives came back to mind. The concert was a double bargain, featuring him as soloist in two of the greatest concertos written for his instrument - Mozart's and Aaron Copland's. The familiar artistry was all there in this performance: phrasing like that of a human singer, but with a power, agility and range beyond any singer's capability; technique that treats the music as though it were happening spontaneously for the first time; an acute awareness of overall form and a tone like a voice coming down from Heaven - voices, actually, because the clarinet has more than one. I had forgotten what a masterpiece the Copland concerto was, and this performance was a

timely reminder. The Mozart concerto, as familiar as the back of my hand, came out sounding fresh, new and somewhat different from usual

"Mr. de Peyer is now the greatest clarinetist appearing before the public. His playing was so beautiful, his tone so seamless and his musical instincts so unerring that everything else last night paled in comparison".

"[de Peyer's] account remains as fine as any available, fluent and lively...Tuckwell at the time was proving a natural inheritor of the mantle of Dennis Brain. His easy technique, smooth, warm tone and obvious musicianship command allegiance" Penguin Guide, 2010 edition

Barry Tuckwell and the Mozart Horn Concertos enjoy a discographical partnership that dates back nearly half a century. I harbor a soft spot for Tuckwell's first recordings reissued here. This is due largely to the London Symphony Orchestra's warm, vibrant, and full-bodied (yet never bloated) support, with Peter Maag—one of the great Mozarteans—at the helm. Because Tuckwell is balanced to the rear, he emerges more from within the ensemble, as opposed to the aforementioned Decca set's "lead singer with back-up band" perspective. The seamless, effortless legato he achieves in slow movements gently soars in the ambient way Joan Sutherland's Bellini cantilenas used to "float" across the footlights out to my balcony seat.

MOZART

**CLARINET CONCERTO IN A MAJOR
HORN CONCERTO NO.1 IN D MAJOR
HORN CONCERTO NO.3 IN E FLAT MAJOR**

**Peter Maag • London Symphony Orchestra
Gervase De Peyer (Clarinet)
Barry Tuckwell (Horn)**

Transferred from a London 4-track tape
Producer: Ray Minshull / Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson
Recorded 25-26 Nov 1959 Kingsway Hall

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