

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS** SIR NEVILLE MARRINER

Sir Neville Marriner's natural habitat for the past half-century has been the recording studio. With the Academy of St Martin in the Fields he has made hundreds of recordings of a breadth of repertoire that few other conductors (even the equally eclectic Herbert von Karajan) achieved. He engaged early on with Italian music of the 18th century with a style and panache that opened many people's ears to this staggeringly rich seam at a time when it was little known. His performances of music of the Classical period – symphonies and concertos by Haydn, Mozart and their contemporaries – were characterised by the vitality and energy of which Murray Perahia speaks. From this period, his survey of the complete Mozart piano concertos with Alfred Brendel remains a cherishable and musically varied memento.

Decca has mined the Argo catalogue – recordings generally made from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s – and produced a superb survey of Marriner's work with the Academy during this important period. Gathered on 28 CDs, these Argo years also reveal the ASMF/Marriner way with music of the 20th century – splendid accounts of string works by Schoenberg (*Verklärte Nacht*), Richard Strauss (*Metamorphosen*) and Stravinsky (*Apollon musagète*) plus serenades by Elgar, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák and (charm bursting from every bar) Dag Wirén.

Marriner came late to opera – at least as a conductor – and when he did, he brought the same style and vitality to these dramatic creations as he did to orchestral repertoire; it's no surprise that one of the world's great concerto partners should also be a master 'in the pit'. His debut operatic recording – Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – sparkles from start to finish and conjures up the atmosphere of the theatre remarkably, given the relative sterility of the recording studio. Not surprisingly, *La Cenerentola* and *Il turco in Italia* followed – to comparable acclaim.

When a young musician was deemed ready to make his or her first concerto disc, it was often to Marriner and the Academy that the record companies turned: he could be guaranteed to shepherd a stylish performance on to tape, and while maintaining a firm hand he would allow his soloists the leeway to convey his or her musical thoughts in the performance. One such young player was Joshua Bell whose debut disc for Decca in 1988 featured those two inseparables, the violin concertos by Bruch and Mendelssohn, and who, all these years later, has taken up the mantle of the ASMF as its current Music Director.

Marriner has maintained a busy career as a guest conductor and has led orchestras on both sides of the Atlantic: Music Director of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (1969-78) and the Minnesota Orchestra (1979-86), and Principal Conductor of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (1986-89). He recorded with all three ensembles, the stand-out disc being, perhaps, a Respighi collection he made in LA. **James Jolly**

PHOTOGRAPHY: ICA ARTISTS

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**RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS**



**'Neville Marriner: The Argo Years'**  
ASMF / Marriner  
Decca © (28)  
478 6883DC28 (6/14)



**Mozart Complete**  
Piano Concertos  
**Brendel pf ASMF / Marriner**  
Decca © (2)  
478 2695DB12 (4/86\*)



**Rossini Il barbiere di Siviglia**  
Sols incl **Thomas Allen bar Agnes Baltsa mez ASMF / Marriner** Decca © (2)  
478 2497DB2 (6/83\*)



**Respighi Orchestral works**  
**ASMF; Los Angeles CO / Marriner**  
Warner Classics © (2)  
586549-2 (6/76\*)

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