



Time to hobnob with the great composers

At last, we have an excuse for a packet of biscuits never lasting longer than five minutes in the *BBC Music* office: listening to classical music makes one reach instinctively for sweet foods. Ha. We suspected as much. In tests, researchers at Miyagi University have shown that the likes of Bach

and Elgar tend to have one heading towards the hobnobs and custard creams. As does Beethoven – which makes the svelte figures of Ludwig-playing pianists such as Igor Levit and Jonathan Biss all the more impressive. Despite his opera *The Marriage of Fig Roll*, Mozart doesn't appear in the research. How odd.

DÉJÀ VU

History just keeps on repeating itself...

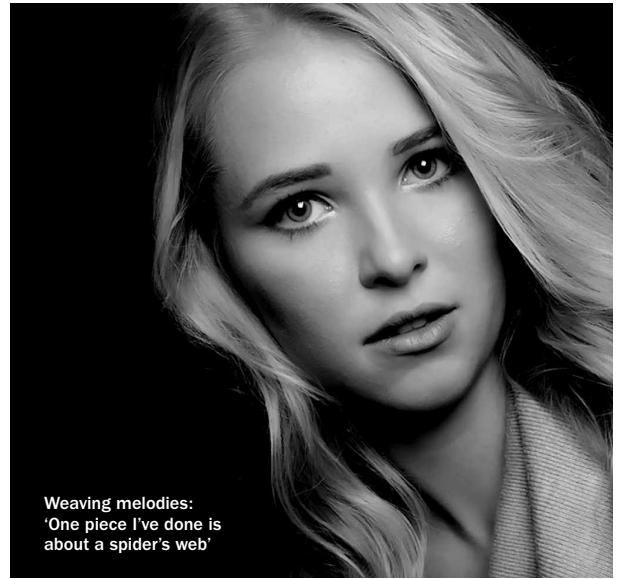


Having mixed with the undead in *Shadow of the Vampire*, dandied his way through *Dangerous Liaisons* and attempted to usurp the British throne in *Johnny English*, John Malkovich has now turned his attention to orchestral matters. For a new film called *The Yellow Tie*, the American actor is to play Sergiu Celibidache, the great, if uniquely characterful, Romanian conductor. Malkovich (left) will not be the first thesp to play a famous baton-waver...

In 1990, Timothy West starred as the title role in **Beecham**, a TV film whose script, based on the earlier stage play by Ned Sherrin and Caryl Brahms, leaned heavily on the famed wit of the eminent British maestro. West was in his element in the role. For the 1998 film *Hilary and Jackie*, it was more about matters of the heart as, united by music, Emily Watson's Jacqueline du Pré falls in love with James Frain's **Daniel Barenboim**. The imaginatively titled 2009 movie *Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky* saw Jérôme Pillement appear as French conductor **Pierre Monteux**, a role also played by Christian McKay in the 2005 BBC film *Riot at the Rite*. **Arturo Toscanini** has likewise been portrayed on the big screen, by C Thomas Howell in Franco Zeffirelli's *The Young Toscanini* in 1988. And then, of course, there's Tom Hulse who, as **Mozart** in 1984's *Amadeus*, is seen conducting at the opera in Vienna. Though nominated for an Oscar for the part, Hulse saw the best actor award go instead to F Murray Abraham as Salieri.

MEET THE COMPOSER

Dani Howard



Weaving melodies:
'One piece I've done is
about a spider's web'

Dani Howard's recent commissions include a Trombone Concerto which, written for Peter Moore and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, has been nominated for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award. She has also just completed a project to compose a walk-through soundscape at Barcelona's Casa Batlló.

The drum kit was my first entry into music and I loved it. I didn't always like the books I had to learn from, so my teacher would let me choose a song and I had to write out the music – from the age of six I was writing out Westlife songs by ear. I learned piano, then cello, and when I was ten I was lucky to have the principal cellist of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Bamping, as my teacher. He changed my life and showed me the way into classical music.

I did a lot of orchestration, copying and engraving work after my studies. I learned so much from being an engraver for other composers. It involved inputting hand-written scores onto the computer from scratch and editing them to publication standards – things such as spacing, stave size, all those rules you have to learn as a composer.

I need to have something to write about. I have tried composing without and it's not satisfying; it doesn't have a purpose for me. Inspiration can

be anything – it can be a video I've watched or a sculpture I've seen. One piece I've done is about the building of a spider's web. When I saw it being made, I sat for two hours watching it. **I love writing for orchestra, but I was terrified of it for years.** I didn't write a single orchestral piece for the whole of my university degree – I managed to avoid it by doing a piece for 24 percussionists instead. When I got my first orchestral commission, it was something I couldn't turn down and I realised 'wow, this is special'. It's so unlimited and satisfying, I don't think I could ever run out of ideas.

The Casa Batlló project was incredible. It's a one-hour audio tour and I had to draw inspiration from the 27 different spaces in the building. Some are explosively colourful and others are completely bare. It's crazy to think that over a million people visit each year, and it makes me really happy to think they will hear orchestral music.