

I've been working now with the Accademia di Santa Cecilia Orchestra for three years. They are based at Rome's new and much-loved arts centre, the Auditorium Parco della Musica, built by Renzo Piano just north of the city's famous Piazza del Popolo. My life is divided between London and Rome. How lucky I am! After a six-week stretch at the Royal Opera House for the Britten *War Requiem*, a birthday gala for Prince Charles's 60th birthday at Buckingham Palace and a run of *The Tales of Hoffmann* which finished on Saturday night, my wife and I were up at 4am on Sunday for the first plane out to Rome to work with my Italian orchestra. In between, there have been innumerable administrative meetings and editing sessions with EMI for two recordings with the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, soon to be released.

Though both my parents are Italian, I was born in London. My family comes from Campania, from a village outside of Naples, the traditional home of opera. I have never really lived in Italy until this wonderful opportunity came up with the Accademia. It's a unique experience to be able to reconnect with my Italian roots, to live and breathe in one of the most beautiful, charismatic and enticing cities in the world. Rome is a magical combination of north and southern Italian sensibilities.

Though the Accademia di Santa Cecilia Orchestra specialises in the symphonic repertoire, their lyricism oozes out of every pore. It's as if they sing every phrase of music, rather than play it. But their musical tradition looks north and is very much rooted in the repertoire of central, western and eastern Europe. Mahler, Strauss, Stravinsky, Debussy, Hindemith all came to work with the Accademia, as well as some of the most legendary conductors such as Toscanini, Karajan, Furtwängler, Kleiber and Celibidache. All have indelibly left their mark on the orchestra, giving it its historical backbone.



DIARY

Antonio PAPPANO

The Accademia di Santa Cecilia Orchestra's centenary season comes to an end – and what a year it's been

This year has been a particularly special one for the Accademia. It's our centenary year, so we've revelled in rediscovering our history. We've made all their recordings available through the Accademia's library, the Bibliomediateca, so people can listen free of charge to concerts as far back as the 1930s. We opened a new musical instrument museum, which has a wonderful interactive centre for children to conduct a virtual orchestra and to become familiar with the sounds of the different instruments.

Last February we put on a full day of celebrations to mark the Accademia's 100th birthday and opened up the Auditorium Parco della Musica to dozens of free events. The orchestra and chorus put on a marathon 40 free concerts, everything from chamber to choral and symphonic. The centre was overflowing with families and children experimenting in workshops

and others just coming along to join in the fun. At the Auditorium, people can come to a science or maths festival one night and the next to a Chick Corea concert or listen to the Accademia playing Beethoven. It's a unique arts centre, which the Romans have embraced wholeheartedly. In fact last year, the Auditorium welcomed two million people to its festivals and events and we were amazed, at the end of our birthday, that 60,000 people had mobbed the centre for its free events.

Artistically it's been a really special year. EMI came to Rome in July to make their first opera recording for several years. For three weeks in July, the Accademia's orchestra and chorus transformed Santa Cecilia Hall into an imaginary theatre, as they worked with Angela Gheorghiu and Jonas Kaufmann on Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The orchestra was emotionally overwhelmed by the experience. The disc will be out on

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March 2, just in time for our European tour. EMI will be back again in January to record our concerts of Verdi's Requiem with Anja Harteros, Sonia Ganassi, Rolando Villazón and René Pape. We'll have to wait until November for that disc to be released. Back in October we inaugurated our season with Honegger's *Joan of Arc at the Stake* in a multimedia staging by Keith Warner and Es Devlin followed by concerts of Mahler's Sixth Symphony and the Carter Horn Concerto.

Two seasons ago we toured the Accademia to Moscow, Japan and Europe, culminating with two concerts at the Musikverein. Over the next 10 months from February, we will tour again around Europe to France, Holland (returning to Amsterdam and Paris after an absence of over 20 years), Spain, Switzerland, Slovakia, Austria and Germany. Our dates at the Canaries Festival (February 13-16) will mark the end of our centenary year. For four concerts, Martha Argerich will be joining us for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1 and Christian Tetzlaff for Brahms's Violin Concerto. Apart from Ligeti's *Concerto Romanesque*, Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra and Shostakovich's Symphony No 5, there will be the world premiere of a new work by the 29-year-old Italian composer Riccardo Panfili, who has already won several competitions worldwide.

So as I board the flight to return to Rome for our pre-Christmas concerts, I'm already slipping back into the Italian mentality... I hear it's raining buckets there! ☀

LAURIE LEWIS