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## 'The best composer you've never heard' triumphs at Gramophone Classical Music Awards 2020

**Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gidon Kremer and Kremerata Baltica win coveted Recording of the Year for Weinberg symphonies**

**Itzhak Perlman honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award**

**Igor Levit named Artist of the Year**

**Philadelphia Orchestra wins Orchestra of the Year by public vote**

**Soprano Natalya Romaniw named Young Artist of the Year**

**Martin Helmchen wins special 2020 BEETHOVEN 250 Award with Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Andrew Manze**

**Ceremony watched live by an international audience via Gramophone's website & social media channels and medici.tv**

[SELECTED PHOTOS OF THE AWARDS CEREMONY CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

Tonight [06 October 2020] the Gramophone Awards – regarded as the Oscars of classical music - presented international talent with the industry's top recording prizes. As **Joyce DiDonato** put it in her acceptance speech: *'It goes without saying that I miss being in the same room with you all at this moment in time, but it doesn't diminish what we've been doing behind the scenes - what we're doing today to come together and still bring music to the forefront of our lives.'*

In this unique year, *Gramophone's* ceremony moved online with *Gramophone's* Editor-in-Chief James Jolly joined by mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey in the stunning setting of Glyndebourne to present a wonderfully slick virtual celebration of this year's recording crème-de-la-crème.

The much-coveted [Recording of the Year](#) prize went to **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla** and the **City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra** with **Gidon Kremer** and **Kremerata Baltica** for their debut recording on Deutsche Grammophon of Mieczysław Weinberg's Symphonies Nos 2 & 21. This Award comes to the Orchestra as it celebrates 100 years since its founding in 1920.

Weinberg (1919-96) is a Polish composer, once reportedly described by Shostakovich as ‘the best composer you’ve never heard’, whose music is enjoying something of a renaissance, in large part thanks to this recording, released in Weinberg’s centenary year. In her acceptance speech, Mirga said “Seven years ago I hadn’t heard of the name of Mieczysław Weinberg. During the years since he has become one of the most important composers for me. He is the composer I would like to stay on for the rest of my life. I think that in days of ideological search and loss that we are living through right now, Weinberg stands as a symbol of humanism. His life and work are huge inspirations.”

Israeli-American violinist and conductor **Itzhak Perlman** was bestowed with the Lifetime Achievement Award. One of his students from Juilliard, Randall Goosby, gave a heartfelt speech about studying with ‘the greatest violinist who’s ever lived’, and the composer John Williams also paid tribute to Perlman in a speech, saying ‘This Award is certainly the reflection of decades of many great recordings that you’ve made [...] It’s recognition of this great work that this Award comes to you as it should. I hope you can enjoy the significance of it, and recognise that these recordings have reached millions of people around the world who love you and love the spirit of the art that you’ve given them for so long.’

Having already won this year’s Instrumental Award for his Sony Classical recording of Beethoven piano sonatas, **Igor Levit** was also named 2020’s Artist of the Year. Levit’s highly acclaimed Beethoven was deservedly lauded by press and public alike, putting Levit firmly on the map as one of the great Beethoven interpreters of our time. In a statement about the sonata cycle, Levit said, ‘For me, this recording is a conclusion of my past 15 years. The literally life-changing encounter with the Diabelli Variations at the age of 17, which is effectively still ongoing, the daily engagement with Beethoven’s sonatas, with Beethoven as a person, with myself, with the world in which I live - all that has also led to this recording.’

**Award sponsored by Raymond Weil**

Welsh soprano **Natalya Romaniw** was named Young Artist of the Year. Following an impressive season of major role debuts including Cio-Cio San in the acclaimed Anthony Minghella *Madam Butterfly* for English National Opera (ENO) and the title role in *Tosca* and *Iris* with Scottish Opera. Last week she also starred in ENO’s highly anticipated ‘Drive & Live’ performance of *La bohème*, in which critics praised her ‘heartfelt’ Mimì.

