

I N T E R N A T I O N A L
RECORD REVIEW

FOR THE SERIOUS CLASSICAL COLLECTOR

November 2013 £4.40

Takács Quartet

Excellent performances of
Britten's string quartets

John Musto
secures the
future of
the American
piano concerto

Liszt at the opera
Piano works
played by
Louis Lortie

Centenary and
bicentenary
Benjamin Britten
Tutto Verdi



IRR Outstanding Recordings



hyperion NEW RELEASES

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH *Christmas Oratorio*

Stephen Layton and the combined forces of Trinity College Choir, Cambridge and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment present a joyous rendition of Bach's Christmas Oratorio, featuring James Gilchrist, acclaimed as one of the greatest Evangelists of today.

JAMES GILCHRIST Evangelist
TRINITY COLLEGE CHOIR, CAMBRIDGE
ORCHESTRA OF THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT
STEPHEN LAYTON conductor



CHS062
2 compact discs

BENJAMIN BRITTEN *String Quartets* *Nos 1, 2 & 3*

The Takacs Quartet are one of the greatest string quartets recording today. Here in the composer's anniversary year they turn to Britten's absorbing music pieces.

TAKACS QUARTET



CHS063

SCHUBERT *Octet*

In elegant, poetic performance of one of the most popular chamber works of the nineteenth century.

"Glowing interpretations... a fine recording... this is a superb performance" (Gramophone)

THE GALERIE ENSEMBLE



CHS064

PALESTRINA *Missa Dum complerentur*

Westminster Cathedral Choir have the music of Palestrina at the centre of their daily ritual. This album focuses on music for Whit Sunday.

"The renowned choir are on top form as they respond to Palestrina's majesty... highly recommended" (Gramophone)

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR
MARTIN BAKER conductor



CHS065

THE ROMANTIC PIANO CONCERTO - 62 *Gomodo*

The Romantic Piano Concerto series reaches 62 and makes an interesting (although temporary) departure: these four works are for pedal piano. Italian pianist Roberto Prosseda, who gave the first modern performance of Gomodo's Concerto for pedal piano and orchestra, makes his Hyperion debut.

ROBERTO PROSSEDA pedal piano
ORCHESTRA DELLA SVEVIZIA ITALIANA / **ROMANO STELLER**



CHS066

FERRUCCIO BUSONI *Late Piano Music*

Marc-André Hamelin is indisputably the king of Busoni pianists. This generously priced triple album offers most of Busoni's mature works and the widest selection of pieces from the Klavierübung set for recorded, many of them for the first time.

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN piano



CHS067
3 compact discs

PAUL HINDEMITH TWO ALBUMS MARKING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HINDEMITH'S DEATH *Piano Sonatas*

In his three piano sonatas, Hindemith presents himself all out as the rebel and revolutionary of the 1920s, not rather as an heir to the contrapuntal skill and keyboard dexterity of Johann Sebastian Bach. Markus Becker has been acclaimed for his authoritative recordings of German repertoire of the late/interwarbands.

MARKUS BECKER piano



CHS068

Violin Sonatas

Hindemith's Violin Sonatas fascinatingly mirror the various stages in the development of his musical language. They are performed here by virtuoso German violinist Tanja Becker-Bender who has made a speciality of the music of the early twentieth century.

TANJA BECKER-BENDER violin
PELLEGRINI piano



CHS069



FREE DOWNLOAD

Hyperion Monthly Samplers

Don't forget to download our "taster" album—a track from each of the new releases above. The sampler is available exclusively for download from our website, and is completely free.

CDs, MP3 and lossless downloads of all our recordings are available from www.hyperion-records.co.uk

Editorial

The Takács Quartet's exceptionally polished interpretations of Britten's three published string quartets on Hyperion join the many excellent new centenary recordings (with more to come, judging by the recent deluge of new releases) and is a characteristically noteworthy addition to its multi-award winning discography. The Takács, rightly described by Mark Pullinger on page 54 as one of the world's most distinguished ensembles, was formed in Budapest in 1975. Of the original ensemble, Károly Székely and András Fejér remain, with violinist Edward Dusinberer joining in 1991 and violist Geraldine Walther in 2005.

The first organ recording to please an IRR Outstanding (Stanford from Daniel Cook) should please aficionados, and pianoforte eager to acquire new recordings by their favourite artists will be delighted with Angela Hewitt's *Fauré* and Louis Lortie's *List*; the debut CD by Igor Levit (who has a fully established recital career) of Beethoven sonatas strikes Nicholas Sawley as 'extraordinary'. There are four orchestral nominations: Brahms's Sixth Symphony (Jaap van Zweden); Hindemith from Tabea Zimmermann; new piano concertos by John Murré; and 'Epifania', an intriguing collection from Orestis Orestis. A lone chamber disc – Bach Transcriptions by and performed by a harpsichord duo (Chasi and Nadja Lesandier) – beguiles Nicholas Anderson. Aleksander Aronenko as Otello is outstanding in every way: see the final instalment of *Tutto Verdi*, marking the bicentenary.

IRR goes digital! From this issue we are also available as a digital edition (see page 81 for further details). *Máire Taylor*

The Contributors

Colin Anderson
Martin Anderson
Nicholas Anderson
Lucy Beckett
Francesco Burns
Piers Burton-Page
Hugh Canning
Christopher Cook
Paul Czajkowski
Mortimer H. Frank
David Gutman
Julian Haylock
William Hedley
Simon Heighes
John T. Hughes
Michael Jameson
Ian Jullier
Robert Layton
Robert J. Levitt
Robert T. Levine
Peter Lyman
Calum MacDonald
Robert Matthew-Walker

Ivan Moody
Andrew Morris
David Newsholme
Andrew O'Connor
Andrew Parker
Roger Pines
Christopher Price
Stephen Pruslin
Mark Pullinger
Peter Quinn
Peter J. Rabinowitz
Marc Rochester
Graham Rogers
Carl Rosman
Michael L. D. Round
Patrick Rucker
Thérèse W. Saba
Nicholas A. Sawley
Nigel Simeone
Mark P. Tanner
Charles Timbrell
Roger Thomas
Raymond S. Tuttle
John Warrack
Richard Whitehouse

All material is copyright and all rights are reserved. This publication may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form, in whole or in part, without the express written permission of the publisher. While every effort is made to ensure that the information in this magazine is correct at the time of going to press, changes can occur which may affect the accuracy of the copy. We accept no liability for such inaccuracies. All advertisements are accepted at the advertiser's risk. We accept no responsibility for advertisers not fulfilling their contracts and obligations. IRR (ISSN 0950-0804) is published by International Record Review Limited, 9 Spring Bridge Mews, Ealing, London W5 2AB, Great Britain and is available worldwide. The US subscription price is \$150 per year. Correspondence from readers requiring a response from the Editor should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Reproduction (Hobby Books Ltd, Ashford, Kent) in England.

Contents

Reviews Index	2
New Releases	4
Benjamin Britten centenary	
by Nigel Simeone	12
Tutto Verdi on C Major Entertainment	
by Mark Pullinger	18
Pierre Boulez – Complete works on DG	
by Julian Haylock	24
Contemporary music on CD	
by Roger Thomas	26
Historic treasures reissued	
by Nigel Simeone	28
Reviews	
Orchestral	34
Chamber	52
Instrumental	60
Vocal	70
Opera	80
Too many records by Richard Egarr	92

The cover features the Takács Quartet, whose new recording of Britten's String Quartets on Hyperion is reviewed on page 54. *Photo: Peter Apple*

Volume 13 Issue 8 November 2013

International Record Review Limited

9 Spring Bridge Mews, Ealing, London W5 2AB, Great Britain
Tel: +44 (0)20 8567 0244
Fax: +44 (0)20 8840 5447
Website: www.recordreview.co.uk

Editor	Máire Taylor mairtaylor@recordreview.co.uk
Editorial Consultants	John T. Hughes Robert Matthew-Walker
Discographer	Alastair Montgomery
Consultant Discographer	Brian Godfrey
Production	Jackie Young www.youngtypesetting.org.uk
Subscriptions Manager	Glen Williams glen.williams@recordreview.co.uk
Accounts Supervisor	Rosemary Rinn rosemary.rinn@recordreview.co.uk
Publisher	Barry Inving barry.inving@recordreview.co.uk

THE CHOIR OF KING'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE



Mozart			
Op. Concerto Raps			
In G-flat	26:47		
Requiem	26:47		
Mass Concertos Nos. 1 and 2	26:47		
Osborne			
A Festival and Two Settings	18:28		
Paderewski			
Miserere your piano, Op. 34			
No. 4, Nonesima	30:47		
R. Panufnik			
Joy at the Feast	18:28		
Perry			
String Quartet No. 5 in G	18:59		
String Quartet in E-flat	18:59		
Pennon			
Liberatus in g-misurata	18:29		
Pergolesi			
Adriano in Seta			
Lirico and solista	37:39		
Philips			
Church Music	18:28		
Porpora			
Antico stile ricominciato			
Passaggio alla volta spinto	37:39		
Poulenc			
Vielle Sonate in D minor, BWV 10	33:57	34	
Prokofiev			
Symphonic No. 5 in B-flat, Op. 100	30:44		
Puccini			
Il Trittico a Trema	37:47		
Symphonic No. 4, 'From Madras - San Juan'	37:47		
To Touch the Sky	37:47		
Rachmaninov			
The Isle of the Dead, Op. 28	31:48		
Symphonic No. 3 in D minor, Op. 35	31:48		
Ravel			
Alborada del gracioso	1:4	48	
Boléro	1:4	48	
Piano Trio	33:57	35	
Rhapsodie espagnole	1:4	48	
Le tombeau de Couperin	1:4	48	
La valse	1:4	48	
Vielle Sonate in G	33:57	36	
Richter			
Grand Symphony No. 7 in C	30:77	30	
Ries			
Der Tag der Glocken, Op. 117 (G-flat)	75		
Rivier			
Concerto Brito	30:56	18	
Rubinstein			
Kamersonic Concerto, Op. 10			
No. 21, Rêve angélique	30:47		
Rutter			
I My Son Richard's Ann.	18:28		
Saariaho			
Calers	18:59		
Neumane	18:59		
Symphonic	18:59		
Spies and Spies	18:59		
Tour	18:59		
Yves mortuus	18:59		
Salmehaara			
Concerto	30:71	11	
Sano			
Yaldrems			
De sur the Sea sea	37:39		
Saver			
Wonder	18:28		
Schäfer			
Op. Festival de concert, Op. 1			
Evade No. 1	30:47		
Schubert			
lieder	18:28		
Requiem, D117			
Two Actes and Ballet Music	30:49		
Symphonic No. 8 in C, D180	30:49		
Schubert			
Concerto Allegro, W009	37:44		
Schubert-Göller			
Andersken über Themas des Waldes			
'An der schönen, blauen Donau'	30:47		
von Johann Strauss			
Schumann			
lieder	18:28		
Schütz			
Op. Motetten your piano, Op. 28			
No. 3, Cantatas	30:47		
Papillon d'Amour/Sonatas			
violin, Op. 39 Nos. 2	30:47		
Sgambati			
Sonata, Op. 34	30:47		
J. Stamitz			
Sinfonia, a 4 in D	30:77	30	
Stanford			
Fantasy and Trios, Op. 17	33:57	46	
Organ Sonata Nos. 1 and 2	33:57	46	
Partsong	28:27	26	
Op. Preludes, Op. 84	33:57	46	
R. Strauss			
Don Quixote, Op. 35	1:4	49	
Marcho, Op. 21	1:4	49	
Till Eulenspiegel's lustige Streiche, Op. 28	1:4	49	
Stravinsky			
Symphony of Psalms	30:44		
Talich			
In g-misurata on Flute	18:29		
Liberus rex	18:29		
Solitaire march	18:29		
Tavener			
Take Him, Earth, for Chanting	18:28		
Tennius			
Solo	30:71		
Tulve			
L'Unders återkomst	30:71		
Vaeks			
Symphony	30:71		
Vaughan Williams			
Op. Windish Ridge	28:27	21	
Op. Symon	30:50		
Op. Impressions for Orchestra	30:50		
The Rhapsody of Canterbury			
Incidental Music	30:50		
Op. Windish Ridge	28:27	21	
Prelude to an Old Carol Tune	30:50		
Songs of Travel - excerpts	30:50		
Vardi			
For Maria	30:77		
Liberus rex	30:77		
Orfeo	30:95		
Op. First work	30:77		
Villa-Lobos			
Complete Solo Piano Works			
Volume 1	30:56	46	
Vinci			
Alexander - Biografia in allegro	30:50		
E Moths - excerpts	30:50		
Sonata in strombolita	30:50		
In brevis a mille luto	30:49		
Vivaldi			
Concerto in D-flat, BWV6	30:46		
Wagner			
Das Rheingold	30:47		
Rienzi	30:46		
Trombe and Soli - Prelude	30:44		
Wallace			
Songs	30:71	28	
Warlock			
The Cuckoo	28:27	21	
Widmer			
Vigen Symphonies			
No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11 No. 1	1:49	47	
No. 6 in F minor, Op. 11 No. 4	1:49	47	
Wiener			
Piano Concerto No. 1, 'Tränen Andante'	30:56	18	
Winter			
Der Waldsee	30:52		
In den Waldsee	30:52		
Zur Nacht	30:52		
L. P. Woolf			
Rain: Quartets of Love	30:79		
Collections			
Arise for Caliphate	30:49		
Book of a Synagogue	30:71	30	
Chantbook for the Queen	30:28		
Symphony	30:71		
A Grand Romance	30:47		
The Hours Begin to Sing	30:79		
Liberus rex	30:79		
Music from the Age of Louis XIV	1:4	48	

BRITTEN SAINT NICOLAS

HYMN TO ST CECILIA
REJOICE IN THE LAMB

STEPHEN CLEOBURY
CONDUCTOR

ANDREW KENNEDY
BRITTEN SINFONIA



AVAILABLE NOW ON AUDIO CD
OR DOWNLOAD

britten
100

www.britten100.org

This album has been Mastered for iTunes.
Distributed in the UK by harmonia mundi UK



Disc of the Month

Adams

Doctor Atomic Symphony

Peter Oundjian and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra tackle three important works by the American composer John Adams. An expansive, richly expressive piece, *Harmonielehre* is influenced by many great twentieth-century composers as well as Adams's own surreal dreams. The *Doctor Atomic Symphony* draws on material from the controversial opera *Doctor Atomic*. Also included is the energetic fanfare *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*.

CHAS 5109

SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



CHANDOS New Releases



Aquarelle Guitar Quartet

Cuatro

In this release the dynamic and innovative Aquarelle Guitar Quartet offers a homage to Spain, the spiritual home of the classical guitar. Arrangements of works by Fernando Sor, Pjotr-Ilyich Korssakof, and Isaac Albeniz join Ian Krouse's evocative Polkas.

CHAN 10796



Sullivan

The Beauty Stone

The Beauty Stone is a neglected gem among the works of Sir Arthur Sullivan, better known for his famous collaboration with W.S. Gilbert. This premiere commercial recording, featuring some of the finest singers on the operatic stage today, restores all the original music. The release follows Chandos's highly regarded recording of *Aeschos*.

CHAN 10794(2)



Tasmin Little

The Lark Ascending

Tasmin Little once again demonstrates her unique affinity with some of the best-loved British composers of the 20th century. Alongside Morav's Violin Concerto are Elgar's three salon pieces, Holst's *A Song of the Night*, Debussy's *L'après-midi et le bal* and Tasmin Little's pièce de résistance, *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams.

CHAN 10798



Choir of St John's College, Cambridge

Sacred Choral Works by John Sheppard

The Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, recognised for its distinctive, rich, and expressive sound, has been a cornerstone of the English choral tradition since the 1670s. Here it performs sacred choral works in a wide range of styles spanning the career of the English composer John Sheppard.

CHAS 0021



Bartók

Miraculous Mandarin Suite

Edward Gardner and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra perform three great orchestral works by Béla Bartók. The Suite from the gritty ballet score *The Miraculous Mandarin* includes some of the composer's most colourful and dramatic music. Also featured are the *Four Orchestral Pieces* and the atmospheric *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*.

CHAS 5130



www.chandos.net

www.theclassicalshop.net (24-bit downloads, lossless, MP3)

STAY IN THE KNOW



New releases • Reviews • Special offers • Artist features

Disc

Beck, J. S. *Beethoven, Chopin, Grieg, Mendels. Recollections. Suite for Solo Violin. Tchaikovsky "Nocturnal Trip", etc.* Beethoven's "Intermezzo in A, Op. 118 No. 7", Grieg's "Wooded Day, Op. 42 No. 1", Beethoven's "Cannon Sonata" (from *Paganini Variations*, Op. 10) and Tchaikovsky's "Narcisse in C-sharp minor, Op. 9 No. 4" **5020952**

Referendari *Masses Requiem, Glagolitic, Kodaly, Lisinski, Pachelbel, Stravinsky et al.* *Chor and Orchestra of Operna House in Zagreb/Sigis* **50207046** (see CD)

CDs

Kalichmanov *Three Piano Sonatas, Op. 1 Gounod* **5021361**

Marcu *"Chamber Works for Guitar"* *Tapies y Diapentes. Viento Viento. Partita de Sopranos Amoros* **5021584**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Yonell *"Vivoli Collection, Vol. 7"* *Sonata Recoracion (mpg) direction: Giorgio Gallone*, *Sonia Miller (mpg) direction: Arnold Bernardi*, *La mariana (mpg) direction: Stefano Mazzoni di Padolina*, *Il trionfo (mpg) direction: Stefano Yonell*, *Felicit (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli*, *Antica (mpg) direction: Flaminio Piccoli* **5021456**

Downloads

DeBussey *"Claire L'Herminie" - Music composed for Jeanette* A film by Georges Gascot **5021138** (see DVD)

Francois Le Gall *Violin et Violoncelle (mpg) direction: Christian Lipp* *Sonata: Jacques-Alexandre Lacombe; Schindler's List: Jonathan Leshowitz et al.* *Chor and Orchestra of Royal Swedish Opera/Stockholm* **5021306** (see CD)

Variations *composers: Vladimir Horowitz and the "Breathing Child"* A film by Lisa Kirk Gilman **5021470** (see CD)

Variations *composers: Beethoven, Lisinski - The Storm - A Walking spirit for one soloist - A film by Greg Thomson* **5021470** (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

Vivoli *the Vivoli in masterpieces (mpg) direction: Francesco Orsi* *Popper: Gavotte; Luigi Cherubini: No. 16; Beethoven et al.: Chor de Oper Leipzig; Gounod/Händel: Spring/Chilly Spring* **5021527** (mpg) (see CD)

NEW RELEASES

divine art
the spirit of music

THE EXPRESSIVE VOICE OF THE FLUTE

A superb collection of 45 light classics, ranging from the dreamy and romantic to the lively and sparkling. Many well-known favourites with real virtuosity.
KENNETH SMITH / PAUL SHODDES
Divine Art DOA 21222 (2CD)



Recently released
FLUTE VOCALISE
The fantastic prelude to The Expressive Voice of the Flute – a programme of timeless concert classics for flute and piano
KENNETH SMITH / PAUL SHODDES
Divine Arts DVD 24156 (sold price)



ROMANTIC PIANO TRIOS
High-Romantic pieces including works by Dag Wulm, William Hurlstone and Max d'Ossola, and the premiere recording of Miriam Hyde's "Fantasy Trio"
TRIO ANIMA SUONI
Divine Art DOA 25182 (2CD)

ABSOLUTELY!
A definite contender for our disc of the year – a true fusion and blend of soft jazz solos and improvisations, over standard "swing" classical playing
LIVE STEINMETZ / MADDS TOLLING
STEFAN LAMM STRING QUARTET
Divine Art DOA 25112



WHEN THE FLAME DIES
A new opera from acclaimed composer Ed Hughes – the story of lost love and betrayal with a strong link to the Orpheus legend and characters
SOLOISTS / NEW MUSIC PLAYERS CONDUCTED BY CARLOS DEL CUSTO
Movie MOV 77293 (CD & DVD)

Divine Art Record Company
UK +44 (0)797 902 3121 uksales@divine-art.co.uk
USA +1 802 247 4295 sales@divineartrecords.com

www.divineartrecords.com

Visit our website for full catalogues, track listings, artist profiles, reviews
Secure on-line purchasing for CDs and downloads
Also available digitally via iTunes, Amazon Prime and Amazon mp3.

Distribution in the USA by



Distribution in the UK by



Australia: SOF Music
France: Alliance Musique
Germany: Naxos
Italy: Melos Direct
Japan: Tokyo Land
New Zealand: Ona Records
Netherlands: Naxos
Russia & Czech Republic: R.C.D.



the specialist Web Store
Dedicated to Classical Music - browse the latest releases, search the on-line database, take advantage of the multi-buy discounts & order securely for world-wide delivery.
www.crotchet.co.uk

Children, Chanters, Handbells.

Monoglyphic Poets. *Revel* (Handbell & Recorder), Grand Finale, Op. 7. L. Brancusi - Diana Bell (Handbell). *Concertino No. 1 in F minor*, Op. 101. *Partners from an Exhibition*. *Quel Jour*.

Martin. *Belles Soires* (English Horn/Guitar). *Belles Soires* (CD) **GN12140**

Schubert (Various Voices and Earth, Vol. 1) (Piano Sonata - No. 9 in B, D978), No. 9B in C minor, 1995A. *Eight December Times* (Clarinet), 2079. *Fan* (CD) **GN12143** (New CD)

Schubert (Piano Sonata No. 21 in B-flat, D959). *Der Erlöser*, 1996. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12151** (New CD)

Schumann et al. *From Winter*, Op. 99. *Abendlied*, Op. 124, etc. (CD) **GN12150**

Classical Music

Ramirez (Los Angeles de Chamber Music). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Partners from Los Angeles Concerto* (CD) **GN12151** (New CD)

Classical Performers

de Cambrai. *Villard de Hainmoncent* (Villard de Hainmoncent: Minors, narratives and music of a 15th-century cathedral builder, Vol. 2 - Canticles). *Groundwork* (Song by John de Cambrai). *Groundwork* (Miniature) (CD) **GN12158**

Instrumental Labels, The

Wagner (Trompa and Jodelle Comedy). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Capriccio*. *Comedy*. *Andas-Hals* et al. *Capriccio* (Clarinet). *Capriccio* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (2009) **GN12159-60** (New CD)

Grand Piano Records

Schubert (Complete Original Works for Piano Solo and Duo, Vol. 4). *Hammerwerk*, Op. 41. *Lied et Mars*, Vol. 6. *Three Pieces* (arrangement), Op. 17. *Two Sonatas* (de piano alla tonda). *Fard*, Op. 18. *Sonata* (Piano Solo). (CD) **GN12164**

Tchaikovsky (Complete Piano Music, Vol. 4). *Sonatina*, Op. 46. 12. *Perle*, Op. 41. *Four Romances*, Op. 11. *Five Caprices* (Piano, Op. 12). *Chanson* (Kauf). (CD) **GN12165**

Orchestral CDs

Veritas composers (Christmas Time). *Cantata from King's College, Cambridge* (O of King's College). *Cambridge* (Widdow). (CD) **GN12167**

CDs

Edwards. *Madrigal Opus*, RTA/17. *Sea Drift*, RTA/17. *The Garden of Zion*, H210. *William*. *Hall* (CD). *Hall* (New CD). *The Hall* (New CD) **GN12170**

Instrumental Classics

Beck, J. S. (The Original Late Works) *Suite in G minor*, BWV1015. *Perle*, *Paper* and *Allegro in G minor*, BWV1098. *Suite in F*, BWV1004a. (CD) **GN12168**

Beck, J. S. (No. 20) *Handwriting Concerto*, BWV1084.11. *Organ Book Festival* (Clarinet Solo) (CD) **GN12171** (New CD)

Haydn (Complete Symphonies, Vol. 20). *Symphonies - No. 21 in C minor*, Hob. 1/21. *No. 38 in F-flat major*, Hob. 1/36. *No. 41 in F major*, Hob. 1/33. *Military* (Auldridge). *English* (CD) **GN12182**

Hauger (Various of New as Richter). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Partners from Los Angeles Concerto* (Piano Solo). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Partners from Los Angeles Concerto* (Piano Solo). (CD) **GN12151**

Penderecki (Piano Concertos, *Reverent*) (Mig). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12152**

Schubert (Piano Works, Vol. 30). *Piano Sonata in A minor*, D181. *Variation in C*, D260. *Wunderhorn* (Fantasie on a Theme of Arnold Dolderer), D176. *Variation on a Walse by Schubert*, D178. (CD) **GN12184**

Shostakovich (Symphonies - No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10). *No. 4 in B minor*, Op. 14. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12183**

Instrumental Music

Beck, J. S. (Handbell Music, BWV1210). *Great Minors* (Ed. John de Long). *Staff*. *Ed. Konrad*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12184** (New CD)

Danz. *Vaughan Williams*. *Walden* (The Fall). *On Woodchick Edge*. *Two Birds Song*. *The Carlin*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12185**

Mozart (Classical Sonatas in A, K101). *String Quartet in D minor*, K417. *K417*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12186**

Tchaikovsky (Wunderhorn Suite). *Suite from the Baller in arrangements by Edvard Ellegren and Billy Strangher*. *Hammerwerk*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12187**

Traditional (Song of Olden Times). *Reverent*. *Ed. Konrad*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12188**

Various Instrumental Series

Mozart (Piano Sonata - No. 4 in F-flat, K101). *Wagner*, Op. 17 in F, K101. *Wagner*, Op. 18 in F, K101. *Wagner*, Op. 18 in F, K101. (CD) **GN12189**

Instrumental Series

Assomptions. *Complete*. *Duffy*. *Compositional*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12190**

Langley (Piano Solo). *Muse*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12191**

Langley (Piano Solo). *Muse*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12192**

Instrumental Series

Haydn (No. 3). *Reverent*. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12193**

Mozart. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12194**

Shostakovich. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12195**

Shostakovich. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12196**

Shostakovich. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12197**

Shostakovich. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12198**

Shostakovich. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12199**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12200**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12201**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12202**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12203**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12204**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12205**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12206**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12207**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12208**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12209**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12210**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12211**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12212**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12213**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12214**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12215**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12216**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12217**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12218**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12219**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12220**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12221**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12222**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12223**

Instrumental Series

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12224**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12225**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12226**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12227**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12228**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12229**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12230**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12231**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12232**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12233**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12234**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12235**

Alford. *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). *Andas-Hals* (2SR Grand-Golf-Jacquard). (CD) **GN12236**

Figue's, "Hindale", "Le moue di Figue", "Mistral", "Le Chateau di Tini", "Le Hill di Riphon", "Sonus et Dille" and "Orlando Portico". **Artist:** Gustav Janáček. **Format:** Audio CD. **Label:** Naxos. **Tracks:** 10. **Price:** £12.99. **Release Date:** 15/10/11. **Barcode:** 0953982800000

Debussy: Nielsen: Spähe Periwinkle
Kapellmeister Christian Gansch, 19179. **Classical Concerto No. 4 in E minor, Walden**
Label: Naxos

Prokofiev: Stravinsky: Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 43, Violin Concerto in D, Op. 190/191a
Label: Naxos

Cherubini Symphonies – No. 1 in G, Walden, "Der National", No. 4 in D, Walden, Overture in C for England & Austria
Label: Naxos

Cherubini Symphonies – No. 1 in G, Walden, "Der National", No. 4 in D, Walden, Overture in C for England & Austria
Label: Naxos

Frangulis, Glenn F. Richter: Haydn/Handel Concertos – Concerto pour Clavier et Ensemble instrumental, Concerto for Haydn/Handel and Chamber Orchestra, Suite Amper-Less, **Label:** Naxos
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

Gravelle: "The Complete Madrigals"
Label: Naxos

NEW RELEASES ON ONDINE

ONDINE

HINDEMITH

VIOLIN CONCERTO • SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSE • KONZERT FÜR SOLO

MIDORI
NDR SINFONIEORCHESTER

CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH

OND 121473

"Midori is one of the most astonishingly gifted musicians of her generation"
BBC Music (classical-music.com)

ONDINE

SHOSTAKOVICH

THE EXECUTION OF STEPAK RAZIN
ZOLA SUITE
SUITE OF FINNISH THOUGHTS

SHENYANG
STATE CHOR "ARTIST"
HEILIGENPELHIMMEL THEATRE
VLADIMIR ASHKENAZY

OND 120652

Stunning dramatic works by Dmitri Shostakovich featuring one of Opera's rising stars, bass-baritone Shenyang, with one of classical music's legendary figures Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Distributed exclusively in the UK by Select Music and in North America by Naxos of America.

ONDINE
www.ondine.com

Romanian Folk Dances, 1895. In the Mine, JW 108/72. Seven Pieces, Op. 11 **RR141**

Hall et al. "Nativity Ball" Choir. Holmgren conducts. Fantasy, Canon 6 in 2. Peace in the Second Time. Lord Loyalty's Galliard. He or so it is of it, etc. Fantasy **RR142**

Shostakovich
Belikov: The Hours of the Master. Cantata No. 1. My beloved is mine, Op. 80. No. 2. Abraham and Isaac; No. 3. Still till the rain, Op. 10; No. 4. Journey of the King, Op. 84; No. 5. The Death of St. Nicholas, Op. 89. Stanzas Gullit. Madras. Tenets. Williams. Fisher. Madras. Walk **RR143/RR144**

Shostakovich
Shostakovich: Like as the late delights. Can dided. vocal. Short time without the great. Three Party. Ego. Memento. Always. Double Ego. I die when I do not see. My love. Give for tears by. Vol. 7. Song Quarters No. 1-3. Khosro Andis. Quater **RR145/RR146** (two CDs)

Telemann
Sebastian Bachmann, C. Telemann. Richard's. Supplement - No. 7 in D3, Op. 73, No. 4 in 2 minor, Op. 98. Lieder. Thomas. Cahill. Dick. Kaplan. S. Hiller. George. Wolf. Andris **RR147/RR148** (two CDs)

Telemann Classics
Center Instrumental and Chamber Music. Vol. 1 - Music for Solo Piano; Piano Sonatas. Six Sonatas, Op. 5. Three Pieces. Pantomime. Sonatas, etc. **RR149/RR150**

Eller: Complete Piano Music, Vol. 4. Piano Sonata No. 1. Six Pieces. Nocturne. Pantomime. Butterfly. Ballade, etc. Lisman **RR151/RR152**

Faren: Premier Album. Concerto 4 string, Vol. 2; Concerto No. 1 & 2; Light. Russian Rhapsody (two CDs) **RR153/RR154**

Tarantini: 90 Sonate piano, Vol. 2. Sonata No. 7-13 **RR155/RR156**

Verona: Complete Music for String Quartet. Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra. String Quartet No. 1 and 2. Real String Quartet. **RR157/RR158**

Verona: Organ Works/Orgelwerke. Gerdemann, G/RY 800. Fink (Reinhold) über den Christ. Himmels in der Sonne. Schütz, G/RY 611. Strakosky. Pöhlmann. (Introduction, Aria and Study) G/RY 807. Pöhlmann. G/RY 100. Schütz. Concerto No. 3, etc. **RR159/RR160** (Major organ of St. Johannes. Organ. Pöhlmann. Organ) **RR161/RR162**

Verona: Zyklus "Mexican Piano Concertos." El Finca de San Juan, Op. 10. Concerto para Piano y Grande Orquesta, Op. 43. Concerto para Piano y Orquesta. Grosse. **RR163/RR164**

Verona: Bach.
Bach/Bachmann, Handel: European Baroque Master in London. In: Bach/Bachmann's "Themas in C and G" and Handel's "Two Sonatas in G minor, Op. 2 No. 4" and "Two Sonatas in E, Op. 2 No. 9" **RR165/RR166**

Kempff, Hans Sigi, Op. 25. Klavierkonzerte in drei Akten **RR167/RR168** (two CDs)
Mahler: The Music of Gustav Mahler - Award 7th, 1963-67 Award. Singing. Harmonies. Songs et al. **RR169/RR170** (two CDs)
Nones La Sonatas musicales orgánicas. Sonatas. Gullit. Bonn **RR171/RR172** (two CDs)

Michael Binotti
Scherzer: Die drei Klavier Opus. Among. Concerto. Rhapsody. Hymns et al. Cello and Symphony. Disk von Radio. Dresden/CD **RR173/RR174** (two CDs)
Yerli: Orff's. Katakomben. Finken. Quilca et al. Orquesta y Coro. Andris del Teatro. Gullit/Kelmar. Buenos Aires. 1940 **RR175/RR176** (two CDs)

Warner Classics
Various composers: The Sound of Music. Nelson: A portrait of the artist Nelson et al. **RR177/RR178**

Wings
Haver Symphonies - No. 1 ("Walden") for chamber orchestra; No. 4 ("Walden") for two orchestras. Beethoven. Haydn. Mozart. Jovanov. **RR179/RR180**
Hosokawa: Silver Flowers - String Quartet; Blossoming. Floral Fairy. Kalligraphic. Landscape 3. Silver Flowers. Middle Ages (two CDs) **RR181/RR182**

Winged Lion
Belikov. Dvorak. Shostakovich. Ligetian. Martin. Part. Tchaikovsky, etc. Belikov's "A Boy was Born," Dvorak's "The Three Kings," Handel's "Young Long Ago," Ligetian's "A Hymn of the Nativity," Martin's "Amen Lay Theodor," and Part's "Rebillion" with the Copenhagen Royal Chapel Ch. Gabriel. Grosse/Richard **RR183/RR184**

LAWO

NEW RELEASE

LAWO CLASSICS



IM FRIEHN

GRIGI/BARTOK/DEBESY

NIL ANAND/MARSHALL - piano

UNICORD

"This is an important pianist who shines brilliantly with his repertoire."

GRIGI/BARTOK/DEBESY

UNICORD CLASSICS

www.lawoclassics.com

CORO

New on CORO



THE SIXTEEN

PALESTRINA

PALESTRINA Volume 4

The Sixteen continues its exploration of Palestrina's work with the fourth disc in its series featuring music for Christmas including the Missa (Resurreximus) in Latin and hymn A solo et corale

A of taste in the making

GRANDPHONY



J.S. BACH

Lutheran Masses

Volume 1

The Sixteen

J.S. BACH

Lutheran Masses

Volume 1

The Sixteen's first Bach project in nearly 20 years uses their vibrant choruses and deeply moving arias of Bach's seldom recorded Masses to great effect.



Joy to the World

An American Christmas

The Sixteen

JOY TO THE WORLD

An American Christmas Celebrates Christmas with America's oldest arts organization, the Handel and Haydn Society, as they explore a fascinating and eclectic selection of festive music with an American flavor.

Christmas on CORO



A Tale of Two Christmas Carols Collection

The Sixteen



Christus Natus Est

An Early English Christmas

The Sixteen



Handel MESSIAH

The Sixteen



A Ceremony of Carols

Responses to the Christmas season

The Sixteen

I was born in 1956 and Britten's music was part of my childhood: he was the first living composer whose works I came to know, either through performing or hearing them. When I was a musical teenager, Britten's newest pieces always engendered excitement: discovering the records of the *War Requiem* in about 1969, sitting glued to the BBC television premiere of *Opera House*, and awaiting the works of Britten's final years with impatience. So it feels a little strange to be celebrating his centenary already, but here we are, approaching November 22nd, 2013, and record companies – especially Britten's own – have taken the opportunity to mark the occasion. The most important by far is a comprehensive celebratory box from Decca, the company for which Britten made most of his recordings.

Britten: The Complete Works

This mighty set is a remarkable collaboration between Decca and some 20 other labels. Thanks to the cooperative nature of this venture, the Decca box is able to include all Britten's original works (having a handful of marginal pieces, mostly noted below) in their final versions; the first versions of *Jilly Bull* and the *Viola Concerto* are available elsewhere – *Jilly Bull* in Warner's *Essential Benjamin Britten* (discussed below). The set does not include Britten's performances of other composers (that those he recorded for Decca are in *Britten the Performer*, discussed below), nor arrangements such as Britten's Purcell realizations and his reconstruction of 'What the Wild Flowers Tell Me' from Mahler's Third Symphony. The idea of this set has been to present Britten's original canonical works in toto and that's what we are given here. A few weeks of total immersion in this set have proved to be an infinitely rewarding experience, and a reminder of what an astonishingly original and compelling musical voice Britten was over more than five decades of creative endeavour. During his lifetime, he was variously charged with being too fluent, or far too grappling with intellectual technique, but these seem peculiarly facile criticisms when one listens to the whole of his output. His position as one of the most important and inventive composers of the twentieth century is confirmed beyond a shadow of doubt by this set: if anything, his stature grows, not least through having the opportunity to hear works that are seldom performed alongside familiar masterpieces.

Decca has a marvellous archive of its own Britten recordings on which to draw for this release. Many of them are familiar and most have been on CD before, but it's the comprehensiveness of this project that makes it so valuable. This large box is organized in four sections, to which is added an Appendix of historical recordings (including the rehearsal of the *War Requiem*, as well as several important performances noted in the course of this review, and a DVD of Tony

Benjamin Britten centenary

by Nigel Simeone



Palmer's BBC film about *The Burning Fire Furnace*). The first section is 'The Operas' and everything here is likely to be well known to Britten collectors. Britten himself conducted most of his own operas for Decca: *Peter Grimes*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Albert Herring*, *Jilly Bull*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Melomane*, *Night's Dream* and *Opera House*. *Peter Grimes* comes in the recording made for EMI/Virgin by Philip Brunelle with the Plymouth Music Series; the premiere recording of *Death in Venice* features the original cast conducted by Stewart Bedford under the composer's supervision. *Glennie* comes in the outstanding recording conducted by Charles Mackerras, long associated with Britten's music ever since conducting some of the original performances of *The Turn of the Screw*. It's impossible to imagine more definitive performances than these and most of them are in the finest Decca sound of the time: for the most part it's still extraordinarily good. *The Turn of the Screw* is in mono, but this hardly matters, since the cast is at its freshest and the work was still new. Peter Pears is central to the success of most of these performances, singing the roles that were directly inspired by and created for him. I know there are some who find Pears's voice just too individual, but this is the musician Britten had in mind for major roles in several of his greatest operas: *Grimes*, *Captain Vere*, *Quint*, *Aschenbach* and so on. In other words, not only do these performances mostly have the authority of Britten's conducting but also, in many cases, of the singers for whom the parts were conceived – Pears above all.

The second subdivision of the box is 'Stage and Screen' and here we come to some far

less-well-known music. Of the 'stage' works, Britten's 'new musical venue' of *The Ragam's Opera comes* in the 1992 recording under Bedford, while *Night's Dream* is the first recording under Norman Del Mar (it's never been bettered) and *The Little Soap (Fat's Hair an Opera)* is the 1956 mono recording by Britten himself. The *Golden Tossie* is described as a 'standalone' by Britten – he conceived it as a miniature stage work (in costume but without scenery) for the Vienna Boys' Choir. It comes in the recording by the

Wandsworth School Boys' Choir conducted by Russell Burgess, with Britten at the piano. The three 'Church Parables' are among the most innovative of Britten's stage works: *Carole Row* based on a Japanese *Noh*-play, *The Burning Fire Furnace* and *The Prodigal Son*, all written for hand-picked groups of singers and players for performance in church and heard here in the recordings all credited as being under the joint musical direction of Britten and Viola Tunnard. These are three of Britten's most experimental pieces, given performances of superb assurance and compelling advocacy. *The Children's Gospel* (after Brody) was written for children – the Wandsworth Boys – on the 50th anniversary of the Save the Children Fund, but the musical language of this 'ballet for children's voices and orchestra' is stark and challenging. *The Peace of the Pagodas* was composed for the Royal Ballet and the score incorporates elements of the Balinese music that had fascinated Britten for many years (his 1941 recording with Colin McPhee of Balinese *Ceremonial Music* isn't included here, though it's readily available elsewhere – it would have been fascinating to have McPhee's two-piano work juxtaposed with Britten's own recording of *The Peace of the Pagodas*, which owes much to McPhee's model in places). The recording is delightfully cast (Oliver Knussen's EMI version is complete – see below). Britten's other original ballet is a rarity: *Plymouth Toss*, composed in 1931 while he was a first-year student at the Royal College of Music, comes in a recording by the BBC SO conducted by Grant Llewellyn that originally appeared as a cover disc on the BBC Music magazine.

Britten's film scores were mostly written for the GPO (Post Office) Film Unit in the 1930s (the most famous of these is *Night Mail*), though *The Way to the Sea* was for the Southern Railway, and *Love from a Stranger* was the only feature film for which he composed the music. An excellent disc conducted by Martin Brabbins includes these, and *Love from a Stranger* comes in a recording by the BBC SO under Jac van Steen. Britten's incidental music for plays and radio drama is perhaps even less familiar. *The Rescue of Penelope*, *The Company of Men* and more besides, including excerpts from *The Secret in the Stone* from a rare recording conducted by Walter Goehr. I should note a couple of omissions: the score of *Stratton* (1949), Britten's last incidental music, for a play by Ronald Duncan, is lost; all that survives is a recording by the English Opera Group Orchestra conducted by the composer (released by Pearl on GDM50231). That isn't included in this set, and nor are Britten's scores for *King Arthur* and *The World of the Siren* (both available on Chandos CHAN9487).

The third subdivision, 'Voices', includes all of Britten's non-dramatic works that use vocal forces, ranging from chorus and orchestra to voice and piano. Among the choral-orchestral works, the *War Requiem*, *Spring Symphony* and *Saint Nicolas* are all firmly established in the standard repertoire and come in the definitive composer-conducted versions (*Saint Nicolas* is in mono, but it's still marvellous); the *War Requiem* rehearsals are included in the Appendix). The *Comata Abscondita* and *Comata Abscondita* are much less regularly performed, and works like *Ballad of Heroism*, *Voces for Today*, or the very late *Williams Ode and Præses* or *Great Men* are seldom encountered in the concert hall. Many of these works (and all the major ones) were recorded by Britten himself, while Simon Rattle recorded *Ballad of Heroism* and *Præses* or *Great Men*, the *Williams Ode* comes in a recording of the first performance, given by forces drawn from Suffolk schools, conducted by Keith Shaw in July 1977.

