
Daniel Kidane

Selected Reviews

Be Still

Manchester Camerata at Stoller Hall (February 2021)

“One of the best I’ve heard from this British composer: an exercise in atmospheric string tremolando chords, spookily embellished by bowed crotales, in which the harmonies gradually became more intense and dissonant. It had shape and substance.” – **Richard Morrison, *The Times***

“Daniel Kidane’s *Be Still*, for string orchestra and bowed crotales, is quite definitely the music of 2020, reflecting (as he says) on the experience of lockdown and losing the everyday markers of passing time: but it’s also intended to create inner stillness and calm. Beginning with high tremolo strings, almost pulse-less, it extends their sound through the orchestra’s compass, as a rhythm begins and chords form fleetingly, building to a crescendo and ending with a lofty solo violin over a sustained sound carpet.” – **Robert Beale, *The Arts Desk***

Woke

BBC Symphony Orchestra, Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, London (September 2019)

“Daniel Kidane’s *Woke* raised the curtain with a ceremonial blast. Its rhythmic and textural permutations at times sounded like a 1950s film score, at others suggesting a sinister, quasi-militaristic atmosphere.”

– **Nick Kimberly, *Evening Standard***

“[*Woke*] launched off in dancing rhythms, the string chords rising and falling in waves under the chirruping winds were not so far from Steve Reich’s minimalism, but the harmonies were darkly suggestive of struggle. Towards the end the music retreated to a lonely place, but revived to end if not in a blaze of glory, at least of hope.”

– **Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph***

“*Woke* is a dynamic concert opener, energised by driving percussion rhythms. The large orchestra is skilfully deployed for diverse colours while always retaining a clarity of texture. The music eventually settles into lush, sonorous harmonies.” – **Gavin Dixon, *The Arts Desk***

“Composer Daniel Kidane says he wants to channel his optimism for the future through music, and the result is a brightly coloured tone-poem which the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sakari Oramo’s genial direction that turns into an agreeable aperitif for what is to come.” – **Michael Church, *The Independent***

“The evening began with a new piece, *Woke*, by Daniel Kidane, commissioned by the BBC and performed for the very first time. It is a short, vigorous work with a rousing finale but it is not a ‘comfortable’ piece that one can listen to and relax with at the end of a working day. Kidane says himself in the programme notes that behind his urge to create an energetic piece was the wish for a subtle message – for us all to be more ‘woke’, concerning awareness of social and racial justice. He fully achieved his goal and started the Last Night with a bang.”

– **Margarida Mota-Bull, *Seen-and-Heard International***

Daniel Kidane

Selected Reviews

“But I end at the beginning, with Daniel Kidane’s *Woke*, the title reminding us to be constantly aware of racism, but the music is inherently interesting in itself, kick-started by a wood-block (like a woodpecker) and teeming into life with long-held strings and chattering parts underneath, eventually coming to a unanimous halt before more rat-a-tat-tat pulses reigniting the music, before eventually building to a ringing climax, though not before the modern plastic equivalent of the ancient bullroarer made air. Electrifying and energising.”

– Nick Breckenfield, *Classial Source*

“Uplifting and energising, [*Woke*] was also designed to leave one thinking about social and racial injustice in the world. This it certainly did, although the overriding sense one was left with was simply that of an immensely skillful composition.” – Sam Smith, *MusicOMH*

Dream Song

Chineke!, Queen Elizabeth Hall, London (April 2018)

“It is to Kidane’s credit that his piece, *Dream Song*, didn’t provide a facile mood of optimism and celebration. Rather the reverse, in fact. The words, sung with powerful conviction by Roderick Williams and echoed by the Chineke! choir, seemed trapped in a realm of dreamlike oppression, the tense string lines shot through with threatening brass. Just as one felt a sense of light dawning, the piece came to an end. It felt like a powerful but enigmatic sketch for something that ought to be much bigger-boned.” – Ivan Hewett, *The Telegraph*

“*Dream Song* is an ambitious, densely scored setting, for baritone (Roderick Williams), choir (the Chineke! Chorus) and orchestra, of fragments from Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech, which underpins a declamatory vocal line with insistent brass riffs and choral tone clusters, though the textures brighten as we reach the final assertion of “Let freedom ring.”” – Tim Ashley *The Guardian*

“If we expected Gospel-flavoured pastiche, Kidane delivered a shock. This turned out to be a sombre, shadowed piece, the hum and stab of anxiety and trepidation carried by the strings as Roderick Williams forcefully phrased King’s words of hope.” – Boyd Tonkin, *theartsdesk.com*

Zulu

Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (November 2017)

“Kidane’s sound world is inevitably Western, of course, but I liked the way he refracted it through something “other” so as to give it a different colour, with contrasting sound textures and energy patterns giving it its momentum.”

