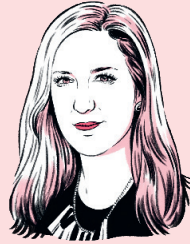


Music



Claire Jackson

CLASSICAL

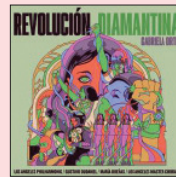
Ecstatic revelations at close quarters

● To my left, the oboe sang the theme; it was taken up by the violins behind me. To the right, cellos danced atop the offbeat bassline. I couldn't see the flutes, but I could clearly hear when it was their turn for the melody. It soared across the instrumentalists' heads and around the cathedral. As a reviewer, I've been privileged to have some excellent seats, stalls in some of the loveliest historic opera houses in Europe; that left-hand viewpoint in Wigmore Hall where you can perfectly see the

pianist's hands. And, as a fan, I've sat in different positions around the Barbican purely to hear how the acoustics change. I'm a regular purchaser of the bargainous (£8) – and vertiginous – balcony seats at the Royal Opera House. But all of these positions pale against Norwich Cathedral's cold stone floor, where I sat as the Aurora Orchestra played the final two movements from Beethoven's *Symphony No 3 (Eroica)*.

When conductor Nicholas Collon invited audiences at Norfolk & Norwich Festival's performance to sit among the ensemble, he wasn't short of volunteers. The Aurora Orchestra has been playing in this immersive way for several years now – it's made possible by learning symphonies off by heart. Not needing music stands allows the musicians the freedom to move around, as they did within Norwich Cathedral, encouraged to swap positions in between movements. The closing *allegro molto* – with its catchy motif, taught to us by Collon before the performance – gathered momentum around those brave enough to stand the spray from the French horn. "Sorry," whispered the player, as she emptied what we will euphemistically refer to as moisture from her instrument. There was no apology necessary. After the pandemic years – where

RECORDING OF THE WEEK



Like pussyhats – the pink beanies first worn by those involved in the 2017 US marches – and 'feminists wear pink' memes, overtly feminine symbols are often used in subversive ways. In Mexico, protesters threw pink glitter at police following the rape of a woman by local officers. The move began 2019's 'glitter revolution', an uprising against the country's tolerance of violence against women. Gabriela Ortiz's **Revolución Diamantina** is a new ballet about these themes and features on the first album of the Mexican composer's orchestral works, recorded by the Los Angeles Philharmonic and star conductor Gustavo Dudamel.

Revolución Diamantina by Gabriela Ortiz is out now (Platoon)

Religious experience: Aurora Orchestra perform at Norwich Cathedral

musicians had to be two metres away from each other, and audiences even further – we couldn't have been more delighted by the concert. The next day the congregation would be there for the usual Sunday services, though I'd already had my own near-religious experience. It's the second time this year I've witnessed how Aurora's physical approach to music can enhance the performance – as part of the ensemble's collaboration with violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, musicians played on the stairs of the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

I'm excited to hear what the group will do at this year's Proms, when instrumentalists are joined by the BBC Singers and the National Youth Choir for Beethoven's *Ninth by Heart* (Prom 42; 21 August).

Norwich Cathedral is one of the key venues for the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, a 17-day series of events that runs across the city every May. Like Aurora, Laura Cannell used the distinctive architecture as part of her performance, positioning herself in the 'crossing' – the centre of the cross shape – surrounded by the audience. Her album *Antiphony of the Trees* – featuring melodies inspired by birdsong – took on an ethereal quality as live recorder figures were electronically looped, reverberating around the nave. Cannell's creative use of playing two instruments simultaneously, alongside the recordings, gave the impression of an entire wind ensemble. Her swooping calls were enough to energise the peregrine falcons, who called in response from their nest on top of the spire.

Opening up the cathedral in this way also brought a full house to hear a late-night recital by Cathedral Master of Music Ashley Grote, whose multifarious techniques in Messiaen's ecstatic organ work *L'Ascension* was shared via large-screen projections across the building, allowing a rare inspection of the newly rebuilt organ, one of the largest in the UK.

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