Choral works – unaccompanied, or with organ, harp or piano – are very well served. *Requiem in the Lamb*, *A Boy was Born* and *A Ceremony of Carols* are conducted by Britten, while many of the shorter sacred pieces come in the versions made for Agnes by George Guest with the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, and the brilliant but short-lived Brian Ransmett at the organ. Their recording of the *Mass* here is very fine, but I'm delighted that room has also been found in the Appendix for the first performance at Westminster Cathedral, directed by George Malcolm. Other choral works are finely done by the Sixteen, the Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge, Louis Halsey's Elizabethan Singers, Pears's Wilby Consort and others. The remarkable A.R.D.C. (1939) setting poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins comes

in an excellent recording by the London Sinfonietta Chorus under Terry Edwards. Britten's choral output was prolific and there are a number of shorter pieces here that are far from familiar even to Britten devotees. Though it's not by Britten himself, I should mention the orchestral arrangement of *Rajasee* in the Lamb made at Britten's request by Ingeborg Holst – his assistant for many years – for an Aldborough Festival concert in 1952. Although not included here, it is available in an excellent recording issued by Harmonia Mundi (HMD907676).

The works for solo voice and orchestra include several masterpieces. *Les Illuminations*, the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*, the *Naxos* and *Phaedra*. The last of these was written for Janet Baker, who sings it incomparably on the 1977 recording with Stewart Bondard. *Les Illuminations* was first sung by a soprano, but Pears's 1966 recording is used here, supplemented by three discarded songs taken from Sandrine Piau's recent (and splendidly) recording originally released by NMC. The *Serenade* comes not only in Pears's 1963 recording with Barry Tuckwell but also in his first recording with Dennis Brain (included in the Appendix) – both conducted by Britten – while 'New Sloops the Cinnamon Pearl', a discarded song which Britten originally thought of including in the *Serenade*, comes in the performance by Neil Mackie with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Bondard. The other works for voice and orchestra include the very early *Quatre chansons françaises* (composed in 1928), in a fine performance by Jill Gomez with Rattle and the CBSO, and the extraordinary *Our Floating Father* is similarly impressive from Elizabeth Söderström with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera and Richard Armstrong (a broadcast performance by Britten and Pears is included in the Appendix). The five *Canzons* come in the recordings from 1961 of 'My Beloved is Mine' (Pears), 'Abraham and Isaac' (Pears) and the boy also John Halverson and 'Still Falls the Rain' (Pears and Tuckwell), and the first recordings of 'The Journey of the Magi' and 'The Death of St Narcissus'. The Appendix also includes the first studio recording of 'Abraham and Isaac' with Norma Procter and Pears; a wonderful performance. 'Still Falls the Rain' appears not only in its original form but also in its re-orchestration as part of 'The Heart of the Matter' (sung by Mackie, narrated by Pears).

The song cycles with piano begin with Britten and John Shirley-Quirk performing *Tu fu Tu* (1911). *On The Maid* is an early cycle based on Auden poems and it was first performed by a soprano (Sophie Wyso) with Britten at the piano in 1937. It's performed here by Barbara Bonney with Malcolm Martineau (the first song, 'Let the flood music praise', was recorded by Pears and Britten in 1957 and is included in the Appendix). The *Canzon Songs* (also Auden settings) come in a version by Cayli Hughes

and Martineau and the Appendix includes two of these songs recorded by Pears and Britten in 1955 – a splendid little discovery. The *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* come in the incomparable Pears-Britten mono recording from 1954, while the *Holy Sonnets of John Donne* were made later, in 1967. The first recording of *A Glass of Solitude* was by Pamela Bowden with Peter Gilhara at the piano and is included here. The Hardy songs, *Winter Finch*, came in the first recording (Pears-Britten, 1956) but with the addition of two songs discarded from the work, sung by Robin Tritchler with Martineau. The later cycles are all present in their first studio recordings: *Songs from the Glass* with Pears and Julian Bream, *Six Madrigals Fragment* with Pears and Britten, *Songs and Poems of William Blake* with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Britten, *The Poet's Echo* with Galina Vishnevskaya and Rostropovich and *Who are these Children?* with Pears and Britten. A disc of 'Early and miscellaneous songs' includes all sorts of unusual material, and two further discs are devoted to Britten's folk-song arrangements, performed by Pears, Sophie Wyso, Robert Tear, Philip Langridge and Felicity Lott, with accompanists including Britten, Orian Ellis and Graham Johnson.

The fourth group, 'Instruments', includes Britten's orchestral, chamber and instrumental works. Given the immense popularity of *The Young Person's Guide*, the outstanding success of the *Sinfonia da Requiem*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Franz Bridge* and *Simple Symphony*, and regular outings for the Violin and Piano Concertos, Britten's orchestral output is surprisingly small: apart from these works, and the shockingly neglected *Enonates*, the *Cello Symphony* and the *Prelude and Fugue* for 18-part string orchestra (all here in recordings conducted by Britten) there are few major pieces. The late *Suite on English Folk Tunes* ('A time there was') comes in a lovely performance by Rattle and the CBSO, who also give splendid accounts of the *Classical Overture* (written for the inauguration of the BBC Third Programme), *An American Overture*, *Canadian Carnival* and *Young Apollo* (with Peter Donohoe). It's curious that Britten didn't record his Russian arrangements – *Soviet marches* and *Martini movements* – but this set includes versions by the National Philharmonic conducted by Richard Buynoy. *Son of Goodwill* – a set of variations on 'God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen' – is given a lively outing by the Minnesota Orchestra under Neville Martinov.

The other orchestral works include several interesting early pieces such as the *Ronde concertante* for piano and orchestra (1910), the *Double Concerto* for violin and viola (1912) and the movement from a planned *Clarinet Concerto* (1942). Two significant orchestral recordings are released for the first time: the *Fourth Ballad* for two pianos and orchestra played by Bracha Eden and Alexander Tansie with the *Orchestra de La Suisse Romande*.

under Sergio Cusani, and the overture (with chorus) *The Building of the House* conducted by Britten himself. The original score movement of the Piano Concerto is usefully added in the Appendix. Since the *Four Sea Interludes* and *Panopticon* from *Peter Grimes* are included in this set (the superb Concertgebouw version under Eduard van Bejnum, in the Appendix of historic recordings), I wonder why the 'Symphonic Suite' from *Glennan* (with its own opus number, Op. 53a) isn't also somewhere in the set. Of the collaborative orchestral works to which Britten contributed (*Sellinger's Round* and *How Jane*), only the parts composed by Britten are included, which feels a little odd, especially with the *Tennesson* on *Sellinger's Round* (the complete recording – conducted by Britten – is included in **Britten: The Performer**, reviewed below). *Lackington* comes in both the original version for viola and piano and the later arrangement for viola and strings.

The chamber music includes early works played by the Eschellien, Gabriel and Utrecht Quartets, the numbered string quartets played by the Allegri (Nos. 1) and Amadeus (Nos. 2 and 3) Quartets, the Cello Sonata and Suites from Rostropovich and good recordings of everything else – including such delightful oddities as the *Tampara Piece for Jimmy* (Blades) played by its dedicatee. Most of the piano music is recorded by Stephen Hough (solo works) and Bracha Liden and Alexander Tansir (two-piano works), with the assistance of Roman O'Hara, Rolf Hind and Anthony Goldstone, supplemented by historic recordings of the two-piano pieces by Britten and Clifford Curzon. There are several rarities among the organ works (the *Village Organist's Pass*, *Telarium* as a *Theme* by Thomas Tallis and *They Walk Alone* Prelude) played by Timothy Bond, as well as the *Prelude and Fugue on a Theme of Vintona* played by Simon Preston.

Presentation includes five booklets: standard-sized ones for each of the four work groups, which contain complete performance and recording details, excellent notes by Andrew Huth and texts and translations for Britten's settings of foreign-language texts, but not the English texts – so there are no opera librettos. There's a fifth book, a larger hardback, handsomely illustrated, to accompany the whole set, with an introduction by Paul Moxley, an essay by Philip Smart on Britten's relationship with Decca, and memories by John Culshaw and Peter Glossop. This book also includes lovely illustrations of the original LP sleeves, some superb session photos, an alphabetical list of Britten's works and information about the material contained on the discs that make up the Appendix to this set. This is really fine documentation – a genuine enhancement to the recordings themselves. A recommendation for this outstanding release seems almost superfluous: Decca has produced the definitive

collection of Britten's works in performances that are almost all of the highest quality. The result is a musical treasure house that nobody who loves this composer's music should be without. Only 3,000 copies of this set have been pressed, so it should be snapped up without delay (**Decca 478 3388**, 65 CDs and one DVD, approx. 70 hours).

Britten: The Performer on Decca

This is no mere supplement to **The Complete Works** but a set that is significant in its own right. Running to 27 discs, it includes all of Britten's studio recordings made for Decca of music by other composers, along with a number of performances that were recorded by the BBC and licensed to Decca – mostly of instrumental and chamber music. (Just to clarify: this set does not include those broadcasts that were issued by BBC Legends in its Britten series – Shostakovich's Fourteenth Symphony, Mahler's Fourth, and so on; as an aside, it would be good to have those discs back in circulation.)



The set opens with Britten's *Book*. The 1971 recording of the *St John Passion* in Imogen Holst's English translation boasts a most involving group of soloists led by Pears as the Evangelist, Guyona Howell as Jesus and Shirley-Quirk as Pilate. Britten's conducting is dramatic and the whole performance is superbly paced. It's a modern-instrument version, of course, but the English Chamber Orchestra plays beautifully and the contribution of the Wandsworth School Boys' Choir is really impressive. Two *Book* Cantatas – Nos. 102 and 151 – come in BBC recordings made at Aldeburgh. Both are very fine, marked by some superb solo singing. *How Jane*, *Three Songs when each Glen Glendon*, *BWV102* features Janet Baker, Pears and Fischer-Dieskau, while *Simon Trust*, *How Jane* comes has a lovely contribution from Jennifer Harper, joined by Helen Watts, Pears and Fischer-Dieskau. Britten's set of the *Roundelay Concerto* with the ECO is among

the most brilliant and refreshing modern-instrument versions – animated, stylish and extremely enjoyable. Purcell is represented by the 1970 recording of *The Fairy Queen* with a cast which includes Jennifer Vyvyan, Alfredo Hodgson, James Bowman, Charles Brett, Ian Partridge, Owen Brannigan, Pears and Shirley-Quirk. The performing edition of the work devised by Pears, Britten and Imogen Holst works extremely well, and though some of the voices may seem a little operatic for modern taste in Purcell, the results are so entertaining that I, for one, don't mind a bit. The other Purcell comprises the birthday ode for Queen Mary, *Gloriate the Festival* from a 1967 broadcast and Britten's version of the *Glossy* in G minor recorded the following year with the ECO.

Handel is represented by a recording that has not been published complete before: the *Ode For St Cecilia's Day*, set at the inaugural concert of the Snape Maltings in June 1967 with Harper and Pears, a chorus of East Anglian choirs and the ECO. Handel was something of a rarity in Britten's conducting repertoire, but this spirited performance reveals a born Handelian. There are four works by Haydn in this set: the famous recording of the C major Cello Concerto with Rostropovich from 1964, two Symphonies: No. 45, 'Farewell', and No. 55, 'Schubertine', recorded live at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1956 and conducted in characteristically illuminating and energetic style; and the charming set of Haydn's *Six Concertos* made by Pears and Britten in 1961. Britten's special affinity with Mozart is well known, and made manifest in his consistently inspired readings of Symphonies Nos. 25, 29, 38 ('Prague'), 39, 40 and 41 ('Jupiter'), all with the ECO,

along with a number of other recordings: the *Tennesson* settings, K229, two arias with Pears – *Si miose* in acts, K209 and *Re joice*, *no avarice*, K430 from 1962, and Piano Concertos in which Britten can be heard both as soloist (in No. 12, K414, recorded live in 1956) and conductor (No. 20, K466 and No. 27, K395) with Curzon. Britten and Sándor Richter are a dreamworthy partnership in the Sonata for piano four hands in C major, K523 and the Sonata for two pianos in D major, K448. This set also includes an important discovery: a series of Mozart recordings that Britten made with the LSO in 1963, released here for the first time. The Overture to *Giulio Cesare*, the *Masonic Funeral Music*, the same two arias he had recorded with Pears and the ECO a year earlier, and Symphony No. 40. Britten's relationship with the LSO at this time was close – the same year they worked together on the first recording of the *Har Requiem* –

and it's great to hear these performances at last, half a century after they were made. Presumably the self-critical Britten was unhappy with them for some reason, but it's hard to see why.

If any composer was even closer to Britten's heart than Mozart, it was Schubert. Here we have his 1970 recording of the 'Unfinished' Symphony with the ECO (originally released on LP coupled with Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony), the *Aspurgian* Sonata, D821 with Rostropovich, and a generous collection of piano four-hand music with Richter: the *Andante rari*, D821, *Fantasy in F minor*, D940, *Fantasy in A flat*, D811 and the glorious *Grand Duo*, D812 – an engaging performance of this expansive masterpiece. Then there are the recordings of Lieder: the two great cycles, *The Nine Wailers* and *Winterreise* with Pears, and a number of individual songs, some of them released for the first time in this set. As a priceless bonus, the handful of Schubert songs Britten recorded with Kathleen Ferrier are also included here.

Britten was an enthusiastic champion of Schumann's music and one of his last recordings was of the *Songs from Goethe's Faust* made at Snape in 1972, with an extraordinary array of soloists including Fischer-Dieskau, Elisabeth Harwood (a rising Dresden), Shirley Quirk, Pears, Jennifer Vyvyan, Felicity Palmer, Alfvina Hodgson and Robert Lloyd. Britten's magnificent advocacy of this work produces a performance that is more compelling than any other I know. There are two more Schumann pieces in this set: the *First Suite in F-sharp* with Rostropovich and *Die Tote* with Pears – a work they had been performing for 20 years when they made this recording in 1963.

Britten may sometimes have been outspoken in his views about British composers, but his recordings reveal a devoted interpreter. *Tiglar's Introduction and Allegro* has seldom had a more committed or detailed recording – a fiery and passionate account masterfully played by the ECO. *The Dream of Gerontius* is another triumph to anyone who isn't allergic to Pears. Speaking for myself, I find him an extremely moving Gerontius, and with Yvonne Milton and Shirley Quirk as the other soloists this is vocally a distinguished reading. The revolutionary playing of the LSO really helps this performance catch fire, from the Prelude onwards Britten's care over balance brings out colours and details that are not to be heard in any other recording. *Gerontius* has been lucky on record and this performance is among the finest. Britten's *DeLius* included not only the *Two Aquellas* but also *Summer Night on the River*, released here for the first time. On the whole *Vaughan Williams* was not a composer whose music Britten admired, but he gave several performances of *On Winkley Edge* and his recording with Pears and the Zurich String Quartet made

at Decca's West Hampstead Studios in 1945 is both atmospheric and subtle, and benefits too from Pears's impeccable diction. Britten felt a closer affinity with Hobot and recorded the *12 Songs*, Op. 48 (all Hansbert Wollé settings) with Pears, along with Ireland's cycle *The Land of Lost Content* and other songs. *Tippett's Songs for Axel*, Arthur Oldham's *Three Chinese Lyrics* as well as individual songs by Butterworth, Moeran, Warlock and Berkeley. Britten's recordings of Bridge are of particular interest: he remained devoted to the music of his most important teacher and this set includes the *Phantasia Quartet* with Britten and members of the Amadeus Quartet, the *Cello Sonata* with Rostropovich, and a number of songs with Pears of which the particular highlights for me are *Goldfish*, *Go not, happy day* and *Love was a-sleep*: it's the most electrifying performance of this thrilling song, with Britten voicing the piano chords superbly, driving the rhythms with rapturous energy, and Pears singing with perfect clarity – every word clear as a bell and his voice ideally resolved – 90 seconds of pure treasure. Grainger was another of Britten's great enthusiasms, and his recordings (released on LP as 'Salute to Percy Grainger') show the most joyous engagement with Grainger's folk-song settings.

Britten admired Shostakovich and this set includes two memorable broadcasts from Aldburgh: the *Cello Sonata* with Rostropovich and the *Seven Poems of Alexander Blok*, Op. 127 with Viduovotaya, Emanuel Harwitz and Rostropovich. Among the other items in this richly rewarding set, there's *Dalrymple* with Rostropovich (the *Cello Sonata*) and Richter (*In Blue at sea*, live), and Janáček (*Pohádka* with Rostropovich) as well as the complete performance of the collective *Seligner's Round variations* (by Oldham), *Tippett, Berkeley, Searle, Walton* and Britten himself, and Britten's arrangement of the National Anthem (preceded by a fanfare from Gleason) from the opening concert at the Snape Hallings.

The booklet includes absorbing notes by Philip Reed on Britten as a performer, and by Graham Johnson on *Winterreise*. This splendid set is a magnificent affirmation of Britten as a great interpreter as well as a composer of genius. A number of the recordings are released for the first time and several of those released have become rarities. (Box £78.99, 27 discs, approx. 20 hours).

EMI's Britten boxes

Five EMI (now Warner/Erato) boxes have appeared during the year. The set of *Orchestral Works* includes the most complete recording available of *The Prince of the Pagodes*, superbly conducted by Knussen. Other treasures in the set include some of Rattle's best Britten (*Deception* with Donohoe and several rarely heard works), Iona Brown's

dice of music for string orchestra and Ila Handel's eloquent account of the *Viola Concerto* with Pears. Beulah, Libor Pešek's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, *Young Person's Guide* and *Four Sea Interludes* with the RLPO are good rather than great, but for anyone wanting to acquire all of Britten's orchestral output, this set is a handy bargain, especially as works like the *Serenade for Lullaby*, *Russian Funeral Orchestral Overture* and *A Time Has Come* in excellent performances from Rattle and the CBSO. The *Cello Symphony* (Steven Isserlis and Richard Hickox) and *Piano Concerto (Left-Hand Andalus and Pears Jari)* are both decently done, though neither is in the same league as the Britten-conducted performances with Rostropovich and Richter. Since the set is offered at budget price, there's no reason to hesitate if the repertoire appeals. (EMI Classics 9 7819-2, eight discs, 8 hours, 2 minutes).



The box of *Chamber and Instrumental Works* is a particularly useful release. The Fudellin Quartet is an impressively cohesive ensemble in all the string quartet pieces (the three numbered quartets, the early *Quartet in D*, *Quintetto*, *Dissonance* and various shorter works) and plays the *Phantasia Quartet*, Op. 2 with oboist Nicholas Daniel and the *Phantasia* for string quintet with Nicholas Logie. The *Suite* for violin and piano, Op. 6 is given strong advocacy by Alexander Ruzhichik and John Alley, while the *Cello Sonata* is well played by Moray Welsh and John Leshons. Britten's solo instrumental works include the *Six Minutephones* for oboe (Roy Carter), the *Elégie* for viola (Garfield Jackson) and the *National* for guitar, played by Iliana. The piano works are performed by Hugh, who is joined by Roman O'Hara in the music for two pianos. The three *Cello Suites* come in really fine recordings by Truls Mørk. In short, this bargain-priced set should delight anybody who wants Britten's chamber music. (EMI Classics 9 78199-2, six discs, 6 hours 25 minutes).

The third of these EMI sets offers *Choral Works & Opera for Children*. Rattle's *His Requiem* with Siderstein, Tear and



Thomas Allen is one of relatively few versions to offer a serious alternative to Britten's own – it's a powerful, lightly charged reading, in spacious sound. The *Spring Symphony* comes in André Previn's 1978 recording with Sheila Armstrong, Baker and Tear. I've always loved this record: it relishes the joyous eccentricity of the work and is nightly impressive at the big moments. The works for choir and organ come mostly in versions by the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, conducted by David Willcocks and Philip Ledger. Good as they are, I tend to prefer the slightly clearer recorded sound and more natural flow of the St John's College recordings in the Decca **Complete Works**. The only oddity is Ledger's recording of *Rejoice in the Lamb* in a version with a sinquapi part added. Britten only sanctioned this addition (which he overtook himself) for a performance in a church with an organ that had weak pedal stops – hardly the case in King's College Chapel (and if choirs must do an arrangement of this piece, Ingeborg Hallén's orchestral version is far more interesting). Among other choral works, *Saint and Profane* is sung by the Ysaari Singers under Jeremy Bachmann, and *A Boy no less, A Maid no less, A Shepherd's Good* by the London Sinfonietta Chorus under Terry Edwards – all very accomplished.

The *Little Sweep*, a 1977 recording conducted by Ledger with Lloyd and Tear leading a cast which included the Fuchsley Children's Music Group, somehow misses a little of the freshness of Britten's own recording. Rather the same is true of Nono's *Stable*, another estimable performance, conducted by Hickox, with Donald Maxwell and Linda Ormiston as Nono and his wife, and with Richard Paus as the Voice of God. It's good but lacks the special atmosphere of the Argo recording under Eiv Mar. The last disc in this set includes *The Company of Heaven* conducted by Philip Brunelle (narrations by Peter Barkworth and Sheila Allen), while the *Ballad of Heroism and Possé Ho Gout*. *Ho* are both performed by Birmingham Forces under Bartle. *Saint Nicolas* comes in the King's College recording under Willcocks, with Tear as the soloist.

If stereo is essential, then this is the best alternative to Britten's outstanding version with Pears, which was recorded in mono (**198 Classics 0 7156-2**, over disc, 8 hour 20 minutes).

A fourth set in this series is devoted to **Vocal Works** and it is the first of them to have appeared sporting a Warner Classics logo. I've always loved Harper's version of *Les Illuminations* (with Manzier and the Northern Sinfonia). The *Sensuale* (with *New Sleeps the Grimm Fairy*) comes from Mackie and Tuckwell, conducted by Bedford, while the *Naxos* is sung by Tear with the ECO under Jeffrey Tate. Gomez's excellent recording of the *Queen Cleopatra fantasia* is coupled with *Our Floating Father* (Siderström, WNO, Richard Armstrong) and folk-song arrangements sung by Siderström and Palmer, who also gives a fine account of *Phaëta*. The historic recordings of the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* and *Maly Sonnets of John Donne* emanate from Pears and Britten, while *White Winds* and *On The Island* are performed by Tear and Ledger. The five Cantatas come in the admirable performances by Ian Bostridge, David Daniels and Christopher Maltman (with pianist Julius Drake), harpist Alison Brewer and, in *Cantata No. 3*, the harp player Timothy Brown). The rest of the box is devoted to early sets of songs and folk-song arrangements from several different singers, and by several of Britten's Parovell realizations and two rarities: Britten's orchestrations of Schubert's *Die ferdele* and Schumann's *Feldjägermusik* (both attractively done by Mackie with the Scottish CO under Bedford). With strong accounts of the major works, and an attractive selection of rarely heard arrangements, this is well worth investigating (**Warner Classics 0 7156-2**, six disc, 6 hour 50 minutes).

Finally, there's a box of six operas: *Paul Bunyan*, *Peter Grimes*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Billy Budd*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *Mohammed Nagle's Dream*. *Paul Bunyan* comes in the same (Philip Brunelle) recording that is used in Decca's **Complete Works**. *Peter Grimes* is the Haitink/*Royal Opera* recording with a cast led by Anthony Rolfe Johnson, Lot and Thomas Allen – a version I find extremely effective on repeated hearings, above all for Rolfe Johnson's engaging and sensitive depiction of the title role and Haitink's tone and disciplined conducting. The live 2011 recording of *The Rape of Lucretia* conducted by Knutson has a cast led by Bostridge, Susan Grillon, Angelika Kirchschlager, Peter Coleman-Wright and Christopher Purves. It is a magnificent achievement – as inspired account that deserves a place alongside Britten's own. Almost the same can be said for *Billy Budd*, with Bostridge as Vere, Gibson Saks as Claggart and Nathan Gunn as Billy. With the LSO on very impressive form under Daniel Harding, this is certainly an extremely worthwhile version, though it doesn't eclipse Britten's own in **The Complete Works**.

The Turn of the Screw has a cast led by Joan Rodgers (*Governess*) and Bostridge (*Quint/Prologue*), with the Malher Chamber Orchestra conducted by Harding. It is well worth serious consideration, not least because it's in very fine sound and thus complements the historic mono version with the original cast conducted by Britten. The last opera here is *A Mohammed Nagle's Dream* in the recording by Hickox with James Bowman (*Obertone*) and a strong cast of British singers including Lillian Watson (*Tytania*), Della Jones and Gomez (*Hermia and Helena*), Norman Bailey (*Thesurus*) and Donald Maxwell (*Bottom*). It's a creditable effort but doesn't have quite the vocal distinction or the exalted atmosphere of Britten's Decca recording. Still, this is a set I would recommend to anybody who wants alternative accounts to set alongside those in **The Complete Works**. In particular, the *Grimes*, *Lucretia*, *Billy Budd* and *Turn of the Screw* are performances of considerable distinction (**Warner Classics 7 85027-2**, 10 disc, 12 hour 25 minutes).

Some other Britten sets

Warner's **Essential Benjamin Britten** is a smaller anthology. The first disc includes *Young Apple*, the *Double Concerto* in B minor for violin, viola and orchestra, *Ten Poems* and the *Sinfonietta*, Op. 1, well played by the Halle under Kent Nagano, with excellent soloists: Gidon Kremer, Yuri Babinov and Nikolai Lugansky. On the second disc Andrew Davis conducts *The Young Person's Guide*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Franz Bridge* and *Five Sea Interludes* with the BBC SO in strong, solid performances. Daniel Hope's recording of the *Violin Concerto* with the BBC SO and Paul Watkins is an insightful account, coupled with the viola and string orchestra version of *Lackawanna* played by Nicholas Wince and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe under William Conway. William Barr's fatidic set of the Cello Suites requires two discs owing to some unusually broad speeds – there are other versions that I find more compelling, above all Bostridge's in the Decca set. Kurt Masur's recording of the *Sea Rhapsody* has plenty going for it, but it cannot rival either the intensity or the authority of Britten's own version. Among the more unusual pieces, *The Ruse of Prometheus* (based on the 1943 incidental music for *The Ruse*) is narrated by Janet Baker in a performance by the Halle under Nagano with Alison Hagley, Catherine Wyn-Rogers, John Mark Ainsley and William Dauterle. One of the most valuable parts of this set is Nagano's recording of the original version of *Billy Budd*, a very fine performance of the opera as first written in four acts (with some significant musical differences from the familiar two-act version), impressively conducted and strongly cast (Thomas Hampson as Billy, Rolfe Johnson as Vere, Eric Halfonson as Claggart). Nagano's set is a most valuable pendant to Britten's own recording of the revised version.

As well as CDs, this set includes four DVDs, starting with *Albert Hoving* and *Juliussum Nigh's Dream in the Peter Hill production* for Glendalehouse, both conducted by Halitak. *Albert Hoving* has John Graham-Hall as Albert, and the supporting cast includes David Hammond-Stredy, Richard Van Allan, Alan Opie, Felicity Palmer and Patricia Johnson. A witty production helps moderate the slightly odd quality of this opera and Halitak conducts well. *Juliussum Nigh's Dream* is led by Beata Czaribara as Tatyana and James Bowman as Oberon. While this is a visually beautiful production, the performance is sometimes a little plain. *Peter Gomes* is the Hilda Modinsky production for Covent Garden, conducted by Colin Davis. Jon Vickers sings the title role and Heather Harper is Ellen Orford. For Vickers admirers, this is one of the supreme portrayals of Grimes, but I have to inject a note of caution: some of his acting borders on ham and his characterization is arguably too dysfunctional to be credible. However, Harper is a magnificent Ellen, and the rest of the cast is strong. The sound and video are rough in this recording. The fourth DVD is Kenneth MacMillan's production of *The Prince of the Pagodas* for Covent Garden, with a cast led by Jonathan Cape and the young (and utterly beguiling) Darcie Rossell, decently conducted by Ashley Lawrence. This set may be a little variable but the best of it is excellent (**Warner Classics 2364 6076-9**, ten CDs and four DVDs, approx. 17 hours).

Two ritual sets of Britten's choral music (unaccompanied and with organ or harp) come from the First Singers and Paul Spicer on Chancel and The Straton under Harry Christophers on Cors. Both choirs give polished performances, well recorded, and song texts are included in the booklets. It's hard to choose between them, but if I have a marginal preference it is probably for Christophers's lighter, briskest approach. However, Spicer draws some haunting choral colours from his First Singers and the Chancel set has a very good booklet. If you want Britten's choral music in fine modern recordings by agile, highly skilled choirs, you can't go far wrong with either (**Chandos CHAN107730X**, three discs, 2 hours 20 minutes; **Cora COR1349F**, three discs, 2 hours 11 minutes).

I am much more cautious about recommending **Britten 100: The Birthday Collection**, a set of ten discs. It includes some kinetically important performances such as Britten's own Royal Opera House recordings of *Peter Gomes* and *The Prince of the Pagodas*, the *sonatas* and *Les Illuminations* with Pears, Brain and the New Sinfonia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Goossens, Britten's first recording of the *Sinfonia da Requiem* with the Danish Radio SO, the *Nonesu* with Pears and the *Dressuon* with Julius Katchen and the LSO (both conducted by Britten), and *The Young Person's Guide* from the Concertgebouw and van Beinum. Other

performances include Herbert von Karajan's Philharmonia version of the *Varuon* on a *Thom* by Frank Bridge and the *Bowden/Giffords Chorus of Lullabies*. Modern performances of the *Viola Concerto* (Sergei Aronson and Osmo Väinö) and *Germany of Cors* (Vienna Boys' Choir) are less satisfying. A useful addition is the Pears and Britten recording of *Schubert's Die Schöne Müllerin*. The problems with this set are more to do with the presentation (or lack of it) and the transfers, which are completely outclassed by Decca's own. Still, anyone wanting those performances at super-bargain price might want to explore this set (**Documents 8000Z**, ten discs, 7 hours 23 minutes).

Britten's pacifism

A moving and fascinating new film by Tony Britten (no relation) has arrived just in time for this survey of Britten centenary releases. 'Benjamin Britten – Peace and Conflict' was shot mostly at Grohman's School, Heb, and the film concentrates on the impact of his school years and his contemporaries there – many of them lost in the Second World War, as well as the spy Donald Maclean. The reconstructions, filmed on location, and documentary interviews are linked by a beautifully read narration by John Hurt



Benjamin Britten - Peace and Conflict



(who appears unseen near the end). The interviews include Joseph Horowitz, Raphael Wallfisch, Anita Lasker Wallfisch, Iain Burnside, Britten's agent Sue Phipps and Simon Kinler (Heard of Henry at Grohman's). The music examples include works like *Kanon Jenseit* (as part of an absorbing discussion of Britten's *Socialism* in the 1930s) and many of these are played by musicians from Britten's old school, along with the *Blow* of tenor James Gilchrist and

the all-female Boyanones Quartet (playing the Second Quartet that was introduced by the all-female Zorian Quartet). Auden was also at Grohman's just before Britten – further evidence of the school's position as a cradle of left-leaning intellectualism. The young Britten is played by Alex Leavelle; on this evidence he's an exceptional talent, and his portrayal is utterly credible. This is an engaging film that deserves the widest circulation (**Capitol Film DVD 50124 6200-00**, 1 hour 45 minutes).

Conclusions

Serious Britten enthusiasts should go for (or save up for) the Decca **Complete Works** – it really is a model of how such things should be done. Collectors who want to acquire a selection of Britten's music, or who are on limited budgets, will find plenty of good things in the IML/Warner Classics sets. Among recent releases not submitted for review, I'd certainly recommend Decca's DVD box set 'Britten: Composer, Conductor, Pianist', which includes the previously released separate DVDs of *Peter Gomes* (1969, with Pears, Harper, conducted by Britten), *Billy Budd* (1966, with Glossop, Pears, Langdon, conducted by Mackerras), *Opera Singers* (the 1971 broadcast premiere,

conducted by Britten), *The Agony's Opera* (conducted by Meredith Peabody, Mozart's *Alceste* in English (Pears, Dudley, Harper, conducted by Britten) and *Schubert's Sonnetto* with Pears and Britten, along with a group of Britten's folk-song arrangements. This seven-DVD set (Decca 074 1366) is in many ways the ideal audio-visual companion to **Britten: The Performer and The Complete Works**, both of which are singularly important releases, for different reasons. Britten was a marvellous interpreter of the music of others, whether as pianist or conductor, and it is good to have that so impressively documented in **Britten: The Performer** – a set I would certainly not want to be without. However, it is as a composer that Britten achieved international recognition during his lifetime – a success that has been rigorously sustained since – and **The Complete Works** is a triumphant celebration of the enduring power of his music. Thanks to its comprehensive coverage and the historical importance of the recordings included, the remarkable collaborative

nature of the project and the exemplary presentation (only a total curmudgeon might grumble about the absence of printed librettos), this is a notable landmark. Britten emerges as an endlessly fascinating creative artist – refreshing, daring, intimate and moving – and his extraordinary output is here in all its glory – from operatic masterpieces like *Billy Budd* and *The Turn of the Screw* to rare miniatures. I can't imagine a better celebration of his 100th birthday.

My third and final round-up of C Major Entertainment's Tutto Verdi box covers his mature operas from *Il trovatore* up to the mellower, satirical comedy of *Falstaff*. In Verdi's early operas, there is little competition on DVD, even less via the newer medium of Blu-ray, but how well can Parma (where the vast majority of the Tutto Verdi project was filmed) compete with starrier names and more lavish productions?

Il trovatore

My first live *Trovatore* was Pisto Faggioli's bleak staging for the Royal Opera, a multi-purpose volcanic rock set serving each scene. It sprang to mind on first viewing Lorenzo Mariani's Parma production, the stage resembling a lunar landscape on which a few giant props have been symbolically scattered, a staid cypress, a white marble horse for Leonora's garden scene, scrolls placed like tombstones in di Luna's encampment, ornate candles either side of a bridal bed for Manrico's wedding to Leonora. It's not exactly bursting with ideas, but playing at something deep and meaningful. A huge moon dominates proceedings, its various colours matching the mood, from virginal white to a coppery red. Sadly – and rather typically for this opera – the lighting at the end of Part 1 takes absolutely no account of the libretto: 'In the darkness I made a terrible blunder!' protests Leonora, having mistaken di Luna for Manrico, but the moon here is so bright that she'd had to have been particularly short-sighted to make this mistake. Perhaps directors should go down Olivier Py's route (Munich this summer) and make Leonora blind. Comrades are traditionally 'in period'.

The cast assembled here wasn't by any means first choice. Norma Fattori (Leonora) and Marianna Taranova (Amanca) both walked out on the production after opening night, the latter after being soundly booed by the *loggionisti*. Their replacements, scheduled for later in the run, are undistinguished. Teresa Romanò is squally and sings in choppy phrases, unable to float notes 'on the breath'. She has a few serious pitch problems before entering the convent and is severely taxed by 'D'amor salfati mosse'. It's a pity the camera didn't catch Serena Farnocchia, who also featured in the run. Miki Noriade is a fearsome wobbler as Amanca, rapping out her contralto-like low notes, a drama separating head and chest registers. Claudio Sgura is a decent di Luna. He doesn't have the elegance for 'Il balen del suo sorriso', but has a lovely, dark tone and commands the stage. I hadn't associated Yuri Tserinkov with Verdi's operas before. After viewing this and the production of *Le nozze* which immediately follows, I'm afraid I still don't. He conducts an infuriatingly stop-start performance, during the course of which he and his singers seem to part company regarding a few tempos. He leaves poor Leonora all but floundering in 'Tu vedrai'.

Tutto Verdi on C Major From troubadour to fat knight

by Mark Pullinger

The men's chorus is suitably angelic, the men's chorus rather less distinguished. A solid Fernando (Deyan Vutskov) and an excellent Raim (Roberto Jachini Virgù) deserve mention.

There is good reason to watch this performance, if only once: Marcelo Álvarez is the real deal as Manrico, possessing the ideal, bright tone quality. He attacks the score with relish, even if we only get one verse of 'Di quella pira' (taken down a semitone to allow him to interpolate a high B). However, Álvarez can also be seen in the recent Metropolitan Opera performance (in David McVicar's production) which is consistently preferable (C Major Entertainment Blu-ray TZ1304/DVD TZ1308, 2 hours 20 minutes).

Le traviata

Despite Tserinkov's conducting, a mixture of snags and duds ('Paris, o cara' where no two successive bars seem to maintain the same tempo). I enjoyed this production of *Le nozze* immensely. Karl-Ernst and Uwe Herrmann's staging plants us firmly in the 1820s, contemporary with the opera's composition, just as Verdi intended.

Their direction is detailed and acute and their cast responds with genuinely involved acting far and away above some of the 'staid and deliver' performances of other Tutto Verdi productions. In the Prelude, Violetta is fawned over by various men, one of whom leaves money on the mantelpiece. Violetta uses one note to light a cigarette, throwing the rest onto the flames. A sense of decadence is thereby established, into which Massimo Giordano's puppyish Alfredo bundles. Act 1 features a retunda not dissimilar to Richard Eyre's Covent Garden production. Violetta's country house of Act 2 has huge windows revealing a snow-blanketed garden containing pollarded trees and a roving boat. We see characters come and go – the servants take an interest in what's going on, while Germont *più* observes the scene between his son and Violetta. Flora's party is suitably gaily, while Act 3 plays out in the retunda again.

Serla Vassileva offers a thoroughly passionate, absorbing portrayal of Violetta. Her soprano has quite a dark quality and there are a few Sherril vowels to contend with. 'Sempre libera' isn't without its flaws – imperfect colouratura and a dull interpolated

E-flat – but is spirited and true to the drama, which rather sums up her whole performance, magnetic from first to last. Giordano's Alfredo is a bit raw; he aspirates, scoops up to several high notes and belts insistently in the final scene, but his aria 'De' miei bollenti spiriti' has a certain charm and there is an open-hearted, old-fashioned quality to his singing and an open sound which brings to mind Giuseppe Di Stefano. Vladimir Stoyanov is an impressive Germont, softening rather quicker than some in his confrontation with Violetta. 'Eh Provenza' is well sung, but his cabaletta is cut.



There are problems with the sound. The orchestra is often too prominent in balance against the voices, but a more serious issue concerns the opening party scene, where too much clutter and clattering cutlery interfere with vocal lines. Performances after this 2007 recording utilized body microphones, possibly as a result of the technical difficulties the recording engineers encountered here. It doesn't challenge the classic Eyre production (best seen with Angela Gheorghiu in its first run) or Willy Decker's controversial Salzburg staging, with an inspired Anna Netrebko. Despite the drawbacks, this Parma production is a performance I'd be happy to return to for its dramatic truth and plucky singing (Blu-ray TZ1304/DVD TZ1308, 2 hours 12 minutes).

I vespri siciliani

One of the most notoriously difficult mature Verdi operas to bring off is *I vespi siciliani* and it is the least performed of his post-*Rigoletto* works. In its original French incarnation, it is even rarer, although it has recently been seen for the first time at Covent Garden, in Stefan Herheim's production, which sets it in the Paris Opéra of the 1870s. Pier Luigi Pizzi likewise places the action in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Risorgimento and struggles for Italian unification were at their height, although there's little that could be Sicilian here; we could almost be in the same Patrisian salon as the Parma production of *La traviata*. Indeed, I wouldn't mind betting that one of the three bears hounded on the simple set during Acts 1 and 2 was the same as the one in the garden of Violetta's country residence. Other sets offer equal simplicity – divine and a giant mirror for Act 3, cell bars for Act 4's prison and an altarpiece for Act 5.

The opera's neglect is probably down to its grand scale and epic length, but then that's never stopped *Don Carlo* since the revival in its fortunes in the 1950s. The music is extremely fine, with each of the protagonists bagging an excellent aria, or two in the case of Elena/Elisav, a Sicilian duchess mourning the murder of her brother

by French occupiers. There is a cracking *Overture*, handsomely dispatched here by the Parma orchestra (fledgling a *ciuchissu*) under the excellent Massimo Zanetti, and fiery ensembles, particularly the father-son duets for Montano, French governor of Sicily, and Arrigo. Perhaps *Traviata* weighed on Verdi's mind during the composition of *Fosco*, for the notable violin solo in the quartet at the end of Act 4 resembles *Traviata*'s Act 3 Prelude.

Plenty of action takes place in the auditorium of the Teatro Regio in Parma itself, with the chorus sometimes placed behind the stalls and characters making their entrances through them. Precida, a Sicilian doctor returning from exile, concludes 'O no, Palermo', his plea to his fellow Sicilians to throw off the yoke of French oppression, among the audience. Throughout this, with singers dispersed around the house, Zanetti marshals his forces superbly, setting lively tempos.

Husband and wife team of Fabio Arrilliani and Daniela Dessi take on the lead tenor and soprano roles. Dessi's Elena is very careful to follow Verdi's dynamic markings, with plenty of *mezza voce* and soft singing, her *passionato* marking tenderly. She can also trill. However, there is also a strong sense of someone put her *prima* shouting and cajoling her voice

through the huge demands the second half of the opera holds for the soprano. She doesn't have the weight or tone for the big notes and mass the end of 'Arrigo, Ah, parli a un core' with a curfled downward scale. The Act 5 *bolero* (or Siciliano) 'More', *diletta amica* has her manoeuvring carefully through the taxing vocal terrain. Arrilliani pushes his voice hard, but just about stays within the boundaries of what he is capable. He can sound throaty and offers limited vocal colour, reminding me strongly of Gianni Raimondi. Arrigo is a notoriously high tenor role – although Act 5's 'La brava sleggia intanto' is cut, so he doesn't have to negotiate the notorious high D where tenors can come a cropper – but he copes with the high B flats and B's in secure fashion. He is decent in duets and sings a creditable 'Giorno di pianto' in Act 4. Giacomo Fronta is in good voice here, Zanetti setting him a lovely lilting tempo for 'O no, Palermo'. Pizzi makes him into a bit of a schoolmaster – picture Simon Callow in Dickens mode – but effectively so. That old trooper Leo Nucci is splendid as Montefiore. His aria 'In braccio alle destinate' is sung on the steps leading from the stage down to the stalls and Nucci turns it into the contrapuntic of the opera.

There is no 'Four Seasons' haller, which will delight those who abhor long dance



ALB 308 812 3020

Spanning 50 years of Ralph Vaughan Williams' composition

Albion Records is proud to announce the release, with four world première recordings, of ***The Solent***

Ralph Vaughan Williams was just thirty when he composed *The Solent* in 1902 and eighty when he composed the *Prelude to an Old Carol Tune* in 1952 – what was remarkable was the consistency of style – the music is unmistakably Vaughan Williams.

