

Label Focus - NMC Recordings



Promoting Contemporary British Composers for 20 Years

The founding principles which launched NMC are as true today as they were in 1989; and as the label reaches its 20th anniversary it remains committed to bringing the finest recordings of the best of British contemporary Classical music to as wide an audience as possible.

In a musical landscape in which a first performance is sometimes the only performance and the difficulties in promoting new works have become increasingly challenging, the existence of NMC's recordings are more important than ever.

Holst's Legacy

Following the success of two pilot releases in 1989 – Jonathan Harvey's *Bhakti*, and a disc of contemporary piano music performed by Michael Finnis – NMC became an independent charitable company, set up with funding from the Holst Foundation. Income from Holst's music (principally *The Planets*) is used to record and promote the work of (predominantly) British contemporary composers.

Today, in addition to sales revenue and the Holst Foundation, NMC also receives funding from Arts Council England and the Britten-Pears Foundation.

NMC's Expanding Catalogue

NMC's catalogue now comprises 150 album releases, ranging from the compositions of Britain's younger, emerging talents – often their first recordings – to that of major established figures.

Works of more than 200 composers have been recorded by NMC and as one of their objectives is to act as an archive of British recorded music, no title is ever deleted.

Best Sellers - All Time

1	Elgar/Payne/Symphony No.3	BBC Symphony Orchestra/Davis
2	Mask Of Orpheus	Harrison Birtwistle
3	Elgar/Sketches From Symphony No 3	BBC Symphony Orchestra/Davis
4	Lento	Howard Skempton
5	Britten On Film	Benjamin Britten
6	Jonathan Harvey/Body Mandala	BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Volkov
7	Book Of Hours & Other Works	Julian Anderson
8	A Night At The Chinese Opera	Judith Weir
9	Symphony/Scenes From Comus	Hugh Wood
10	Shadowtime	Brian Ferneyhough

Best Sellers - Q1 2009

1	Jonathan Harvey/Body Mandala	BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Volkov
2	New Music For Brass Band	Fodens Richardson Band
3	Birtwistle Secret Theatre	London Sinfonietta
4	Britten On Film	Benjamin Britten
5	Book Of Hours & Other Works	Julian Anderson
6	Mask Of Orpheus	Harrison Birtwistle
7	Colin Matthews / Divertimento	Various Artists
8	The Soadie Waste	James Dillon
9	The Welcome Arrival Of Rain	Judith Weir
10	Birtwistle/Punch And Judy	London Sinfonietta

The quality of the catalogue is reflected in the numerous awards and outstanding reviews which many of NMC's recordings have received over the years (further details of which are given on page 16).

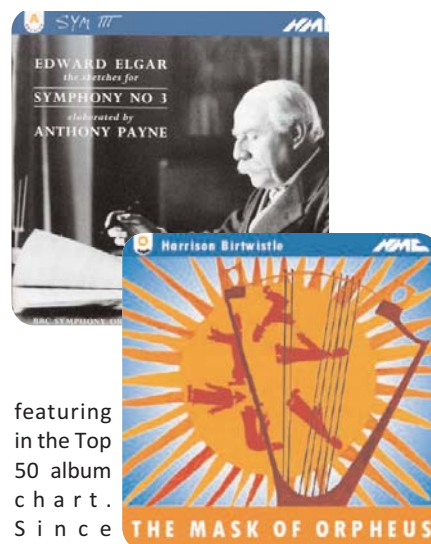
Best Sellers

In the mid 1990s NMC received an unexpected windfall when Holst's music came back into copyright as a result of EU legislation. This allowed the foundation to increase its funding and resulted in what were to become NMC's most ambitious recordings - Harrison Birtwistle's *Mask Of Orpheus* and Anthony Payne's realisation of *Elgar's Third Symphony*.

It was the latter of these two, originally released in 1998, that has become NMC's most popular and biggest selling recording.

Elgar died in 1934 leaving behind the sketches for a 4-movement symphony; the Elgar family decided to commission Anthony Payne to realise the sketches and his work produced an acclaimed work which won several notable awards.

The recording was featured on BBC TV's *Newsnight* and created substantial media interest which resulted in the album



featuring in the Top 50 album chart. Since then it has sold well in excess of 32,000 copies in the UK alone.