– Simon Thompson, *bachtrack.com*

Daniel Kidane

Selected Reviews

Six Etudes

Mahan Esfahani, Recital, Wigmore Hall, London (July 2016)

“The *Six Etudes* of 30-year-old Daniel Kidane brought us right up to the present, offering textures of great finesse and shards of Ligetian playfulness (even adding an intentionally jarring hotel reception bell to the sixth).”

– Harriet Smith, *Financial Times*

Sirens

Sounds of Shakespeare, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester (April 2016)

“Daniel Kidane's *Sirens* plunged from sonnets 153 to 154 to a pulsating, foot-tapping Mancunian nocturne, topped off with a queasy morning-after.” – Geoff Brown, *The Times*

“...well-attuned to the homoeroticism of Shakespeare's poems; creating a febrile sense of a heady cruise through Manchester's gay village. Daniel Kidane's propulsive, eclectic piece, *Sirens*, soaked up influences of jungle, dubstep and R&B sampled from a trawl through the city after dark.” – Alfred Hickling, *The Guardian*

“Grit, certainly, in a score infused with animal energy and visceral drive, but despite the frenetic ride through that myriad landscape of club scene *hommages*, it was mapped and navigated with meticulous control; the orchestration, characterised by a transparency of instrumental texture, was handled not just with rhythmic wit but also a searing clarity of purpose.” – Pamela Nash, *bachtrack.com*

Tourbillon

UK-DK, Michala Petri and Mahan Esfahani, OUR 6.220611 (SACD: 66:27) (February 2015)

“Kidane, who was born in 1986, has composed an interesting work not based on a whirlwind, as the title might suggest, but on a watch mechanism that bears that same name. In horology, a tourbillon counteracts the effects of gravity on a watch's escapement. Kidane writes, “Both instruments take on the idea of breaking away from gravity but at the same time are restrained by moments of tranquility.” The recorder and the harpsichord are equals in this work, which, while lacking the rhythms of jazz, has something of modern jazz's spontaneity and jaggedness. I'm glad that it was included on this disc because, among all the sweets, it gives listeners something meaty on which to chew.” – Raymond Tuttle, *Fanfare*

“*Tourbillon*, the contribution of the youngest composer on the disc, British shooting star Daniel Kidane, born in 1986, was written for Michala and Mahan's CD – a work partly disturbingly mono-maniac and circling around itself, partly highly virtuosic, but with lyric moments.” – Heinz Braun, *Klassik Heute*

Daniel Kidane

Selected Reviews

Flux and Stasis

Fournier Piano Trio, Park Lane Group New Year Concert Series (November 2011)

"The fine Fournier Piano Trio introduced the 24-year-old composer Daniel Kidane. They gave the world premiere of his *Flux and Stasis*, nine compelling minutes of tautly constructed, vibrantly imagined movement and colour, inspired by a mirage that Kidane experienced in Eritrea. No mere piece of impressionistic indulgence, this self-energising music would fire the imagination even without its hidden "programme". It made me keen to hear more both of Kidane and of the Fournier Piano Trio themselves."

– Hilary Finch, *The Times*

"Much more of a stretch for them was Flux and Stasis by Daniel Kidane, the result of the young composer's travels in East Africa in 2009 and his experience of and musical reaction to a mirage, an easily explained natural phenomenon and one with just as easily understandable visionary implications. In terms of the music's resources of string harmonics and tremolos, and chordal mightiness for the piano, Kidane has

perhaps drunk deep at the Messiaen oasis, but the 10-minute piece did speak of stridently lit mysteries, and did so with rigour and assurance. In short, it worked, and the Fournier players were keenly alive to its glittering soundworld."

– Peter Reed, *Classical Source*

Metamorphosis

Pei-Jee Ng, Royal Northern College of Music

"Later that night, your intrepid correspondent braved a recorder quintet in order to hear in the same programme the Australian cellist Pei-Jee Ng premiere *Metamorphosis* by the Royal Northern College of Music student Daniel Kidane. It proved a splendid piece, in free variation form, and was superbly played. The composer told me that he is a violinist but has not yet written for solo violin. I hope he will. *Journeying Songs* by David Matthews (also present) uses variation form in a different but equally interesting way. Again Ng played with fine command and control..." – Tully Potter, *The Strad*

"With Ng we finally got the real thing - an artist whose age is irrelevant to his musical maturity...To Daniel Kidane's quietly impressive new *Metamorphosis* he brought stature, concentration and a beguiling range of sonorities."

– Andrew Clark, *Financial Times*

"Cellist Pei-Jee Ng's performance of...Daniel Kidane's *Metamorphosis* [was] strong and expressive."

– Anna Picard, *The Independent*

Daniel Kidane

Selected Reviews

LSO Soundhub Scheme

“Daniel Kidane’s works are packed with incident and expression, braiding together sounds and entwining groups of instruments to create a meta-instrument that deftly weaves through novel timbres.”

– *London Philharmonic Orchestra*