"... a mandatory purchase for the *Three Impressions – The Solent* in particular ..."

Richard Whitehouse - *International Record Review*

Available from:



and all good
record shops

www.albionrecords.org

www.rvw.society.com



Record of the week
CLASSIC FM

Distributed by Select Music and Video Distribution 01757 646 600

episodes, but it does rather make a mockery of the chorus which follows, proclaiming the splendid entertainment. The chorus itself is impressive (and much larger than the numbers fielded in the early operas in this series). This is a welcome account, with excellent video direction by Tiziano Mancini, but it doesn't really qualify as 'grand opera' on the scale on which Verdi conceived it. Plenty of Italian flag-waving at the end, as flags flutter like confetti into the auditorium, gives a sense of occasion though, and it holds up well against competition on DVD from Bologna and La Scala, although you might wish to wait for the inevitable release of Houston's Royal Opera production (**Blu-ray 72180/DVD 72388**, 2 hours 50 minutes).

Simon Boccanegra

Competition on film in Verdi's next opera, *Simon Boccanegra*, is far greater, although most of the new versions seem to star Plácido Domingo in the title role! Although next in the compositional sequence (1857), the opera is given in its familiar (and superior) 1881 revision, with the addition of the Council Chamber scene its greatest difference. Verdi's first collaboration with Arrigo Boito. Giorgio Gallone directs a straightforward production. The centrepiece is a giant, simply scaled mosaic platform, with few additional set features. We have a tree – but no hint of the sea or dawn – in the first scene of Act 1, but a biograph of Genoa makes for an effective backdrop on occasions. With so many splendid productions available, this one suffers due to its budgetary constraints, quite how a single guard is going to hold the plate at bay during the Council Chamber scene is anyone's guess, while the debating chamber contains just the one bench.

Nucci sounds nearly as firm of voice as in his 1998 Decca recording under Georg Solti; it's still a characteristically dry baritone and he indulges in launching several high notes from an octave below, but he's completely into the role. Tamar Jevsi sings a plucky Anselma, neither as cream-toned as Anja Harteros nor as dramatically affecting as Mariya Popykayeva (both on recent releases opposite Domingo's Dago). It's a pleasure to encounter Roberto Scandizzi once again now that his services no longer appear required in Covent Garden or at the Metropolitan. He sings 'Il sacro spirito' with warm, rounded tone, even if he doesn't dig beneath the skin of the character too deeply. Francesco Meli bludgeons his way through Gabriele Adorno's music in stentorian voice and holding on to 'Cielo' in the Council Chamber scene as an unworily length. Still, he cuts a dashing figure in his heavily required costume. The Paolo di Simone Pizzolo is a bit anonymous, missing the lago-like vulnerability required (Paolo was surely Boito's and Verdi's blueprint for lago).

Daniela Calligaris conducts effectively, but the performance comes across as a bit

routine, especially when there are so many fine alternatives available, including one on Arkham of the same production, but filmed in Bologna with Carmen Giannattasio as Anselma (**Blu-ray 72180/DVD 72388**, 2 hours 17 minutes).

Un ballo in maschera

Mario Gargiulo's Modena production of *Un ballo in maschera* is dramatically conservative and, in truth, a bit of a damp squib. There are stylish sets, the scene at Ulrica's but looks effective in a semi-underground setting with light streaming down and there is a foggy gallows scene, but otherwise it is strictly conventional. Choreography in the ball scene works well, with dancers doubly masked creating a sense of menace and tension. The Boston setting is chosen, so we have Francesco Meli's Riccardo making his entrance dressed from top to toe in royal blue accompanied by much Union Jack waving. Meli is either recorded at a greater volume than his colleagues (body microphones in evidence) or else he is in stentorian voice. His dirty 'Di te so fedele' is a tricky aria to pull off for tenors, yet he has good, solid bottom notes. He also impresses in the love duet and his Act 3 aria. It's not a subtle portrayal but he carries it off well.

Estina Lewis invites her rich timbre and low-like incision in her upper register to the role of Anselma, yet she isn't as engaging across at all, so while 'Ma dall'aria stelo divide' sounds fantastic, little of the character's terror comes across. Vladimir Stoyanov as her husband, Renato, is the most stylish singer on display here, his 'Tri tu' carrying the evening's biggest ovation. I was quite taken with Sorella Gambononi's Oscar, not your typical chirruping coloratura pageboy, for she has no trill to speak of, yet her lyric soprano copes well enough and she offers an attractive portrayal. Riccardo dies in Oscar's arms, which, given Gambononi is Meli's wife, is rather touching. Elisabetta Furlini has made something of a speciality of the role of the fortune-teller Ulrica. She has an imperious lower register, but by this 2011 Parma performance the rest of her voice is ruffled. The conspiratorial duo are afflicted by a throaty tone.

Giulio Gelmotti's conducting impresses. From the pacy Prelude, he is brisk and efficient, yet still brings the drama to the fore. However, there is a hazy, reverberant quality to the recorded orchestral sound, especially the lower strings, which mars complete enjoyment (**Blu-ray 72480/DVD 72488**, 2 hours 18 minutes).

La forza del destino

Gelmotti is also in the pit for *La forza del destino*, where his energetic conducting, allied to sets which allow scenes to flow seamlessly from one to the next, helps to maintain momentum in one of Verdi's most sprawling operas. From the striking opening brass chords of a starkly reading of the

Overture, the orchestra plays with verve. Gelmotti really has the measure of this opera. Don Federico Horroves, Pereda, Raphaela, Don Felice de Borromeo ... there are so many false identities and unfortunate coincidences (well, this is Donizetti at work!) that *Forza* is a difficult opera to stage credibly without it lapsing into operatic parody. Stefano Poda treats the opera to a dark, dangerous interpretation. All colour is sucked from the costumes in his austere treatment, with the characters dressed in funeral garb other than when a red-coated Piovola is rousing the soldiers in the scene inspired by Schiller's *Wallenstein's Camp*. Initially, Leonora, her maid, Carla, and Piovola are dressed identically in black, frothy dresses and brief wavy hair. The lacquered floor holds two monolithic dials – with leaden tracery on one side, white plaster on the other – which rotate to form the sets, including a very effective instant monastery, flooded with golden light. Poda populates his tavern with a top-knotted crowd (Julius as well as gentlemen) and a dance troupe whose weird, angular dancing irritates. When Don Carlo, disguised as the student Pereda, praiseth the 'convivial company', you question which production he thinks he's singing in. The dancers appear at several points through the opera, including a dice-matton battle sequence and a high body count in the 'Ritorno' chorus. A giant pendulum, swinging like a doom-laden wrecking ball, appears at one stage; I can't imagine anyone was anticipating a happy ending.

After several earlier appearances, Doina Theodorescu returns to the Teatro Verdi box in one of her key roles. She assumes Callisti 'grand dame' mood, both in her heroic acting – wist raised haughtily to her forehead on just about every occasion – but also in vocal mannerisms amounting to cooing. On her night, Theodorescu could be thrilling; this wasn't one of them. Aquiles Machado is a 'can-bello' in the Mario del Monaco tradition (no bad thing at all) and his Don Alvarez is exciting to listen to, if a bit raw and ungaily. Stoyanov is Leonora's brother, Carlo. Here he is less impressive, rather running out of steam in the cabaretta following 'Uraa fatala' and doesn't truly convince as the vengeance-crazed brother in the tenor-baritone duets which are the crux of this opera. My reference recording, on film, for *Forza* remains the scorching Naples performance with Franco Corelli and Ettore Bastianini trailing vocal lines (Earlyly RCD4002).

Mariya Popykayeva's lead Piovola misses the playful gypsy touch. Roberto Scandizzi sings a dry, tired-sounding Paolo Guardasola, finding the ornamentation in the Guardasola/Melitone duet a trial, but Carlo Laporta's cantabile Melitone is a joy. A curiously enjoyable effort, but mixed vocal performances and an imposing, but frustrating production mean it won't be a *Forza* to pull off the shelves with any great frequency (**Blu-ray 72480/DVD 72488**, 2 hours 18 minutes).

Don Carlo

It is nearly appropriate that the 1886 five-act "Medea version" of *Don Carlo* is brought to the Tutto Verdi box courtesy of the Teatro Comunale di Modena itself. Joseph Francoeur's low-budget production isn't an asset to this opera, which features an ugly set of platforms and wooden scaffolding that leave all the appearance of a village hall production ... an *Aida* *Don Carlo*, if you will. The exception to this is Alessandro Ciannamardi's sumptuous costumes; that for Giacomo Piretti's Philip could have been Boris Christoff's outfit in the Vincent production, but that's about the only nod to visual opulence this production receives, although the backcloth of a towering, angled chandelier looks pretty enough for the garden scene. The cost-cutter sets are matched by cardboard cut-out stage direction, as we are served up big slices of an-don-ham. The only scene which engenders much interest is, ironically, the auto-da-fé, which is the most notoriously difficult to bring off. During the chorus, we glimpse the interior of Valladolid Cathedral and its ceremony through gauze, while the crowd hays in the forecourt outside.

The singing is very ordinary for the most part. Maria Malagù has the right sort of tone for the title role, but zero stage-persona. Goffa Costea's Inezzy, grumpy Elisabetta isn't a success. Her low-lying soprano doesn't bring enough light or charm to the character and her phrasing is floppy, punctuated by big, audible breaths. "Tu te lo vaniti" comes off quite well. There is absolutely no spark ignited between Costea and Malagù; they barely look at each other in their final duet. Simone Placida's Marquis of Posa is no "man of action". Despite a pleasant voice, he is a bland portrayer. Luciano Montanaro waffles and Moresco lies way through the Good Inquisitor's confrontation with the king. I'm more positive about Alla Freni's fruity mezzo which manages surprisingly well as Iphig. In the Vell Song she copes with the Moorish arabesque and ornamentation and she has the vocal weight to bring off a good 'O don re!'. Piretti's Philip is a cut above the rest of the cast, a vocally assured if not a towering monarch, with good dramatic sensibilities.

Fabrizio Ventura provides in the pit, multiple cellos in the introduction to Philip's "Ella giamaica m'ami" a disappointing decision. We're blessed with so many good versions on film (I reviewed eight of them in my feature on the opera in the November 2011 issue) that this goes straight to the bottom of the pile ([Blu-ray T24709/DVD T24608](#), 2 hour 35 minutes).

Aida

Following *Don Carlo*, I was slightly apprehensive to see what Joseph Francoeur Lee did to *Aida*. Despite its huge choral scenes, *Aida* is far from the operatic blockbuster it's often

marketed as. Essentially it's a love triangle complicated by the forces of war. Whilst noting his grand spectacles at La Scala and Verona, it's worth noting that Franco Zeffirelli also directed a production of *Aida* at the tiny Teatro Verdi in Busseto which got far closer to establishing the human drama at a personal level than grander, glossier affairs. Good Parma *aido*! Not exactly. Lee directs a production based on one by Alberto Fassini. Mauro Caroli's sets and costumes offer lavish spectacle (or at least as lavish as a small house can muster). Embossed panels and hieroglyphs are de rigueur, the stage looks handsome – especially the Nile Scene – and is well populated in the crowd scenes. As far as direction goes, if *Don Carlo* and this *Aida* are anything to go by, Lee allows his singers to do their own thing, which would be fine if they had something to say about their roles.

When it was premiered, this production was scathingly referred to in the Italian press as the 'Blue *Aida*'. Blue and gold are the predominant colours of the sets and costumes, even extending to blue-tinted Egyptian reassembling something out of *Jane!* It holds together well, though. Compared to many of the productions London has seen in recent decades, I would happily welcome this one to the stage of the Royal Opera House or Coliseum. Tiziano Mancini's acute video direction makes the stage appear larger than it is, adding a sense of grandeur.

As Radamès, Walter Fracaro is even more on-balance than Michele in Foca. His tenor has clearing power and heroic timbres, yet he is monumentally loud (and frequently flat). His 'Colore *Aida*' is utterly devoid of poetry or any attention to Verdi's dynamic markings. He marginally impresses as the performance continues (or perhaps I acclimated to him). Mariana Poutcheva proves she is more suited to Amnèsis than Previnella, launching a good Act 4 *canto*, with freerpower to spare, despite the occasional wobbly vibrato. George Asagidulo sings a Slavic, hollow-toned Radek. Alberto Gualà's deadlocked Amnèsis is strong on declamation and is the best dramatic presence on stage. The stand-out vocal performance here is from Susanna Brancini in the title role. I'd been looking forward to hearing her *Aida* since reviewing the earlier Tutto Verdi disc of *Aida* in which she sang Odabella quite fearlessly. Her 'Ritorna vincitor' is factually dispatched, as is 'O patria mia'. I can think of no higher praise than to report that Brancini sometimes sounds like the great Renata Tebaldi in terms of her creamy timbre, her phrasing and dynamic shading. Her legato is not always smoothly negotiated but her diction is terrific. Here is the loveliest *Aida* I've heard since Lenora Moore at Covent Garden a few seasons back.

Antonino Fogliani rather smoothes the contours of Verdi's score, but plenty of orchestral detail is heard, especially the magical atmosphere at the start of the Nile

Scene. The recording suffers a slight glitch at the end of the Act 3 Radamès-*Aida* duet, where I suspect Fracaro's body microphone fails (only two performers were filmed), but otherwise the sound engineering is very good. However many filmed productions of *Aida* you have in your collection, at least try and hear this for Brancini ([Blu-ray T24901/DVD T24808](#), 2 hour 45 minutes).

Orléans

It is perhaps ironic that the finest individual performance in the Tutto Verdi set does not originate from Parma at all. Back in January, in my report on the first bunch of releases, I noted that C. Major would have a tough job finding a performance of *Orléans* to match the one already in its catalogue – the Salzburg Festival production under Riccardo Muti. In the event, it couldn't. The production which was to have opened the 2012 Verdi Festival, featuring Frank Poretti, Alisa Znosjevica and Nucci, was scrapped, replaced with a revival of *Agotina*, so Stephen Langridge's Salzburg production is replicated here. Viewed after a sequence of Parma productions, the differences are marked and we have to make the leap from provincial Italian opera house to a world-class stage. There are many excellent filmed performances of *Orléans* out there (many of them starring Domingo in the title role) but this one is up there with the best.

It stars young Latvian tenor Albinas Antonenko as the Moor and he is terrific, a true heir to Domingo's crown. His tenor has an incredible quality, rich and dark but which opens out at the top quite gloriously so that Orléans's chorus cry of "Vincite!" rings out triumphantly. Muti harries and harries him through 'Ora e per sempre *Aida*', but there is greatness here. His interpretation has developed since this 2008 performance; in the summer of 2012 he performed the role at Covent Garden, where he seemed more intense.

Antonenko's Desdemona in the Covent Garden run was Anja Harteros, until she cancelled the final performance, replaced by Marina Poplavskaya, who sang the role in Salzburg. Her big lyric sound doesn't have Harteros's creamy legato but otherwise she is preferable in every way, especially her outstanding acting ability. Poplavskaya's Desdemona is charming, both adorable and adored; the exchanges between her and the Cypriots in Act 2 are delightful, but she is fiddier than most in pursuing Carlo's case and does not "go gentle into that good night". The Willow Song and *de Ma* as performed here give the lie to those who complain she doesn't have the voice for Verdi. The stylized song, dark legs of Carlo *Aida* is a real asset. Langridge has him sing the 'Credo' in front of the house curtain, confiding directly in the audience, and he matches Antonenko blow for blow in their Act 2 scene.



Laurigade's production has a fortress abstractly presented, with a giant Perseus platform in the centre. A video backdrop displays the prevailing weather conditions, including a fearsome storm opening (which follows a crackling 'storm at sea' film sequence shown during the opening credits). A giant figure in the set opens up during the storm, in which Otello plants his sword, to remain there until he grabs it in Act 4. Stage direction and movement is well managed, including a decent stage fight between Cassio (young American Stephen Costello) and Montano (Simone Del Savio).



Muti conducts a passionate, driven account, the Vienna Philharmonic responding with a performance every inch as glorious as its 1961 Decca recording for Herbert von Karajan. He opts for the revised version (Paris 1894) of the Act 1 concertino, which Giuseppe Dossemani an extended solo. Giuseppe Di Leo's lighting is fabulous and the close-up camerawork (video director Peter Schindhofer) is incredibly detailed – on Blu-ray, you can count every bead of sweat on Antonenko's (toddily tanned) brow! A vivid, outstanding performance in every way (**Blu-ray 721907/DVD 721908**, 2 hour 22 minutes).

Falstaff

Another coup to complete the Tatro Verdi set is the engagement of baritone Andrejko Maestri in Parma as the fat knight in Verdi's autumnal comedy which brought down the curtain on his operatic career. Maestri is

simply an untroubled Falstaff in person, a larger-than-life interpretation with real-life padding. He relishes the text, rolling the words around his mouth as if enjoying a tasty morsel from his platter. If there is slightly less of a regalish twinkle in his eye here, that is probably due to Stephen Medhall's production, which is respectable enough – shrewdly traditional even – but doesn't translate the humour as spontaneously as Robert Carsen did in his splendid new staging, seen so far at the Royal Opera and La Scala and transferring to the Met this winter. It can be only a matter of time before it appears on DVD.

Other Maestri Falstaffs are available on film, a joyous effort with the La Scala company under Muti decamped to Busseto's minuscule stage and Sven-Eric Bechtolf's Zurich Opera production, with 1960s trevich and riding habits – he has a veritable monopoly on the role. In Parma, Maestri's Falstaff is debonair and debauched from the start, confined to his enormous bed for much of Act 1, which detracts from the humour of his chasing out Iachery Bardolph and Pistol after his 'Honour' monologue. He recovers from his dip in the Thames with a glib rather than the wise he requests.

Apart from Maestri, the best performances of the Windsor residents come from Svetla Vasilova's vivacious Alice and Luca Salsi's assured Ford. I've encountered more enchanting couples than Antonio Ganika and Barbara Bרגnes as Feston and Nanuccetta – his tenor not ideally light, suffering from vibrato under strain – but that's only a minor complaint. A youthful, lighter Mistress Quickly (Romina Tomassoni) and a strongly sung, nasal Dr Cajan (Luca Casali) contribute strongly.

The exceptionally youthful Andrea Bantianni conducts a rambunctious account of Verdi's mercantile score, fleet tempo moving things along at a lively pace, but maintaining coordination in tricky ensembles. Rather than the Teatro Regio, this final opera was filmed at Parma's Teatro Farnese, with its drier acoustic. Medhall's Falstaff is cleverly depicted on a series of sheets hung out on washing lines, while the Fords' house is pushed forward and seen in cross-section. The stage business is just as indicated in Boito's libretto and the spirited performance does the faithful staging proud even if it's not quite the enjoyable romp I had wished for (**Blu-ray 721910/DVD 721909**, 2 hour 22 minutes).

Requiem and 'Verdi's Backyard'

The Teatro Farnese also plays host to a performance of Verdi's *Requiem*, presumably included in a boxed set of the complete operas due to the familiar reference to it as an opera in all but name. Yuri Temirkanov conducts the Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Regio di Parma, setting off at a terrific pace for the 'Dies irae' but with generally solid tempo employed. Apart from some scrawny cello playing at the start of the 'Offertorio', the orchestra plays with spirit. Video direction isn't always alert. We see the offstage brass in the 'Dies irae', but cut away from giving us a shot of the great Verdi drum in action.

Of the soloists, Dimitra Theodosiou's sweetly vibrant soprano is troubling. Her soprano is taxed by Temirkanov's leisurely tempo for the 'Agnus Dei' and the 'Libera me' is a trial, especially when her lower register cracks. After his showings in *Il ballo in maschera* and *Simo Scavone*, tenor Francesco Meli is remarkably restrained, with honeyed singing in the 'Quid sum miser' but plenty of power in the 'Ingonico'. Riccardo Zaffanito is a little tremulous in the 'Mors stupida', but his soft-grained bass is rather lovely in the 'Hostias'. Senta Gausa's firm mezzo holds up well in the 'Libera scriptura'. She doesn't hate the *Impresario* for some of the grander moments but she does well in the face of Theodosiou's wobbliest in the 'Recordare'.

The main enjoyment on this final disc came with the extra item, a 52-minute documentary by Sergej Gegeric entitled 'Verdi's Backyard'. It's less a documentary and more a collection of vox pops from residents narrating how the residents of Roncole, Busseto and Parma hold Verdi dear to their hearts. 'The music of Verdi flows through your veins', one of them proclaims, and it's hard to disagree. Conducted entirely in Italian (subtitles in seven languages are available), we hear from one of Verdi's heirs, entrusted with maintaining the villa at Sant'Agata and from the *loggione* who populate the upper gallery of the Teatro Regio (and are ruthless critics). Passionate advocates talk about the Parma Liceo, founded in a tavern, where people gather to sing and celebrate the composer. We also meet the society, 'The 27', who commemorate Verdi's work, each member named after one of his operas. Rather satisfyingly, *Il giorno di nozze* is the Chairman. Nucci contributes and explains why Verdi is just about the only composer he has performed for the past decade: 'I'm bound to the values, to the vision of values of Verdi's life.' The film includes clips from various Parma performances.

'I am and shall always remain a peasant from Roncole', Verdi promised. This charming documentary about his home – and the entire Tatro Verdi set, despite the low-budget sets and less than starry casting – is a worthy testament to Verdi's genius and to his humanity (**Blu-ray 721906/DVD 721905**, 1 hour 25 minutes, plus 52-minute documentary).



mdt.co.uk
The Classical Music Specialists

Over 75,000 titles
CDs | SACDs | DVDs | Blu-rays | Vinyl



SHOSTAKOVICH

Symphony No. 4



UK & WORLDWIDE DELIVERY
Order online at mdt.co.uk

facebook.com/MDTClassicalMusicSpecialists
twitter.com/MDT_co_uk



REGENT New Releases

"...the most superb recordings of choral and organ music from some of the world's finest musical institutions..." *Sydney Organ Journal*



**Thomas Hewitt Jones
INCARNATION**

The first recording of a major new work for Christmas by rapidly rising star composer Thomas Hewitt Jones and writer Paul Wilkinson.
REGCD429



**ALL BELLS IN PARADISE:
Carols from Guildford Cathedral**

The Choir of Guildford Cathedral directed by Katherine Dimes-Williams, Paul Pevsner (organ)
Seasonal music for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, including several first recordings.
REGCD413



**REJOICE AND BE MERRY:
Organ music for Christmas**

Paul Wilson (organ)
A joyous collection of festive music played on the organ of Bristol Cathedral.
REGCD406



TRURO 125

Truro Cathedral Choir directed by Christopher Gray, Luke Bond (organ)
A fitting celebration of 125 years of music at Truro Cathedral, featuring an impressive collection of music, all written for or associated with Truro in recent years.
REGCD422



HOWELLS FROM SALISBURY

David Norekhome (organ)
Three rarely recorded works published after Howells' death, together with the four magnificent Ekephorides, and the large-scale Organ Sonata of 1932, played on the 'Father' Willis organ of Salisbury Cathedral.
REGCD407



MIGHTY VOICE

Luke Bond plays the organ of Truro Cathedral
The debut solo recording from Truro's gifted young assistant organist, playing what is regarded by many as 'Father' Willis's finest organ.
REGCD386



PIPING BLUES

Philip Savaris plays the organ of Lichfield Cathedral
A showcase for this increasingly versatile instrument, with a programme of jazz and blues inspired music.
REGCD304



CHRISTMAS FROM DUBLIN

Saint Patrick's Cathedral Choir directed by Stuart Nicholson, David Leigh (organ)
A festive collaboration from the choir of St Patrick's, which has the only choir school in Ireland.
REGCD418

Available from all good CD retailers and from Regent direct
REGENT RECORDS, PO Box 328, Widenhampton, WY3 9YW Tel: 01902 404077, Fax: 01902 313861, www.regentrecords.com (with secure online ordering)

REGENT Retail distribution by RJK Entertainment Ltd, www.rjkenertainment.co.uk
Distributed in the USA by Albany Music Distributors Inc., www.albanymusic.com

Contemporary music has become so diverse in terms of its range and creative dynamic that to try and relate it as a collective to the same tradition that spawned the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras is a near-impossibility. From our current perspective, one major solution to the problem of 'whither music' (as Leonard Bernstein memorably coined the situation) at the turn of the twentieth century appears to have lost a lot of ground in recent years: serialism. As an organizational construct the concept remains enormously appealing, yet the rhetorical and sonic realities have proved, for the great majority of music lovers, simply too radical a departure from the beloved tonal tradition.

Part of the problem is that serialism's most distinguished early exponents followed such divergent creative paths. Schoenberg was essentially a neo-classicist, whose natural desire to build directly on what had gone before led in his early experiments, such as the Op. 25 Suite for piano, to the strange (if erroneous) sensation of familiar rhythms and constructs supporting 'wrong notes'. Berg was a neo-romantic who found ingenious ways of 'bending the rules' in order to inject to his emotionally opulent sound-worlds a sense of pseudo-tonality, while Webern was a progressive who went in completely the opposite direction with microscopic structures of profound musical density. While all three were creative geniuses of the first order, none of these solutions met general approval amongst ordinary music lovers.

Those composers who subsequently adopted serialism tended to fall into one of two main camps: traditionalists who employed certain aspects of the technique as an expressive device reserved particularly for exploring dark areas of the human psyche, and modernists who used it as a springboard for experimentation in other fields. If one composer can be said to have upheld the concept of serialism in the context of soundscapes and structures that appeared to grow naturally out of its organizational principles, it is surely Pierre Boulez.

Listening again through Boulez's Masterly inventive music of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s (most especially *Le Matin sans Musique*) one experiences a bracing shock to the nervous system, a sense of exciting new possibilities opening up, equalled perhaps only by Stravinsky's *The Fire of Spring* and Poulencis. Some of these period-defining works have been subsequently rethought and refined by the composer, but they have lost none of their ability to amaze and inspire during the intervening years. Indeed, it could be argued that just as the post-war generation of performers produced some of their finest work in their first flush of youth, the same holds true of its composers.

DG's 11-disc 'Pierre Boulez Complete Works' is presented in roughly chronological order, which if anything enhances further the scale of his overall achievement. One thing that Boulez aficionados might have prayed for

Pierre Boulez on DG Oeuvres complètes

by Julian Haylock



Mauricio Pollán's all-embracing, prophetically astounding, sonically multi-layered account of the Second Sonata remains a defining classic of modern pianists, although on much the same level of achievement is an astounding performance (originally on Disques Asa) of the *Live pour quatuor* from the Quatuor Parisii, that encompasses the work's electrifying, high-tension textural changeability with unflinching aplomb. Alfred and Mays Konrad's legendary account of *Structures I* sounds amazingly vivid in this skilled transfer (no one could guess it was recorded over half a century ago), and although I still find Boulez's bracing 1970s CBS recording of *Le Matin sans Musique* with Yvonne

Minton (coupled originally with *Live pour quatuor*) uniquely persuasive, there is no doubting the even greater sophistication and effortless command of his 2004 remake for DG with Hilary Summers, featured here. The 1950s (ignoring *Écluse*, the original version of 1968's *Figures, Double, Promes*, which appears on the fifth disc) are rounded out by *Pli selon Pli* (in its definitive 1989 version), whose intoxicating theatricality – embraced with nerve-shredding intensity by Christine Schäfer – has rarely felt so pungent and disturbing.

With the two movements of the Third Piano Sonata that Boulez has so far authorized (performed here with hypnotic tonal allure by Pascal Janquas), he began experimenting with controlled systems of chance – never as free-wheeling as with John Cage, but flexible enough to avoid what the composer came increasingly to see as the rigidity of completely through-composed, finite structures. This continued through *Structures II* (Aimard and Florent Boffard), *Écluse-Multiples* (Ensemble Intercontemporain/Boulez, originally on CBS) and the two-clarinet *Dominos* – solo and accompanied (clarinetists Alain Danielsen and Michel Portal with Maurice Vincent/Diego Masson) – all performed here with a sense of exploratory spontaneity that helps compensate for the re-creative irony that by submitting them to the recording process they have frozen in time that which Boulez had intended would in a sense become timeless.

Time becomes an all-consuming element in *Révol* in moments from *Malheur*, via Boulez's

intoxicating BBC SO account of the early 1980s for CBS, which fully captures the spatial groupings arranged across the stage in increasing size, each one featuring a percussionist. The score states that 'each group, strictly synchronous individually, is led by an instrumentalist (generally the first of the group), designated as leader, the tempo being maintained by the percussionist associated with each group' and the results here are nothing short of spectacular. No less hypnotically entrancing are five of the Natanas (so far) for orchestra (Ensemble Modern Orchestra/Boulez, recorded live in 2007), which encapsulate the flexibility of Boulez's later music as 'work in progress'.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of the original version of *Explosive fix* (justified *Monnaie* in 1973) and its fourth version (so far) of 1995, both played by the remarkable flautist Sophie Cherrier with Ensemble Intercontemporain conducted by the composer. The sense of a composer in a constant state of creative flux is no less pronounced in *Andreas I and II*, the first dating from 1991 (expanded in 1994) for solo violin (Jeanne-Marie Conquer performing profiles in a seductively warm acoustic) and the 1997 rethink on roughly twice the scale, featuring the breathtaking electro-acoustic response of IRCAM

technology, as realized by Andrew Gornon with world premiere violinist Hae-Sun Kang.

None of Boulez's pieces since *Le Matras* has captured the sheer excitement and exhilaration of creativity quite as strikingly as *Riposte*. Composed and thoroughly revised twice during the 1980s (and still undergoing a process of gestation that could lead ultimately to a work being in excess of 90 minutes), the currently definitive 1984 version is performed here with mesmerizing precision and sensitivity to sonic impulses, captured in alluringly sophisticated sound by the DG engineers. In a set overflowing with instrumental and vocal tours de force, perhaps the most staggering of all is Danjose's dazzling 1997 performance of *Dialogue de l'ombre double*, in which he responds and interacts with lightning reflexes to pre-recorded material, which emerges from a bank of six speakers located around the audience.

Bringing us up to date – as far as that is possible with a composer who increasingly feels that his latest scores are merely a rather than the solution – are *Diivo I and II*, the first a highly compressed vision of lyricism, the second a strikingly wide-ranging exploration of the same heretofore (a third *Diivo* is also promised) performed live with jaw-dropping aplomb by Ensemble

Intercontemporain in 2010. Boulez has been especially lucky with his pianists and here the various contributions to *Imus* (the definitive version of 2001), *Imus* (1998) and most recently *Imus page d'ephémère* (2005) by Dmitri Vassilakis, Hideki Nagano and Florent Buffard are of astounding command and virtuosic exuberance.

The twelfth disc contains three important historic recordings: a striking 1964 Paris performance of *Le Matras sans Malice* with contralto Jeanne Desmarest under Boulez's direction that goes like the wind, the premiere 1950 recording of the second version of *Le Soleil des eaux* under Roger Desormière and the 1956 premiere recording of the flute *Sonata* with Severino Gazzelloni and David Tudor.

Rounding things off in style is a 250-page booklet in French and English containing full track listings, authoritative in-depth annotations by Claude Samuel, a translation of Samuel's hour-long absorbing interview with Boulez that appears on the final disc and a useful timeline that helps place everything in its proper context. An unforgettable set, capturing some of the most compelling music of the last half-century in exemplary performances, it is difficult to imagine it ever being surpassed. (DG 481 823, 12 discs, 12 hours 43 minutes).



TUTTO VERDI THE OPERAS

To celebrate Giuseppe Verdi's bicentenary in 2013, C Major is proud to present, Tutto Verdi - The Complete Operas, representing Verdi's early, middle and late operas.



Music for art's sake seems to be the opening theme this month. By far the most interesting CD to come my way in recent weeks, John Harle's *Art Music* sees the saxophonist reaching for additional hats as a composer, guitarist, bassist and pianist to create an album – more literally than some – of pieces inspired by paintings by Lucien Freud, David Hockney, Francis Bacon, John O'Connor and John Cuxton, with various collaborators on

Contemporary music on CD

by Roger Thomas



board including soprano Sarah Leonard and the Dark String Quartet. The influence of Harle's one-time bandleader Michael Nyman is discernible, notably in the substantial take on Hockney's *The Arrival of Spring in Woldley, East Yorkshire in 2011* (twenty-album) (sic), its assertive, near-syncretic style providing a neat analogy to the 12 modular canvases of which the work is composed and showcasing Leonard's distinctive scaring vocalise. Other echoes – Wolf, Fisher, Scott Walker's *Tilt* (via the poignant contribution from pop vocalist Marc Almond), old jazz, new jazz and much else – emerge from the mixture to excellent effect in this remarkable and truly gorgeous project (**Caprice 373UN00218**, 1 hour).

Thereafter in the gallery we find the *Munch Suite*, a sequence of 15 miniatures for unaccompanied violin inspired by the painter's works and written by a whole raft of composers, of whom Aaron Jay Kernis and Naj Hakim are probably the most widely known, performed by Blomqvist Kragerud. This disc is packaged with a set of postcard-sized prints in what would pass for a chocolate box, looking like something that belongs in a gallery gift shop or a corporate event goodie bag, both of which may indeed apply. However, literally buried under all this tat is a disc of extraordinarily good music, varied in style but never less than vital and compelling (all composers should be required to write convincing works lasting just a few minutes before winning their merit badge) and often alluding to but never over-mimicking its expressionist inspiration. I'll be playing this one repeatedly, but as 'posterity edition' in

an ordinary jewel-case with a booklet might convey the music more efficiently to the wider public it deserves

(**Voxbox POC1022**, 1 hour).

Somewhat recalling the Harle disc in its use of the string quartet, the Fitzwilliam and violin soloist Mads Telling join saxophonist Uwe Straumann on the latter's *Absolutely*, a pleasing set of jazz-inflected chamber music coupled with some Purcell arrangements. The former goes for the subtle rather than the obvious by such devices as mapping the sonnettes of a jazz horn section onto the strings rather than settling for superficial imitation, while the latter is workmanlike [1 – 6] but nonetheless convincing, so good, fresh stuff all in all (**Divine Art dda2012**, 1 hour 2 minutes).

Very much elsewhere, the Cold Blue label has revived what the critics describe as the CD single (although CD EP might be more accurate), which is something of a statement in the era of the download, although there's perhaps a new-old kind of logic in a physical package that contains a single composition such as a pair of covers usually contains a single book. Two examples are to hand, both evoking the spirit of Brian Eno to an extent. Eno gave us the ambient classic *Music for Airports*, but Stephen Whittington narrows his prescription to *Music for Airport Furniture* for string quartet (here the Zephyr), a tasteful, refined, barely evolving piece that any devotee of Feldman or Sciold would appreciate (**Cold Blue Music CB008**, 28 minutes).

Joe Fox mixes a different vein with *Black Water*, which could have been an allusion to Eno's song about a causing accident involving 'the donor of the porter's daughters', but is in fact named after a short story collection and is a piece for three pianos, here orchestrated by Bryan Payne. Driven alternately by furious staccato passages, strident chords and assertive arpeggios with the occasional oasis of restraint ('tranquility' doesn't cut it), this is an energetic whittling of a piece that captures and holds the attention (**Cold Blue Music CB007**, 58 minutes).

Remaining at the piano for the first division of the issue's inevitable Glass monogamy, the young pianist Jeremy Lieb's double CD devoted to *The Piano Music of Philip*

Glass is a worthy attempt at this deceptive repertoire, but ultimately it loses out to the competition (see previous issue). Lieb is perhaps too inexperienced and his CV spread a little too thinly to have come to grips with this material as yet, and his tendency to overdo the three six (rubato, ritardando and rallentando) is typical of the tendency to over-interpret that can easily bedevil the unseasoned performer of these pieces. Nonetheless, Lieb is a very able and intuitive musician and I'd be interested to hear what he might make of this repertoire ten years hence (**Quarta QT2102**, two-disc, 1 hour 27 minutes).

Glass himself is the pianist on *Concert of the Sixth Sun*, an unusual and rather refreshing release which sees him working with two Mexican musicians from the Wixarika community playing the local equivalent to the violin and guitar. The repertoire is in the traditional style of the region with Glas willingly and expertly confining himself to the role of accompanist, providing a gentle harmonic underpinning to the lilting, trance-like music which seems to have made the transition to this concert entirely unscathed. However, the absence of the song texts from the booklet means in any form, let alone in translation, is an inescapable omission; there's clearly more to this undertaking than middlebrow cultural tourism, so crediting listeners with a similar level of engagement wouldn't hurt (**Orange Mountain Music OM08**, 60 minutes).

Glass's music for Geoffrey Raggio's new film *Finances* is also available, but works much better in conjunction with the film, which I won't spoil for you, do seek it out (**Orange Mountain Music OM08**, 1 hour 18 minutes).

Finally, no fewer than three honourable mentions: the ensemble *eX's* *Passages* is actually early and traditional music, but the disc's theme (literally the traditions of demonic and spiritual possession) and the booklet illustrations from various had horror movies both seem to be targeting non-traditional audiences, so I'll note it here (**Newly Books N12**, 54 minutes). Leo Braver gets a second mention in as many months for *Reverberations*, an enjoyable set of Beatles arrangements and much else for guitar (Carlos Barbosa-Lima) and string quartet (the Hecate) (**Deja Classic DM20106**, 1 hour 11 minutes). Last but is no way least, David Starobin's *New Music with Guitar*, Volume 8 has now been issued, continuing this fine series with a set of recent solo and small ensemble pieces from Lundy, Radev, Crumb and the guitarist himself (**Bridge BR0269404**, 56 minutes).

40 Years of BIS



2013 Highlights

Exceptional Artists Recorded in State-of-the-Art Sound for over Forty Years



Final Volume
Available 4th November

Johann Sebastian Bach
BACH COLLEGIUM JAPAN
Masaaki Suzuki

55 Freue dich, erlöste Schar
CANTATAS +30 +60 +191



"Suzuki's singers, soloists and chorus alike, consistently impress, as I think they do throughout the series"

IRR April 2013



Marketed and distributed in the UK by Select Music and Video Distribution Ltd, 3 Wells Place, Redhill RH1 3SL
T: +44 (0) 1737 645600 • E: cds@selectmusic.co.uk • For international distribution see www.bis.se

Leon Fleisher

I can't think of many pianists I'd rather listen to than Leon Fleisher – a musician whose poetic sensibilities and profound musical insights were nurtured early on by his teacher Schnabel but also a player with an astonishing technique. So it's a pleasure to welcome Sony's 'Leon Fleisher: The Complete Album Collection'. The discs, in miniature versions of their original jackets, are arranged chronologically, so the first recording here is Fleisher's magnificent debut: **Schubert's Piano Sonata in B flat, D960**, made in 1955, coupled with **12 Danzas (Lindler), D990**. The sheer intelligence of Fleisher's playing is clear from the sense of architecture, of ebb and flow, of long-term musical trajectories that are wonderfully realized in the most lyrical and unselfish way.

This is followed by a stunning disc that finds soloist and conductor in unexpected repetition. Neither Fleisher nor George Solti performed much **Rachmaninov**, but I don't know of any account of the *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini* that has such rhythmic energy, such imaginative shaping and such melting expressiveness in the slower variations, or such flawless technical control. This is a phenomenal performance, brilliantly accompanied by Solti and the Cleveland Orchestra. The *Symphony Fantasia* by **Frank** are scarcely less magical, and the *Interim* – the *Prelude to Interim by Dohnányi* – is a charming Solti rarity. Fleisher was soon to become a particularly sought-after player of **Brahms's** music and his 1956 recording of the *Tonata on a Theme by Mendel* and the *Waltz, Op. 39* demonstrates why: the *Mendel* Fantasie culminating in a tremendous account of the closing fugue.

A disc of **Hindemith** has Fleisher as the refined soloist in *The Four Temperaments*, while the rest of the record is just as attractive: the *Five Pieces for string orchestra* and the *Träumerei* (Paul Godwin the solo viola player), all with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra conducted by Seymour Goldberg, a friend of the composer who had recorded several works with him. After the stupor of repertoire of their first collaboration, Fleisher and Solti continued their partnership with **Brahms's First Piano Concerto** – a performance of such muscular splendour, rhythmic tension and liquid expressiveness that it continues to sit at or near the top of any list of recommendations, alongside Solti's other stereo recordings of the work with Curzon and Serkin. Fleisher's next disc was of French music: **Debussy's four baguettes** along with **Ravel's Sonatine, Valse noble et ostinatos and Alborada del gracieux**. The *Alborada* performance is a simply dazzling account – but Fleisher's sensitivity to colour and voicing throughout this recital is exceptional.

A pairing of **Beethoven's** Fourth Piano Concerto and **Mozart's** Piano Concerto in C major, K501 was recorded with Solti in

Historic treasures reissued

by Nigel Simeone



Cleveland on two consecutive days in January 1959. While this record marked the start of one of the most consistently satisfying cycles of the Beethoven concertos, it also demonstrates the quality of Fleisher's Mozart playing. From the same time, a disc of **Mozart** Piano Sonatas – in C major, K130, in E flat, K282 – and the *Rondo in D major, K485* has the same impressive combination of stylish elegance and poise, with a sure grasp of musical form and direction. I can't imagine why Fleisher's recording of the *Liszt Sonata in B minor* isn't better known. It appeared on Volume 27 of the Philips Great Pianists of the Century series, but has otherwise been rather elusive. Fleisher has just the right temperament for the sustained drama of *Liszt's* masterpiece and his technique is the most hair-raising passages in jaw-dropping – seriousness of purpose and a sense of pianistic theatre, of colour and of refinement are found in an ideal combination here. The coupling – **Weber's** Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 70 and *Interim in the Dance* – is unusual and effective. The combination of the **Grig and Schumann** Piano Concertos with Solti and the Cleveland Orchestra presents two wonders that seem refreshed and overgrown in these recordings from 1960 – not a note sounds lackluster and Solti matches Fleisher all the way in terms of energy and conviction. A disc from the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont includes **Brahms's** *Labellade Waltz*, Op. 52 with Fleisher and Radiff Serkin as the piano duettists, joined by the soprano Bonita Valente, contralto Marlena Kleiman, tenor Wayne Connor and baritone Martial Sagher. This is delightful, as is the coupling of **Schubert's** *Claydon* as the *Roc* with Valente, Serkin and clarinetist Harold Wright.