No less ambitious was the recording of Harrison Birtwistle's *Mask Of Orpheus*, widely regarded as an awe-inspiring masterpiece and a key work in the development of post-war opera, groundbreaking in its fusion of music, song, drama, myth and electronics. This recording is a three CD set and yet has become NMC's second best selling release.

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Sales Analysis

The nature of NMC's repertoire means that sales have been heavily skewed towards the Specialists and Independents since 1994. Since then, the company's sales can be broken down as follows:

Sales by Retailer Type 1994 - 2009

Specialists	51.3%
Independents	36.1%
General Multiples	11.1%
Digital	1.5%
Supermarkets	0.1%

Source: OCC

Digital Sales

Digital is becoming an increasingly important sales channel for NMC and since the beginning of 2008, download sales have accounted for 13% of sales volume - a particularly impressive share, which is ahead of both the total album market and especially the Classical market which recorded a digital share of less than 4% in 2008.

NMC has embraced the opportunities offered by recent digital developments. MP3 downloads are available to buy from their own website and free samplers are also available, which currently include their 20th Anniversary offering.



The company also has developed a MySpace presence and a Facebook page (see below for details) to keep in touch with their audience more effectively and has also recently created a podcast for the NMC Songbook and video content for YouTube.

Regional Sales

Just as Specialist and Independent retailers have been crucial to the success of NMC over the years, so has the London region which has accounted for more than half of the label's sales.

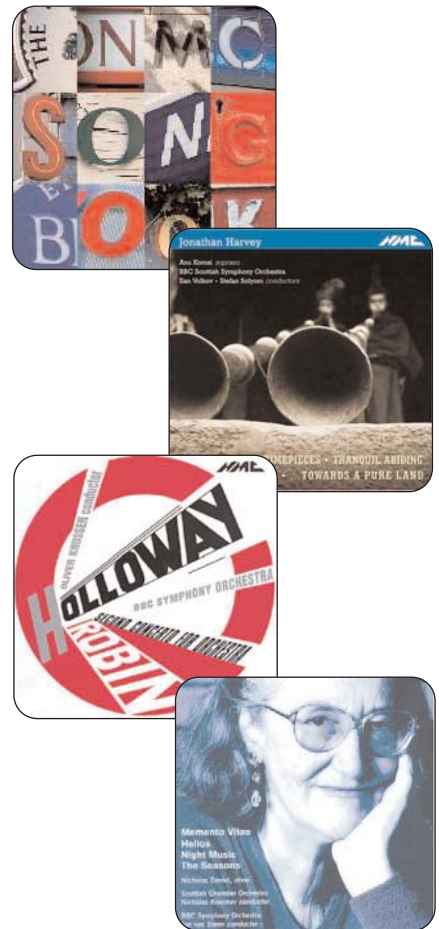
London has long boasted many of the best and most important Classical retailers in the country. The capital has always accounted for a high share of Classical sales and in 2008 accounted for a quarter of all albums sold.

Key Projects - The NMC Songbook

NMC's 20th Anniversary is a considerable achievement for a label specialising in what is often niche repertoire. To mark the event, NMC Recordings has commissioned the *NMC Songbook*. Nearly 100 composers, ranging from the country's most highly regarded figures to the younger generation of emerging talents, have each written a song on the theme of 'Britain', for single voice or duet and a range of accompanying instruments.

The songs have been set to text chosen by the composers and cover a vast array of subjects, from lyrics by Blake and Byron and schoolbook rhymes listing the Kings and Queens of England, to extracts from a National Trust brochure, chants from the Leyton Orient terraces, a recipe for whisky, and road rage at Lakeside.

A series of 45-minute concerts featuring nearly 100 world premiere performances of songs was commissioned by NMC for its 20th Anniversary. The concerts ran from 1-4 April 2009 at London's newest venue Kings Place.



From the top:

The NMC Songbook - a four disc set released to mark the company's 20th anniversary

Jonathon Harvey's Body Mandala, winner of the Best Contemporary Recording at the Gramophone Awards 2008

Robin Holloway's Second Concerto for Orchestra - winner of the Best Contemporary Recording at the 1994 Gramophone Awards

Thea Musgrave's Helios and Memento Vice the first release on NMC's re-issue label Ancora which features titles from Collins Classics, Unicorn Kanchana and other labels

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Submitting a recording

Please send CD-Rs to the Artistic Panel at the address opposite, together with score, information on the composer and artists, an estimate of the recording costs involved and details of any other possible sources of funding. Please note, the panel meets on a quarterly basis.