

feel that whatever I proposed via the piano, she picked up with interest; any ideas I suggested she picked up and ran with: this is what was really exciting, engaging with a really quick musical imagination.'

The concert went well and it was suggested that Duffy be recruited for the Hyperion recording project. It was another daunting challenge for her. 'It was a huge programme; I was very nervous about the whole thing, but the second I walked into the studio everyone was so down-to-earth and really relaxed, I ended up thoroughly enjoying every second of it.'

Again, Vignoles was hugely impressed by someone making her first recording: 'She was unbelievably professional. It was quite clear that the whole business of recording didn't faze her at all; she was able to listen objectively to takes, and one can hear that her sense of the text, her sense of character, comes over outstandingly.'

The Strauss disc, volume five in Vignoles' ongoing series, is released in the autumn, and he is confident of a Wigmore Hall recital date with Duffy in the 2012/13 season. London audiences can hear her before then, however, as she sings Cunegonde in Bernstein's *Candide* with the LSO at the Barbican Hall on 5 June.

[www.kieraduffy.com](http://www.kieraduffy.com)

[www.hyperion-records.co.uk](http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk)



Vignoles: 'We just clicked immediately'

# Resource management

Universal's newly appointed classical director will be fighting the corner for an exceptional back catalogue



Holden: exploiting the back catalogue

'Perhaps no finer set of catalogues has been assembled than those with the combined might of Decca and Deutsche Grammophon,' says Barry Holden, recently appointed director of the classical catalogue at Universal Music Group, 'as well as the wonderful Philips catalogue – which shouldn't be forgotten and won't be. My job is to ensure that it is being exploited to its full potential, making available as representative a sample from that catalogue as we can afford to do, reaching as wide an audience as possible.'

Holden has not written off physical media, but is finding digital alternatives increasingly exciting and potentially profitable. He feels a responsibility to encourage consumers to get the most out of what his labels have to offer, and also to get excited about the possibilities that exist in the digital domain. 'Acquiring a digital file without much to go with it, the classical consumer has been underwhelmed – quite rightly expecting more from the product and more from us. More packaging, texts where we can afford them, some sort of analysis, images and an insight into the artists: these are the things that perhaps we were less able to deliver. Developments like

'studio-quality masters', for instance, will allow aficionados the chance to hear our recordings at a higher resolution than the CD. The iPad in particular offers a chance to marry visual elements with audio to deliver a much more exciting, integrated experience than the CD.'

Holden acknowledges the achievements of his predecessors. 'Many DG Originals have sold 100,000 copies over the years, and of course all were on their second or third release for the company. Ranges like 'Double Deccas' and the former Philips 'Duo' range also racked up millions of units over the years, so let's put aside this defeatist notion that people aren't interested! But increasingly there has to be a marketing dialogue, making sure we deliver what people actually want, and this is something that is reshaping arts communications everywhere.'

There is an ambassadorial role within the wider, non-classical Universal business that Holden relishes. 'When we get our own people excited with what we can deliver, we tend to be at our very best. It is a big organisation and, understandably, classical has to fight its corner. So the first thing we do is persuade them that this is an exciting business for Universal.'

A large commercial organisation requires as much of the catalogue to be viable and successful as possible. 'Some of the latitude that may be available within the independent sector is not so possible in the harsh glare of the commercial prism. But that's how companies like Universal, understandably, have to operate – we have a fiscal responsibility to shareholders. The biggest single problem for me, therefore, is to keep as much of that catalogue as possible active, available and working. On the other hand it is an enormous privilege to be in charge of this beautiful, crafted catalogue – what a problem to have!'

[www.deccaclassics.com](http://www.deccaclassics.com)