The Fleisher-Solti **Beethoven** cycle was completed with Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5 recorded between February and April 1961, to join the 1959 Fourth Concerto. These are probably Fleisher's best-known records and the quality of the musicianship throughout is breathtaking among versions of the Beethoven concertos using modern instruments, this seems to me as fine as any. The following year (1962), the same musicians recorded a magnificent **Brahms** Second Concerto to complement the D minor from 1958. Fleisher

is a pianist who is capable of the most lyrical and poetic playing within a finely disciplined musical framework and his performance also rides with spectacular assurance over the extremely demanding passages that pepper this gigantic concerto.

A disc of twentieth-century American music is dominated by **Copland's** Piano Sonata and the Piano Sonata No. 1 by **Leon Kirchner**. It also includes four pieces from *Sessions's* *From my Diary* and *Three Rhapsodies* by **Noel Horowitz**. The star turn is the *Copland Sonata* – a work pioneered by the composer himself (who gave the premiere), Leonard Bernstein (who gave the New York premiere), William Kapell, William Masselos and Leo Smit – all of them outstanding exponents of this music. Fleisher is in the same league: his sense of proportion, rhythmic flair and comprehension of the work's demands make for a reasonable performance. Fleisher recorded relatively little chamber music for Sony and this is cause for regret given the superlative quality of his **Brahms** Piano Quintet with the Juilliard String Quartet made in 1961 (the solo is a little raw, but don't let that put you off). His remake of **Schubert's** *Wanderer's Fantasy*, coupled with a wonderful account of the *A major Piano Sonata, D664* came from the same year, and was the last Fleisher record released by Columbia for almost 30 years.

A recital of solo works for piano left hand was made in 1991 and opens with **Johannes Brahms's** *Tonata and Fugue, Op. 56* and **Saint-Saëns's** *Six Etudes, Op. 135*. **Brahms's** transcription of the *Chaconne* from **Bach's** D minor *Pavane*, preceded by **Robert Schumann's** *Fantasy, Scriabin's* *Prelude and Nocturne, Op. 9* Nos. 1 and 2 are followed by **Godowsky's** *Symphonic Rhapsody* of

the *Schubert-Walzer* from **Johann Strauss's** *Zigeunerbaron*. At about the same time Heider recorded three major works for piano left hand and orchestra – all commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein – with the Boston Symphony under Seiji Ozawa: **Ravel's** *Concerto*, **Prokofiev's** Fourth Piano Concerto and **Britten's** *Sonatas*.

An enterprising chamber music disc followed a couple of years later with two further Wittgenstein commissions: **Korngold's** *Suite*, Op. 21 for two violins, cello and piano left hand, and **Franz Schmidt's** *rakkar Quintet* in G for string quartet and piano left hand – a work often played in the bootlegged two-handed version made by Friedrich Willner but given here in its original version. There has never been a recorded performance to match this one, in which Heider is joined by Joseph Silvestri, Joel Sussman, Michael Tree and Yu-Yu Ma. The latest disc in the set, recorded in 2008, celebrates something of a miracle: Heider regained the use of his right hand earlier in the decade and here he gives brilliant and stylish performances of **Mozart's** Piano Concertos, K414 (No. 12) and K488 (No. 23) – both in A major – along with the Concerto, K242 for three pianos in Mozart's arrangement of it for two pianos, where his partner is Katherine Jacobson. Heider, with Heider himself directing the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. It's an inspiring record with which to conclude a vastly rewarding set. With both documentation and remastering of a high standard, this is a most distinguished release (**Sony Classical** **8872 0097-2**, 23 discs, approx. 20 hours).

Gary Graffman

Sony has done American pianists proud in 2011: as well as Heider, it has issued splendid original-jacket box sets devoted to **Byron Janis** and **Van Cliburn** and a budget box of **William Kapell** (all reviewed in earlier round-ups) – and now here is an enticing set of Gary Graffman's recordings, including a number of items that are reissued on CD for the first time. Graffman recorded for RCA, then Columbia, before – like Heider – he lost the use of his right hand (he later recorded Richard Strauss's *Paganini* for piano left hand for DG and **Ned Rorem's** Concerto for Piano left hand for New World Records, both conducted by André Previn). His first recording, of **Prokofiev's** Second and Third Piano Sonatas and **Schubert's** "Wanderer" Fantasy, made in 1957, is new to CD and it already reveals a pianist whose astonishing technique was subservient to his musicianship: throughout this set there are moments when Graffman's playing has a wonderful delicacy, and he often demonstrates an aristocratic grasp of large-scale structures, not least in the two late **Beethoven** sonatas. His piano teacher at the Curtis Institute (an institution Graffman later led with great distinction) was Isabelle Vengerova whose other piano pupils



included **Berstein** and **Jauch Lattiner**. Since he was born of Russian parents, it's no surprise to find quite extensive coverage of Russian repertoire in his discography and some of it is spectacularly good. He made two recordings of the **Prokofiev** Third Piano Concerto, in mono with **Enrique Jorda** and the San Francisco SO for RCA and in stereo for Columbia with **Stell** and the Cleveland Orchestra. The stereo results with **Stell** is an extraordinary disc that also includes the First Piano Concerto – but the mono with **Jorda** is, if anything, even more exciting, despite some rough edges in the orchestral playing. Graffman's **Tchaikovsky** First Piano Concerto, also with **Stell**, is enormously impressive, as are the same composer's Second and Third Concertos with **Ormandy** and the Philadelphia Orchestra on Eryu Form. **Rachmaninov's** Second Piano Concerto and **Paganini Rhapsody** are both with **Bernstein** (who seldom conducted Rachmaninov) and the New York Philharmonic. It's a disc I've always regarded very highly: Graffman plays with real grandeur as well as dazzling technique and **Bernstein** accompanies splendidly. The solo Russian repertoire is just as compelling: the early recordings of **Prokofiev's** Second and Third Sonatas, **Mussorgsky's** *Pictures at an Exhibition* and a wonderfully agile **Balakirev** *Allegro* for Columbia in 1962. Another Russian disc from the same year includes stereo remakes of the same two Prokofiev sonatas along with **Rachmaninov's** *the finale-Talbot*, Op. 31 No. 9, *Ravenscroft*, Op. 10 No. 3, *Polka*, Op. 24 No. 5 and Op. 32 Nos. 8 and 12, *Étude*, Op. 1 No. 1 and the delightful *Polichinelle*, Op. 3 No. 5. In other modern repertoire, Graffman recorded the Fourth Piano Sonata by **Benjamin Lees** and **Bartók's** *Suite*, Op. 14. His last recording for Columbia was **Gershwin's** *Rhapsody in Blue* with the New York Philharmonic under **Zubin Mehta** for **Woody Allen's** *Bandstand*.

Graffman was also a distinguished player of Austro-German classics. His **Beethoven** includes an early (1959) Living Stereo recording of the Third Piano Concerto

with the Chicago SO and **Walter Hendel** and two much later discs of Piano Sonatas: the "Waldstein" and "Appassionata" from 1970 and the last two, Op. 110 and Op. 111, from 1975. The **Schubert** "Wanderer" Fantasy on his first RCA disc was followed by a slightly less impetuous stereo remake for Columbia in 1965, coupled with the late Piano Sonata in C minor, D958. **Schumann** featured on another of Graffman's first RCA discs: the Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 22, *Romance in F sharp*, Op. 28 No. 2 and the *Andante symphonique*, Op. 13. In 1967 Graffman re-recorded the *Andante symphonique*, coupling them this time with **Canova**.

He was a fine **Brahms** player, as can be heard from the D minor Concerto with **Manuch** and the Boston SO (1958), a volatile and imaginative reading, and a later (1965 and 1967) disc of the *Fantasies on themes by Handel*, Op. 24 and *Paganini*, Op. 35 as well as the C major Piano Trio discussed below. His **Chopin** included a performance of the E minor Piano Concerto with **Manuch** and the Boston SO that is often extremely beautiful as well as intelligently paced, while his solo Chopin includes a recording of the four *Balade* that I find particularly satisfying – in Chopin as elsewhere, Graffman's toning is impeccable, never mind his straining technique – coupled with the *Andante quasi ad grand pianissimo*. He recorded more Chopin for Columbia in the mid-1960s: remakes of the G minor *Balade* and *Andante quasi ad grand pianissimo*, but also the *Scherzo* No. 2, *Nocturne*, Op. 27 Nos. 1 and 2 and a couple of isolated preludes. There's just one **Liszt** record, made in 1959-60, which includes a terrific account of the six *Grandes études de Paganini* as well as popular favourites such as the *supra*, the *Magnificata Rhapsody* No. 11 and the *Consolation* No. 3, though the quieter pieces are sometimes marred by odd extraneous noises (it almost sounds as if someone left a door open on to the street during one or two tracks) happily, the *Paganini études* are not thus affected).

The last known of Graffman's records include two chamber music discs from 1959-60: **Brahms's** Piano Trio in C major, Op. 87 with violinist **Beryl Senko** and cellist **Shelley Toppel** (a pupil of both **Ferencsik** and **Platigorsky**) and it's magnificent. As with Heider it immediately made me wish that Graffman had recorded more chamber music: he's a superb ensemble player and his colleagues are tremendous musicians. This is thrilling, passionate playing, notable for an account of the *Scherzo* that is finer than any I've heard; the outer sections are played with a Mendelssohnian lightness of touch and a kind of nervous, divesting intensity that is

most effective, while the trio strays along superbly. **Beethoven's** *Kolida Festivals*, Op. 121a complete this disc. The second chamber music record features **Berl Scodifly and Griffioen in Faure's** First Violin Sonata and **Debussy's** Violin Sonata. The *Schostakovich* is particularly effective, while the shifting moods (and speeds) of the Debussy are judged superbly: the result is a tremendous performance. I know that two little-known chamber music recordings may not necessarily be of the greatest interest in a set devoted to one of America's mightiest virtuosi, but they are such fine records that they deserve attention. With interesting booklet notes and attractive presentation, this is another worthwhile set, including many records that are likely to be new to many collectors, as they were to me (**Key Classical 88721 0029-2**, 28 discs, approx. 19 hours).

Bruno Walter

The Bruno Walter Edition from Sony Classical was originally released on separate discs or sets, but has now been brought together in a single box, the size of an old LP box set, which some collectors will find pleasingly nostalgic and others will find irritating in terms of storage. On the positive side, the booklet has fine and large reproductions of photos (including the famous image of five great conductors in 1929: Walter, Toscanini, Furtwängler, Kleiber and Klemperer). The discs, in sturdy cardboard sleeves, don't readily slip out inside the four pockets within the large box and I can't help thinking there must be a more ingenious solution to presenting these records. Handsome as it is, the booklet doesn't include comprehensive documentation (in striking contrast to the material in Sony's booklet for the Heister set, for instance). Basic information about date and venue is printed on the back of each sleeve (collectors wanting complete discographical information for Walter will, however, find it online at www.hediscography.com). So much for the mechanics. What matters here is a collection that includes some exceptional music-making.

The Bruno Walter Edition did not include his complete Columbia recordings, but was, with a few exceptions, a set that represented the peak of his later form. This set revisits those discs with the same couplings as the earlier single releases, so Walter collectors will know what to expect: the stereo **Beethoven** and **Brahms** symphony cycles recorded with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra on the West coast, along with shorter works and *Les Danzas Espagnoles* from 1954 (with Irmgard Seifried and George London); the justly celebrated recordings – ranging from the 1940s to the 1960s – of **Bruckner** (Symphonies Nos. 4, 7, 9 and *Le Don*) and **Mahler** (Symphonies Nos. 1 – the stereo remakes – 2, 4, 5 and 9); *Les Danzas espagnoles* with Mildred Miller and Ernst Haefliger, and other songs with Dora Halban,



Mozart is represented by the *Rapine* (with Seifried, Tzavel, Simonsen and Warfield), shorter works including the *Musica Funera* Music, the late Symphonies (Nos. 25, 28, 35, 39-41) in the mono recordings by the New York Philharmonic or the East coast version of the Columbia SO, and No. 36, the 'Lair' – in stereo with the (West coast) Columbia SO along with the extensive and absorbing rehearsal for that recording. Equally captivating is the rehearsal and performance of **Wagner's** *Siegfried Idyll* which finds Walter at his most charming and relaxed, working with a group of musicians he clearly liked and trusted. This lovely performance comes along with further Wagner orchestral extracts from *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, *Meistersinger*, *Parsifal* and *Tannhäuser* – a reminder, if any is needed, of Walter's superlative opera conducting. It's good to be reminded of his genial and energetic **Haydn** (Symphonies Nos. 88, 92, 100 and 102). His final years see him make fine recordings of Symphonies by **Schubert** (Nos. 5, 8 and 9) and **Dvořák** (Nos. 8 and 9), while the only **Schumann** Symphony in the set – the 'Rhenish' – is much earlier, recorded in New York in 1941, and the Piano Concerto with Eugene Istomin is also included. The only **Richard Strauss** pieces are *Don Juan* and *Ein Festlied*, both with the New York Philharmonic. Even though Walter performed a good deal of twentieth-century music in the United States, little of it was recorded. However, this set does include **Barber's** Symphony No. 1 with the NYPO.

With a few more discs this could have been an absolutely comprehensive collection of Walter's Columbia records, including – among other things – the mono New York Philharmonic recordings of the **Beethoven** and **Brahms** symphonies, Schubert's Ninth, Dvořák's Eighth, Mahler's First and Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, as well as the 1959-60 remakes of the Mozart symphonies, various Mozart operatic arias with Lilli Pons, Hleanor Steber, Euse Piccini and George London, and some missing rehearsal recordings (the **Brahms** Second Symphony rehearsal, issued on a very rare 10-inch record – Columbia 32786 – would have been particularly welcome, especially for those of us who haven't heard it). Most of these earlier recordings have been

made available before – by Sony and by others – and serious Walter collectors may have them already. Still, it would have been handy to have had everything in one box. The object of this review was a little less ambitious, though certainly useful: to make available the whole of the deleted Bruno Walter Edition in a single collection. Many admirers of this great conductor will welcome the chance – as I do – to acquire all these recordings at a very reasonable price. Listening to such a large body of

Walter's legacy leaves no doubt about his importance and serves as an inspiring reminder of what a towering musician he was: one of the greatest conductors of the twentieth century (**Key Classical 88748 0010-2**, 28 discs, approx. 60 hours).

Symphony cycles briefly noted

Now sporting the Warner Classics logo, three symphonic cycles recorded by EMI have been restored to the catalogue at budget price and all three are valuable. Egon **Jochum's** **Bruckner** cycle with the Dresden Staatskapelle is a set I've written about often, so let me just repeat that it is my preferred Jochum **Bruckner** cycle and that it belongs in any serious **Bruckner** collection. The playing has a bunched magnificence, the recordings are good for their age and Jochum is consistently inspired: the cycle gets ever more impressive as it goes on. It's particularly impressive in the Seventh and Eighth, while in the Ninth Jochum conducts what for me is one of the best **Bruckner** performances on record. At budget price this is not to be missed (**Warner Classics 9 84589-2**, nine discs, 9 hours 20 minutes).

Bernard Haitink's **Vaughan Williams** series is one of the most thoughtful and imaginative since Adrian Boult's two cycles, and for the most part it's beautifully (if sometimes a little distantly) recorded. 'A Sea Symphony', with Felicity Lott and Jonathan Summers as the soloists, has breadth and splendour, the soloists and chorus are excellent and the London Philharmonic – which plays the whole of this cycle – is on magnificent form. I like Haitink's 'London Symphony' too. Though it's less vibrant than Barber's, and less atmospheric than Boult's, Haitink brings out something rather different: its musical impressionism, seen in a distinctly European light – and convincingly so. Like Haitink's Debussy and Ravel, there's remarkable subtlety and refinement in his view of this music. Haitink is an ideal guide in the 'Pastoral', allowing the music to unfold patiently (and quite flexibly) but always with a strong sense of the underlying structure. I remember a stunning live performance of the Fourth by Haitink and the LPO at the Festival Hall in the early 1970s and, though the recording here is not quite so clearcut, it's still an aptly furious reading. His

synphonic view of the Fifth, tempered by the most acute ear for detail, brings dividends throughout by underlining the musical argument of the first movement and the poetry of the slow movement. The closing *Fantasia* is beautifully done. The Sixth is magnificent, excitingly driven (but unusually transparent) in the first movement, and startlingly remote in the extraordinary finale. Haitink seems very much at home in the *Infans in antea*, relishing its chilly nobility, drawing superb playing from the LPO and helped by Sheila Armstrong's solo soprano. I'm not quite so sure about his approach to the Eighth Symphony – it seems a little sluggish in the outer movements – but the Ninth is excellent; there's real nobility in Haitink's reading and the results are most moving. The shorter pieces in this box are just as well served: the *Zehn Fantasia*, *Napoli Klavur* No. 1 and the *Five Country* along with the orchestral version of *On Bostick Edge* with Ian Routledge, and *The Last Ascending* with Sarah Chang. I'm not sure I would make this a first choice – that would have to be one of Bostick's cycles – but Haitink has a great many original things to say about these works, he's extremely well supported by the orchestra and the sound is excellent. I would certainly recommend this set to any Vaughan Williams collector looking for a fascinating alternative approach to these extraordinary works. (**Warner Classics 9 8578-2**, seven discs, 7 hours, 16 minutes).



As a postscript, there's an interesting new release from the LPO's own label which includes Haitink's live performances of the Fifth Symphony and *Infans in antea*, broadcast from the Royal Festival Hall in 1994 and 1998 respectively. Both have the kind of fervid intensity that Haitink can generate in a concert and the *Infans in antea* is particularly memorable, with a notable contribution from the Festival Hall organ. Admirers of Haitink's Vaughan Williams are likely to want these concert performances as a supplement to his studio cycle (**London Philharmonic LP0002**, two discs, 1 hour 26 minutes).

John Barbirolli's complete *Sibelius* symphonies recorded with the Hall's core with other works including *Fantasia*, the *Kaarlo Suite*, *Pohjola's Daughter*, *Talo*, *Sea*, *The Swan of Tuonela*, *Pellinur* and *Milkanen*, *Säms Antropos*, *Ruhmstern* and the *Romanos* in C. These recordings of the seven symphonies are among the finest records from the later years of Barbirolli's career: the orchestra sounds tremendous and the best of the performances are magnificent – including a marvellous account of the Second, heaven-storming readings of the Fifth and Seventh and a remarkable version of the Fourth. Barbirolli may be marginally less successful in the First (a little lecturing, perhaps, though there is much to love about this version too) and the Sixth, but this is to nitpick. The only one that really doesn't work for me in this cycle is Barbirolli's heavy-handed version of the Third. Most of the other orchestral pieces are very fine. With the recent reappearance of Pevero Berglund's Bourgeois cycle made a few years later, competition among bargain *Sibelius* cycles is fierce, but I wouldn't want to be without the passionate involvement of this Barbirolli set. (**Warner Classics 9 8170-2**, five discs, 5 hours 52 minutes).

Brilliant Classics has also released another very worthwhile *Sibelius* cycle – a much less well-known one made in East Berlin in the 1970s. The Berlin Symphony Orchestra is conducted by Kurt Sanderling, and while he may not have been thought of as a specialist in Scandinavian repertoire, there is plenty to admire in this cycle, which is notable for its attention to orchestral detail and the patient, broad unfolding of the music. Only the Seventh strikes me as disappointing – somehow it lacks the necessary concentration and inner tension (in contrast to both Barbirolli and Berglund). Among the others, I'm particularly impressed by Sanderling's Fourth and Sixth and by the Tchaikovsky-like fervour of his First. This series also included *En Saga*, *Fantasia* and a particularly good *Night Ride and Sunrise*. All three of these works are duplicated in the latest Brilliant Classics incarnation, which also includes Vasily Staidy's set of the tone poems with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, recorded in 1991: as well as Staidy's versions of these three pieces, included are his complete *Lemminkäinen Suite*, *Lemminkäinen* (with soprano Maria Jigova), *The Reed*, *Pohjola's Daughter*, *The Dying*, *Spring Song*, *The Oxenbow* and *Tapsala*. These are generally well played, though Staidy is not the most imaginative of conductors: at times his approach feels routine and he misses some of the propulsive energy that underpins so much of Sibelius's music. Still, at the price these are a useful addition to Sanderling's altogether more thought-provoking cycle of the symphonies. (**Brilliant Classics BC699**, seven discs, 7 hours 16 minutes).

Sergiu Celibidache in Berlin: 1945-57

Audite has released a fascinating box of early Celibidache performances with the Berlin Philharmonic, the Berlin Radio SO (now the Deutsches-Symphonie-Orchester, Berlin) and the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester. The repertoire is likely to surprise those of us who remember Celibidache's concerts from late in his career. In Berlin he was conducting an immense and surprising range of music. The works by American composers include **MacDowell's** *Romance* for cello and orchestra, **Barber's** *Capricorn Concerto*, **Piston's** *Symphony No. 2*, **Diamond's** *Round* for string orchestra, **Copland's** *Appalachian Spring* and **Carlos Chávez's** *Sinfonia de Antigua*. British music is represented by **Britten's** *Infans de Requiem* and *Julian Herbage's* suite from *Purcell's King John*. French repertoire ranges from **Berlioz** (*L'assaut romain*, *Le Corsaire*), **Bizet** (*Symphonie in C*) and *Saint-Saëns* (*Softly awakes my heart*), via **Debussy** (*Le nu, Jeu*, *Vivier* from *Les Noces*) to **Roussel** (*Petit Suite*) and **Milhaud** (*Suite française* and three movements from the *Suite symphonique No. 2*). Celibidache always had a flair for Russian music, and as well as **Tchaikovsky's** *Little Russian* Symphony and *Romeo and Juliet*, **Prokofiev's** *Classical* Symphony and the second suite from *Romeo and Juliet*, **Shostakovich's** *Symphony No. 9*, **Rimsky-Korsakov's** *Russian Easter Festival Overture* and **Stravinsky's** *Jeux de cartes*, we find rarities such as **Glazunov's** *Canon Overture*, Op. 45, **César Cui's** *Suite No. 3*, Op. 43, 'his most popular' and **Glire's** *Concerto for coloratura soprano and orchestra* (with Irina Berger).

Among Austro-German works, the surprises include live orchestral songs by **Wolf**, **Rudi Stephan's** *Musik für Orchester*, **Günter Raphael's** *Symphony No. 4*, **Heinz Tiessen's** *Overture to a Revolutionary Drama*, alongside **Haydn's** *Symphonies Nos. 94 and 104*, **Mozart's** *Viola Concerto No. 5*, **K219**, **Beethoven's** *Lecture No. 3* and a partial performance of the Seventh Symphony, **Mendelssohn's** *Italian* Symphony and the *Five Helms Overture*, **Brahms's** *Fourth Symphony* and **Stravav's** *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Jeune Femme*. Other works include **Chopin's** *Piano Concerto No. 2*, **Dvořák's** *Cello Concerto*, **Bassani's** *Romance oliganque* and **Vivaldi's** *Viola Concerto*, Op. 8 No. 11. It's intriguing that there's not a note of Bruckner, not any Ravel, not even of the works Celibidache conducted regularly later in his career such as *Berossus* at the Kolshorn, *Rimsky's* *Schéhérazade* or Wagner orchestral extracts. But what we do have in these Berlin radio recordings is a remarkable documentation of early Celibidache – often a very exciting musician (though he later renounced his interpretative approach during these years).

Many of these performances have not been published before (though some are in a four-

disc Music & Arts set) and few have made use of the original master tapes, as Audite has here. Collectors with a serious interest in Colbühne will not need any encouragement from me to explore this set, which is a companion to the earlier three-disc Audite box of Colbühne's RIAS recordings.

(Incidentally, there was even more in the way of startling repertoire that doesn't seem to have survived on tape: for instance, in April 1951 Colbühne and the Berlin Philharmonic gave two performances of Vaughan Williams's Fourth Symphony.) In terms of how Colbühne's interpretations developed, it's interesting to hear his early Brahms Fourth (1945) and Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel* (1947), both with the Berlin Philharmonic. The Brahms is five minutes quicker overall than his Munich Philharmonic performance on EMI and it is a turbulent and tense reading, with a fiery urgency that is quite unlike Colbühne's later performances. *Till* is a minute later than his Swedish Radio SO version (DG). Equally intriguing, though for different reasons, is the sound of the Berlin Philharmonic in American works such as Pines's Second Symphony, Barber's Capriccio Concerto, and Copland's *Appalachian Spring* (all from April 6th, 1950), and the quality of Colbühne's performances of rarities such as Cal's *Solo*, or Stephan's marvelous *Music for Orchestra* – to say nothing of the remarkable – occasionally wild – musical personality that can be heard conducting the volcanic performance of Beethoven's *Lionel No. 3* with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1946. With detailed notes and sound that is often exceptional for its age, this is a model of how an important historical set should be presented. **Audio 21.42**, 12 discs, approx. 15 hours.

Bernard Haitink: The Philips Years

Decca has made some imaginative choices for its set celebrating Haitink's 'Philips years'. Several of these records are appearing for the first time in the international CD catalogue. These rarities include a fine Schubert 'Great' C major Symphony with the Concertgebouw Orchestra from 1975, two Haydn Symphonies (Nos. 96 and 99) with the same orchestra, two Beethoven Symphonies (Nos. 1 and 3) with the London Philharmonic (1974 and 1975), the Tchaikovsky and Bruch (No. 1) Violin Concertos with Arthur Grumiaux and the Concertgebouw (coupled with the Mendelssohn and altogether a beautiful disc), as well as two twentieth-century works – Hindrik Andriessen's *Symphonische Etude* and Stravinsky's *Footed* – again, both with the Concertgebouw. With such an impressive raft of material that hasn't been generally available on CD before, this is a box that should be of considerable interest to Haitink enthusiasts. Among the rarities, the Schubert 'Great' Symphony is particularly welcome – with wonderfully disciplined playing and a fine sense of symphonic



trajectory. Haitink's Bruckner is represented by three symphonies: the Third is the 1988 Vienna Philharmonic recording of the 1977 version (Oester's edition) – beautifully played, and conducted with real intensity. The Ninth is the 1969 Concertgebouw set that formed part of Haitink's original Philips Bruckner cycle, while the Ninth is the later (1981) Concertgebouw account – probably his finest studio recording of the work, unfolding with greater nobility and sense of space than his earlier version.

Mahler is represented by the Sixth and Ninth Symphonies, both recorded in Amsterdam in 1969. The Ninth, in particular, is a performance of great insight and sensitivity, and it's played superbly. There are a number of outstanding recordings of this work, from Walter in Vienna to Abbado in Lucerne, and this is surely another of them. I'm not quite so convinced by the Sixth: Haitink's approach is direct and unselfish – and, again, the Concertgebouw responds wonderfully. But to me, this feels a little short on both aggression and fantasy. Having said that, it's a version I always return to with pleasure and it's good to have it here. Haitink's recordings of French repertoire are among the most refined and intelligent of any: his Debussy here includes the *Nocturnes*, *Jas. Poldi 2 L'après-midi d'un faune* and *La mer* – all of them notable for Haitink's ear for the most telling details and for the impressive sweep of the performances as a whole. His complete Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé* with the Boston Symphony (1989) is less well known but is a most welcome inclusion here – there are moments of the most extraordinary beauty – coupled with earlier Concertgebouw recordings of the *Alceste del granata* and *La valse*. Haitink's Brahms is a mixed bag. On the one hand, there is his animated and gritty Third Symphony with the Concertgebouw, made in 1970. I described this in an earlier sound-up as 'warm, propulsive Brahms that is consistently alive to inner details and has plenty of motive power' – it is a performance of real distinction and intensity. On the other hand, there's Haitink's

Disraeli Requiem made with the Vienna Philharmonic, Guschla Javoritz and Tom Kraus, and the Konzertvereinigung Wiener Staatsoperchor. This is extravagantly slow and Haitink seems to be in a private dream world for much of the performance, with results that soon become dreary and tiresome. To paraphrase what Richard Strauss said about *Faust*, this is already composed to be slow, so playing it even more slowly does it no favours.

Haitink's Strauss is more consistent: a passionate but firmly controlled Hollenbohn, played with considerable flamboyance by the Concertgebouw (with Hermann Kreibitz as the violin soloist) comes on the same disc as a radiant and magnificent *Tal und Frühling*. One of Haitink's most successful early records was Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra*, made with the Concertgebouw in 1960, full of rhythmic energy and relishing the work's orchestral colour. The Second Violin Concerto is with Henrick Szeryng, whose solo playing has a lyrical, bony and intensity that are utterly convincing, especially as he's also so well accompanied. With Beethoven, as well as the two symphonies with the LPO (neither of which is particularly memorable, to be honest – his more recent Beethoven is far more impressive), there are also two concertos: the Triple Concerto with the Beaux Arts Trio and the LPO, a transparent, chamber-like performance of great charm as well as distinction, and the Violin Concerto with Kreibitz – a performance that can stand as a model of refined, unfurled music-making. Some Wagner orchestral preludes (*Meistersinger*, *Parsifal*, *Lohengrin* and the *Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan*) with the Concertgebouw (recorded in 1974) reveal Haitink as a perceptive Wagnerian years before he conducted the complete works in the theatre.

The earliest record in this set, made in September 1959, is Dvořák's Seventh Symphony, rhythmical and well controlled by Haitink, but also notable for the lucid orchestral textures as well as some beautifully shaped solo playing. The same disc includes Smetana's 'Vltava' recorded in 1961 and a finely proportioned Schubert 'Unfinished' Symphony from 1975, all with the Concertgebouw. The partnership of Alfred Brendel with Haitink in the Liszt Piano Concertos and *Totentanz* was an inspired one: Brendel plays with abundant brilliance and fiery virtuosity, with Haitink and the LPO as exciting accomplices. It's a magnificent record and this set adds two works from the Liszt orchestral series that Haitink recorded with the LPO: *Moyses/Water No. 1* and *Les Félises*. Tchaikovsky may not seem the prime Haitink territory, but his straightforward readings of the First ('Winter Daydreams') and Second ('Little Russian') Symphonies makes for a very

atisfying disc – it's a pleasure to hear these works played so directly and without mannerisms. Among Hatik's ventures into more recent repertoire, it's good to have his performances of **Takemitsu's** *November Steps* and **Messiaen's** *Le temps du tourbillon* (reissued on **musica**). The booklet includes a good note by Andrew Stewart, illustrated with session photographs (**Decca 478 3071**, 20 disc, 26 hours 16 minutes).

Cherkasky, Kleiber, Seif and Rostropovich in live performances

A recital by Shostakovich from 1971 released on First Hand Records (from Cherkasky's own tapes in the British Library) includes a breathtaking **Liszt Sonata** – exquisite, dazzling, full of nobility and passion, and with Cherkasky's technique in very fine shape. Any collection wanting to discover why he was such an admired pianist need look no further: I've never heard a more engaging Cherkasky performance than this. The rest of the programme is just as beguiling. **Mozart's** *A minor Sonata*, K110, the **Grieg Piano Sonata**, **Paul Pabst's** *Concert Paraphrase on themes from Tchaikovsky's 'Eugene Onegin'*, the 'Russian Dance' from **Strauss's** *Peter and the Wolf* and some shorter pieces. Strangely, there's no indication on the original tapes of where this remarkable concert was given, but though the (stereo) sound is a little thin, it's a phenomenal experience – and very warmly recommended (**First Hand Records 19078**, 1 hour 22 minutes).



Svetlanovich has issued a fascinating set of historic **Shostakovich** recordings. Mentor Rostropovich was the dedicatee of the First Cello Concerto and this set includes two live performances with different orchestras in Moscow on October 6th, 1959 with the Moscow PO under Alexander Gauk (the earliest known recorded performance of the work, given two days after the premiere in Leningrad), and with Kiril Kondradin and the Czech PO at the Prague Spring Festival on May 29th, 1960. A

Moscow Radio recording of the Cello Sonata with Rostropovich and the composer himself at the piano dates from 1959, while the Second Cello Concerto – also written for Rostropovich – comes in a performance with Evgeny Svetlanov and the Prague SO recorded on December 11th, 1967. These are significant sound documents and the Prague performances are released for the first time here. Rostropovich's playing of all three works has the most vibrant conviction and the sound is respectable for its age. The notes by Antonia Matusek are informative. This is an exciting opportunity to acquire Rostropovich performances of the two Shostakovich concertos that have been unknown until now (**Virginophon Archiv SVR1071-2**, two-disc, 1 hour 52 minutes).

How about Carlos Kleiber conducting **Offenbach's** *Prélude* (released on Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Düsseldorf, in 1962; these are German-language versions of *Le fût enlevé*, *Le mariage aux lanternes* and *L'île Tulipeau*). With lively casts, which include Karl Kleinmann, Gabrielle Trocher, Dietha Sommer, Erika Wren, Sander Schlor, Fritz Gleditsch, Anni Körner, and Alfons Holz and Eva Kasper in all three operas, this is music-making of the most infectious energy – and even in this early performance, Kleiber's inimitable shaping of rhythm and his marvellous sense of phrasing and pacing is already in evidence, and the music is the purest delight in such devoted and imaginative hands. The sound is occasionally murky, but I hope that won't deter any Kleiber enthusiasts from hearing these joyous performances, which come with interesting notes explaining the circumstances of the recording (though there are no librettos). This is a really alluring rarity (**Profil OCCOPY2008**, two-disc, 1 hour 26 minutes).

Stoll's concerts at the Lucerne Festival included **Brahms's** First Symphony with the Swiss Festival Orchestra in 1962 and **Dvořák's** Eighth Symphony with the Czech Philharmonic in 1969. Both works were among Stoll's favourites (whereas he made two studio recordings of the Brahms and three of the Dvořák). To hear these live performances is a treat – especially the Dvořák. The distinctive sonority of the Czech Philharmonic, its idiomatic sense of light and shade and its rhythmic subtlety brings out a flexibility and warmth in Stoll's conducting that was not always apparent in his studio records (though the *Decca/Concertophony* Dvořák Eighth is a marvellous performance). The sound – from original radio master tapes – is up to Auden's usual high standards, as are the notes. Sill collectors shouldn't miss this (**Audite 95.625**, 1 hour 21 minutes).



Eric Coates

Several British conductors have demonstrated their fondness for the music of Eric Coates – Adrian Boult and Charles Mackerras among them – and Elgar greatly admired his younger colleague's distinctive gifts. I've always loved Coates's music, so it was a pleasure to discover 'The Definitive Eric Coates', a set that includes all his commercial recordings from 1921 to 1967, well described in an absorbing booklet essay by Michael Payne on 'Eric Coates and the Gramophone'. Coates recorded several of his pieces more than once and everything is included here: both the 1944 and 1953 recordings of *The Four Gossams* and *The Three Elizabeths*, several versions of *London and London Again*, and a large number of shorter pieces – many of them enchanting discoveries – as well as works such as the *Sou-Éclair*, played here by his dedicatee Sigurd Rascher. Coates's 1949 recording of *The Three Bells* has always intrigued me, since it changes several details from Coates's own published full score (Chappell, 1929). The excellent notes explain that Coates asked Robert Farnes to join up the passage for this recording (an earlier 1945 record made for Columbia is also included here and plays the same music as written). While finding particular performances isn't always simple here (the discs come in two boxes of four and three discs, and the arrangement of pieces and performances isn't chronological), such details are attractive Coates programme in its own right. This is a very serious endeavour on behalf of Britain's most inventive composer of light music and Alan Bunting deserves a great deal of credit for his scrupulous transfers. The seventh disc includes early performances conducted by others, including Charles Williams, Sidney Torch, Farnes and Clarence Raybould, ending with the Central Band of the RAF under Wing Commander A. F. Sims playing *The Dow Buses*. This is a vastly enjoyable collection of records – no Coates lover should be without it, not least because it is an invaluable opportunity to acquire all his own recordings thoroughly documented and beautifully restored (**Nimbus NW111**, seven-disc, 8 hours 50 minutes).

J. S. Bach

Six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-51.

Dunedin Consort/John Butt (harpsichord).

Line Records LRC0420 (medium-price, two discs,

1 hour 20 minutes). Website: www.linerecords.com

Producer Philip Hobbs, Engineer Robert Carnegie.

Date: May 7/9-10/9, 2012.

New CD/SACD

Comparisons:

English Baroque Soloists/Gardiner

(Set One Classics) SO2707 (2009, rev. Nov 2009)

Colegion Musica Antiqua/Gardiner

(DG) 089 182-2 (1987)

Berlin AAM (Harmonia Mundi) GMD

HMC0160035 (1997)

The six instrumental concertos that Bach completed in March 1721 and subsequently presented to the Margrave of Brandenburg are almost certainly the most frequently recorded of all Baroque concerto sets, and in an already heavily over-subscribed discography, any newcomer needs to find some novel way of justifying itself. Perhaps in any less-crowded sector, the quality of the performances and of the recording itself would normally suffice, and it can be said that each of these cardinal attributes is capably met in the case of this new cycle from the Dunedin Consort directed by harpsichordist John Butt.

What, then, might serve to distinguish these new accounts from the many other excellent contenders in the current catalogue?

To answer that question, we need to appreciate that modern Bach research continues to illuminate performance practice during the composer's Cöthen period and, in particular, has helped us to understand far more than ever before about the supposed pitch Bach and his performers might have chosen to use.

As Butt explains in his booklet essay, Bach's musicians might have been comparatively few in number, and it is likely that the parts in these concertos and other works would have been taken by individual instrumentalists. Bach's players were all highly accomplished virtuosi and this undoubtedly facilitated a much closer correlation between solo and ripieno textures than might be expected in most Baroque concertos, but (as Bruce Haynes has also shown) it now seems probable that the Cöthen pitch (which was in all likelihood not completely standardized) was set much lower than that used elsewhere at the time. For this new recording, the 'Hof-Cammermus' is set at A=392Hz, in other words a whole tone below modern concert pitch and a semitone lower than the A=415Hz often used by most Baroque performers today.

Why should that fact alone have such far-reaching implications? As Butt explains, 'The low pitch – which adds an element of technical complexity – does have several significant effects on the sound of the performance. First, it is perhaps most suited to smaller rooms than the high pitch levels, which tend to render the music more penetrating, but it brings a warmth and glow to the sound that is well suited to the opulent textures of the *Brandenburg Concertos*.' That assertion does receive frequent endorsement throughout this impressive set. Even at first hearing, it is remarkable to find that this over-familiar music often sounds so different as to immediately captivate and engage the listener in a myriad different and unexpected ways, all of them refreshing and illuminating. The *Allegro* slow movement of Concerto No. 5 in D, BWV1050, a trio for three solo instruments alone (and most akin to a Baroque sonata slow movement in its intimacy) makes the point especially clear, but there are other consequences too.

The lower pitch, suggests Butt, also 'tends to encourage a slightly slower but more subtle articulation for most instruments, which means that both fast and slow tempi can generate a rich array of note shapes and dynamic shadings'. Again, the musical evidence in support of this suggestion seems compelling, and is nowhere more eloquently displayed than in the *Adagio* of Concerto No. 6, BWV1051.

Other consequences of reduced pitch might seem less obvious to the listener, but nevertheless have a very significant effect upon the playability of certain passages in the *Brandenburg* set. That is most obviously the case in the intimidating *clauso* register solo trumpet writing of the second concerto, which, says Butt, becomes 'slightly easier to handle'. Not that his technically brilliant and apparently fearless soloist here, the wonderfully agile David Blackadder, ever needs any such concession, and his thrilling high-wire act trumpet playing throughout BWV1047 is among the many enticements that should prompt hard-bitten Bach devotees to purchase this wonderful set!

Perhaps under normal conditions it would seem impossible to conceal the depth of scholarship and detailed preparation which underpins these outstanding realizations, and yet Butt and his team play all six *Brandenburgs* with such discerning spontaneity and assurance that no hint of anything drab or prosaic is ever detectable. If anything, those rich-based, generous readings provide further compelling reasons to conclude that, in the right hands, an equitable balance between the scholarly and the musicianly can bring this, or any

other music, to life in a very personal and exciting way. No matter how many times you've heard the *Brandenburg Concertos* before, these readings have that rare capacity to make you feel you're hearing them afresh for the very first time.

There was a time when I should have ignored Reinhard Goebel's survey with *Musica Antiqua Köln* above all others, for the flair and virtuosity of the third and fifth concertos especially. However, there remains a certain clinical detachment about this famous DG set that nowadays seems less satisfying, and both the *Harmonia Mundi* set by the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and the English Baroque Soloists' traversal with John Eliot Gardiner both afford fine playing but without the coolness of the Cologne accounts. If forced to choose, I'd probably elect for the *Harmonia Mundi* disc, yet not even this comes close to matching the richness and majesty of the Dunedin Consort performance, which seems to provide the best of all possible worlds in this music.

Michael Ameson

American Piano

Barber Piano Concerto, Op. 38.

Copland Piano Concerto.

Gershwin Piano Concerto in F.

Xiyin Wang (piano); Royal Scottish National

Orchestra/Peter Oundjian.

Chandos CHSAS128 (full price, 1 hour 16 minutes).

Website: www.chandos.net | Producer Brian

Poljan, Engineers Ralph Coates, Jonathan Cooper.

Date: February 17th and April 29th-30th, 2012.

New CD/SACD

Comparisons:

Barber:

Bronson, Cleveland Orchestra

(Sony Classical) SMK0701 (1966)

Copland:

Copland, New York Philharmonic

(Sony Classical) SMK0722 (1966, new disc)

Wild, Sym of the Air/Copland

(Vanguard) VUC029 (1981)

Gershwin:

Evansmore, Philadelphia Orchestra

(Sony Classical) SMK0318 (1972)

Previn, LSO (SME Classics) S 6899-2 (1977)

One could make a case that these piano concertos are the three finest American works in that genre. (Still, I'd hate leaving out Edward MacDowell's Second.) However, apart from quality, they have at little in common as their respective composers do, a fact also discussed by Mervyn Cooke in his fine booklet notes. As a result, it would be asking a lot of a single pianist and a single conductor to excel at all three of them in equal degree, and if any pianist or conductor has performed all three of them before, I am unaware of it.

Xiyin Wang, whose 2009 Edvard Wild recital for Chandos was a success (reviewed in December 2010), turns in quite a good effort here, as does conductor Peter Oundjian.