**Award presented with Nordoff Robbins**

**The Philadelphia Orchestra** is this year’s Orchestra of the Year, an Award presented with Apple Music. The Orchestra was 23 years old when the first issue of *Gramophone* was published and has a long-held recording legacy of great renown. Re-energised by a conductor of extraordinary talent and great charisma, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, thousands of people have championed this deserving winner of the only award decided entirely by public vote, in a campaign supported by Apple Music playlists and *Gramophone* podcasts.

Only in its second year, the newly created award for Concept Album goes to ‘**From the Ground Up: The Chaconne**’ by **Hugo Ticciati** and **o/modernt**. The Award celebrates imaginative A&R, ear-catching programming and, above all, faultless execution, all of which is found in this album in which Ticciati has surrounded himself with instrumentalists ‘so at one with the chaconne repertoire’ (*Gramophone*). Particular mention also goes to the Shakespearean verses performed by actor Sam West, alongside Baba Israel’s energised rap poetry.

**Award sponsored by Classical:NEXT**

This year’s Label of the Year is **Alpha Classics**, whose output over the past 12 months has been so exemplary, it has been impossible to ignore. With releases ranging from ‘What’s Next Vivaldi?’ with Patricia Kopatchinskaja to Sarah Willis’s ‘Mozart y Mambo’ as well as this year’s Beethoven 250 and

Recital Award winners, the label has continued to sign stellar artists over the past year, producing records of the highest quality underpinned by the inspired A&R of Alpha's Didier Martin.

*Gramophone* gave its Special Achievement Award to **Robert Bahr**, the visionary founder of the hugely respected Swedish label BIS. The pianist Ronald Brautigam said in a video message during the ceremony, *'If there's anyone in the music industry who absolutely deserves this it's got to be you.'* Robert said in his acceptance speech, *'I prefer to take this as a tribute, not only to me, but to all classical record producers that there are. There are quite a number of them – and very good too [...] It's been my great, great pleasure to get to work with these people, to get to know them, to befriend them, to compete with them, to be inspired by them, and hopefully have inspired some of them myself.'*

This year's Awards also featured a special Beethoven 250 Award that went to the pianist **Martin Helmchen, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin** and **Andrew Manze** for their recording of Beethoven's Piano Concertos Nos 2 and 5 on Alpha. Martin Helmchen accepted the Award in a speech, saying *'recording something like this only makes sense in mutual spirit of curiosity, being willing to find these pieces as if they were new to us and discover the hidden mysteries that are still there, and that was exactly the spirit that made this whole project so inspiring and so exciting. It was a pure joy [...] It is a privilege and I'm very grateful to be part of it.'*

Broadcast on the *Gramophone* website & social media channels, as well as medici.tv, the event featured performances from winners past and present, including Bertrand Chamayou (winner of last year's Recording of the Year), Igor Levit, Benjamin Grosvenor, Alexandre Kantorow, Natalya Romaniw & Lada Valešová, Carolyn Sampson & Joseph Middleton, and Stile Antico.

James Jolly, *Gramophone's* Editor-in-Chief, said: *'We may have been robbed of the opportunity to celebrate these award-winning artists, projects and creators in the physical company of our friends in the music world for the first time in over 40 years. But, spurred on by the constraints of putting on a major event in the midst of a pandemic, we rose to the challenge and proved that the music plays on and the artistry of these hugely talented individuals can be celebrated in style even when apart.'*

The medici.tv stream was sponsored by E.Gutzwiller & Cie, Banquiers, and is available to view for 90 days [here](#).

***Gramophone's* Awards issue is published on October 7 and contains full information on the Awards and Award winners.**

The *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards were presented in association with Apple Music, E Gutzwiller et Cie Banquiers, and official charity partner, Help Musicians UK.

[www.gramophone.co.uk/awards](http://www.gramophone.co.uk/awards)

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## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Gramophone Awards**

The annual Gramophone Classical Music Awards, the world's most influential classical recorded-music prizes, were launched in 1977 by *Gramophone* magazine (founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie). The Awards celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2017. Available internationally, *Gramophone* publishes a bespoke edition of the magazine for North America. *Gramophone's* full, searchable archive of magazines from 1923 to the latest issue is available digitally for iPad and other tablet devices, smartphone or computer. *Gramophone's* weekly podcasts have recently passed their 380,000th download.