

From The House of the Dead



Best (and worst) of opera and classical music

And what we're looking forward to in 2010.

By Steve Smith and Olivia Giovetti

In Vain at Miller Theatre, Feb 6

The Argento Chamber Ensemble was characteristically brilliant in this Composer Portrait concert, featuring a powerful, mysterious and evocative modern musical rite by Austrian composer Georg Friedrich Haas.—SS

Ensemble Intercontemporain at the Rose Theater; May 8, 9

Susanna Mälkki conducted this extraordinary French ensemble in two concerts that mixed Ligeti masterpieces with important recent works by Bruno Mantovani, Unsuk Chin and Michael Jarrell.—SS

Green Aria at the Guggenheim Museum of Art, May 31

The traditional pairing of composer and librettist became a threesome with perfumer added, for the world's first "scent opera." Far from being a one-note gimmick, Nico Muhly's score delighted ears as much as Absolute Zero delighted noses.—OG

So Percussion at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Oct 14

Urban angst was soothed in the percussion quartet's evening-long Imaginary City. At once quirky and probing, So created a multilayered portrait of a city, using everything from wine bottles to toy pianos to a Monopoly set.—OG

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New Amsterdam Records takes Brooklyn

This inventive label filled the void of its discontinued VIM: Tribeca series twofold. This summer's Undiscovered Islands series was crowned by Missy Mazzoli's Song from the Uproar, while fall saw the start of Archipelago, a monthly event at Galapagos. —OG

ubiquitous even in the concert hall, 140 characters at a time. (Twitter even helped get this editor her job.)—OG

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Alan Gilbert's arrival at the New York Philharmonic

Beyond the effects of any one concert, the Phil's new music director has created a welcome buzz with his vitality, openness to fresh ideas and earnest intent to reassert the orchestra's prime position in New York's artistic conversation.—SS

New York City Opera's welcome return

George Steel still has a huge job ahead in restoring City Opera's fortunes. But a successful opening volley with Hugo Weisgall's severe Esther and a brash, cheeky Don Giovanni proved that Steel knows exactly what the company needs right now. —SS

21c Liederabend at Galapagos Art Space, Nov 19

Three ambitious grassroots organizations—Beth Morrison Projects, VisionIntoArt and Opera on Tap—mounted an expansive, at times explosive survey of contemporary art song, musical theater and opera.—SS

Twitter takes the classical-music world

From Bang on a Can's marathon tweet team to the New York Phil's blogger's night at Contact!, the bird and the whale became