Given that the Wild works she recorded previously are, for the most part, based on Gershwin's music (a *Good Fantasy on 'Foggy and Hot' and the like*) one might expect her to have an affinity for Gershwin's Concerto in F, and that she does. Ondajka gets the concerto off to an assertive start and establishes an elusive balance between its jazz and classical elements. (Performances that sub-plot the jazz, such as the one by Philippe Entremont and Eugene Ormandy, actually work better than those that are self-consciously jazz. The latter are as embarrassing as an idiot dancing to the latest Miley Cyrus tune at a family wedding!) When I wrote 'an elusive balance' rather than 'the elusive balance' that was intentional, as I think there's more than one way to make this concerto work. Wang and Ondajka are closer to the Entremont/Ormandy camp, in contrast to the excellent EMI version played and conducted by André Previn, who, of course has had a long and legitimate career as a jazz pianist. There are times in the first movement when I would have liked Ondajka to close down and screw the moment; he can be a little hard-driven. Similarly, in the third movement, when the second movement's Big Tune reappears, albeit speeded up, one would like to hear him do more with it. Wang's pluck sound, like Entremont's, romanticises the concerto, but she doesn't short-change its rhythmic élan. The orchestra's first trumpet, when Chandos leaves nameless, also does stylish work in the second movement.

The Barber and the Copland concertos receive more unusual performances, thanks to the restraint and tight control that come both from the conductor's podium and the piano bench. The last movement of Barber's concerto was, at one point, so difficult that not even Horowitz, trying it out as a favour to premiere performer John Browning, could play it. Barber was compelled to dial it back a notch for Browning, who ultimately made two excellent recordings of this work, although his first is the one to acquire. Even so, it's brutal. This music fits well under Wang's fingers. She plays it with strength and confidence. In the outer movements, Browning and Stoll snarl, while Wang and Ondajka clench their teeth, which is equally unswerving. At the end of the concerto, Barber's tempo marking is *affirmando con fessivo* ('misting ahead, wildly'). Browning takes that direction literally. Wang, in contrast, is almost laughably controlled.

Copland composed his Piano Concerto in 1926, not long after returning from Paris and three years of study with Nadia Boulanger. As concertos go, it is concise; most recordings take about 16 minutes. Copland jumbled different styles together in this concerto and made them all come out sounding like Copland. Although contemporaneous with Gershwin's concerto, the jazz in Copland's work spurs listeners more, perhaps because it bumps up against lonely and more traditionally

classical 'wide open spaces' music (albeit with a strong dose of the blues) that Copland would return to in later works. As a pianist, Copland recorded it with Bernstein, and as a conductor, with Earl Wild. Both recordings are well worth knowing. They are more percussive in style, and brasher, than this new version, which makes one wonder what all the fuss was about when this work appeared in 1927. I appreciate the refinement of Wang and Ondajka as an alternative, but they would not be my first choice. I guess I like the idea of Copland, in his twenties, being a very bad boy.

Chandos's engineering is more decorous than anything Sony and Vanguard have to offer, but, in its own way, Vanguard's engineering packs an appealing punch. (I admit my American ears are sympathetic to American recordings made during this era, despite European claims that many of them sound unrefined.)

Raymond S. Tuttle

Mariss Jansons Conducts Brahms Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 73.



Janáček *Glagolitic Mass, MV80P*.
Tatiana Monogorova (soprano); **Marina Prudenskaya** (mezzo); **Ludovít Lúda** (tenor); **Peter Mikuláš** (bass); **Tuula Apkalna** (organ); **Chor und Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks/Mariss Jansons**.
Arthaus Musik 101 684 (also available on **Blu-ray SOB 080**) (1 hour 28 minutes). Subtitles in English/French/German/Korean. Website: www.arthaus-music.com. NTSC. 16:9. DVD 9. Region 0. PCM Stereo. Dolby Digital 5.1. Video Director Michael Bayer. Recording Engineer Wilhelm Meiser. Live live performances at the KKL Concert Hall, Lucerne on March 2nd, 2012.

Composers:

Janežič
 Dvoržák, Beethoven, Elgar, Fauré,
 Vivaldi, Czech Phil Chor and Orchestra!
 (Supraphon) S238P-2 (1964, CD)
 Sibelius, Dvořák, Liszt, Smetáček, Czech Phil Chor
 and Ork/Melrose (Supraphon) CD-1988 (1984, CD)

In his book *How as Alchemy* (Faber, 2012), Tom Service follows six of his favourite conductors as each one prepares and conducts a major concert. Valery Gergiev, whose DVD from the 2012 Salzburg Festival I review on page 46, and Mariss Jansons, conducting here in Lucerne, both feature. One of the themes of the book is the almost inexplicable way that the finest conductors communicate their ideas to the players and thence to the audience. This is the 'alchemy' of the title. Reading the book confirms that conducting is a game in which there are no rules: each of the six has his own way of achieving his aims. (And yes, all six are male.)

About Gergiev he writes that 'his bearing is not that of an overworking maestro but a shuffling, overworked, and pretty knackered-looking human being'. His conducting style is

ICA Classics 
Latest releases
now available at
www.icaclassics.com



ICAC 0116 - Mariss Jansons
 Brahms 2 (1978 - Zurich, 1987)



ICAC 0117 - Kampa
 Miller (1957 - Wagner 2 (80) - Brno/Saade (1967)



ICAC 0118 - Gidon
 100th Anniversary Edition (1984-86)



ICAC 0119 - Kampa
 Brahms - Wagner (1972)

Contact info@icaclassics.com for your free copy of the ICA Classics catalogue



described as 'jolliers and drollers from the independent movements of all ten of his fingers, and the unpredictable oscillations of his forearms and wrists'. Writing about Jansons, Service draws attention to his humanity and easy contact with the players. He has a skillful way of correcting something that has not satisfied him, asking for the passage to be played again, inviting the players to pay particular attention to some aspect or other, when his real aim was to correct a mistake or a moment of poor ensemble. His beat is 'clear and energising'.

You'd find it difficult, watching Gergiev with the chorus down, to guess the nature of the music he is conducting, whereas Jansons is virtually a physical representation of it. It is clear from the beginning of the Brahms that every gesture is meant to communicate the essence of the music to the orchestra. This makes him a more conventional conductor to watch, and students of the conducting phenomenon will find Gergiev more intriguing visually. Jansons micromanages the performance to a greater extent than his Russian counterpart: his smiling delight as he accompanies a player in some little phrase, sometimes even less than a phrase, to which he is clearly particularly attached, is a pleasure to behold. The Brahms receives an outstanding performance from Jansons and his superb orchestra. The short, calm passage shortly before the end of the first movement is played with great sensitivity, a fine example of the skilful management of the movement's ebb and flow. The cellos play with gorgeously warm tone at the outset of the slow movement, and the short scherzo is a delight. The tempo for the finale is perfectly judged, a little slower, making the end of the work – Brahms letting his hair down: I know of no passage in the whole of the composer's output quite like it – all the more exhilarating.

In spite of this, the almost uncontrollable passion that bursts from the pages of Janáček's *Glagolita Mass* makes for a strange pairing indeed. Those who, like me, learned this masterpiece from old Supraphon performances will probably find that Jansons has smoothed off some of its rough edges. The fanfare-like opening is imposing enough – so 'intrada'-like here in this performance – but the 'Kyrie' that follows is moulded in an expressive manner, using pulse and dynamics, that rather takes away some of its uncompromising nature, transforming the music into something more musical, less earthy, than it really is. There are examples of this throughout the performance, and as it progresses one becomes accustomed, but for repeated listening I wouldn't find this as satisfying a reading as those by Anserl or, more recently, Mackerras (there is also a live performance in Prague in 1996 on a Supraphon DVD, reviewed in October 2005, which I have not seen).

It is, however, an exciting performance in its own right and as a filmed concert, complete with subtitles, it works very well. Solo voices

are very much subject to personal taste, particularly when filmed in close-up, but the four Slovak voices here are perfectly suited to the work. A special word of congratulation is due to Ludvík L'ulka for managing so heroically the crucial high-lying tenor part, but Tatiana Monogova is magnificent too, and the mezzo and bass are so fine here that one regrets that Janáček gave them so little to do. The choral writing is frequently terrifying, but the choir can lay claim to being the star of this particular show, and it is gratifying to see Jansons paying quite as much attention to the choir as he does to the orchestra. Chorus master Peter Dijkstra positively delights Jansons on the platform at the end.

If the orchestral playing seems sometimes too refined, if one misses a certain coarseness, this is all of a piece with the conductor's view of the work, and in any event it would be perverse to criticise an ensemble that has mastered a difficult work's technical challenges. There are passages in the performance that seem too fast. This is undeniably exciting, but the music loses some of its grandeur in the process. The passage in the 'Credo', at the words 'Heaven and Earth are full of Thy glory', is an example of this, and another is the extraordinary organ postlude. The performance by Iveta Ajkajka is stunning, and stunningly filmed. (One wonders why anybody would ever choose to play the organ) if it is not the finest I have ever heard, it certainly seems so, but I don't think this is necessarily a good thing.

William Anley

Brahms

New CD/ SACD

Symphonies – No. 3 in F, Op. 90; No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

Philharmoniker Hamburg/Simone Young.

Oehms Classics OC677 (full price, 1 hour

54 minutes). Website www.oehmsclassics.de. Producer Jan Schürmann. Engineer Christian Feilgen. Date: Live performances at the Laeiszhalle, Hamburg on October 8th–10th, 2009.

Comparisons:

BWV 10, Baden Baden and Freiburg/Gidon

Knauer/Classica CD95.138 (2005)

MPX/Melite (BBC Classics) 2 67250-2

(2008, three discs, rev. Oct 2009)

Following on from a commendable account of the First and an excellent account of the Second (both reviewed in July/August 2012), Simone Young completes her Brahms cycle with this disc of the Third and Fourth Symphonies – a coupling which reflects the close proximity of these works as well as their soaring balancing out of contrasts within the cycle as a whole.

Nonetheless difficult to bring off on disc as in the concert hall, the Third Symphony here emerges as the defiant and most overtly Classical of the cycle. The opening Adagio evinces no lack of 'con brío', Young ensuring that the initial 'F-A-F' motif is integrated into the singing main theme rather than being an

apostrophe to it, while the second theme (136") has the requisite poise without losing tension in the wake of a more agitated coda (209"). The repeat (rightly) brings a degree of intensification prior to the restless development (548"), but the gradual accumulation of energy going into the reprise (721") could have had greater impetus, for all that the attainment of serenity in the coda (1078") is ideally judged. If she does not trace out all the subtleties from the Andante, Young still has the measure of its alteration between soulful repose and (as at 148") more introspective aches that are eloquently combined in the final pages (606"), while the third movement – (rightly) following on arioso – retains a dance-like lift that prevents this most inexact of intermezzos from dragging, not least the wistful trio (157"). The finale is initially a little reticent in its juxtaposing of the speculative and defiant, yet the climactic modulation into the reprise (157") is handsily realised while the lengthy coda (542") emerges with waning weariness, even if the recall of the work's opening theme (648") is manipulative rather than transcendent.

An intermittently fine account, whereas that of the Fourth Symphony is consistently so from start to finish. The first movement unfolds with little deviation from an underlying pulse that is well able to encompass the expressive nuances of the exposition (as at 121") and the discursive logic of a development from which the reprise (611") is spellbindingly launched, and with a coda (942") whose rhetoric is powerfully channelled through to the implacable closing bars. The slow movement is very much an 'Andante moderato', its lyrical tread opening expressively into the eloquent second theme (400") and with the tricky rhythmic inflections of the central development (551") as judiciously managed as the coda (951") is dist through with autumnal radiance. The scherzo has the right stately energy (the triangle not too expensively), Young mindful to underline the sonata-form coherence of the movement through to its effervescent coda (476"). Perhaps the finale could have followed even more immediately, but this most formidable of passacaglias is all of a piece with what went before. Its restive initial variations cease into what becomes an oasis of calm (738") within the context of a movement that synthesises two centuries of the Austro-German tradition into its minute span, and in which the laurel returns of the Bach-derived theme (624") sets a course maintained through to the unspooling closing bars (876").

For all that they remain central to the orchestral repertoire, the Brahms symphonies have arguably become harder to interpret successfully over time and a cycle such as this is to be welcomed. Young seems more at ease with the Third Symphony than Simon Rattle (who conducted this music with far

greater naturalness a quarter-century ago) – and it, in the Fourth Symphony, Michael Gielen's staccato intensity arguably gets closer to the heart of the matter, Young's expressive variety in its own justification. The sound is comparable to the previous discs in its warmth and detail, while Michael Levin's annotations are entertaining even when stating the obvious. Those looking to invest in a current Bruckner cycle should certainly consider this.

Richard Whitehouse

Bruckner

Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1891 version, ed. Günter Bruchse).

Lucerne Festival Orchestra/Claudio Abbado. **Accentus Music ACC30274** (full price, 50 minutes). www.accentus.com  Producer Georg Obermayer. Engineer Toine Mertens, Manuel Fischer. Live performance at the KKL Concert Hall, Lucerne on August 17th and 18th, 2012.

Composers:

1868 version (ed. Cappeng)

Royal Scottish Nat. Orch/Twitter

0210, rev. Oct 2011 (1988)

Hamburg PO/Young (Delos Classics) CC83

2010, rev. Oct 2011

1877 version (ed. Haas)

WFO/Abbado (Eloquence) EUQ76 9890 (1970)

WFO/Abbado (DG) 483 4102 (1986)

1877 version (ed. Bruchse)

Berlin SO/Chailly (Decca) 675 3112 (1987, two-disc)

Colonye RSO/Ward (NCA) 8887 7768-2

(1987, nine discs)

Having made an impressive DVD of Bruckner's Fifth Symphony in 2011 (ACC30264), Claudio Abbado follows it up with the First – a work he has championed since the outset of his career and has already made two earlier recordings, both with the Vienna Philharmonic. The first was a life and engaging though overly lightweight account that missed something of the music's rugged individuality, a falling his remake overcomes in what has been the most recommendable for those wanting the so-called '1866 Linz version' – actually done in Vienna a decade later while considering largely of textual refinements to an original which has latterly been taken up by several notable exponents. The surprise is that Abbado has now opted for the 'Vienna version' of the score from 1891, an overhaul which, while it leaves the work's formal proportions intact, evinces an confidence and grandeur in keeping with those symphonies which the composer revised in the wake of the debacle concerning Hermann Levi's rejection of the Eighth Symphony in 1887.

There is no reason why Abbado should not have had second thoughts about the edition of a symphony that he has long championed (Howard Haskin, after all, opted for the Leopold Nowak edition of the Eighth after decades of adherence to that by Robert Haas), but the final version of the First has had conspicuously few advocates among even

those who have tackled the entire Bruckner canon – and even in its most recent edition as prepared by Günter Bruchse some 31 years ago. More surprisingly yet, Abbado endorses it with an expressive restraint and textual leanings audibly more in keeping with the 1877 version that, while he may not have discovered it outright, he has consciously avoided this time.

In duration this account is very similar to his DG reading, with the many incremental changes Bruckner made absorbed into the overall interpretation. That said, most of these changes do not sound more idiomatic even when rendered with such subtlety.

The initial *Allegro* loses expressive focus and immediacy when its formal proportions are regularized and evoked out – witness the contrived continuation between the second subject and the coda (1777) or the equally lacklustre follow-through of the coda (947*) – while the *Adagio* has its antediluvian initial harmonic progression (145*) neutered and the ominous transition back to the opening music (624*) robbed of its emotional charge. The scherzo, too, loses much of its irrefragable impact in view of numerous harmonic and textual modifications, while the segueing of the trio section into the scherzo (617*) is as pointless as it is affected. The finale is subject to greatest change, not least in the needless extension of its wistful second subject (175*). Abbado brings spellbinding anticipation to the woodwind passage near the start of the development (411*), though his literal handling of the detoured interlude (600*) prior to its resumption only increases the redundancy of this revision, while the transitional crescendo into the reprise (936*) feels at half-hearted as does the overbearing presentation (1401*) – felled out of what had been an exhilarating coda.

In short, this is an expertly conceived and – as one would expect given the presence of the Lucerne Festival Orchestra – supremely well-played account that yet not only sets the First Symphony short in this version but arguably misses the point that said version was attempting to convey. Choice in this respect is hardly abundant, with Günter Wand sounding uncharacteristically uninvolved in his only commercial recording of the piece and Riccardo Chailly's vividly contrasting account likewise available only as part of an integral cycle. This would still be the option for the 'Vienna version' – while, for the work as Bruckner initially conceived it, either Georg Tintner's tonal energy or Simone Young's more calculated approach are worth considering. Those who want Abbado in this work should seek out his DG reading, ironically similar in intent to the present rendition and so much more in keeping with the essential spirit of the composer's 'lockes flow'. With its warily detailed sound and adequate booklet notes, this release is primarily for Abbado enthusiasts.

Richard Whitehouse

Bruckner

Symphony No. 6 in A (ed. Nowak). Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra/Jaap van Zweden.

Challenge Classics CC72552 (full price, 57 minutes). www.challengeclassics.com. Production@nrc.nl van der Wolf. Dates June 11th–10th, 2012.

Composers:

1874 version

Orch. Miroslav Turek/Robert Sargis

(Alpha Classics) ACCD 2009 (2012, rev. Sep 2010)



Last month I reviewed a new recording of this work from Yehudi Niren-Siglin

which had many good points but which I felt was ultimately not quite in the top flight. Just over a year ago (September 2012) I reviewed Jaap van Zweden's account of Bruckner's Eighth, which most assuredly is in the top flight, and now comes his recording of the Sixth Symphony, a magnificent performance indeed and superbly recorded.

Van Zweden's tempo for the first movement is absolutely ideal: every phrase and paragraph in this wonderful movement is neatly accommodated within it, a fine demonstration of how just the slightest error in choice of tempo can make all the difference – Niren-Siglin is a shade more fettle, which might not appear to be disadvantageous at first but which in a movement lasting over a quarter of an hour can lead to what would appear to be a wrong-headed, essentially misconceived approach to music that – as Bruckner's unique 'Majestoso' indication implies – should inhabit a deep sense of unfazed relaxed poise throughout, as van Zweden demonstrates.

This is the greatest performance of the first movement I have ever heard – live or on disc – and the conductor's approach clearly inspires his players, who on this showing are fully the equal of more famous international ensembles: the playing throughout is magnificent, wonderfully balanced and inherently at one with the essence of the music. Van Zweden's approach to the superb waltz coda to this movement is quite masterly: supremely well judged and eliciting from the musicians a response that gladdens the heart. The remainder of the Symphony is on this high interpretative level; the slow movement and scherzo are relatively – but only relatively – more straightforward in terms of structural cohesion, and therefore pose fewer problems for the conductor: van Zweden has their measure admirably. In the difficult finale he excels once more, his basic tempo absolutely right in enabling him to

relate the changes Bruckner demands to a greater organic structure, at the same time as achieving the double triumph of making the music both more personal yet related entirely to the work overall and not – as so often happens with lesser conductors – making the music appear to be a succession of poorly related late-nineteenth-century picturesque views. Everything is beautifully paced and, therefore, proportioned, the outstandingly fine and eminently suitable recording quality enabling us to appreciate this masterpiece fully.

Without succumbing to the temptation of hyperbolic enthusiasms, I cannot recall ever having heard a finer performance of the work overall than this. I should be astonished, not to say curious, if all those who know and love their Bruckner here either.

Robert Matthew-Walker

Brun Volume 4.

Symphony No. 1 in B minor. Ouverture à einer Jubiläumsmesse.

Moscow Symphony Orchestra/Adriano.

Guid GMD7395 (full price, 47 minutes). 999205
www.guidmusic.com. Producer/Engineer: Maria
Sotolova. Date: October 2009–November 1st, 2012.

In the latest instalment of Guild's ongoing survey of the orchestral output of Swiss composer Fritz Brun (1878–1959), the focus is on the first of his ten symphonies, composed in 1900–02 when he was still a student in Cologne (earlier volumes were reviewed in October 2006 and June 2009). Though it received a number of performances from the year of its completion into the 1960s the work has never been published and Brun's original manuscript has disappeared; this recording uses a fair copy and set of parts made by his friend Hermann Wilhelm Deuber. Conductor Adriano contributes a very extensive booklet note so exhaustive in detail and speculation that I won't even try to paraphrase it; I'll just note that Adriano finds it useful to compare Brun's work with the steady contemporary First Symphony of Brun's Dutch friend Jan van Goye – the two symphonies shared the 1902 Paleyevski Prize – which would probably be more enlightening if one had a recording of van Goye's piece to hand.

Taking Brun's symphony – a dramatic, large-scale four-movement composition in the sonata key of Schubert's 'Unfinished' and Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' – simply as it sounds, it turns out to be an impressive achievement for a 25-year-old, clearly coached in the vocabulary of Germanic late-romanticism but with a subtle character of its own, very well orchestrated and handling the expected forms with skill. Certainly the influence of Brahms can be felt at many points – it was against this work that the young Brun declared himself more interested in continuing the symphonic

tradition established by Brahms than succumb to the influence of the 'New German' school, or Wagner, or Strauss – but it is more a matter of colouring and phrasing than slavish emulation, and one could point to several Brucknerian echoes as well. The work consists of a forceful first movement, a lyric slow movement of considerable heft, a jubilant scherzo and a tripartite finale, beginning with a fairly unmistakable reference to the start of the finale of Brahms's Symphony No. 2, which, despite some checks and false starts, wins through resolutely to a satisfying conclusion. Adriano's descriptions of this movement ('the composer stands shrouded at the edge of an abyss which he had long feared he would have to face') strike me as a little overcooked, though it is certainly a stirring piece and probably the finest part of the symphony. The ending is unexpectedly abrupt and quiet: Adriano thinks it 'strange and bitter', while to me it's more interestingly laconic.

The *Ouverture à une Jubiläumsmesse*, written for the 25th anniversary of Radio Berna, is based on the sixteenth-century church melody *In Gode Nomen heb idē*'s ('In God's name will I sing'), whose words had become associated with praise not only of God but the big bear that is the heraldic symbol of the City of Bern. Is it Brun ennobled the more contemporary idiom of his recent symphonies and produced a work for popular consumption not far from the model and style of, say, Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture*. It's certainly a spirited and attractive piece.

Adriano's interpretations of these works sound confidently authentic and the members of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, with whom he has by now established a long-standing rapport, sound as if they're playing at the top of their game. (The Symphony gives the brass ensemble some striking opportunities to shine.) Guild's recording is fully up to the standards of previous volumes in this series, which is certainly putting Fritz Brun on the map as probably, despite the claim of his elder contemporary Hans Huber, Switzerland's most important symphonist. Rather short measure for a CD these days, though!

Calum MacDonnell

Le Piano François

Casadesu Capriccio Op. 49.

Castèrède Piano Concerto No. 1.

Rivier Concerto Brève.

Wiener Piano Concerto No. 1, 'Franco-Américain'.

**Timon Ahwegg (piano); Orchestre de
Chambre de Toulouse/Gilles Collard.**

Guid GMD7284 (full price, 3 hour 9 minutes).

999205 www.guidmusic.com. Producer/Engineer:
Patrick Sabour. Date: May 2009–2012.

Robert Matthew-Walker's ever-helpful booklet notes trace a sequence of short French piano concertos works through Faure, Franck,



Timon Ahwegg

Guid

Saint-Saëns and d'Indy. This disc of neo-classical concertos with strings continues the line through to 1952. Probably the best-known name here to BR readers will be that of Robert Casadesu (1899–1972), highly respected pianist from a musical family. I've accompanied various wind pieces by Jacques Castèrède (b.1926) and enjoyed his *Rivier à nos* (as who wouldn't?) for six hands on one piano; I'd heard of Jean Rivier (1896–1987), but the name that leapt out to me first was that of Jean Wiener (1896–1982).

An unofficial 'set book' among the handful of affordable ones from impeccable music-student days of long ago was a Penguin symposium entitled *European Music in the Twentieth Century* (1967, revised 1968). The most-thumbed chapter is it – trenchant and still highly readable more than 50 years on – was that on French music by David Drew (1930–2009, best known as author of possibly the first serious monograph of Messiaen). When he was desperately searching for a worthy successor to Debussy and Ravel among the likes of Satie, Koechlin, Milhaud and Jolivet (even Ravel didn't come up to the mark), his encounter with the 1920s liveliness of Wiener – and specifically this Concerto, 'Franco-Américain' – provoked him into, so to speak, chewing the furniture. 'Widely uninteresting as a composer' was his verdict, a composer who in this concerto's first movement 'instead of adding the insight of meaningful harmonies to the injury of constant melodic jargon ... presented that same jargon in its crudest form'. Drew dismissed the finale theme in particular as being 'of unsurpassed and unsurpassable vulgarity'. Ouch! How could anyone reading that judgement ever play this piece (third on the disc) first?

The opening first certainly starts like Palestrina without the wrong notes, especially when as dully performed as here by the Toulousians under Swiss-born Gilles Collard. (A rival version from Danièle Laval and the

NEW RELEASES



WRITTEN TO AMERICA (RADIO & THEATRE MUSIC) - HEBBARD RECOMPOSED
Heller - Ellner - Es-Cabeallo - Steinhilber
Samuel West (narrator) - Jean Rigby
Mary Caswell - Andrew Kennedy



DEIDRE ERIBBIN: ISLAND PEOPLE
Francis Poulter - Lori Loomberg
RTÉ Harpichord Quartet - Mark O'Keefe



KENNETH HESKETH: WUNDERKAMMER/KONZERT
Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /
Muller - Ensemble 1970 / Randell



JOSEPH PHIBBS: THE CANTICLE OF THE ROSE
Helen-Jane Howells - Navarra String Quartet
Alexa Francis - Joanna Shaw
Michael Chanter - James Boyd



PHILIP CASHAN: THE HOUSE OF NIGHT
London Sinfonietta - Northern Sinfonia / Zahner
Sarah Niles - Christopher Redgate - Garrett
Adkins and others



ELLIOTT CARTER - 100TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT, NEW YORK with: Simard
Violates Iona Brumby, Gosh, Kravits,
Matthews, Benjamin | Concert audio
available as mp3 and FLAC.



MUSIC OF MEMORY. New works by
John McCabe, Nicholas Slon, Charlotte Bray and others
Antonia Hatzidakou, guitar



ANTHONY FAYNE: PHOENIX MASS
BBC Singers - Jane Manning
Philip Jones Brass Ensemble / Poole
The Nash Ensemble / Friend



ALEXANDER OODHR: SINCE BRASS, NOB STONE ...
Cate Curran - Paval Haas Quartet
The Nash Ensemble



ORCHID CLASSICS

An artist-led, creatively driven company

NEW RELEASE
NOVEMBER 2013

The Flanders Symphony Orchestra is joined by violinist **Matthew Trusler** in a new recording celebrating the 100th anniversary of Benjamin Britten's birth in November 2013



For more information on the Flanders Symphony Orchestra visit their website www.symfonieorkest.be

Symfonie.
orkest.
vlaanderen

www.twitter.com/nmcrecordings
www.facebook.com/nmcrecordings
NMC Recordings Ltd - tel: 020 7760 1807
Email: nmc@nmcree.co.uk
Distributed in the UK by NMC Entertainment
www.nmc-entertainment.co.uk

100% RECYCLED PAPER
NMC Recordings
Registered Charity no. 1043834

www.orchidclassics.com



OR/C/100037

Monte-Carlo PO under Pascal Vermet on a Naxos download may be better: I haven't heard it.) The soloist's night-fish interludes sound dated now, but less so when you learn that this piece dates from the very same year as Wiener's fellow-student

Milhaud's pioneering jazz exercise *Le Génies du monde*, and that Wiener himself (before starting work on up to 100 film scores) was resident pianist at *Le Bœuf sur le Toit* – not Milhaud's other piece, that is, but the very nightclub named after it. Wiener's second movement is pure cocktail piano; the finale, I'm afraid, is wine-making obvious, covering similar ground to Jean Françaix's *Concerto* though in far less subtle fashion. Again, the opening tutti could have been more wittily played. But in perhaps expecting more than the piece intended to deliver, Drew could be accused of – in Clive James's telling phrase – 'kicking a powder-puff'.

Wiener composed eight symphonies and 11 concertos, one of which – that for alto sax, trumpet and orchestra – is available on Marco Polo (8.225127). His most-recorded piece, however, is probably the *Quintet for Piano* for saxophone quartet. Drew's chapter dealt with him more briefly, though scarcely more flatly, than Wiener: the *Concerto for Piano* opens the disc, filling four-bar phrases with commonplace rhythms and guitar-tooth dissonance. Well worth a listen, even so: the finale springs from the second scene of *Pavane* and the whole piece reminded me of Rameau and Honegger.

Casadesu wrote seven symphonies, and his concertos included family affairs for two and three pianos: with Gaby and son Jean were also pianists. (His opera numbers reached 68; one scans his biography as a busy pianist and wonders how he found the time.) Prevailing influences here include Prokofiev, Bartók (particularly the finale, recalling the *Musik für Streich, Bassoon and Cellos*) and, fleetingly, Britten and Blacher. The whole concerto is high-pitched (I wondered for a while if the orchestral part included bones at all) and its opening is unaccountably similar to Ravel's finale, which immediately precedes it on the disc. The orchestra leader should have been credited by name with a valiant approach to a quite ungenial solo-violin part. The tiddly Prokofievian second-movement moto perpetuo is the most striking movement of the first, its title sounding by contrast almost British-pastoral.

After Wiener comes the less prolific Castriote, his biography almost here served for a few brass pieces. His 1954 *Concerto* starts typically, with a *Fantasia* that RM-W shrewdly links to Faure's, and a second movement he compares to Prokofiev's Second Concerto. The solo part is relentless: Strinborn soloist Timon Altrweg is dazzling, here and throughout, and I'm sure the slowing down from 71b' derives from a note in the score rather than sheer fatigue. Memories of Bartók's *Shostakovich Mandolin* flash by, and

the whole movement dissolves delightfully. The arguably over-long third movement *Naxos* (longer than the two previous movements combined) groans in a Honeggerian manner, relieved by a porky finale that sounds off, most satisfyingly, an exciting disc recommended for the curious, for piano fans, for lecturers seeking to illustrate neo-classicism and for lovers of well-recorded sound. I will now re-read Drew with greater insight. **Michael Ross**

Eino Vihälä New CD/RCA
Corigliano Violin Concerto, 'The Red Violin'.

Kuusisto Violin Concerto, Op. 28*

Leika, Op. 24.

Eino Vihälä (violin); **Lahti Symphony Orchestra/Jaakko Kuusisto**.

RS 852205/CA (full price, 1 hour 17 minutes).

Website www.tac.or.fi **Producer** Ingo Petry.

Engineer Fabian Frank. **Dates** 2 April and August 2012.

John Corigliano's Violin Concerto has its origins in music he composed for the film *The Red Violin*. He first drew on that music to compose a free-standing concert work entitled *The Red Violin: Chaconne for Violin and Orchestra*, successfully recorded by Chloé Hanslip for Naxos (8.559302). With discerning candour, he explains in the booklet that since a work that lasts only 15 minutes is too short to make it worthwhile engaging a soloist, he decided to add three movements to make up a full-length concerto. The work therefore has hybrid origins. The first movement, the original *Chaconne*, is a long, highly romantic rhapsody that passes through many different tempos and contrasting moods. I think you need to hear it quite a few times before you twig that it is, in fact, a chaconne. You might not necessarily guess the work's film music origins, either, if you didn't already know about them. The composer writes that the second movement was designed 'to break the romantic mood of the first', and this it certainly does. It is an ultra-rapid, *pianissimo*, shimmering scherzo, whose throwaway finish could have ended one of Walton's string concerto scherzos. The slow movement is, for this listener, the most beautiful part of the work, richly scored and using some modest *fandango*-effects. The fourth movement is a riot, the composer employing – deliberately – some thoroughly nasty intonations as well as a few angry gestures in his efforts to construct a virtuosic finale. It ends with a bang that will be highly effective in the concert hall.

American-born but Finland-raised Eino Vihälä rises to the concerto's very considerable technical challenges. I'm not convinced by the work's form, as it feels a little like two halves sewn together that don't quite make up a single garment. It does respond positively, though, to at least two criteria of success. First, once you have heard

it you want to hear it again, and, second, when you do, it reveals new and interesting things.

The *Viola Concerto* by Jaakko Kuusisto, the conductor of this recording, shares some common ground with the *Corigliano*. Its three movements follow the traditional romantic concerto pattern, with a big first movement in sonata form, a slow movement and a fast, exciting finale. An original feature is that the cadenza is heard at the very beginning. 17b' of violin playing as commanding as any you are likely to hear this year. The first movement is diaphanous and, like *Corigliano*'s, romantic in character, with the emphasis, here and throughout the work, on a long, open, singing solo line. The slow movement is darker in mood, with a violent passage toward the end. The close of this movement is achieved with some highly mysterious and very beautiful instrumental effects. The finale is exciting, with much virtuosic writing for the soloist and another 'got them cheering' finish. This is, in many ways, an old-fashioned work. The musical language is hardly more adventurous than that of *Corigliano*. It is obviously contemporary music, yet it never loses touch with tradition for very long, and indeed the aforementioned ending arrives deftly on a major chord. In addition, the orchestral writing is at once opulent and transparent, particularly in its use of the brass, in a way that recalls a noble, Finnish precedent. Most important, however, is the epic, heroic nature of the work that goes back, not so much to the big romantic violin concertos but to those for piano. It is more integrated than the *Corigliano*, but both works, in their different ways, are intriguing and satisfying. Kuusisto composed his concerto for Vihälä and she plays it superbly. The orchestral support under the composer's direction is clearly authoritative.

That Kuusisto is a member of the orchestra is evident from the short work that opens the disc. The composer tells us that 'bells' is an Icelandic word meaning 'child's play', and indeed the musical material of the work comes from an earlier chamber piece entitled *Play*. The idea of playing is explored in several different ways throughout the work, which is more exuberant, now positive. There is nothing revolutionary about either the musical material or the way in which the orchestra is deployed, but as the piece makes its way towards its pleasingly peaceful conclusion we know we are in the presence of a composer of real music that will surely satisfy most listeners who encounter it.

William Hedley

ADVERTISEMENT



The Romantic Piano**Concerto – 62**

Gounod The complete works for pedal piano and orchestra.

Concerto in E flat. Suite concertante in A. Fantaisie sur l'hymne national russe. Danse roumaine.

Roberto Prosseda (pedal piano); **Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana/Howard Shelley.**

Hyperion CDH67975 (full price, 56 minutes).

Website www.hyperion-records.co.uk  **Amazon**
Ben Constanter, Engineer/Michael Ratt, Dates: October 2019–2019, 2012.

The booklet essay by soloist Roberto Prosseda (b.1975) is so interesting, and, perhaps, relevant to the potential listener's understanding of the extraordinary instrument for which Gounod wrote these works, that I am tempted to suggest that anyone who already likes Gounod's music, or is interested in learning about an unusual stage in the development of the modern grand piano, should acquire this disc for the booklet alone. Fortunately, the music is another strong reason, because it is delightful, and apart from his operas *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, Gounod is quite often an undervalued/under-rated composer.

Let me give you a précis about the instrument, using Prosseda's words: "The resources of the pedal piano, designed to allow organists to practise outside church, were turned to advantage by Schumann, Liszt, and especially Charles-Valentin Alkan ... who gave virtuoso performances in the salons of the piano manufacturer Erard. Gounod was present there in 1875 ... Just ten years later ... Gounod himself wrote four works for the pedal piano."

Before I address the music itself, two of the included monochrome photographs will feed your visual imagination. On the inside front cover of the booklet we see Prosseda sitting (from an audience's vantage point) in profile at a Steinway D concert grand, but with his feet pinned above a pedal board that stretches the full width of the keyboard, and with the piano itself 'sitting' atop a virtually identical Steinway D. Across the top of page 5 there is a close-up of the pedal board. About the one used in this recording Prosseda writes: "This innovative model was conceived and built in 2012 by the Italian organ builder Claudio Piccini ... This makes the performance of pedal piano music more viable, since it avoids the need to move and transport a dedicated pedal piano. The Piccini pedal-board has 17 pedals, but these operate 61 wooden 'taps', which depress the lowest 61 keys of the piano ... In addition, three independent steps add octave doublings, and these can be combined (allowing triple octave) to match the sound pattern of the pedal board, as can be heard on this recording."

Though one understandable response to all this might be 'Come back, Back/Basso – all is forgiven!', the actual piano sound in this

recording is not always massive – in fact the pedal piano sounds rather drier than a regular concert grand because "The pedal technique used for the organ cannot be applied to the pedal piano, since the latter requires a particular sensitivity of touch, as the pedals control a piano action with hammers and strings. So a more pianistic approach to pedal technique is required, using the weight of the leg and transferring this weight from one note to another in order to achieve a legato, as well as to enable a rich sonority and good control of dynamics. The sustaining pedal is seldom used, as both feet are often busy playing the pedal-board ... Thus, the general sound is drier and more transparent than from a normal piano, and this is probably a specific feature that Gounod and Alkan wanted for their pedal piano music."

Phew! Now it is time for me to write 'Come back, Gounod, please forgive me.' His four works are often charming and witty, sometimes massive and sometimes delicate. Prosseda plays all of the solo parts with Gallic elegance, while Howard Shelley encourages the strings of the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana to play with superb legato, and the woodwinds to combine with the upper register of the piano in delightful modulations. Hyperion's recorded sound expands and contracts in accord with the sonority of the music. This release is certainly 'off the beaten track', but it is definitely worth exploring.

Stephen Priddy

Haydn**Complete Symphonies, Volume 21.**

Symphonies – No. 99 in E flat, Hob. 109;

No. 100 in G, Hob. 1100, 'Military'.

L'incontro improvviso, Hob. XXV/10/8 –

Overture.

Heideberger Sinfoniker/Thomas Fey.

Hänssler Classic CD98.014 (full price, 58 minutes).

Website www.haenssler-classic.de **ProduceEngineer**
Gedhard Steiger, Dates: March 2018–2018, 2012.

Comparisons:

Symphonies Nos. 99 and 100:

SWR SO, Stuttgart/Norrington (Minster Classics)

CDR1202 (2009, full album, rev. Mar 2010)

Symphony No. 100:

St Luke's Osh/Mackerras (Telarc) CD2022 (1997)

Haydn collectors will probably be familiar with Thomas Fey's high-voltage historically informed series of the symphonies that has been in progress for several years. The present disc includes two of the 'London' symphonies and opens with the two-movement Overture to *L'incontro improvviso*, an ideal companion to the 'Military' (No. 100) since it too uses Turkish percussion (the opera's plot is a Turkish one – not unlike Mozart's *Figliuolino*). The recital performance of the Overture gets the disc off to the best possible start.

Symphony No. 99 was first performed at the Hanover Square Rooms in London on

February 10th, 1794, at the start of the composer's second stay in the city. It's also notable as the first of Haydn's symphonies to use clarinets. Fey's performance is typical of his approach on earlier discs in this series: there's abundant rhythmic drive and textures are bright and clear. Collectors who prefer mellow Haydn should probably look elsewhere – Fey is a conductor who energises Haydn with lively speeds and exciting attack. I find the results immensely refreshing; this is Haydn playing that brings out the originality and daring of the music without apology, but it is by no means short on charm either.

Anyone collecting the whole of Fey's series as it appears won't need any further recommendation from me, but it is interesting to listen to Fey alongside two other pioneers of historically informed Haydn, Roger Norrington's conducting (sometimes leaves me cold, but his complete 'London' Symphonies (also on Hänssler) is a marvellous set and one that is, if anything, even more radical than Fey's – but both are extremely successful in Nos. 99 and 100. Perhaps even more impressive in the 'Military' is the disc Charles Mackerras made with the Orchestra of St Luke's for Telarc – bristling with rhythmic tension but with a slightly lighter, slyer touch than from either Fey or Norrington.

Still, all this goes to show that there is plenty of good historically informed Haydn around and it's nice to be spoiled for choice. I would certainly encourage anyone to hear this latest instalment of Fey's series. The recording is bright and clear and the notes are useful.

Nigel Simcox

Handel

Water Music, HWV348-50. Occasional

Oratorio, HWV62 – Overture.

Haydn Sinfonietta Wien/Married Huss.

RS RS2027SACD (full price, 1 hour 2 minutes).

Website www.rsi.co.uk **ProduceEngineer**
Fabian Frank, Date: March 2012.

Comparisons:

Water Music:

Les Musiciens du Louvre/Mondonvi (Naxos) V1233

(2010, rev. Dec 2010)

Le Concert Spirituel/Chailly/Niquet (Classica) CD2017006

(2002, rev. Sep 2002)

The first performance of Handel's *Water Music* must be one of the most famous premieres in music history. The lively pomp and spectacle of the occasion – not least the vast orchestra of 50-plus musicians assembled on the second of several boats that followed George I's royal barge along the Thames from Whitehall to Chelsea on July 17th, 1717 – made such an impression on witnesses that the immortal success of Handel's music was instantly assured. The music itself, with its winning mix of lively popular dances, courtly refinement and majestic grandeur, was an instant hit, and it enjoyed frequent performances throughout the composer's

Orchestral

lifetime in many different guises, in all types of venues and with ensembles of all sizes.

Enthusiasm for the *Water Music* has barely dimmed in the century since. Aware that this new recording with his period-instrument Haydn Sinfonietta of Vienna is entering a crowded market, conductor Manfred Hoes offers an exciting USP: a return to the recently discovered probable original ordering of the movements.

With no surviving autograph score, modern consensus (based on the evidence of the earliest published edition from 1788) has been that Handel divided his 60-minute work into three suites: an opening suite in F with horns, a central suite in D with trumpets, and a final, more subdued, suite in G descending woodwinds. But a recently resurfaced 1718 copy of the autograph, used as the basis for the 2007 new critical edition, indicates that Handel actually conceived the work as a 23-movement single entity – and it is this version which Hoes presents here.

