

ONYX LAUNCHES WITH MULLOVA

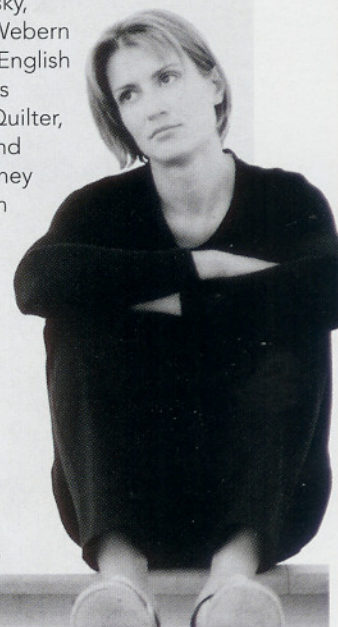
A new label which aims to offer a haven to some high-profile artists currently without major-company contracts launched his month.

Called Onyx, its initial artist roster includes violinist Viktoria Mullova (pictured), the Borodin Quartet, soprano Barbara Bonney and pianist Pascal Rogé.

The label has been set up by Chris Cracker (founder of the Black Box label, former head of Sanctuary Classics and new head of classics at Sony BMG UK), and Paul Moseley (a former vice president of Decca).

Twelve releases per year are planned. The first four are: a disc of Vivaldi concertos from Mullova and Il Giardino Armonico; Borodin's Quartet No 2, plus Schubert, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Webern from the Borodins; English and American songs (including Britten, Quilter, Barber, Bernstein and Copland) from Bonney and pianist Malcolm Martineau; and the start of a complete Debussy series (beginning with the *Préludes*) from Rogé.

Individual track downloads as well as complete albums will also be available from the company's website.



MUTI QUILTS LA SCALA

The music director of Milan's La Scala opera house, Riccardo Muti, quit his post in March after months of internal – though very public – disagreement at the world-famous venue.

In his resignation letter he wrote: 'The vulgar show of hostility from people I have worked with for nearly 20 years has made it really impossible to continue a working relationship which should be based on harmony and trust'. Muti, 64, took up the post in 1986.

Tensions at the newly redeveloped house came to a head in February with the sacking of *sovrintendente* Carlo Fontana and his replacement with Mauro Meli, an ally of Muti. Muti and Fontana had long been at loggerheads over artistic direction of the theatre.

Strikes and protests continued, however, and La Scala's heavily unionised staff voted unanimously to oust both Muti and Meli. Though the opera house sought to restore order, it became increasingly difficult to see how Muti could have carried on in the circumstances.

No successor has been announced but the spotlight has fallen on two Italians: Daniele Gatti, music director of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and of the Teatro Comunale in Bologna, and Riccardo Chailly, who is renowned worldwide as an opera conductor and is music director of the Milan Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra, chief conductor-elect of the Leipzig Gewandhaus and music-director-elect of the Leipzig Opera.

NAXOS LOSES US REISSUES CASE ON APPEAL

The New York State Court of Appeals has said that Naxos of America broke copyright by issuing remastered 1930s recordings in the US. Capitol Records filed a suit in 2002 on behalf of its subsidiary EMI Classics, claiming that Naxos had infringed copyright by producing and distributing in the US restorations of recordings made by The Gramophone Company (now EMI Classics). These included Yehudi Menuhin's 1932 performance of the Elgar Violin Concerto, and Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* recorded by Edwin Fischer between 1933-36. In 2003 a New York court found in favour of Naxos.

In the UK, where copyright on recordings lasts for 50 years, these recordings had already come into the public domain. In the US, copyright generally holds for 75 years. The appeal court's decision said that the disputed recordings are covered under New York state law (recordings made after 1972 are protected by US federal law). Naxos said it is considering appealing to the US Supreme Court.

Shop talk: Best sellers

Virgin Megastore Piccadilly, London

- 1 **Karl Jenkins** Requiem EMI
- 2 **Puccini** Arias Gheorghiu EMI
- 3 **Rawsthorne** Symphonies Nos 1-3
Lloyd-Jones Naxos
- 2 **Canteloube** Chants d'Auvergne Gens Naxos
- 5 **Lamento** Kožená DG



Tokyo Opera Nomori, a new company set up by **SEIJI OZAWA**, has given its inaugural performance – Strauss's *Elektra*, a co-production with Maggio Musicale, Florence. Future seasons will include co-productions with the Paris and Vienna State Operas • French label **ZIG-ZAG TERRITOIRES** has signed a UK distribution deal with RSK, beginning in late April with an initial five titles from its 85-disc catalogue.