The reordering is not a radical overhaul (other recordings made since 2007 – notably Marc Minkowski's vibrant 2010 account on Naxos with his Musiciens du Louvre – have actually stuck with the three-suite version) – but the single-suite has definite merits. While the first half essentially adheres to the F major suite, the second half mingles the D and G major suites, providing effective contrast and a stronger conclusion. This is certainly interesting enough to justify a new recording, but the stylisation of this Viennese performance, led by distinguished veteran period-instrumentalist Simon Standage, raises it sufficiently above the level of an academic exercise to hold its own with the best on the market.

After a brisk but purposeful introduction, the Overture springs into action with tangible excitement – bustling violins bounce phrases between left/right divided first and seconds with impressive dexterity, oboes and bassoons chatter animatedly. The third-movement 'Alligro' throws the spotlight onto the pair of horns, who sound a shaly two points for real champagne before the purgatory

tuned horns of Le Concert Spirituel on Glassy rings supreme), but the percussive propulsion of strutting mandolins contains imparts an intoxicating swagger. Hoes's steady 'Bourrée' allows the opportunity for elegant and fun ornamentation in the solo spots, and its tart is wonderfully lusty.

The horns raise their game to match the brilliance of the trumpets, who make their first appearance halfway through, and the impact of the famous 'Hornpipe' is further enhanced by increasingly flamboyant trumpet extemporizations (Handel did not write any drum parts, but almost certainly expected them to be added in performance). A delightfully delicate solo flute graces the gentle 'Minuet' which follows, and a pastoral soprano recorder contrasts well with the early bassoon in the final peasant dances. The stately trumpet 'Minuet' rounds the *Water Music* off suitably, but allowing your player to run on to the filler, the Overtures to the *Queen's Oboes* – written 10 years later but remarkably complementary in style – will ensure a more satisfying conclusion.

After reading Hoes's authoritative advocacy for large orchestral forces – a core of 28 strings was, he says, common in the theatres of Handel's day – and his disavowment of the small-scaled period-instrument bands of today for not corresponding 'at all to the original sound conceptions of the period', it is disappointing that he employs a band of only 14 strings for this recording – which, with just two violas and cellos and a single double bass, is almost the bare minimum. Moreover, for an album which offers a welcome chance to hear the *Water Music* in Handel's (questionable) original structure – first, and possibly only ever, experienced with vast forces at the premiere performance – it seems perverse to present it here on such an intimate scale.

The closeness pays dividends in the performance's vivid and nuanced detail, however, and the studio recording, made at the Godeffroy Auditorium in Austria, has just enough bloom. So, regardless of orchestral size, this is an enjoyable *Water Music* as any in the catalogue. **Graham Rogers**

Hindemith

New CD/BLACD

Complete Viola Works, Volume 1.
Kammermusik No. 5, Op. 35/4.
Konzertmusik, Op. 48 (original version).
Der Schwanendreher.
Trauermusik.

Tabes Zimmermann (viola); **Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin/Hans Graf.**
Myrica Classics MYRD10 (full price, 1 hour 20 minutes). hibsite.warnerclassics.com.
Producer: Stephan Cohen. Date: August 2012.



Along with other notable composers (Britten, Lutoski, Verdi and Wagner, and

I am happy to include him in their number), 2013 brings a significant anniversary for Paul Hindemith: he died on December 28th, 1963. Yet he seems to be shamefully underrated and hardly appears in concert programmes at present. A real shame, for he is a master and left us some really distinctive and glorious music. This first volume of works for viola really hits the spot, an 80-minute collection of pieces with orchestra. What immediately strikes the listener is how good the recording is: excellently truthful reproduction of the solo viola and the instruments that accompany it, and also how good the balance is between the two.

Der Schwanendreher ('The Swan Turner') is from 1915 and makes use of Medieval German folk songs. The orchestra is without violas and violas. Opening with a richly expressive solokey for the violin, played with persuasiveness and full tone by Tabes Zimmermann, one is immediately and willingly taken into a harmonic and communicative world that is wholly beguiling, once again questioning Hindemith's current neglect. His left scoring is a pleasure in itself

JOHN MUSTO

ON

BRIDGE RECORDS



PIANO CONCERTOS



SONGS of JOHN MUSTO



TWO COMIC OPERAS

John Musto, piano
Odense Symphony Orchestra
Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra
Scott Yao, Glen Contee

Amy Burton, soprano
Patrick Mason, bassitone
John Musto, piano

BRIDGE.COM

John Musto, *Bastamello*
William Bolcom, *Lucrezia*
New York Festival of Song

BRIDGE.COM

BRIDGE.COM

BRIDGE RECORDS.COM
AS DISTRIBUTED BY THE BRIDGE SELECT
MUSIC A WORLD OF MUSIC FROM LTD

and the writing for viola, Hindemith's own instrument (remember, he stopped it at short notice to replace Lionel Tertis in the 1929 premiere of Walton's *Viola Concerto* – the composer conducted and a lifelong friendship ensued), is idiomatic and resourceful. The tunes that Hindemith uses are strongly characterful and he makes them his own. The opening of the second movement, viola with harp accompaniment, is beguiling; the beginning of the finale, viola with woodwinds and brass, raises the spirits, as do the ingenious variations that follow.

By contrast, the *Kammermusik* (for string orchestra with solo viola), written rapidly on January 21st, 1916 at the BBC's request to remember King George V, mixes the soul in its eloquent beauty, and even more so here in this deeply felt performance. By further contrast, *Kammermusik* No. 5 (1927) is a pithy and strutting masterpiece, rhythmically uplifting and full of car-catching orchestration. The heart of the four-movement work is the *Larghetto* that comes second, dark and haunted, which should appeal to the many collectors who listen to Shostakovich's music.

The final work on the disc is the first recording of the original version of the *Kammermusik* for solo viola and large chamber orchestra. Laid out in two parts and, altogether, six movements, it opens in jaunty and intricate style. This 25-minute work is of consistent interest and incident, written by an inventive composer who was as contrapuntally savvy as the best of them and who could turn a poetic phrase that strikes you not only in the heart but also the gut; it's witty, too. There are plenty of examples in this 'Fritze Fanning' – not least numerous melodic gifts and spicy scoring – that confirm Hindemith as a composer to ignore or be prejudiced against at your peril.

No praise is too high for the dedication, perception and skills that Zimmermann, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and Hans Graf have lavished on this marvellous music. **Colin Anderson**

Hindemith

New CD/ SACD

*Violin Concerto**, *Konzertmaik*, Op. 50*
Symphonic Metamorphosis after Thomas by Carl Maria von Weber.

*Midori (violin); NDR Sinfonieorchester/

Christoph Eschenbach.

Online ODE1214-2 (full price, 1 hour 7 minutes)
website: www.ode.net  Producer Hans-Michael Kisting. Engineers: djgon lingue, Dominik Blech, Johannes Kurner. Date: Live performances at the Lauchhalle, Hamburg on *December 12nd, 2011, **October 24th and 26th, 2012.

Composers:
Hindemith

Performers:
Midori

Orchestra, UCD/Hindemith (Decca) 470 288-2

(1982, live disc)

Zimmermann, Frankfurt BPO/ DGiv

(812) 853282SACD (2008, rev. Sep 2010)

Kammermusik/Symphonic Metamorphosis

label: POC/Decca (DG) 470 288-2 (1982)

Philharmonia Orchestra/Hindemith

(BM Classics) 3 77564-2 (1981, live disc)

Symphonic Metamorphosis

UCD/Abelto (Decca) 470 288-2 (1982, rev. Sep 2010)

BPO/Abelto (DG) 470 288-2 (1982)

DFG/Hindemith (DG) 470 770-2 (1981, three discs)

This programme of Hindemith orchestral music is released in time to mark the 50th anniversary of Hindemith's death (December 28th, 1963) and it's a useful compilation of three major works. The earliest of them is the *Kammermusik*, Op. 50, composed in 1916 for the 50th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (the same celebration that inspired Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*). It's a fine piece, but one that is only rarely heard in concert. Christoph Eschenbach and the NDR SO give a lively and purposeful account of it here, with punchy rhythms and well-disciplined playing. Hindemith's own performance with the Philharmonia (EMI) was recorded in 1956, but it still sounds good, and the composer finds a little more warmth in places. Borstein and the Israel Philharmonic (DG) are resplendent, and Borstein's conducting on what was one of his last records has a visionary fervour that is hard to match. Still, there's plenty to enjoy in Eschenbach's version and his programme is different from Borstein's.

The *Symphonic Metamorphosis* after Thomas by Carl Maria Weber is a much more familiar piece and here, I think, Eschenbach is a little less successful. Hindemith and the Berlin Philharmonic in 1955 are better at sustaining energy from start to finish, and Borstein's Israel Philharmonic recording is a joyous experience. This is tough competition (as are both of Claudio Abbado's recordings, on Decca and DG) and this new version doesn't quite have their character or brilliance.

However, the value of this disc lies, at least in part, in its programme. The third work is the *Violin Concerto*, played here with wonderful purity of tone by Midori. This is an admirable performance, but it has the bad luck to appear just after Frank Peter Zimmermann and Pavo Jari in the same work (BS, nominated as Outstanding in the September issue). Zimmermann's account has a sensitivity, imagination and excitement which put it in very select company (along with Gótztrich and Hindemith) and Midori and Eschenbach don't quite match that: not only is the poetry of Zimmermann's playing remarkable but so is the colour and life of Jari's accompaniment. It's also in sound that has more focus and body than Ondine's disc. However, Midori is very well suited to this work and she spins a beautiful musical line in the slow movement – the highlight of her performance.

So it all comes down to the programme. If you are looking for a disc of these three works together, then Eschenbach and Midori

are a dependable team – but for the most characterful performances of the individual works here, I'd look further afield – to Hindemith, to Borstein and to Zimmermann and Jari. Sound is decent (not always as sharply focused as it might be) and the notes are very good. **Nigel Simone**

Holst

New CD/ SACD

Orchestral Works, Volume 3.

The Mystic Trumpeter, H71. *First Choral Symphony*, H155*.

Susan Gibbon (soprano); BBC Symphony Chorus; BBC Symphony Orchestra/Andrew Davis.

Chandos CHSAS 127 (full price, 1 hour 6 minutes)
website: www.chandos.net  English text included
Producer Brian Phipps. Engineers: Ralph Coates, Jonathan Cooper. Date: April 6th and 7th, 2012.

The Choral Symphony, is this third volume of Chandos's series admirably devoted to the music of Holst, was actually in the process of being recorded in 2006 when the conductor Richard Hickox was felled by the stroke from which he never recovered. He did record, excellently, the first volume, containing some of what Holst too modestly labelled 'Early Harvers'. For the second volume, with *The Planets* and two other less well-known suites, the *Japanese Suite* and *First Mass*, Andrew Davis took over as a very worthy successor (I reviewed them in January 2009 and February 2011). He continues now with two works, one of which escaped the 'Early Harvers' disclaimer and was regarded by Holst's daughter Ingeborg as 'the most important work he had yet written, and ... his nearest approach to an expression of what he wanted to say', *The Mystic Trumpeter* of 1904.

For any admirer of Holst's extraordinarily original art, it is very well worth hearing, despite some characteristic shortcomings. The shadow of Wagner still falls across the music, though less obliteratingly than is sometimes alleged. It is more fluent than some of the contemporary pieces, and the emergent voice includes the use of bitonality, the constructive contact between two different keys, which suffused *The Planets* and almost all his late music (and profoundly influenced Britten). There are significant touches here, as when the trumpets clash keys in their response to Wab Whittman's invocation, 'Blow again, trumpet – conjure war's alarms', which they do, if with considerably less violence than in 'Mars' only a few years later. The fascination with Whitman that was then fashionable (and inspired both Debussy and Holst's friend Vaughan Williams) did not always do a composer favours, and Holst is predictably deflated by lines, in the section on love, such as 'I see the vast slumber ever working'. He recovers himself well in time for a conclusion worthy of the best in his music. Davis does this beautifully, and Susan

Grims has the steadiness and conviction of line and purity of voice to see her safely through the more doubtful moments.

Heldt wrote his Choral Symphony in 1925 for the Leeds Festival (where it was revived in an excellent performance under Vernon Handley in 1981). He called it his First Choral Symphony, the plan for a second, setting poems by Meredith, never got beyond fragments. The poet here is Keats, who at his greatest, with the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, draws some of Händel's finest inspirations. The chorus sings with marvellous purity and restraint in music that embodies these qualities, making all the more moving the slight warming of expression that comes with the characteristic Händelian procession at 'Who are these coming to the sacrifice?'. The singers are also secure with some difficult Händelian rhythmic dodges, such as the alternating bars of four and five beats in the much weaker finale, and in the surprisingly difficult monotone opening 'Invocation to Pan', 17 bars of declamation holding the single note B while the strings circle with detaching chromatics. A degree of more intoxicating, or possibly intoxicated, exuberance might have done better justice to the Bacchanal, but overall this is a fine performance, subtly accented to do justice to Händel's always sensitive and lucid orchestration. **John Warwick**

The 20th-century Concerto Grosso

d'Indy Concerto, Op. 89*

Krenek Concertino, Op. 27*

Schulhoff Concerto doppio, WV89.

Karl-Heinz Schütz (flute); Maria Preis (piano);

with 'Robert Nagy (cello); Christoph Koncz (violin); Academy of St Martin in the Fields/

Neville Martinson.

Chandos CHAN16791 (full price, 1 hour 2 minutes).

Website: www.chandos.net | Producer: Andrew

Green. Engineer: Phil Rowlands. Date: September

21st-23rd, 2012.

This interesting release, combining mixed instrumental concertos by Krenek, Schulhoff and d'Indy, might perplex listeners expecting conventional ASMP repertoire from Neville Martinson as he approaches his 90th birthday. Perhaps, however, the over-widening scope of St Neville's musical tastes could actually prove outwitting enough in itself to compel his more adventurous devotees to investigate this new Chandos issue. Any who do won't be disappointed, though I suspect that much, perhaps all, of the expertise on this CD will be unfamiliar to most, the possible exceptions being the attractive Op. 20 *Concerto for flute, viola, piano, and strings* by Ernst Krenek, written in 1924, which is very occasionally heard in concert, and Schulhoff's *Concerto doppio*, recorded by Dabryghians and Grims in 1997.

The other pieces, however, share something at least with the Krenek *Concerto*, and that

promised common link between all these works on this disc is reflected by its title, 'The 20th-century Concerto Grosso'. Apart from the fact that all three belong to the first quarter of the last century, the connections between them might not be altogether clear. Don't infer, either, from the disc's title that this repertoire has much, if indeed anything at all in common with the specified genre, at least in its traditional Baroque context. For all that, it probably doesn't overstretch credibility too much to suggest that the mixed concertante element in these works does have occasional if tenuous links with the Baroque model, though one doubts that Krenek, Schulhoff and d'Indy had specific examples in mind when they set down these works. Almost out of necessity, Susie Harker works pretty hard to find connecting links in her enthusiastic and otherwise helpfully illuminating booklet notes.

Krenek's model in his *Concerto* seems to have been the Stravinskian neo-classicism of Paganini, for example, though the composer wrote that it was 'probably as close as I would ever come to the more obvious patterns of neo-classicism ... remaining on the total language of that period, and playfully employing some of its mannerisms'. In other words, this is a fairly typical product of the *jeune École* movement spearheaded by Ravel and taken up by later German composers including Hindemith and Reger. The work in receiving its world premiere recording on this release and this account seems to make out a highly persuasive case for what is arguably the most attractive piece on this disc. Of the three soloists, violinist Christoph Koncz has probably the most demanding role, though contributions from all three are admirably assured.

In Ervin Schulhoff's *Concerto doppio*, WV89 of 1927, flautist Karl-Heinz Schütz and pianist Maria Preis are joined by the ASMP's two fine horn players, who surely ought to have been credited for their contributions here. There is a terse, somewhat abstruse quality to this music and under Martinson's attentive direction it receives an agile, rhythmically pointed and clean-edged performance. The brusque, argumentative style of the first movement is counterbalanced in the softer-lined central *Andante* and folk-flavoured finale. A particular point of interest is the lengthy written-out cadenza in the opening *Allegro*. Again, the edgy, elastic and technically demanding solo parts are capably played by Preis and Schütz.

They are joined by cellist Robert Nagy in the final work here, d'Indy's *Grosset*, Op. 89 for piano, flute and cello, composed in 1926. This was his final orchestral work and marked a departure from his exploration of larger forms and, of course, of his fervent admiration of Wagner, a strong influence in his earlier works. As Roman Rolland remarked of him, 'Clarity! That is the hallmark of M. d'Indy's intelligence. There

are no shadows about him. There is no quirk more French!' Perhaps there could be no better overall description, either, of this delightful and winning work, which receives another cultivated and adroit performance.

In sum, this is an engaging and entertaining release from Chandos, nicely played and deftly recorded, even if one wonders about the market appeal of the repertoire here.

Michael Jansson

Mahler

New CD/SACD

Symphony No. 8 in E flat, 'Symphony of a Thousand'.

Christine Brewer, Camilla Nylund, Maria Espada (soprano); Stephanie Blythe (mezzo); Mihoko Fujimori (mezzo); Robert Dean Smith (tenor); Tommi Hakala (baritone); Stefan Kocian (bass); Netherlands Radio Choir; State Choir 'Lutjica'; Bavarian Radio Choir; National Boy's Choir; National Children's Choir; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Markus Jansson.

RCO Live RCO12902 (medium price, 1 hour 20 minutes). Includes bonus DVD (1 hour 26 minutes). German/latvian text and English translations included. Website: www.concertgebouw.orkest.nl. Producer: Engineer: Gerrit Fortner. Engineer: Jean-Marie Guéhen, Jette Maaß. DVD Director: Joost Havardus. Date: live performance at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam on March 6th and 6th, 2011.

Comparisons

Engles, Schumann, Dvák, Paganini, Lisner, Huggins, Mahler, Raveling, St. Louis City Boy's Ch, Brno Sarameris Ch, Prague Philharmonic Ch, Netherlands Radio Ch, Concertgebouw Ork/Chuffy (Dvák) 87 116-2 (2000, live also, see Apr 2007) Vredey, Engles, Bullock, Schmidt, Rappé, Ring, Schulte, Berlin, Elton College Boy's Ch, London Sym Ch, London Philharmonic Ch and Ork/Tenors (London Philharmonic) UFG002 (1991, live CD, see Apr 2012)

Markus Jansson sets off Mahler's cosmic clockwork with all-encompassing vision and jewelled precision. Contrasting textures never flag or become garrulous in density or over-insistence. The few passages where the music draws breath are deftly punctuated as moments of re-charge, but interestingly there is no slowing into the multiple cylindrical recapitulation of *Fine*, *Credo* *quiesce*. Thereafter, a compelling course is steered towards a torrential closing passage. For once, the extra brass resound as essential to the moment rather than overlaid; a clarion call to the other-worldliness of what follows and a vaulting link to their contribution at the symphony's conclusion.

Similar assimilation of structure, spirituality and colour informs the second part. After an evocative orchestral and lush choral setting, Mahler's sequence of solo vocal contributions can bring a sagging sense of duty, revealing why he remained a conductor rather than a composer of opera. These are especially difficult passages for the baritone and bass,

but with no weak link in the solo train, the music survives the potential dead zone and swiftly regains inspiration and purpose.

The ladies cover themselves in glory. Julia Vinday, first soprano for Klaus Tennstedt's miraculous 1991 live Royal Festival Hall performance, has long remained indelible, but Christine Brewer's prodigious supply of notes above the stave is incontinent, clashing with a rapturous pensive top C in the closing *slow symphony*. Accomplished with an appropriately radiant smile on the DVD and followed by an equally rapt offering from Camilla Nylund, this is possibly the highlight of the whole performance. With sustained, fervent chlosters, especially the youth contingent singing without scores, and the orchestra bringing its unique Middlesex pedigree to bear so comprehensively, there's surely no better acoustic than the Concertgebouw for the sonic glories of this symphony, especially when so thrillingly captured as here.

General splendour notwithstanding, one nagging reservation regarding the final section has to be voiced. Jansons favours energy throughout, but his inflexible, slightly impatient tempo for the ethereal orchestral wind-down into 'Alles vergingelide' lacks atmosphere, sapping the music of intensity and expressive freedom at its most crucial point. Far-angling as it is to hear the choral bass line sing with such quiet solidity, it's surely not sufficiently hushed to fulfil Mahler's 'wie ein Hauch'. The wonder, intimacy or expectation loved in some of the composer's most surprising harmonies when music and text are at their most profound are not fully communicated. Although matters improve as momentum and volume build towards the final pages, the magic moments are only tantalisingly ajar, the mystery of what may be beyond only partially revealed. By default this highlights an element of bombast rather than conviction in the deafeningly riotous conclusion.

The LPO's executive process for Tennstedt and the RFH acoustic may not be immaculate, but their conception certainly is, taking listeners and participants seriously to other dimensions. Tennstedt trumps Jansons's undoubted vision with something transcendental – a 'Symphony of a Thousand' in every way. However, not everyone responds so enthusiastically to his imperative way with Mahler, so standing by my admiration for the Concertgebouw Orchestra and hall, Riccardo Chailly's frequently overlooked Decca recording as part of his complete cycle in state-of-the-art engineering also gets to the heart of the matter.

Ian Joller

I This symbol in a review heading indicates that the company provides a download service, directly or via a third party, but not necessarily for the release under review.

Mozart

Concerto for Flute and Harp in C, K299/ K297c, Piano Concerto No. 19 in F, K459. Piano Sonata No. 16 in C, K545 (both arr. de Maistre).

Xavier de Maistre (harp); Magali Mosnier (flute); Mozarteumorchester Salzburg/IVR Bolton.

Sony Classical 88765 42992-2 (full price, 1 hour 4 minutes). Website www.sonymasters.co.uk | Producer Michael Scharisch, Engineer Klaus Wachsmutz. Dates February 20th-27th, 2012.



Xavier de Maistre

2012 00049996-06

What's a harpist to do, if making an all-Mozart CD? Mozart himself was little help, dorking the instrument as much as the flute, dispatching the two instruments at one go in the C major Concerto, K299 and seemingly never writing for the harp again. Followers of Xavier de Maistre will know his predilection for transcriptions, which include recordings of Haydn and Debussy for RCA (the latter was reviewed in September 2008). For them the question is, 'What has he chosen this time, and does it work?' The *Adagio and Rondo* with glissé harmonics, K617 might have been fair game: this rare instrument has been substituted before on record by piano or cello (I've now I also once heard it on vibraphone) and the harp would do just as well, though on a disc already running for a (nowhere steady) time of 64'17" there wouldn't have been room for both it and the 'rare' C major piano sonata on which de Maistre has alighted – and, more dramatically, on a whole piano concerto.

De Maistre's own booklet note is persuasive, and convincingly argued. He mentions (without enumerating) ten Mozart piano concertos he considers suitable for transcribing, stressing that 'the differences between the pianoforte of the earlier period and the harps of today are less significant than those between an old fortepiano and a modern Steinway'. Ignore the fact that even the transient fortepiano comprehensively outdoes the harp in console, and you'll readily accept the suitability of the F major Concerto, K459, 'which tends to exploit the

upper end of the keyboard, a register in which the harp sounds strikingly clear and bell-like in tone'. Having stated that non-for-note transcription would be 'altogether impossible', he then, delightfully and strikingly, dispenses that very point by playing Mozart's exact piano part, unaltered save for the cadences (Mozart's own), where two chromatic scales are replaced by diatonic glissandos: the impossible exchanged for the thrillingly effective.

Impossible! The layout of the modern harp, with seven strings to the octave, requires chromatic notes to be individually adjusted from among seven pedals. This itself requires advance planning from players and – ideally – careful orchestrators alike. Some of the chromatic agility on show here (try 7'39" in the third movement) will surprise seasoned arrangers, though the cunning choice of concerto certainly helps: don't hold your breath waiting for a harp version of K450, whose reiterated chromatic thirds would sound ungainly if not impossible even for de Maistre himself. Here all is control, perfection and expressivity: he plays non-appoggiando chords throughout, as a pianist would, rather than automatically spread (even when not written so), like a harpist. Apart from a surprising missed *slow entry* at 7'55" in the third movement, able support comes from the Salzburg Mozarteum under Ivor Bolton.

The K299 Concerto follows. Mozart could scarcely write bad music, even for instruments he disliked, and among the merits of this piece are an unerring use of diatonic scales and a flute part that, probably unhelpfully for this composer, descends to middle C. De Maistre is joined by flautist Magali Mosnier, born in Montpéran and principal flute of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Her performance – in small-tuned but dazzling, with far appropriate poise confining to score readers of old editions that prize them as regular misapprehensions. The orchestral part sparkles despite some Salzburg Mozarteum Lugs Hall reverberation. Fellow harpist Sylvia Blaud's cadences are substantial and stylish. The 'rare' C major Sonata works charmingly on harp, but I'm not sure how often I'd want to listen to it thus.

The running order of the disc is debatable (if largely academic), given that straight-through listening to this insubstantial sound-world could sound overrating, however brilliant the performances. Placing the Piano Concerto last instead of first would have made for greater tonal contrast (the sonata in the middle) and an arguably more effective key-sequence. To be honest, there's not much in it, and I imagine most people will want to hear the headline-grabbing transcription first. Taken one work at a time, however, this disc is delightful. I won't expect K466 or K491 on harp any time soon, but I look forward eagerly to whatever else de Maistre offers us next.

Michael Round

Mozart

New CD/SACD

Symphonies, Volume 1.

Symphonies – No. 1 in E flat, K16; No. 4 in D, K19; No. 5 in B flat, K22; F, K191a/KArrh 223; F, K76/K42a.

Danish National Chamber Orchestra/Adam Fischer.

Decca 6.220536 (full price, 54 minutes). Website www.decca-records.de | Producer John Funston. Engineer Lars C. Bruun. Dates February and August 2012.

Mozart

New CD/SACD

Symphonies, Volume 10.

Symphonies – No. 35 in D, K385, 'Haffner'; No. 38 in D, K504, 'Prague'.

Danish National Chamber Orchestra/Adam Fischer.

Decca 6.220545 (full price, 52 minutes). Producer John Funston. Engineer Lars C. Bruun. Dates February, April and August 2012.

Adam Fischer's series of Mozart's symphonies with the Danish National Chamber Orchestra has been coming out in rather haphazard fashion, and here is the latest couple, consisting of a group of early works (Volume 1) and a pairing of the 'Haffner' and the 'Prague' (Volume 10). Common to all volumes are the agreeable packaging in sturdy folders, well printed, and essays by Claus Johnson that do not usually treat the music in such detail but range round various subjects that skillfully shed light on the conditions of music-making and of Mozart's life at the time of writing the works. The present pair include something on 'Mozart and Salzburg' and then a rather chatty one on Mozart's condition when he arrived to live in Vienna (Volume 1), then Mozart and his finances (rather misleadingly entitled 'Mozart and his Parlorenaud') and 'Mozart and the Trumpet', all translated from the Danish into German and excellent English. If later volumes include an essay on Mozart and the trumpet, it will be interesting to see how the player's vehemence and prominent recording in an otherwise well-balanced acoustic are justified.

The performances continue in Fischer's now familiar vein. He is particularly good in making the most of the early works without exaggerating their merits. K16 and K19, written in London when Mozart was still only eight, are given suitably fresh and lively performances, though the *Andante* of K16's remarkable hints of darkness are noted, and Fischer finds a note of humour in the finale of K19. With them and with K22, it is noticeable how it is the first movements that show Mozart's originality beginning to emerge; the middle movements and finales tend to be more conventional, however amusing in their competence in one so young. K76/K42a, written in Vienna in 1767 when Mozart would have been 12, has a remarkably dramatic first movement marked *Allegro Maestoso* *subito*, even grave.

With the 'Haffner' and the 'Prague', there is naturally a much greater range of interpretation possible when the works are masterpieces. Fischer takes the first movement of the 'Haffner' fast, quite lightly, the *Mozarte* vigorously, even forcefully, with a singing Trio, and the finale, as many do, fast and even fervently, with in this case surprisingly violent outbursts. The 'Prague' has found more subtle and more expressive interpretations than this one, for all its energy (bordering on the aggressive sometimes), and includes an *Andante* that seems to underestimate the movement's emotional range. But they are consistent with Fischer's lucid and intelligent approach to Mozart, which is seeing him through an enjoyable series of symphonies even if there will always be preferences for different approaches to the mature works. **John Warrack**

Salzburg Festival 2012

Opening concert.

Mussorgsky Songs and Dances of

Death (orch. Alexander Raskatov)*.

Prokofiev Symphony No. 5 in B flat,

Op. 100.

Stravinsky Symphony of Psalms.

*Serge Semishchikov (baritone).

Konzertvereinigung Wiener

Staatsopernchor; Wiener Philharmoniker/

Valery Gergiev.

EuroArts 2022618 (also available on Blu-ray

2072614 (1 hour 20 minutes). Website www.aon.at/can.

NTSC. 16:9. Region 0. PCM Stereo. Dolby

Digital 5.0. DTS 5.1. Video Director Andreas Meier.

Recording Producer Raimund Langner. Dates live

performance at the Salzburg Festival on July 29th,

2012.

Katrin Haas's informative booklet essay tells us that the Salzburg Festival habitually opens with a 'gala concert dedicated to a single subject'. There were only a very few empty seats in the Grosses Festspielhaus for the opening concert of the 2012 Festival. There were quite a few gaps on the platform though, at least for the first half. No violins or violas are used in Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*, as when Valery Gergiev launches the work he has the cello on his left and the double basses on his right. The choir takes up the full width of the platform, standing in three straight lines. The three movements are played with only a minimal break between them, as the score demands. (The score also asks for children to sing the upper voices, only to be replaced by adult female voices 'if a children's choir is not available'.) Gergiev's reading of the work is straight and to the point, austere and faithful to the letter – and therefore to the spirit – of the score. Only in the 'Alleluia' in the final movement is there a hint of romantic expression, and then by the slightest exaggeration of the composer's markings and with the addition of the most discreet rubato. The work is a surprising one,

then, even within the 'single subject' concept – in 2012, Russian composers – to choose for a 'gala concert'. The members of the Vienna State Opera Chorus are superbly disciplined, and the orchestra too. An instant where ensemble goes awry in the first pulse – no more than a second or two – is the only audible sign of live-performance fallibility throughout the concert. The audience applauds respectfully.

Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* is hardly festival fare either. Once again the platform looks bare, though the orchestral forces used are quite different. All the usual stringed instruments are there, but in reduced numbers, plus an assortment of wind instruments and a large array of percussion. Those expecting Shostakovich's orchestration of this deeply sinister work are in for a surprise. Russian composer Alexander Raskatov is responsible for this version, as he also is for the three new introductions that maintain and even enhance the work's already heavy atmosphere. Tenor Sergey Semishchikov is superb, intensely communicative and dramatic vocally, with the minimum of facial expression and bodily gesture to bring out the meaning of the words. Raskatov's unorthodox and uncompromising orchestration is also at the service of the text. What a lamentable circumstance, then, that the text is not available to the viewer. Whilst printing the words of a vocal work in a DVD booklet would be rather missing the point, not providing subtitles is positively perverse. The unwary viewer has to struggle through both the Stravinsky and the text-heavy Mussorgsky with little idea about what these magnificent musicians are trying to express. It is an affront both to the composers and to the performers.

Now to the thorny matter – almost literally – of Gergiev's baton. For the Stravinsky and the Mussorgsky he holds in his right hand what looks suspiciously like, and may even be, a wooden toothpick. It's difficult to imagine quite what this is meant to achieve, but who am I to doubt when faced with such stunning results? Apart from that peculiarity, he is certainly an unusual conductor to watch. He looks pretty worried for much of the time, and his frequent, flattery hand gestures might be expected to obscure the beat. He abandons the baton/toothpick for Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, where we note that for long passages in the remarkable scherzo relatively little in Gergiev's demeanour or movements might be thought to provide the stunning rhythmic energy in the orchestra's playing. A mystery! Much the same can be said of the finale, where the frequent, yet string figures are toned off with astonishing accuracy and unanimity. If rhythmic drive is the principal element of this performance, as it is of the work, the music's lyrical side is not neglected. This reading really is a winner. What a supreme collection of individual talent the Vienna Philharmonic is!

Yet here, under Gergiev, it might almost be a different orchestra from the one we hear so often in Mahler, or with other celebrity figures on the podium.

The canonic work is sober and logical, with a happy balance between close-ups and views of the whole platform. We are largely spared special effects – dissolves and so on – and only rarely are we left to wonder where the orchestral solist is that we can hear but, for the moment, can't see. The sound has been skilfully managed. The absence of texts is the only blot on a very fine film of a superb concert. Unfortunately it is a serious one.

William Reddy

Musto

Piano Concertos – No. 1; No. 2; Five Concerto Rags – Regrets; In Stride.
John Musto (piano); "Odense Synchronic Orchestra/Scott Yoo; "Greely Philharmonic Orchestra/Glen Cortese.

Bridge BRDGE9199 (full price, 1 hour 15 minutes).

Website: www.bridgeconcerts.com | Producer: Engineer Adam Abernethy; Producer David Starobin; Engineer Vigggo Itanger; Dates March 10th–12th, 2010, May 1st and 2nd, 2012.



I freely admit that there are times when I feel like a latter-day Diogenes.

Instead of trying to find an honest man (though that too would be a welcome discovery), my lamp is lit in search of a recent piano concerto. I mean a real one, the kind written by a pianist rather than by somebody who merely goes around the keyboard, one who exploits the potential individual-versus-the-mob drama inherent to the medium, and one who explores the infinite variety of colour combinations possible when a keyed-string-percussion instrument is juxtaposed with a band of strings, winds and other percussionists.

Certainly since Bartók almost floundered his Third Concerto in 1945 and Prokofiev left his Sixth unfinished in 1952, there have been piano concertos aplenty. Think of Corigliano, Lutoszewski, Carter, Barber, Liebermann, Schnittke, Giacinto, Wuorinen, Rovani ... the list goes on, some achieving a foothold in the repertoire, most not. But given the richness of this tradition, stretching all the way back to the harpsichord concertos of Bach, you'd think there might be more fruit from this large, mature tree. More pieces that we wait to listen to a fraction as often as we return again and again to concertos of Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt,

Brahms, Rachmaninov or Bartók. Does the sheer number of successful, beloved piano concertos already written discourage composers from attempting new ones?

Listening to the two piano concertos of Brooklyn-born composer John Musto, I think I may have found something like what I've been looking for. These are bold, proud, unapologetically expressive concertos that, judging from Musto's playing of their solo parts, were unquestionably written by a card-carrying pianist of significant gifts. They evidence full cognizance of the concerto tradition and seem not in the least covered by it. Moreover, they speak a fluent vernacular – no elevated intellectual pretensions here – but a vernacular of a particularly eloquent stripe. Their vitality, it seems to me, stems in part from the fact that, like much of the best American music, they never stray far from the spirit of the dance.

The First Concerto was composed between 1988 and 2005, begun at a time when, according to Musto, "the inescapable drambatt of the HIV/AIDS epidemic was the accompaniment of so many lives. Among the fallen was the dedicatee of this piece, Joe Rausell." The first movement, lasting almost 18 minutes of the piece's half-hour duration, requires hand-in-glove ensemble between solist and orchestra, here expertly provided by the Odense players under Scott Yoo. Musto describes the Andante *grazioso* as a "Mallorcan rag", alluding to the great composer/conductor's tenure in New York at the very time ragtime was taking root. To my ears it speaks with a Mozartian precision and economy. The finale is as brilliant and rich with ideas as any concerto that comes to mind, achieving for all that a terse cohesion. It would not surprise me if this piece were not one day regarded, along with a few others like John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, among the great musical theodicies of our time.

In many ways the brash, exuberant Second Concerto is the antithesis of its predecessor. It was completed in 2006 on commission from George Steil, director of Columbia University's Miller Theater, and is dedicated to Susan and Elias Ross. Originally conceived for large chamber ensemble (18 players, including three percussionists playing 21 instruments), with expansion of the strings to full sections, it becomes a fully fledged orchestral work as heard here. Textures are sparkling and the orchestration as brilliant as the intensely challenging solo part. The kinetic thrust of the outer movements is irresistible: great gusts, whirrs and eddies of sound whip up and intoxicatingly envelop before subsiding into the rich musical fabric. To an even greater degree than the First Concerto, the profusion of diverse ideas is striking. More remarkable is their coherence within an extraordinarily taut overall musical argument. The Greely Philharmonic and Glen Cortese acquit themselves in fine style.

Two wistful, sultry rags, sound out the programme of this beautifully produced recording. Representative of the ragtime renaissance that included William Bolcom and William Albright, they offer the opportunity to hear Musto's cultivated piano playing up close and personal.

Musto, who turns 59 this year, has composed four operas, a good deal of chamber music and many, many songs and songs cycles. Recently I mentioned reviewing this disc to a veteran musician friend. As it turned out, he played in the orchestra for the 2004 premiere of Musto's opera *Edipus* at Wolf Trap, the site for summer music and opera near Washington. His immediate response was, "Edipus was the hottest recent opera I've done. Charming, funny, challenging, it gave me hope for new opera!" Personally speaking, Musto here gives me at much hope as anyone has for the future of the piano concerto. **Patrick Rucker**

Puts

Symphony No. 4, 'From Mission San Juan', If I Were a Swan', To Touch the Sky'.

Composers/Craig Hella Johnson; Baltimore Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop.

Harmonia Mundi USA HMU907580 (full price, 1 hour). English texts and French/German translations included. Producers Carolyn Kay, Notina G. Young; Engineers Tim Handley, Matt Michat. Dates: Live performance at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Baltimore, Maryland in June, studio recordings in September and October 2012.

If I Were a Swan (to a text by Floda Brown) and To Touch the Sky (settings of poems by nine women from Sappho to Mother Teresa) received wide acclaim when they were premiered by Comptare in September 2012. It's easy to see why. Granted, if you're looking for something experimental or extravagant, you may find Kevin Puts (b.1972) a little too low key. He does not draw on the twentieth-century avant-garde traditions of composers like Berio or Nono, nor does he aim for the kind of splash you get, say, with Bernstein's *Mass*. Rather, craft takes priority over adventure, reflection over indulgence; and even the most assertive passages (for instance, his setting of the line "Like a diamond, it breaks the hammer that strikes it" in the second section of *To Touch the Sky*) achieve their sense of resolve without aggression. Direct and luminous, this is music that caresses rather than shocks, warms rather than soars.

Puts avoids jagged edges in his smooth intertwining lines, just as he avoids glare in his glowing colours, pain in his dissonances and sudden jolts in his music's patient dynamic rises and falls. While there are scattered moments of rapid activity (especially in the accompaniments, for instance the chattering background in his setting of

Christina Rossetti's *His Ma Saw the Hind*, the overall pacing is moderate, too, which only adds to the contemplative ambience.

Easy listening? Not really. The texts are challenging, and the music, for all its allegiance to tonality, for all its refusal to disengage, for all its formal elegance, consistently rewards our attention as it makes its way through nuanced and unexpected changes in its textural and harmonic landscape. Certainly, if you appreciate the refined and reflective

music of Lauridsen, you should find these works to your liking. The performances are striking in their purity and control.

Pats's Fourth Symphony is entirely different in character. Commissioned to write a piece inspired by the Mission San Juan Bautista, home to the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Pats decided to centre his work on the interaction of two musical cultures: the western church music that the mission's friars tried to teach to the Mission Indians and the traditional music that the Mission of the time refused to abandon. Since it would be culturally inappropriate, he chose not to quote actual Native American tunes. Instead, working with ethnomusicologist Victoria Levine, he 'distilled [their] musical DNA' (to quote Gavin Plumley's notes), producing in the second movement what the composer calls 'an imaginary compendium' of Native American melodies, and he chose to end his work (in contrast to Liszt's superficially similar *Die Heine*) not with a triumph but with a staccato 'Howling Song' that transcends cultural differences.

Has Pats managed to avoid the problems of cultural appropriation or picture-postcard cultural tourism that such a programme risks? I suspect that there will be debates about this. Perhaps because of his distance from his sources, he doesn't inhibit the indigenous folk spirit as fully as Chavez does in his *Sinfonia Indica*. He does, however, avoid the kind of condescension we find even in such well-intentioned works as Hanson's *Indian Fantasy* – not to mention such overtly racist ensembles as 'What Made the Red Man Red?' from Walt Disney's *Peter Pan*. Even so, I suspect there will be some listeners who will find the symphony intermittently awkward.

Most others, however, are apt to consider it an attractive and effective score. Its conservative idiom is certainly approachable: the quiet strings of the opening may bring to mind the Doves Interlude from Britten's *Peter Grimes*; there's plenty of Copland-esque writing throughout. The orchestration is consistently brilliant, too, and the music's kaleidoscopic shifts in emotional terrain – from the quietly spiritual to the rhythmically insistent to the grandly confident to the achingly poignant – are handled with aplomb. Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony, who premiered the work in 2007, return to it with exuberance and panache.

The engineering on all these works – choral and orchestral halves of the programme recorded at different times and different places – is clear and transparent, and while I wish that Harmonia Mundi had given more space for the notes, it does provide the texts of all the works in English, German and French. It's all in all, a welcome addition to the discography of our century's music.

Peter J. Rabinowitz

Rachmaninov

**Symphony No. 1 in D minor, Op. 13-
The Isle of the Dead, Op. 29***

Detroit Symphony Orchestra/Leonard Slatkin

Naxos 8.573234 (budget price, 1 hour 6 minutes).
Website www.naxos.com | Producer: Ilanitza
Algoch. Engineer: Matthew Ford. Dates: *October 1985-21st and *November 9th-11th, 2012.

Comparisons:

Symphony No. 1:
Philadelphia Orchestra
[New Classic] 18293237 (1986, two discs)
USSR SO/Warner Classics
MLC22100041 (1986)

Given the dismal failure of the first performance of Rachmaninov's First Symphony in 1897 (woefully under-rehearsed, it was conducted by Glasounov, who may not have been entirely sober), the rehabilitation of the work since the rediscovery of a set of manuscript parts and the subsequent publication of a full score in 1947 has been a heartening success. The American premiere took place in 1948, when it was played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy. These musicians were always the most ardent advocates of Rachmaninov's orchestral works in the USA and their 1966 recording is still a very impressive achievement: beautifully played and conducted with a warm-blooded passion that marks out the best of Ormandy's Rachmaninov performances. The same year, Evgeny Svetlanov made his first recording of the work: a stunning, visceral account that brings out the Russian quality of the music with a ravenous and power unmatchable by any other version. Different as they are, both are still among my favourite accounts of the work, despite the proliferation of recordings of the Rachmaninov symphonies since then.

Any new version is up against stiff competition from these two venerable performances and I'm not as impressed by some of their successors as others apparently are (Ashkenazy, Maazel, Pletner, Previn *et al*), but I have greatly enjoyed Leonard Slatkin's new Detroit SO version on Naxos. His is an Ormandy-like account in many ways: warm-hearted, scrupulously balanced, full of detail and rhythmic life and very well paced. Slatkin also uses Ormandy's touchings to the orchestration. The Detroit orchestra does not play quite as rickingly

as the Philadelphiaans, but it produces a fine, rich sound for the most part. In the finale, Slatkin whips things up to splendid effect – the opening fanfare (incorporated as the old *Panorama* theme music) has an unbuttoned splendour that is just what's needed, helped by rhythmic tension and clear textures. As the movement progresses seasoned listeners may miss some of the splendour of the Philadelphia Orchestra (about nine minutes in, there is some slightly approximate playing), or the blazing intensity of Svetlanov and his Russian orchestra, but on its own terms Slatkin's is an impressive and engaging performance, and an exciting one.

Coupled with an equally perceptive and committed reading of *The Isle of the Dead*, this is a disc that is more than worth its modest asking price and I urge interested collectors to give it a try.

Nigel Simione

Ravel

Orchestral Works, Volume 1.

**Alborada del gracioso*. Boléro*.
Rhapsodie espagnole*. Le tombeau de
Couperin. La valse.**

**Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart dir SWR/
Stéphane Denève**

Hänssler Classic CD82.305 (full price, 1 hour 10 minutes). Website www.haenssler-classic.de.
Producer Felix Richter. Engineer: Martin Vögler. Dates: live performances in the Liederhalle, Stuttgart on October 26th and 26th and 4-December 12th and 16th, 2012.

This well-filled disc inaugurates a survey of Maurice Ravel's orchestral music. I followed my instinct as to choosing what to play first and thereafter did so in an arbitrary order. Blessed with a well-balanced, clear and vibrant recording (the harp is nicely present), *Le tombeau de Couperin* (Ravel's memorial to friends lost in the First World War) proved a serendipitous choice on my part. In this moving suite (consisting of four of the six movements originally for piano) Stéphane Denève allows the music to flow naturally: the 'Pavane' is not rushed, the choice being given room for expression, and equally the 'Folies' has time on its side to be pointed and also elegant. One or two couplets and other notes-off intrude, testifying to the live performances. Similar good musical judgement is maintained in the 'Menuet', its final chord finally lingered over until no more sound is possible.

After this (my choice and Hänssler's) *Alborada del gracioso* (also orchestrated from a piano original) is a bracing contrast, but still retaining Denève's keen ear for water-colour textures and Galle's refinement.

There's a well-taken bassoon solo in the work's languorous middle section, dully mysterious here and very attractive. The exuberant ending provides further evidence of Denève's insistence on rhythmic precision and clarity of detailing.

In *Rapsodie espagnole* the opening mysteries of the night are evocatively revealed, dynamics often *quasi* drop down to *pppp*, the daylight colours and slinky curves of succeeding movements made vivid but not overdone. Dvořák really appreciates Ravel's subtlety and the need for finesse when playing his music.

The dissonance of *La suite* is another matter, of course, and if the first half is more about painting the Viennese society before the conflagration that was the First World War, then the way this great piece turns into a savage condemnation of hostilities is here achieved through deep means. This is not a showpiece meditation, thank the Lord, but a considered one that understands the inner turmoil of the music and makes its catastrophic conclusion inevitable.

As for *Idolus*, it's not Ravel's fault that the piece has been so abused over the years – cut, restored, electronically redesigned, used for dancing on ice ... and all sorts of other neuroses in the name of entertainment. (Yes, I am wearing my sister's hat!) Even in the concert hall things can be erratic, for example during this year's Proms when *Idolus* was danced to – yes, I know it's a ballet – but was an subtle racket over the BBC Radio 1 airwaves as the troupe competed against the BBC Philharmonic: anti-rhythmically and in terms of details. Suffice to say that Dvořák treats *Idolus* with respect, charting the crescendos with care and with some characterful *ad lib* along the way; the end (*gong* and *hoo-doo* strokes and trombone glissandos well caught) manages to be both pulverising and joyous.

All in all, an excellent release, and I look forward to the next volume. **Colin Anderson**

Schubert

New CD/SACD

Symphony No. 6 in C, D588. *Rosamunde*, D797 – *Entr'acte*: No. 1 in B minor; No. 2 in D; No. 3 in B flat; *Ballet Music*: No. 1 in B minor; No. 2 in G.

Swedish Chamber Orchestra/Thomas Dausgaard

BC 951987SACD (full price, 1 hour 2 minutes). Website www.bis.se Producer/Martin Hoger.

Original: Karlos Särck. Date February 2012.

Composers:

Symphony No. 6

Ramberg CD/Book (Pulver) 7143

2004, rev. May 2007, page 18

Rosamunde – complete

Mail: Subscribers@Clio.com, Music@Clio.com

Website: www.bis.se (Dahlinghaus and Griens)

MD0901 1833 (2010), rev. May 2010

When Thomas Dausgaard's disc of Schubert's Eighth and Ninth Symphonies was released (reviewed in July/August 2010), there was no indication that he and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra might be including that composer's cycle as part of their 'Opposing Doors' series, but the present disc suggests one might be forthcoming. Although it belongs in essence

to his early symphonies, the Sixth (1818) yet suggests a direction which Schubert could well have taken had the influence of Beethoven not become paramount: had his attempts, indeed, to become the Viennese Rossini borne more productive fruit. Not so much a cul-de-sac as a blind alley whose essence Dausgaard has grasped instinctively.

With emphasis on its notably tonalistic profundity, the first movement's *Adagio* introduction is a perfect foil to the blithe *Allegro* that follows – Dausgaard bringing out the latter's infectious gaiety which is briefly threatened only by the tonal sidings of the development (7'16") then reinforced by a coda (8'06") that wraps up the musical content with the decisiveness of an operatic overture. The *Andante* lacks nothing in innocent charm, while making appropriate leeway for the more trenchant rhythmic profile of a secondary idea (1'48") with whose buoyancy it becomes intertwined near the close, then the *Scherzo* unfolds with an alacrity that is deftly yielded by the bling gat of its trio (3'06") before being reanimated by a startling tonal switch back into the main theme (4'42"). The finale begins in a suitably carefree fashion which not even the more demonstrative second theme can ruffle, and their equable alternation makes the sudden dash to the finish of the coda (7'19") the more unexpected – setting the seal on a reading as poised as it is perceptive.

A reading, indeed, to rank above any other recent version were it not for the extra dimension that Jonathan Roth brings to the piece with a tangibly Stravinskian gloss on the music's (jarringly) neo-classical dimension. That account is coupled with an appealing rendition of the Fifth Symphony, whereas Dausgaard opts for a selection from the incidental music to *Rosamunde* (1823). One of its composer's most immediately attractive scores, the overall sequence nonetheless lacks the cohesion which makes Beethoven's music for *Egmont* or Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* viable as a complete unity. The present account commences with the imposing 'First Entr'acte', its impetuosity maintained through to a singing coda (6'51"), then continues with the artless 'Third Entr'acte' – wifely yet never cloying – and the 'Second Entr'acte', whose chorale-like phrases frame a fervent central crescendo. The 'Second Ballet Music' achieves any hint of true-ness, not least in its more animated trio (7'06"), while the 'First Ballet Music' frames the sequence with its return to a restiveness which is pacified by a questioning transition (7'18") into the serene close. Douglas Boyd's attentive recording makes an eloquent case for the complete score, though those who require just the principal orchestral sections will find Dausgaard's shaping of them into a 'symphonic suite' entirely plausible.

The present disc is enhanced by warm and detailed sound familiar from previous sessions at the Örebro Concert Hall, while Hest A. Scholz's booklet note is succinctly informative and highly entertaining when it comes to the disastrous first and only production of *Rosamunde*. Those who have been collecting this worthwhile series need not hesitate.

Richard Whittocks

R. Strauss Tone Poems 2.

Macbeth, Op. 23^a. Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op. 28^b. Don Quixote, Op. 35^c.

SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg/François-Xavier Roth.

Hänssler Classic CD92.304 (full price, 1 hour

16 minutes). Website www.haenssler-classic.de

Producer Reinhard Goebel. Engineer: 'Mitglied'

Rein, Workshop Vienna, 414a-Garten House, Darm

^a June 23rd-26th and December 20th-21st, 2012.

^b March 16th and 19th, 2012.

I reviewed extravagantly the first volume of this Richard Strauss series in the September issue. The danger is that for its success expectations might now be so high that they cannot be met. Not so with the work first on the disc, Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, given a reconstruction using pointed toes, and bristling with story-cueing incident, finding a nice mix of focused preparation and artlessness (and with something saved for the performance). Not so either with *Macbeth* (played last), hardly vintage Strauss, but well worth catching in this vibrant and dramatic account, full of suggestion and impulse, and leaving one in no doubt as to the young composer's fervent imagination and accomplished means of setting it down on paper.

Not is there any real disappointment with Don Quixote, save that it is maybe too hyper at times. It is centrally placed here and afforded 14 tracks. Neither the collier nor the violin is given a biography in the booklet. A quick search on Google doesn't reveal too much either, save that Johannes Löffly is principal violist of the SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg and it most follow that Frank-Michael Gorbunov is the lead collier. That would make some given Strauss's original conception had in mind orchestral solistes other than those with star status. They both play splendidly and are naturally balanced.

To open Don Quixote François-Xavier Roth presents a dreamy and tender 'Introduction', which is also lively and gallops in tension. Once again, pictures are painted. This is a vividly characterised reading, and these deep do not safely guard! Let me hear on about this (mostly) absorbing rendition, which is as vital as it is sensitive, detail played up but not to the extent of being pushy or obvious. Maybe this Technician Don Quixote is not for everyday listening, but it speaks volumes about the charismatic relationship that Roth has developed with the Baden-Baden

Orchestra and of his ability to live the music that he conducts, with enthusiasm and perception while inspiring those around him. There is much compassion as well, not least when the Don is quietly missing, and his final thoughts – Guthmann playing with much loneliness – are wonderfully moving.

Colin Anderson

Vaughan Williams *The Solent* **NEW**

Three Impressions for Orchestra. Three Songs of Travel (orch. composer)*. Four Hymns*. The Mayor of Casterbridge – Incidental Music. Prelude on an Old Carol Tune.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/
Paul Daniel (with *Andrew Kennedy (soprano),
*Roland Wood (baritone), *Nicholas Bootman (alto)).

Albion Music ALBCD016 (full price, 57 minutes).
English text included. Website www.albionrecords.org.
Producer Andrew Watton. Engineer Mike Clements. Dates April 2nd and 3rd, 2012.

Composers:

Songs of Travel:

Allen, CBC/Raville (SM) Guedes 7 64710-2 (1988)

Four Hymns:

Atmley, Carolyn Orff/Neil

(Hyperion) CDAM855 (1993)

Prelude on an Old Carol Tune:

Northern Sinfonia/Widdow

(BM) Classics 3 17998-2 (1988, new issue)

The past decade has seen the gradual rehabilitation (on disc) of numerous early pieces that Vaughan Williams discarded during his lifetime, enabling a more complete overview of his evolution than would until recently have been considered possible. This release continues the process – comprising a miscellany from across 50 years of the composer's career and featuring three orchestral pieces that, taken in conjunction with the *Rosso Elogio* and *Triumphal Epiphany*, and *Female and Boyish Suite* (both on Dutton, reviewed in February 2010 and November 2012 respectively), and the *Fantasy* for piano and orchestra (Scelus, reviewed in November 2011), rounds out almost the entire picture of Vaughan Williams's orchestral output prior to his embarking on *A Sea Symphony*.

Although presented here (and effective enough) as a self-contained group, the *Three Impressions* were actually conceived as two separate works: the first two were written during 1902-03 as part of a projected series of four pieces entitled *The New Forest*, with the third begun in 1904 but seemingly not completed until 1907 as the first of two further descriptive pieces (the second of which, 'Bollie Wood', has vanished). What remains is a 25-minute sequence that confers an innate identity with landscape and an ability to fuse this with more subjective emotion. 'Barley Heath' is an intermezzo recalling Schubert's lighter

music, its whimsical central section framed by music of more ominous cast (the latter breaks off before the close and has been sensitively completed by James Francis Brown, who edited all three works for publication), while 'Harsham Down' – which saw performance in November 1907 under Emil von Reznick – is an elegy whose uneasy interplay of modal and chromatic elements underlines the impasse at which the composer found himself around this time.

Most significant, though, is 'The Solent' – of which VW aficionados have been aware for many years, its initial clarinet reappearing on flagstones at the opening of the Ninth Symphony's second movement some 54 years later. As Stephen Coombes points out in his extensive booklet note, the piece is prefaced with a quotation from the short-lived poet Philip Marston – suggesting this is music as much about resignation in the face of the unknowable as it is an evocation of the place in question. Certainly the initial elaboration of clarinet and muted strings is as inspired as anything in its composer's earlier output, while the restive central seascape and inward recollection of the opening maintains the quality of what is arguably his finest and certainly most personal orchestral work prior to the *Talks Fantasia*. Unlike the pieces mentioned above, moreover, it warrants more than occasional revival and will hopefully take its place alongside in the *Sea Concert* and *First Norfolk Blythway* as a composition by which Vaughan Williams is known to a wider concert-going audience.

The remainder of this disc is largely devoted to more familiar fare. What is described as 'Book 1' of the *Songs of Travel* (1904) is the first, third and eighth of the cycle – these being the only songs that were orchestrated by the composer (his amanuensis Roy Douglas orchestrating the rest after his death). The *Four Hymns* (1914) is likewise an arrangement of a set for voice, viola and piano – this latter being replaced by strings, the writing for which finds Vaughan Williams at his most imaginative. Roland Wood and Andrew Kennedy respectively do justice to some of the most appealing among his secular and sacred songs, the *Hymns* evincing an emotional fervency redolent of his choral works from the post-war era.

Wood also contributes a reorienting account of the folk song *Wayliff Inn*, deployed here in the incidental music to a radio adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1951), which is also receiving its first recording. Although too fragmentary as a concert proposition, the three short pieces (the last being a sequence of brief over/acts) are nothing if not evocative of the novel and the composer was right to recycle them as the *Prelude on an Old Carol Tune* (1952) which enjoys occasional revival as one of his most arresting forays into lighter music, while not concealing that deeper and more ambivalent expression which makes this

piece a pendant, indeed harbinger, of the deceptively 'light' *Tilgham Symphony*.

Paul Daniel (whose VW credentials were established via his recordings of the First and Fourth Symphonies for Naxos) secures responsive and idiomatic playing from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, which is heard to advantage in spacious and wide-ranging sound. The comparisons above remain desirable (not least Richard Hickox's account of the *Prelude* on an invaluable two-disc set of the composer's shorter works) but the present disc is still a mandatory purchase for the *Three Impressions* and 'The Solent' in particular. It is a pity that the contemporary *Blythway* could not have been included here, leaving one to hope this will yet see the light of day on a future release from Albion Records.

Richard Whitehouse

Birth of the Symphony **NEW** Handel to Haydn.

Handel Saul, HWV/53 – Sinfonia. Haydn Symphony No. 49 in F minor, Hob. IV/8, 'La passione'. Mozart Grande Symphonie No. 7 in C. J. Stamitz Sinfonia a 4 in D. Academy of Ancient Music/Richard Egarr (pianoforte).

Academy of Ancient Music AAM001 (full price, 1 hour 11 minutes). Website www.aam.co.uk.
Producer/Engineer Philip Hobbs. Dates September 21st-23rd, 2011.

After decades of recordings on L'Oiseau-Lyre and French Harmonia Mundi, the Academy of Ancient Music has now set up its own label. It hopes to fund itself from the proceeds of concerts, CD sales and direct support from its many admirers. This is its first release on the new label and is a canny mix of familiar and unfamiliar music with an interesting theme. A little disappointingly, the booklet advises that its next releases will be three Bach warblers: *St John Passion*, *St Matthew Passion* and the *Orchestral Suites* (and with a couple of pretty questionable side digressions in the *Passions*, in my opinion). In any event, this first release has an interesting premise and boasts first-rate performances.

One can certainly see why Richard Egarr wanted to include Handel's lengthy *Sinfonia from Saul*: it is a marvellous piece, played with great class by these experienced HandMans. It is, however, questionable how much influence such late-Baroque theatrical sinfonias, particularly those written in England, had on the emergence of the symphony in its classical form. A symphony by G. B. Sammartini or J. C. Bach may have been more instructive. Perhaps a future volume on the same theme could look into these early symphonies.

The symphonies by two Mannheim-based composers, Franz Xaver Richter (1709-89) and the older Stamitz (Johann Wenzel Anton

1717-47), are genuine rarities. Both works show the characteristics we often read about in connection with the Mannheim style, such as upward rushing strings, but seldom get to hear. These two symphonies are full of energy and fun, which the AAM brings out splendidly; however, I must say that while they are enjoyable listening, I found them also instantly forgettable. Perhaps it is only my Mozart fanaticism speaking, but it seemed to me there was more memorable music (and better melody) in the first five bars of Mozart's little Symphony No. 1, K16 than in either of the older composers' featured works (And who can hear the last movement and fail to love it for days). Stephen Rose's notes give a good account of the work's creation, when the eight-year-old composer was in London, and describes some of its salient qualities. So it is odd that he makes no mention of one of its most interesting characteristics, the first appearance of the four-note motif, sometimes called the 'Credo theme', that Mozart used repeatedly in his works: the 'Credo' Mass, K157, Symphony No. 11, the Violin Sonata, K481 and, most spectacularly, in the finale of the 'Jupiter' Symphony. The motif is listed at in the first movement, then played very clearly by the horns in the second movement (and in this performance delightfully ornamented by the horn players). The AAM's account of this tiny gem of a symphony is spirited and witty – probably the finest version on disc.

The stand-out work on the recording is without doubt Haydn's F minor Symphony No. 49, 'La passione', a work whose furious intensity is matched only by its close relation, Symphony No 44. As we now believe that Haydn's symphonies were generally played in Esterházy without continuo, Igaré leaves his harpsichord to direct the orchestra more like a modern conductor. He and the AAM play this dark masterpiece with both subtlety and drama. In its earlier decades, this orchestra was sometimes guilty of exact but deliberately inexpressive playing. This was probably a necessary reaction to the over-Romantic approaches to eighteenth-century music then common. Latterly, particularly under the direction of Igaré, it has lost none of its precision but is no longer afraid of overtly emotional playing. This is a masterly account of 'La passione', crisply articulated, with transparency of texture and really clear, confident wind playing. Let us acknowledge, too, that the AAM was one of the first period-instrument orchestras to adopt the common eighteenth-century practice of placing first and second violins opposite each other. As can be heard in this recording, this often makes much more musical sense than the modern placement.

This is Classical symphony playing of the highest order. Dare one hope that future AAM releases may fill in the gaps in the never-completed Haydn symphony series on L'Oiseau-Lyre? **Andrew O'Connor**

Epifania

Meriläinen Summer Concerto, 'Summer Night's Dream', **Salmehaara** Carozonetta, **Tiemu Suvi**, **Tuive** L'ombre d'errine tot.

Vaek Epifania.

Ottobrothian Chamber Orchestra/Juha

Kangas.

Alfa ABCD355 (full price, 1 hour 7 minutes).

Website www.alfa.fi. Producer/Engineer Simon

Fau-Gil. Date/Day 21st-25th, 2012.



Ottobrothian is a region on the western coast of Finland.

As this disc actually was recorded in Kakkola, in Central Ottobrothian, distinct from Ottobrothian itself, one wonders why this ensemble is not called the Central Ottobrothian Chamber Orchestra. Perhaps its activities take it to the neighbouring regions of Southern Ottobrothian and Central Ottobrothian. Perhaps 'COCCO', the inevitable English acronym, was considered too unappealing!

Be that as it may, this intriguing collection contains music by three Finns and two Baltic composers – the Estonian Helmut Tuive and the Latvian Peteris Vasks. Eddi Salmehaara and Udo Meriläinen both passed away a decade ago, and their works date from 1971 and 1994 respectively. The other composers are very much

with us – Tuive, as a matter of fact, is just in her forties – and their works are recent. The stylistic variety encountered here is attractive. This is not one of those releases in which one work bleeds unconvincingly into the next.

A adieu is a groove or furrow; the term appears in discussions of brain anatomy. Jukka Tiemu's *Säli* begins with dramatic glances from the strings' high registers into the low, and no less dramatic leaps in the opposite direction. Is it naive to link the work's title with its melodic morphology? The booklet notes tells us that Tiemu refuses to comment on his works, 'preferring to let the music speak for itself', and that his titles are 'intentionally ambiguous, often plays on words involving more than one language, or all in all just smart'. Those of us who listen to a lot of music in many genres might think, at times, that we've heard it all. *Säli* demonstrates that there really is something new under the sun. Tiemu takes obvious delight in creating string effects and timeless that tease, perplex and stimulate the listener. It's not a melodic work, in the traditional sense, but its drama and originality

nevertheless should attract many, and its 15-minute span does not seem too long.

As a young man, Salmehaara studied with Ligeti, but the Hungarian composer's influence plays no role in the consonant *Gaonetta*, which originated as a movement from an organ work he titled *Gaoneta*. With its slow-moving, arched string lines and its intense climaxes, the tension-and-release architecture of Barber's *Adagio* comes to mind, although the *Gaonetta* is more cerebral than Barber's fleshly opus. It's a fine work, and makes one wonder why one hasn't encountered it previously.

Tuive's 'The Shadow Behind You' (the title's English translation) includes three parts for three violi da gamba and also evokes an 'I've never heard anything like that before' response, at least from this listener. (Among other things, the composer accomplishes the neat trick of making string instruments sound like accordions.) Tuive weaves a dense polyphonic web in this work, although the violins move up and away from it to produce sonorous laloes and lightning bolts. *L'ombre d'errine tot* is oppressive and even rather frightening, but not gratuitously so, and I'm very interested to find out what else Tuive has composed.

For many, Vasks will be the draw here, which might be why his *Epifania* gives this disc its title. Its open harmonies could not be in greater contrast to Tuive's work. This elegiac music moves gravely forward, rather in the style of Arvo Pärt's, although it picks up emotional momentum as it goes. Vasks's music has been linked, rightly or wrongly, with 'optimal minimalism' and *Epifania* will do nothing to change that.

At 20 minutes, Meriläinen's *Summer Concerto* is the longest work here. The composer wrote, I was, I admit, prompted by a need to write spontaneous, possibly slightly shadowy yet happy-sounding music.' He also cautioned against hearing it as a description of nature. If this sounds ambiguous, the actual music is no less so, avoiding any classification in terms of style, mood and texture. To me, it sounds like Morton Feldman experimenting with Fortepiano. The *Summer Concerto* ends this release on a quizzical note. It clearly merits a deeper investigation.

The performers seem to have this music in their collective DNA. This is no surprise, as all five pieces were associated with the ensemble, with conductor Juha Kangas, or with both right from the start. Tentativeness or approximation plays no part in the music-making so richly captured here in Alfa's atmospheric engineering. Only the *Gaonetta* has been recorded previously. These recordings are likely to be definitive for the foreseeable future and make an excellent case for the provocative and very rewarding programme, as do the friendly booklet notes. A decided keeper!

Raymond S. Tuttle

Abrahamsen

Walden* **New**

Winter Bei Anbruch... In Den Wildern. Zur Nacht*

*Stefan Winter (electronics); **Calefax Reed Quintet** (Ivor Brooker, cello; Ivar Benk, clarinet; Jelle Althuis, bass clarinet; Raaf Heikema, alto saxophone; Heidi Mockert, baritone); **Asko/Schönberg Ensemble/ Reinbert de Leeuw.**

Winter & Winter 910 203-2 (full price,

50 minutes). Website: www.winterandwinter.com. Production/Engineering: Stefan Winter. Producers: Michael Feuchtl, Douglas Schmidt. Engineers: Yusei Kise, Sebastian Roth. Date: April 26th and 29th, 2012, *May 2011.

Composers

Walden (original version)

Scandinavian Wind Quintet (2009) (2009)

Winter & Winter's second release of Hans Abrahamsen (the first, centred on the magisterial *Solus*, was released in 2010 – 910 129-2) brings together two of his ensemble pieces separated by over three decades, along with what might now be termed 'ambient' music that frames the Danish composer's music to make for a cohesive and absorbing listen.

Deriving its inspiration from the eponymous book – and contemplation of the unity between man and nature therein – by Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1978) deftly amalgamates metric, rhythmic and evocative elements during the course of four movements. Thus an opening *Moderato* of gradually intensifying animation is followed by the most understated of marches, then an *Andante* of elegant poise segues into a brief and gently humorous *Allegretto*. Ligeti's Ten Pieces for Wind Quintet is the likely precursor in its juxtaposing of the music and the mordant, though any such influence is admirably tempered in this 1995 revision (with bass clarinet and alto saxophone frequently to the fore) for the *Calefax Reed Quintet*; moodier and more immediately expressive than the original – not least as rendered there by the Scandinavian Wind Quintet in what is a virtual conspectus of Danish music for the medium from the last century. This remains no less valid a listening experience, though the present incarnation audibly enhances the music's elusiveness.

Walden, and with it the Thoreau connection, are central to *Winter* (2009) – if not the most imposing then arguably the most intriguing of Abrahamsen's works since his welcome resumption of original composition at the turn of the century. The present work shares silent motifs with its predecessor, making this on one level a

theme and variations – though, as the former resembles more a sequence of contrasted textures than a definable melodic line, while the latter increasingly overlap and intercut each other, the overall evolution has a notably sensitive freedom – evident in music of a pervasive rhythmic profile that surrounds a phase of magically detached suspense which itself re-emerges after a burst of hectic activity toward the conclusion. This is a work of distinctly artless complexity, to which the musicians of Asko/Schönberg Ensemble do full justice under the direction of Reinbert de Leeuw. Descriptive rhapsody or covert chamber symphony – *Wald* is an undoubted masterpiece of understatement to which the eminent American philosopher would surely respond.

Interposed between these pieces are examples of music *concrete* as recorded and edited by Stefan Winter – in the words of whom '... the sounds of the woods captured from early morning till late night ...', is what are appropriately understated yet appealing examples of the genre. They certainly enhance this disc, as do the close yet finely balanced sound and the reproductions of Feri Király's *Half-Fantasia* series. No booklet notes are included, but informative paragraphs on each work can be accessed at the Winter & Winter website. Those who have been drawn to the music of Abrahamsen, or who (rightly) find the overall programme appealing, should not hesitate to acquire this release.

Richard Whittham

J. S. Bach

Der Ewigkeit saphirnes Haus.

Wo soll ich fliehen hin, BWV5 – Ergieße dich reichlich. Weiner, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen, BWV12 – Sinfonia. O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort, BWV20 – Ewigkeit, du machst mir bang. Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis, BWV21 – Sinfonia. Die Himmel erzählen die Ehre Gottes, BWV76 – Sinfonia. Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden, BWV88 – Siehe, ich will viel Fischer aussenden. Bereitet die Wege, bereitet die Bahn, BWV132 – Christi Glieder, ach, bedenket. Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, BWV147 – Jesu bleibet meine Freude. Laß, Fürstin, laß noch einen Strahl, BWV198 – Der Ewigkeit saphirnes Haus. Trio Sonata No. 6 in G, BWV530. Orgelbüchlein, BWV599-644 – Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ, BWV639. Six Schübler Chorales, BWV645-50 – Meine Seele erhebet den Herren, BWV648. Brandenburg Concerto No. 6 in B flat, BWV1051 (all traces. C. Lesauznier and N. Lesauznier).

Le Petit Concert Baroque (Chani Lesauznier, Nadja Lesauznier, harpsichord duo).

Fra Bernardo FB1205172 (full price, 1 hour

8 minutes). Website: www.frabernardo.com.

Production/Engineering: Fra Bernardo Studios.

Date live-performance at the Kartause, Mauterbach, Vienna in October 2010.



Many, indeed, too many transcriptions or arrangements of Bach's music leave me

unimpressed. Happily there are exceptions; Max Reger's erstwhile favoured-upon arrangements for piano duo of the six *Brandenburg Concertos* are among them. Now I can add another to my slender list, for this disc of transcriptions for two harpsichords of an assortment of Bach pieces is a delight.

Chani and Nadja Lesauznier are specialists in the art of transcription and have formed a harpsichord duo, *Le Petit Concert Baroque*, to demonstrate their skill in this medium. As they are former pupils of Pierre Hantaï, Elisabeth Joyt, Beatrice Martin and the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis their credentials are manifestly in order but there is, and above their instrumental pedigree, a refreshing originality about their playing which is mirrored in their imaginative and often surprising choice of transcription material. There are, for example, several arias from Bach's cantatas which clearly lend themselves though by no means obviously to the art of transcription.

One of the most captivating items is the tenor aria from the cantata *Wo soll ich fliehen hin* (BWV5). Bach accompanies the voice with an obbligato viola but the music is of a calm and melodic allure which make it inevitable even in a schoolroom of muted recorders. The sisters Lesauznier do a great deal better than that with their evenly balanced, eloquently articulated and warmly responsive playing. Comparably affecting is another tenor aria, this time from Bach's elegant masterpiece *Laf, Fincin, laß noch einen Strahl*, often called the 'Tramrose' (BWV198). The text of the aria aptly lends its first line to the title of the disc: 'Eternity's Sapphire House'. Bach's scoring is generous and texturally transparent and features flute, also d'ancora, two violins, two viola da gambas, two lutes and continuo. Any one of us, perhaps, could be forgiven for doubting the efficacy of a keyboard transcription. The colours, of course, are completely different but I found myself quickly enthralled by the expressive tenderness of the playing and who is to say that Bach himself did not get up to similar transcriptions with his musically talented son?

Interspersed with the transcriptions of vocal pieces are two instrumental movements from Cantatas BWV731 and 76 and several free-standing instrumental compositions. The most exhilarating of them is a transcription of the Sixth Brandenburg Concerto. My sensibilities respond to every bar of the Louisiane's keyboard playing, while at the same time whetting my appetite, as if that is ever required, for the original. This is the high water mark of a recital that has, curiously, only one slight disappointment: it is the transcription of the chorale 'Jesu Meinet meinet Freude' ('Jesu, joy of man's desiring') from the cantata *Flow and Blood and Tea and Lemon* (BWV147). The most often-transcribed item in the programme, it comes as a surprise to find it a little indulgent and unedifying. Even that has neither spoilt my overall enjoyment nor will dissuade me from awaiting the disc's outstanding status. The recording of the two manual harpsichords, built by Martin Pihlström after eighteenth-century French models, is exemplary. **Nicholas Anderson**

British Works for Cello

and Piano Volume 2.
Bax Cello Sonata in E flat.

Bowen Cello Sonata in A, Op. 64.

Ireland Cello Sonata in G minor.

Paul Watkins (cello); Huw Watkins (piano).

Chandos CHAN10792 (medium price, 1 hour 15 minutes). Website www.chandos.net (Productor Rachel Smith, Engineer Ben Cornelissen, Datec November 12th-14th, 2012).

Composers:

Bax:

Houston, Perry (cello) RRAM2106 (1998, new disc)

Listeners with long ears, or a good memory, may recall that Volume 1 of the present series, likewise recorded by the brothers Watkins, consisted of works by Parry, Delius, Granville Bantock and John Foulds (reviewed in October 2012). This follow-up, recorded at Foston Hall in Suffolk a year ago, is likewise cleverly planned: three British cello sonatas, all written for the same leading instrumentalist –

Beatrice Harrison, who not long before had premiered the Elgar Concerto – and indeed, all composed within the space of a year or two, by three fine composer-pianists. Each piece follows a similar pattern and is in three contrasted movements, within which, predictably, are almost kaleidoscopically changing contrasts, of mood and texture and tempo. The Bowen Sonata here lasts 25 minutes, the Bax 30, the Ireland 20; they appear in that order on the disc.

An admirable note by Calum MacDonald supplies plenty of background as well as analysis, and includes first-performance details of each Sonata, including the identity of Harrison's accompanist on each occasion. The Bowen was first heard at the Wigmore Hall on the piano 9th, 1921 with the composer at the piano; Bax's lifelong flame Harriet Cohen was the accompanist in the same venue on February 26th, 1924; and on April 6th that same year, the pianist in the Aeolian Hall for the Ireland work was Evelyn Howard-Jones.

Inevitably, one is moved to wonder whether each composer was, or was not, aware of the others' work, what they thought of it, even whether any subconscious imprint remained when each returned to his desk. The startling overall impression, though, is one not of similarity but of considerable difference.

A further impression is that Paul and Huw Watkins are very much alert to the gulf that separates the three works, and that they mould their respective interpretations accordingly.


For 'gulf', I think, is possibly not too strong a term. Even the choice of keys is revealing. There is little point here in attempting too detailed a stylistic discussion, especially as this is admirably done in the booklet notes, best followed with the music itself in the mind's ear. Suffice it to say in broad terms that the outlines are initially what you might expect. Bowen's Sonata, in A major, is at the outset passionate and Romantic, often feels reasonably regular in form, with a dancing piano part, hints of French influence in the central *Lento*, and then a finale that includes allusions to the earlier movements and a final apotheosis. It's an exhilarating piece in quite a different way

from the Bax (in a more heroic E flat) that follows it. As CMaD observes, Bax's opening movement can and maybe should be heard in the context of this composer's first two symphonies, near its date to the Sonata (1922 and 1926 respectively) and like them full of drama, anger and conflict. Certainly this applies to the long opening movement, with its eyebrow-raising first marking of *Maestoso (poco sciolto)*! The rhapsodic slow movement is almost as long, and reworks material from the same poem *Spring fire* which Bax despised of hearing in its original orchestral guise. The finale is typical of Bax in moving towards one of his favourite devices, an extended quasi-meditative *Adagio*, actually thus designated. It does indeed seem to tie up the loose ends in a piece that might otherwise seem rambling. (I happen to have the old Florence Hooton recording to hand, from 1958, in fairly grim mono sound; the newcomer is a more than worthy replacement.)

'Rambling' is of course the last possible adjective that might ever be applied to John Ireland, whose watershed was always contention. His Cello Sonata is no exception. One sometimes has the feeling that it was in his chamber music rather than in orchestral music or song that Ireland was at his most intense and personal; certainly the work is often agitated, even in the slow movement, where the lyricist sits side by side with a mood sometimes a lot more troubled. Ireland's choice of key for the work, G minor, would certainly have had resonance for him in the classical literature, Mozart above all.

In sum, this is a well-contrasted, well-achieved recital, one that often illuminates its three composers intriguingly.

Peter Barton-Page

 This symbol in a review heading indicates that the company provides a download service, directly or via a third party, but not necessarily for the release under review.

HERITAGE

www.heritage-records.com

J. L. Dussek Complete Piano Sonatas Vol. 1

Maria Garcia performs the first complete recorded cycle of Dussek's piano sonatas (five volumes of 3 CDs). A Czech contemporary of Mozart, Dussek's composed forward-looking piano works and was instrumental in the technical development of the piano.

HTGCD 380



The Emanuel Feuermann Edition

The first Heritage release to re-issue material from the Pearl catalogue. This 6-CD set brings together the complete English Columbia recordings and rare, early German Parlophone recordings of Emanuel Feuermann.

HTGCD 401



Hovagel Brian

The very first commercial recordings of the music of Hovagel Brian given by the Leeds-Liverpool Schools Symphony Orchestra (Columbia and Gramophone). The only available recording of the composer's 21st Symphony.

HTGCD 256/7

Regis Records, Southover House, Tolpuddle, Dorset, DT2 7HF
Tel: (01305) 848983 | Fax: (01305) 848516 | orders@regisrecords.co.uk

PRESTO
CLASSICAL

EUROPADISC

Britten

String Quartets – No. 1 in D, Op. 25;
No. 2 in C, Op. 36; No. 3, Op. 94.

Talkies Quartet (Edward Dusinberre, Károly Schranz, violins; Geraldine Walther, viola; Andriš Fejčí, cello).

Hyperion CDH68004 (full price, 1 hour 16 minutes).
Hwbate www.hyperion-records.co.uk | Producer
Tim Oldham, Engineer David Witt: 28th February
12th–15th, 2012.

Comparisons:

Belton Q (EMI Classics) 1.57968-2
(2003-04, two discs, rev. July/Aug 2005)
String Quartets Nos. 1 and 2
Maggini Q (Naxos) 8.553383 (1996)
String Quartet No. 2
Empireur Q (BIS) BIS1528&22
(2007, rev. Sep 2010)
String Quartet No. 2
Maggini Q (Naxos) 8.553383 (1997)

Benjamin Britten is enjoying a fine century, notable for memorable performances and excellent new recordings. No one huffed against the elements on Aldeburgh beach could possibly forget the performances staged there of *Peter Grimes*, while there have been *His Majesty's Agent* and a great revival of *Jolly Bunch* at Glyndebourne. In the month celebrating the centenary itself, it is wonderful to welcome an innovative new recording of Britten's last published string quartets played by one of the world's most distinguished ensembles, the Talkies Quartet.

String quartets span Britten's artistic life, from youthful unpolished efforts to the third numbered quartet of 1975, his last major work. A considerable advantage of this new release is that it is the only recording currently available to squeeze all three onto a single disc – with room to spare – while others spread them over two discs accompanied by other works. Presented in chronological order, it allows the listener to chart Britten's development in the genre. However, there is no sense of the music being at all rushed, the main time differential against other recorded performances being the *Chacony* concluding the Second Quartet, which is considerably swifter.

String Quartet No. 1 was written in California in 1941, commissioned for 1400 by the wealthy American patroness Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Although the more famous Second Quartet was written around the same time as Britten was working on *Peter Grimes* (1945), there are moments in the First Quartet – such as the high tessitura of the *Andante sostenuto* opening – which aren't too distant from the 'Diana' Interlude from Britten's opera, the Talkies's violins in ethereal mode during the opening, before the brusque *Allargo vivo* energetically bursts in. The shimmering 5/4 dance movement in B flat, taken at a bounding pace, fore shadows the 'Moonlight' Interlude. Under the Talkies's fingers, this work really shines.



Talkies Quartet

Richard Hougham

String Quartet No. 2 commemorated the 250th anniversary of the death of Purcell and was written only months after the premiere of *Grimes* and the song cycle *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*. The Talkies favour a swifter opening tempo, marked *Allargo calmo senza segni*, capturing the movement's shifts in mood from restless energy to languor. The opaquely harmonies dip and slide effectively (rehearsal mark C, 1'40"), as do the eerie glissandos (B, 1'47"). Perhaps they push on through the final few bars, marked *trappollo di fine*, whereas the Belton Quartet, in particular, offers a more relaxed view, the strummed cells at the movement's close sounding the most harp-like.

Competition on disc is especially strong in this Second Quartet, my favourite interpretation coming from the Empireur Quartet, which is slightly more impassioned, particularly in the explosive *Finale* second movement, where the Talkies can seem tame in comparison, although they recouer their cues off each other well enough at the end (K, 17'5").

It's in the grand *Chacony* where the Talkies differ most markedly, favouring a quicker, more urgent tempo which almost thoroughly convinces. The only doubt I harboured was at rehearsal mark 11 (6'52"), Britten switching rehearsal marks from letters to numerals in this movement), the Talkies's precise articulation sounding more 'click' than Britten's *pizzicato* marking. The playing, though, is remarkably, solo cadenzas revealing exceptionally polished playing, closely recorded in the gratifyingly warm acoustic of Wynton, which offers plenty of stereo width. I especially enjoyed Andriš Fejčí's dark-melancholic cello colour in the

almost operatic recitative at rehearsal mark 17 (10'12") as well as Edward Dusinberre's lustrous first viola (27'7").

The ghosts of Britten's final opera *Death in Venice* haunt the Third Quartet, with its sparse textures and sense of isolation. Composing in five short movements, Britten originally considered the title *Dissonance*. 'Disco' explores the different duo combinations against a gentle rocking suggestive of Venetian lapping waves. The movement labelled 'Ornato' is playful. The Talkies are obsessive where they need to be, but never make an ugly sound, unless it's deliberate, such as the viola playing 'the wrong side of the bridge' in the spiky Trio section of the 'Balletique', accompanying the *opinato* first violin and *col legno* second – a gruesome dance of death. Britten composed the final movement, 'La Serenissima', on his final visit to Venice and it opens with a 'Recitative' which quotes five short passages from *Death in Venice*, including Achenbach's 'I love you' from the end of Act 1. It then launches into a lengthy 'Passagio' before fading away, the cello's final D natural holding out last before expiring.

There are many very good recordings of the Quartets, from the Belton to the Maggini, each highly recommendable. I have yet to hear the Empireur Quartet's new disc of Quartets Nos. 1 and 3, but if its No. 2 is anything to go by, it should provide essential listening. It will be hard-pressed, however, to match the playing of the Talkies Quartet on this splendid disc. Mervyn Cooke contributes a booklet essay on the quartets, while the striking watercolour *Red Hot Saffron House*, by East Anglian artist Mita Highton and exhibited at Snape Maltings, graces its cover.

Mark Pullinger

Corelli

New CD/MACD

Trio Sonatas – Op. 2; Op. 4.

The Avion Ensemble (Caroline Eiding, violin; Richard Tunnicliffe, cello; Paula Chiriacanaut, archlute; Roger Hamilton, harpsichord/organo)
Paolo Beozzi (violin)

Linea Records LDC142 (medium price, two discs, 2 hours 21 minutes). W96289 www.linerecords.com
 Producer Philip Hobbs, Engineer Robert Cambridge. Dates January 11th–15th, 2010, January 11th–17th, 2012.

Composers:

Trio Sonatas, Op. 2.

Il Ruggiero/Marcato's Tactus 032004 (1988)

Trio Sonatas, Op. 4.

Les Accords/Gatti (Glossa) 02CD11207 (2012, new album)

The continuing survey by Linea Records of the instrumental works of Arcangelo Corelli reaches completion in 2013, marking the 300th anniversary of the composer's death (earlier volumes were reviewed in February and March this year). This persuasive series of recordings has by now emphatically redefined our expectations, experience and comprehension of the music of this great master of the Italian Baroque. With flawless and often rivalling performances by the Avion Ensemble directed by Paolo Beozzi, this project has established itself as a definitive recorded compendium of Corelli's works, to which this latest release now adds the Trio Sonatas, Opp. 2 and 4 to the Op. 5 Violin Sonatas and the six Concerti grossi of Op. 6. No comparable set of Corelli recordings offers performances of such brilliance and scholarly insight and here, as before, these new accounts can only be applauded and welcomed without qualification, for this is music-making of the highest order.

Corelli wrote the 12 Op. 2 works for Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili, into whose employment the composer had entered in 1694. The Cardinal's famously opulent and extravagant lifestyle sat curiously at odds with his supposed calling, however, and attracted censure from the Pope himself. It also led to Pamphili's removal from Rome to Bologna in 1695, whereupon Corelli entered the service of Cardinal Ottoboni, whose court at the Palazzo della Cancelleria was famous throughout Europe for its cultivated tastes and patronage of the arts, and of music and musicians in particular. A letter written by James Drummond, Earl of Perth, who visited the Cancelleria in the autumn of 1695, observed that Ottoboni had 'the best musique in the world, and is glad when strangers go to the house and take the pleasure of its diversion ...'.

Corelli's Op. 4 set of Trio Sonatas appeared with a dedication to Ottoboni in 1696. The earlier Op. 2 set, however, was the subject of one of the most infamous musicological scandals of all time. Within two months of publication in Venice and Bologna (it seems curious that nobody found reason to criticise the series when it first appeared in

Rome), Corelli found himself embroiled in what became known as the 'Affair of the Fiddle', in which flagrant violations of the rule expressly forbidding the use of consecutive intervals of a fifth became the main talking point in the fashionable coffee houses of both cities. The *Allondra* of Sonata No. 3 does indeed contain a notorious passage in which the first violin and bass lines descend in parallel fifths, which led to the 'crime' being (according to Giovanni Colonna) 'hotly disputed in piazzas and shops with rising interest, prompting many in Italy apart from virtuosos to write giving their opinions, and many letters have appeared, all of which condemn the passage by Corelli'.

Another novel point common to both sets is the occasional use of the dissonance which occurs when the delayed resolution of a leading note at a cadence point coincides with the early sounding of the tonic in the melody line, a feature known as the 'Corelli Clash'. Corelli was not alone in deliberately using both devices in his music, but that his doing so fuelled both public interest and critical conversation attests to the fact that his music revealed unprecedented degrees of cunning, originality and melodic appeal unmatched by any of his Italian contemporaries.

Such are the very attributes which Beozzi and his team seem to relish and they bring a fascinating mix of affection and exploratory daring to these boundlessly illuminating accounts. The recordings, made (as before) at St George's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge in January 2010 and January 2012, are breathtakingly transparent and palpably faithful and, in their very clarity and pin-sharp focus, serve to bring the inaudible auras of this playing fully to life. Of the two selected comparisons (both from Italian period ensembles), only Emanuel Marcato's Tactus recordings with the ensemble Il Ruggiero can realistically compete with the Avions, taring in admit and athletic playing in a recording that's pleasingly warm and natural, while the Ensemble Aurora directed by Enrico Gatti (on Glossa) are accomplished yet never inspirational in their recording of the Op. 4 set.

Once again Beozzi and the Avion Ensemble warrant the highest commendation for these exceptionally fine performances – as it says on spine of this attractively packaged set, just listen! **Michael Ameson**

Trio Shaham Erez Wallfish ^{New}
Debussy Cello Sonata in D minor[™]
Violin Sonata in G minor[™]
Fauré Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 120
Ravel Piano Trio in A minor

Trio Shaham Erez Wallfish (Shaham Erez, violin; Raphael Wallfish, cello; Arnon Erez, piano)

Nimbus NIS065 (full price, 1 hour 12 minutes).
 Website www.spartaco.uk.uk.Producer/Engineering/Nimbus Records. Dates February 18th–19th, 2012.

This well-planned disc effectively makes an entire recital and the four broadly contemporary French masterpieces chosen receive excellent performances, each well balanced in terms of recording quality.

Personally, I always prefer slightly slower tempos in Ravel's great Trio than these fine musicians adopt, especially with regard to the first movement's *Moder indicato*, but their tempo reminds me that this is indeed a pre-First World War composition, undertaken not long after Daphn et Chloé, and is not the rather elegant work it can sometimes appear to be if the tempos ever too much on the slow side.

It is the energy and positive approach of these musicians to Ravel's chamber masterpieces which are so impressive here, their concept of the work continuing at every level. Fauré's very late Trio (the most recent of the four works, although he was certainly the eldest composer of the three) involves an equally fine account, full of an impressive sense of inner forward momentum, which, if not brought to this work, can prove fatal. It was particularly taken with Arnon Erez's playing in the slow movement of the Fauré, so superbly does he phrase, never oversteering his colleagues, even if in some of the accompanimental chordal passages I would have preferred a shade more sustaining pedal. But this is in all manner of degree, what cannot be denied is that this is chamber music-making of high quality throughout, the musicians clearly of one mind in their approach to these works, quite unlike those 'celebrity' ensembles since beloved of record companies, whereby a few 'big names' were brought together, arriving in town a day or so beforehand to run through the music before the recording session, after which they split up and flew out again the following day to their next gig.

Performances of the standard on this disc are not achieved overnight, the playing in both Sonatas is alive and concentrated from Hagar Shaham and Raphael Wallfish respectively, and they are admirably partnered by this outstanding pianist, a truly fine chamber musician. The results are more pleasing in that in many performances of Debussy's late sonatas the writing can appear diffuse, but not here. In addition, the choice of repertoire centres that these works, in music-historical terms, are presented as part of the great stream of major French chamber music from the early decades of the twentieth century and not as purely 'loopy-tower', 'stand-alone' compositions.

The recording quality is good, although in the duo sonatas the microphone placing appears not to have been suitably adjusted as perhaps it should have been – but this is a passing quibble, not a serious disadvantage. Calum MacDonald's booklet notes add to

the attraction of this disc, but Nimbus should really discard the company's individual approach to record marketing; nowhere on this disc are the dates of the composers shown, which makes references in the notes to the individual years of composition, and of Debussy's death, less meaningful than they otherwise should appear.

Robert Matthew-Walker

Delius

Orchestral music transcribed for two pianos, Volume 2.

Paris: A Nocturne (The Song of a Great City), RTvi14 (arr. Julius Blüthner). **Summer Night on the River**, RTvi19 No. 2 (arr. Philip Heseltine). **Evertry**, RTvi23 (arr. Benjamin Dale). **Fantastic Dance**, RTvi28 (arr. Ethel Bartlett/Rae Robertson). **The Song of the High Hills**, RTvi86 (arr. Percy Grainger).

Simon Callaghan, Hiroaki Takenouchi (piano).

SONN GÄLSTÄ SOMMCD0129 (median price, 1 hour 20 minutes). Website: www.sonn-recordings.com. Producer: Siva Oka. Engineer: Paul Andro-Taylor. Dates: September 15th and 16th, 2011.



Simon Callaghan and Hiroaki Takenouchi

Callaghan and Takenouchi are a very well-matched duo, coupling dexterity and enthusiasm with a natural sense of ease and a perceptive response to the music. Though two pianos can, in the right hands, tease out an enormous spectrum of effects with which to fill an orchestral conceived music, there are a great many hazards and complexities to overcome first, such as matching tonal and dynamic shades alongside pedal effects, not to mention the sixty-giddy business of gagging shifts in tempo and marrying up the attack so that the texture remains transparent. All of this is very well handled by these players, so that the music is permitted to spring forward in a lively, engaging manner. I particularly enjoyed their account of the somewhat loopy *Paris: A Nocturne* (arranged by Julius Blüthner), which took as its inspiration Delius's first encounter with the French capital in 1888, a time when the air must have been thick with riotous hedonism and intellectual inspiration. This sprawling work, a kind of bizarre non-poem, emerges over some 22 minutes from an enigmatic – scary even – subterranean pervasiveness into more emphatic, evocative and perfumed territory. The shadowy becomes eventually, or at least temporarily, laid into lighter, brilliant areas of music; in truth one never quite knows what is coming next. The performance is well coordinated and evolves into something really rather exciting in the middle.

Summer Night on the River is the sequel to *On Flowing the First Caduce in Spring*, which was also dedicated to Ralfine Gardiner. Arranged by Philip Heseltine (a.k.a. Peter Watlock), it achieves a beautifully lilting atmosphere in this performance.

Debussyan sonnetries are somewhere in the mix and, although there is an elusive melody to clutch onto from time to time, one finds oneself floating along in the moment, pleasantly aware of what one is experiencing.

In his nicely concise notes, Martin Lee-Brown explains that Delius was a lifelong admirer of Norway, and in this marvellously spacious, panoramic work, *Evertry*, arranged by Benjamin Dale, the music's storytelling dimension comes across very enjoyably. For me, this piece shines out as the most consistently exciting work on the disc, with sinister undertones and rugged scenes colliding with less impetuous moments and idyllic pleasing brighter splashes of colour. Delius seems to have had people queuing up to create arrangements of his orchestral pieces, and Percy Grainger was also responsible for *A Dance Rhapsody No. 1*, which the duo ably captured in Volume 1. *Song of*

the High Hills is another Norway-motivated work of considerable length and diversity. The mountainous terrain is very well evoked in the writing, and the shimmering detail is superbly drawn out in this performance. The rhythmically stirring *Fantastic Dance*, written in 1911, arranged by Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson, is by comparison a somewhat brief, quickly work, though nonetheless vivid and always interesting.

Though narrowly missing the beat for the 150th anniversary of Delius's birth (Volume 1 was timed to perfection), this recording chalks up another highly successful and rewarding endeavour for Callaghan and Takenouchi. Delius fans will have something to talk about.

Mark Towner

An American in Paris

Gershwin *An American in Paris*. **Porgy and Bess** – *Summertime* & a woman is a sometime thing; My man's gone now; It ain't necessarily so; Bess, you is my woman now; Tempo di blues (all transcr. John Heifetz).

Ives *Decoration Day* (reconstr. John Kirkpatrick).

Poulenc *Violin Sonata in D minor*, FP15.

Ravel *Violin Sonata No. 2 in G*.

Tamini Waley-Cohen (violin); **Huw Watkins** (piano).

Champs Hill Records CHRCD059 (full price, 1 hour 12 minutes). Website: www.champsrecords.co.uk. Producer/Engineer: Raphael Mataric. Date: November 6th-7th, 2012.

The Gershwin tracks are transcriptions, but as they were made by Jascha Heifetz (like both of Gershwin's parents, a Russian émigré to the United States) there is ample justification for including them in this intelligently planned recital, although I confess not to have encountered the six-minute pot-pourri of *An American in Paris* before, which may be because it does not come off satisfactorily as a separate recital item and is thereby not immediately appealing to violins. Andrew Stewart's good booklet notes are otherwise underwhelming as to when this severely cut-down version was made. Nonetheless, this item is sufficient of a rarity, either live in recital or on disc, to add to the attractions of this intriguing selection, which is well worth investigating. The inclusion of the far better-known *Porgy and Bess* transcriptions by Heifetz is stylish and convincing performances here reinforce one's eternal belief in Gershwin's individual melodic genius.

The French sonatas are obviously more seriously intentioned works, although the 'Mass' movement (the Sonata is not really one of Ravel's greatest inspirations – in the documentation called 'No. 2', which technically it is if one includes the early A minor work, first published in 1975) and the *Andante* of Poulenc's fine Sonata

both sit reasonably comfortably alongside Geršwin's melodies. Only live, it would seem, stands rather more to one side – as one might expect from this Yankee iconoclast – but the inclusion here of his own version of *Decorous Day* for violin and piano adds further to the appeal of this disc.

The recent engrossing book on John Kirkpatrick by Drew Massey (*John Kirkpatrick, American Music and the Pressed Page* – Eastman Studies in Music 98, ISBN 9781504644088) details the pianist's and musicologist's travels with getting much of Ives's music for piano published in acceptable editions; it was Kirkpatrick who was able to reconstruct this version of the *Decorous Day* movement, part of Ives's orchestral 'Holidays' Symphony, from the composer's original sketches for a transcription. The connection here is that Tania Waley-Cohen gave the first performance of this work outside of the USA as recently as 2007 – a further incentive to investigate this CD.

The performances by Waley-Cohen and How Watkins are uniformly excellent throughout, although some may feel the recorded balance is a little awry in that the venue does not appear to be wholly suitable for chamber music: a shade too 'big', whereas a more intimate acoustic might have been preferable. In any event, the music's best thing, the sound itself is by no means objectionable and the performances from this well-matched duo are entirely convincing. A truly interesting and – in its way – most valuable disc.

Robert Matthew-Walker

Hindemith

Violin Sonatas – E flat, Op. 11/1; D, Op. 11/2; E (1935); C (1939).
Nobilissima visione – Meditation
(arr. composer).

Tanja Becker-Bender (violin); Peter Nagy (piano).

Hyperion CDAG8014 (full price, 57 minutes).

www.hyperion-records.co.uk

Producer/Engineer Ludwig Richterhoff. June 2009/2010–2011, 2012.

Composer:

Paul Hindemith, Op. 11 Nos. 1 and 2 (1935).

Walter, Nietzsche (2012) (2011) (1980).

Hindemith wrote six sonatas for stringed instruments, four of which were for the violin, his own first instrument, and that upon which his earliest professional experience as a musician was founded. He was just 19 years of age when he became Konzertmeister of the Orchestra of Frankfurt Opera, although he subsequently switched from violin to viola, becoming one of its foremost exponents and gaining a reputation both as a soloist and later as a chamber musician as violin of the Amis Quartet. A figure of considerable influence, even notoriety (he was possibly the only composer who ever claimed to be able to play all the

instruments of the orchestra), and well on out of the cultural press, particularly after the rise of National Socialism in Germany, Hindemith was censured for his music's alleged degeneracy and decadence and publicly harangued by the Nazis during the infamous 1938 Düsseldorf stateless Musik Exhibition, in which much progressive German music of the period was soundly derided.

Hindemith's music for his adopted first instrument has been comprehensively surveyed for Hyperion by the acclaimed British violist Lawrence Power (reviewed in June 2009, April 2010 and January 2011) and it seems only natural that the violin sonatas should now be added to these existing recordings. With the bar already set at a very high level by the overall excellence of Power's recordings, it seemed clear that violinist Tanja Becker-Bender and pianist Peter Nagy would have to turn in outstanding accounts of the violin sonatas: these new performances prove to be everything that one could wish for in these taxing and often elusive works.

All four of Hindemith's violin sonatas can be accommodated comfortably on a single CD and the inclusion of the familiar 'Meditation' from *Nobilissima visione* (1938) as a filler is a rather more useful option than the two-minute fragment of a conjectural finale for the Op. 11 No. 1 Sonata, which is offered by Iltis Wallis and Roland Poutinen on their rival BIS survey of these works.

Hindemith's sonatas were written in pairs, or at least in close proximity one to another, as was the case with the Op. 11 set. The earlier work, written during the composer's service on the Western Front in 1918, was premiered in Frankfurt in June 1919, at the first concert devoted exclusively to Hindemith's music. Becker-Bender and Nagy deliver a strikingly vivid and motoric reading of the opening movement, which starts practically half a minute off the pretty fast basic tempo adopted by Wallis and Poutinen. But their performance doesn't overlook any passing detail of phrasing or dynamics, and is so closely attuned to the prescribed needs of the music that this playing could hardly be bettered. There's a touch to admire, too, in the second sonata, struck with a tone signor that strongly reflects Hindemith's Schumannesque performance direction for the opening movement, *Its stesso Triste* – to be played with 'stiff defiance'. This is touchant, stubbornly resilient music and tremendously well played by Becker-Bender, who again brings to the piece a sense of anxiety and urgency not always so evident on BIS.

The later Sonatas, in E major (1915) and C major (1919) could hardly be more different in form, concept and content. As Malcolm MacDonald suggests in his booklet notes, it is possible to recognise the various phases of Hindemith's creative life throughout the four sonatas. The E major work seems to be characterized by what the booklet notes describe as 'profound serenity despite

moments of tension', and in that sense, at least, the piece may be said to anticipate the 1937 ballet on the life of St Francis, *Nobilissima visione* (the 'Meditation' occupies the final track on this disc).

The final Sonata in C reverts to the defiant and truculent style that seems to inform so much of Hindemith's output, at least as far as the opening movement goes, but this acerbity of entrance is offset in the deliberately paced and reflective slow movement (with its own interpolated scherzo part way through). The finale takes the form of a huge and labyrinthine fugue of the kind that would have delighted Max Regor, and the form and musical language, powerfully argued and severe, is often suggestive of Regor's own complex polyphony. This work receives a particularly fine reading here, bringing this valuable release to a powerfully imposing and majestic conclusion.

Michael Jameson

Marais Images.

New

Pièces de viole, Deuxième Livre – Suite

No. 1: Prélude; La Folette; Sarabande; Ballet en rondeau. Suite No. 4:

La Discrète; Chaconne en rondeau.

Pièces de viole, Troisième Livre – Suite

No. 3: Prélude; Sarabande; Rondeau;

Chaconne. Pièces de viole, Quatrième

Livre – Suite d'un goût étranger:

Muzette; L'Arabesque. Pièces de viole,

Cinquième Livre – Suite No. 6: Prélude;

La Fière; Menuet; Deuxième Menuet;

Le Trouillev; Le Petit Badinage;

La Précieuse. Suite No. 7: Prélude;

La Simplicité paysanne; Renveries

maupréziennes; Les Arruements.

Moins Prélude in G.

Vivise Prélude in E minor. Prélude in C.

Mineke van der Velden (viola da gamba);

Fred Jacobs (French theorbo).

Ramie RAM1205 (full price, 1 hour 6 minutes).

www.naxos-music.com. Producer/Engineer

Rainer Arndt. Date: May 2011.

Composer:

J. Alphon, E. Alphon, Alphon, Martine

(Alphon & Alphon) ALPHAM02 (2008)

For anyone interested in the history of the viola da gamba (alias 'viol'), the lengthy booklet essay with this disc is probably worth the sale price alone. Gustave Hindemith traces the history of the instrument from its origins in late-Medieval Spain all the way through to its gentle decline in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century. For obvious reasons, the bulk of the account is devoted to its golden century in France, starting from the middle of the seventeenth century. That reading this fascinating essay, I was not fully aware of the fact that the French devotion to the viol came via England. French musicians at the courts of the early Stuart kings fell in love with an instrument that the English had earlier adopted from Italy. Ultimately at the hands of composers such as Sainte-Colombe,

who added a seventh string, Marin Marais and Forqueray (father and son), it became the quintessential French instrument. By the time of these composers – in the decades immediately before and after 1700 – the Italians had largely abandoned the viol family (though perhaps not as completely as once thought) in favour of the violin, viola and their kin. The essay also deftly sketches how the French viol tradition sits within a wider cultural and intellectual milieu and notes its affinity with the visual arts of the period, notably the painting of Watteau. The greatest of all French composers for the viol was Marais, who proudly claimed any Italian influences. (Nevertheless, *Bidonhoux* speculates that his famous variations on *La Follie*, which were composed the year after Corelli's famous sonata based on the same theme appeared in print, may 'betray a certain receptivity to Latin themes'.)

The present collection samples works from Books II, III, IV and V and, notwithstanding the absence of the above-mentioned *Follie* variations, gives a good representation of Marais's utter mastery of the *viola da gamba*. The range of moods in the selection is very wide, from the scintillating mobility of the two *Chaconnes* and the heartbreak of the *sonata da Zibelle* to the almost dirklike *La Sospirata payane*. The most stirring and acrobatic piece on the disc is the often-performed *L'Isabelle*. Many recordings of Marais pieces for viol employ a rich and sometimes clanging continuo including such other instruments as a second viol, guitar, lute or theorbo and harpsichord. The artists on this disc, gambaist Miescha van der Velden and lutenist Fred Jacobs, adopt a minimalist approach throughout. The only instrument heard alongside the solo gamba is a large French-style gut-string theorbo. As the lutenist Michael Lenoir explains in a separate booklet essay, since there are no surviving models, he has had to base his instrument on an earlier, smaller model (probably itself a reborn Italian instrument) supplemented by iconographic evidence. The viol was made in Paris in 1617 by Antoine Despont. Although the notes do not say, it would seem likely that a seventh string has been added at some point in the instrument's life.

Even though the French viol is a big, bossy instrument, at no point on this recording does it come close to overwhelming the theorbo. It is not clear how much of this is due to Lenoir's construction, how much to Jacobs's playing and how much to sound engineering and a sympathetic recording venue. Whatever the case, the balance always seems just right. Jacobs is a wonderfully refined musician. His accompaniment is often as interesting as the solo gamba and, happily, he is allowed three exquisite solo preludes, two by the well-known Robert de Visée and one by the obscure Estienne Le Moine.

Van der Velden is a gamba soloist of the first rank, with an outstanding level

of technical skill. Her approach is often more muscular than pretty. Compared with some gambaists, she may seem to play with a very deliberate (maybe even brusque) attack, with bow-strokes crisp and articulated – rarely allowed to linger. According to *Bidonhoux*, this 'tick-tock' style of playing, using lifted bow-strokes, was characteristic of Marais and other gambaists of his era and it was in some ways closer to the techniques of lutenists and guitarists than the more seamless style of cellists. Her playing is very impressive; however, some listeners may find it slightly lacking in flair and drama. Those seeking more of such qualities in their Marais should track down a wily cutting disc with the brothers Fabel and Rami Alqais (on their own label), which also includes several major works by Forqueray. Van der Velden and Jacobs may not have quite the theatrical flair of the Alqais and their collaborators, but their playing is subtle, assured and shows great insight into Marais's often melancholy musical rhetoric. It is to their diffident yet despairing *Le Toulou* I shall return most often.

This beautifully produced disc is warmly recommended. **Andrew O'Connor**

Mozart

New

String Quartet No. 15 in D minor, K421/K417b. Clarinet Quintet in A, K581*

***Jörg Widmann** (clarinet); **Arcanto Quartett** (Arto Forquardt, Daniel Sepec, violins; Tabia Zimmerman, viola; Jean-Guhen Queyran, cello). **Hanna Mandl HMC902168** (full price, \$9 minutes). www.hannamandl.com    Producer Tobias Lehmann. Engineer Alexander Fuchs. Date January 2012.

Composers:

Clarinet Quintet:

Haydn, *opus* of CDZ (Mitsui) MXT03 (2012)

King, Gabriel Op (Hyperion) CDA66198 (1988)

From the gentle, promise-laden opening bars of the Clarinet Quintet – wonderfully sensitive but bristling with energy and purpose – it is apparent that this is a more involved performance than many (such as the undeniably genial and graceful but essentially laissez-faire Gabrieli Quartet account with Theo King). These players throw themselves wholeheartedly into the performance – possibly too wholeheartedly on occasion – living every note. The Arcanto, it is clear, is a quartet of soloists, each forthright when placed by Mozart in the spotlight, but subtle and homogeneous accompanists as an ensemble too.

Evidently sharing this approach, clarinetist Jörg Widmann is a perfect partner. Playing with muscular immediacy (in marked contrast to the polite, almost soft-focus timbre of Romain Geyrot in his recording with members of the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, released earlier this year on Mitsui),

his impressive arsenal includes a creamy legato and sharp, percussive articulation.

The first movement is light and breezy, but grounded with substance and full of lively detail. The *Larghetto* is refreshingly mobile, while still eminently poised and elegant, and features some radiantly beautiful duetting between the sweet, beguiling lines of leader Arto Forquardt and Widmann's softly murmuring accompaniment. The tempo for the *Menuet* is ideal – buoyant and gracefully dance-like – but the two trios demonstrate the musicians' tendency to micro-manage dynamics more extremely than elsewhere. In the first, string-only, trio, a disconcerting habiting before Mozart's accents may leave you feeling a bit wozzle, and Widmann's enthusiastic crescendo in the second trio bulge rather conspicuously. His cheeky rubato here may not be to everyone's taste, but for my money it is delightful and thoroughly in character (though I wouldn't want to hear it performed this way every time). The theme-and-variations finale is a tour de force, showcasing Widmann's finest, natural-sounding improvised ornaments in the first variation, a woffle A minor third variation, and a dazzling bubbly and joyful conclusion.

There are no photographs of the recording session in the booklet, so it's not clear how the players assembled themselves, but the final playing results are ideal – the clarinet is placed centrally, surrounded by the strings (King is placed to the extreme right on Hyperion, positioning which might work in concert but which sounds imbalanced on a recording).

This performance immediately takes its place as one of the most enjoyable on disc – which makes it all the more of a shame that Widmann has opted to play on a regular clarinet rather than a basset clarinet – the custom-made instrument with an extended lower register that Mozart's clarinetist Anton Stadler played. It is true that, as the booklet note points out, modern editions of the score for basset clarinet are speculative (Mozart's 1789 autograph is missing) – but they are, on the whole, intelligent reconstructions which build on passages where the melodic line was clearly compromised by anonymous nineteenth-century adjustments for regular clarinet. Early modern-era basset clarinet practitioners (Alan Hacker produced a pioneering edition in the late 1940s) could possibly be accused of occasional trigger-happiness with the low notes, eager to show off the possibilities the instrument offered, but that is no longer generally a problem – and certainly not a reason for Widmann to shy away from the basset. It is all but unthinkable these days to perform the Clarinet Concerto on a regular clarinet; the Quintet has fewer cases of obvious compromise, but there are a number of crucial passages which suffer without the lower range – and those let

down this recording. Nevertheless, this is a winningly stylish and engaging account to which I fervently return frequently returning.

Although it displays many of the same positive characteristics, the Arcanto's account of the D minor Quartet, K421 – the second of Mozart's 1785 set dedicated to Haydn – is less satisfying. As if anxious to avoid overblown romantic angst, the quartet approaches the work with a classical restraint bordering on coolness. The opening phrase of the first movement creeps in almost unannounced, at a measured tempo (Mozart's marking is *Allargando*). The musicians play down the *Sturm- und-Drang* elements, but there is still drama here, building in quiet intensity as the movement progresses.

The intimate atmosphere carries through into the elegantly flowing *Adagio*, which has some ultra-lushly pianissimo moments. Often rendered as an angry, angular affair, here the well-controlled Mozart is gentle and subtle; the admirably delicate trio is a fraction too reticent in its luring rhythms. The finale – another set of variations – is, again, somewhat understated, but there is no shortage of impressive detail, such as a nimble and precise scurrying motif.

The Berlin studio recording is clear and naturally paced, with attractive subtle bloom.

Gregory Rogers

Parry Early Chamber Works. **New** String Quartet No. 3 in E-flat Major and String Quintet in E-flat.

Bridge Quartet (Colin Twigg, Catherine Schofield, violin; Michael Schofield, viola; Lucy Willing, cello) with **Robert Gibbs** (viola).

EM Records EMRCDD16 (full price, 1 hour 2 minutes). Website www.em-records.com. Producer Matthew Dilley. Engineer Richard Ward. Dates March 29th and 30th, 2011.

EM Records is busy shining an enquiring light into unloved and unrecorded corners of English music (try its website for generous samples of its work so far) and it here delights on a pair of chamber pieces by Hubert Parry which have never before been caught on disc. Parry, acknowledged as one of the key figures of the late-nineteenth-century English music revival, remains less widely explored than some of his contemporaries, so it's good to find evidence here of his activities in the decades before works such as *Red Fox of Ince* or *I Was Glad*.

The Bridge Quartet (which has previously appeared on EM Records with a disc of chamber music by Norman O'Neill) begins with the third of Parry's three string quartets. The work, of 1878 (Parry's 30th year), begins with the kind of dry obfuscation of the home key that we recognise in later works, but settles quickly into an easy Mendelssohnian mode that shows off the composer's buoyant lyricism. A more trenchant scheme left me wondering if Parry

had been particularly taken with Wagner's Nibelheim music from the *Ring* (think *trick* instead *avril*), but the underlying sunny disposition is reinforced by the finale, which features much of winning delicacy.

The String Quintet of 1884 introduces an additional viola to the quartet, a part taken here by Robert Gibbs. There's an immediately obvious thickening of the texture, though it's testament to Parry's skills as a composer that the effect is breadth rather than muddiness. Parry, though, had to work for some time to achieve the result he wanted, coming back to it in the 1890s to make some revisions. These changes are helpfully detailed in the booklet notes, as is Parry's diffusion with the response he received from Joseph Joachim after the great German violinist looked through the score. Joachim singled out the Quintet's slow movement for criticism, complaining that it was too long; on the contrary, its length seems to be well judged and its progression marked by an accomplished sense of direction. There's also a pleasing circularity achieved by the re-statement of the home key in the final bars of the finale and much pleasant material in between, though I can't help but feel that a performance better able to achieve a sense of flow and accumulation would give a greater feeling for its virtues.

We must be thankful for the Bridge Quartet's enthusiastic advocacy of these pieces, but the players could have been better served by the recording, which spotlights their playing with unflattering closeness.

Andrew Morris

Saariaho **New** Chamber Works for Strings. Calices^o, Nocturne^o, Nymphes^o, Spins and Spell^o, Tocare, Vent nocturne^o.

Metal (¹Arto Tikkonen, ²Mina Pernola, violin; ³Atte Kipiläinen, viola; ⁴Tomas Djupedjbacka, cello) with **Anna Laakso** (piano); **Marko Myhlinen** (electronics).
Online ODE122-2 (full price, 1 hour 12 minutes). Website www.online.net. Producer Metal. Engineer Ivo Mäenatt. Dates October 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th, 2011.

Finnish string quartet Metal gathers here a collection of pieces for stringed instruments by the players' compatriot Kaija Saariaho spanning some 21 years. Unusually, they're tracked mostly in reverse chronological order, but reveal the consistency of Saariaho's voice across the decades.

Tour (2010), the most recent piece in the collection, is tracked first. Commissioned by the Jean Sibelius Violin Competition, this seven-minute piece for viola and piano probes the limits of tone by asking the violinist (a aptly named Mina Pernola) to skate about in the parts of the string where pitch gives way to whisper. It rises

from and returns to near silence, pushing positively along a route of half-lit colours with an intriguing sense of dark fantasy.

Ten (written in 2006) draws similar sounds from Arto Kipiläinen's viola, but here with much less sense of purpose. The piece's two parts are listless, desolate and, with distantly murmuring and howling electronics, not a little creepy. Viola and electronics (the work's two distinct elements) feel separate, like two voices occupying the same space, but there's a feeling of trailing water, as though the music is bobbing, helpless, in the same spot for its duration.

Calice (2009) for violin and piano is a livelier – though hardly warmer – experience. Its three movements are based on material from Saariaho's earlier violin concerto *Grand Thème* and are considerably more agitated slices of the composer's distinctive sound-world. All three pieces are much more concerned with combative instrumental technique, asking for crunched bowing produced by grinding the bow against the string. There's also greater emphasis on more sonorous playing, but the landscape is again brittle and gloomy; violinist Arto Tikkonen and pianist Anna Laakso are energetic and accomplished guides to it.

Two pieces for solo instruments pursue different paths. *Spins and Spells* (1997) for solo cello circles a point, working through unusual harmonics produced by the string's unconventional tuning. Tomas Djupedjbacka casts it into this musical wilderness, which covers the instrument's range from ghostly sparkle to sizzling growl. *Nocturne* (1994) for solo viola is more ethereal, floating aimlessly on the edge of pitched sound. The piece was a response to the death of Witold Lutoskiński but evokes eeriness, rather than memorial.

The earliest – and most substantial – piece here is *Nymphes*, written for the Kronos Quartet in 1987 (recorded on Ondine ODE1047-2), and it seems to cover the most ground. It's a particularly intense experience, rising at one point to a quite frightening series of climaxes which put me in mind of swarms of insects beating their wings in frenzied activity. Electronics augment and corrupt the quartet's music and add a layer of blood and whispered text by Soviet poet Anna Tarkovskaya (father of visionary filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky; the text is included with the notes). The notes mention Saariaho's affinity with Mozart's water flutes and ponds; icy and suffocating water seemed closer to my mind during this particularly unsettling work.

Much of Saariaho's music hovers at the edge of conventional instrumental technique, circling similar territory and finding the views of the same desolate landscape seen from different windows of the same – probably haunted – house. It's all brilliantly played and spectacularly recorded, and comes with handsome booklet notes. **Andrew Morris**

Instrumental

A Folk Song Runs Through It New

Bartók Six Romanian Folkdances, BB68. Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, BB83. Piano Sonata, BB88.

Janáček In the Mists, JVVIII22.

Kodály Seven Pieces, Op. 11.

Andrew Rangel (piano).

Steinway & Sons 2018 (full price, 1 hour

7 minutes). Website www.arkimusic.com.

Producer Andrew Rangel. Engineer Tom Stephenson. Date

May 2012.

Comparisons:

Bartók: Improvisations/Piano Sonata:

Pevslik (Sony Classical) 828N 78750-2 (1980, 187)

Janáček:

Prekling (DG Originals) 828 764-2 (1971)

Louis Armstrong once said, 'All music is folk music, I ain't never heard no horse sing a song.' (Numerous jokes suggest themselves here, but I think I should just leave them alone.) Folk music, like classical music, is easier to identify than to define, and the title of Andrew Rangel's new CD – his 2018 – adequately forecasts its contents. Rangel, not just an expert pianist, is also an intellectual (the two don't necessarily go hand in hand). He wrote the booklet notes for this release and in it he distinguishes between 'the more cosmopolitan or artifice-inclined' composers, who, on a limited basis, 'used folk material (often) as an exotic element' and 'the trio of composers represented on this disc [who] embodied a consuming devotion and commitment to folk music which went to the core of their identities'.

Everyone knows that Bartók and Kodály travelled throughout Hungary and neighbouring regions, inducing villagers to sing into a portable recording gramophone, and then analysing and categorising their findings with scientific zeal. I did not know that Janáček, almost 30 years earlier, collected Hungarian folk music and moved on to Bohemia, Slovakia and Silesian folk songs. Not having the benefit of a gramophone, this was a challenging task, but Janáček attacked it with passion. Until now, I had never thought of his haunting piano work in *de šiben*, composed in 1912, as inspired by folk music. Instead, I tended to think of Janáček's interest in translating speech rhythms into music. Rangel asserts, however, that the first three of the work's four movements contain 'the suggestion of folk music, but there is no specific usage'. It is one thing to make that statement, and another to demonstrate it, but Rangel does both. Most performances of *de šiben* take its title very literally, decorating the music with a rich impressionist fig. Rangel seems to be less enamoured with the ostentatious pedal



Andrew Rangel

David Street

than most of his colleagues and his reading of this score really sings. The music loses a little atmosphere, maybe, but it sounds like an old painting whose gloomy layers of varnish have been removed by a restorer.

The folk influences in Bartók's solo piano sonata are a little more obvious, but even so, performers tend not to dwell on them, when so much of Bartók's music explicitly draws on folk material. Instead, the sonata is usually played as an extroverted modernist manifesto, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, once again, Rangel shifts the perspective – not dramatically, but enough to be noticed, and enough to make the listener think about the sonata in new ways.

The three remaining works by Bartók and Kodály are, of course, explicitly related to folk music from Hungary or, in Bartók's *Six Romanian Folkdances*, neighbouring Transylvania. One can hear and enjoy them for the ways in which they present and develop their rich materials. This time around, another thing that I took from them was the distinction between Kodály's *Seven Pieces* and the two sets by Bartók. Kodály, who was not a piano virtuoso, did not compose extensively for the instrument. Bartók, of course, wrote lots of piano music, some for his own use and some (Whitstones, for example) for educational purposes. Therefore, I find it interesting that the most self-consciously 'pianistic' work among the remaining selections is Kodály's. Perhaps because the piano spoke a less familiar language to him, he felt more constrained to follow familiar models. Not only does it draw upon Hungarian folk music, it also evokes Debussy and Ravel, and so it adds further contrast to this well-varied programme. In Bartók's eight Improvisations (of which two are less than a minute long) the composer placed actual folk material beside his own folk-like ideas, as if daring the listener to tell them apart. The *Six Romanian Folkdances*, from five

years earlier, more closely adhere to their source material, although Bartók couldn't resist putting his personal stamp on them.

Rangel is a thinking man's pianist, and his recordings leave you admiring his technique, but they leave you admiring his insight even more. Other pianists (Radu Fritula), for example, have extracted more colour from *de šiben*, and Pevslik's Bartók is an ideal mixture of intelligence and pianistic panache. Rangel is not for the impatient or for sensation-seekers, but his readings stand the test of repetition, never losing their ability to satisfy. The engineering, like Rangel's playing, does not call attention to itself, but it faithfully reproduces the warmth and tonal richness of his Steinway D. **Raymond S. Turtle**

Beethoven New

The Late Piano Sonatas.

Piano Sonata – No. 28 in A, Op. 101; No. 29 in B flat, Op. 106, 'Hammerklavier'; No. 30 in E, Op. 109; No. 31 in A flat, Op. 110; No. 32 in C minor, Op. 111.

Sony Classical (piano).

Sony Classical 8883 78287-2 (medium price, two disc, 2 hours 9 minutes). Website www.sonymusic.com. Producer/Engineer/Septon Schellman. Date: January 2nd-6th and February 2nd-6th, 2012.

Comparisons:

Borrelli (Philips) 418 278-2 (1970-75, two disc)

Goode (Nonesuch) 7809 79328-2 (ten disc)

Polvin (DG) 828 740-2 (1977, two disc)

Schubert (EMI Classics) 7 63765-2 (1952-55, eight disc)

Schuman (EMI Classics) 7 63768-2 (1951-54, ten disc)

Lee (EMI Classics) 4 68912-2 (2011, eight disc)



It's a brave person who sets down Beethoven's late piano sonatas for his first recording.

but the 25-year-old Russian pianist Igor Levit already has a fully established career performing with the most illustrious artists, and with a fascinating and very wide-ranging repertoire (that includes such radical and rarely heard works as Frederic Rzewski's *The People will never be Defeated*).

This debut is quite extraordinary, one of the most musically authoritative and technically assured performances of these works that I've ever heard, and his interpretations are entirely free of any affectation or mannerism. Levit performs with minimal use of the peddle, a beautiful rounded tone and a dynamic range which would be hard to surpass. The recording quality is suitably flawless and captures

every detail. There are moments here – such as the Coda of the slow movement of the ‘Hammerklavier’, or the opening of the slow movement of Op. 101 – where Levin reduces the volume to a magical level: one strain to hear it, and he draws you into music-making of the most extraordinary intimacy. This is matched by lean muscular playing which is hugely powerful, with the opening bars of the ‘Hammerklavier’ taken at full pace, the cumulative accrual of registers on that first page (spanning the entire compass of the keyboard) creating a vast sonority but never with a harsh percussive tone, instead played with a richness and fullness that comes from being able to play right to the bed of the note even in passages as demanding as that.

One could list so many passages where Levin’s technical assurance beggars belief, but this is not virtuosity for its own sake, and there is none of the exaggerated tempo and stiving for effect which to my mind mars the recent Beethoven cycle of Hyun Jang Lim on EMI. Levin’s speed is entirely in keeping with the most eminent interpreters and his readings of these works have a clear and natural sense of narrative and direction. One of his many strengths lies in his ability to convey the radical harmonic shifts and sudden modulations that even today make these works so innovative, whether it be the shock of the *faux* chords in the two slow sections of the first movement of Op. 109, the gradual transition from G major to A flat major in the closing pages of Op. 110, or the wide-ranging tonal peregrinations in the middle of the slow movement of Op. 109.

Meaningful comparisons are often difficult to make, and I could point to countless tiny details without necessarily managing to encapsulate what makes this set so special. Imagine, if you will, the intellectual rigour of Brendel, the clarity and articulation of Pollini, combined with – excuse the pun – the wisdom of Solomon, and then you get an idea of the extraordinary combination of gifts that one finds fused here. Without supplanting any of these (or, in my top five, Richard Goode and Schnabel), this set earns its place firmly alongside them. This is the finest release to have crossed my path this year.

Nicholas Salsby

Complete Preludes Volume 1. **NEW**
Chopin 24 Préludes, Op. 28. Prélude in C sharp minor, Op. 45. Prélude in A flat, Op. posth.
Dutilleulx Trois Préludes.
 Alexandra Dariescu (piano).
 Champs Hill Records CHRC061 (full price, 57 minutes). Website www.champshillrecords.co.uk.
 Producer Matthew Bennett. Engineer Dave Rowell. Date: March 4th-6th, 2012.

I had never heard of the Romanian pianist Alexandra Dariescu before, but I accepted this release for review because Chopin’s

24 *Préludes*, Op. 28 are one of my ‘desert island’ works, while the separate *Prélude* in C sharp minor, Op. 45 would identify Chopin as the single most original harmonic ear of the nineteenth century even if some of his other music had survived.

Op. 28 justifiably occupies tracks 1-24, and right from the start of No. 1 in C major (marked *Allegro*) it is clear that Dariescu derives the music’s expression from Chopin’s immaculately chosen notes, rather than externally imposing the character onto the notes. This is quite a rare gift, because numerous pianists (at least some of them rather famous) turn this *Allegro* into a hectic, insouciant mess. After such a promising start, Dariescu continues well in the A minor, whose physically uncomfortable chord progression in the left hand sounds impressively soft, suggesting that her hands are pliant and flexible, and that she has a rather wide stretch. The right hand’s interrupted recitative is appropriately dark-coloured. In No. 3 in C major the left hand’s semiquaver (16th-note) reлады sparkle, and in No. 4 in E minor she plays the right hand’s sustained, monochromatic *crescendo* intensely but non-expressively (a distinction that can be quite important), while she shades the inner voices of the left hand’s *quaver* (eighth-note) chordal accompaniment with safety yet without exaggeration.

If this is beginning to sound as if I have no reservations at all about Dariescu’s playing, let me assure you that I do, but she sets the bar so high for herself that these are relatively few and far between. In fact, the first of these comes next, in No. 5 in D major, wherein both hands play widely spaced (and again rather uncomfortable) semiquavers with some cross-accents between the hands. Here, her control is so secure that Chopin’s daring tenuto loses some of its sense of danger, and one almost (if not quite) wishes that she had let herself ‘drop’ a few notes. No. 6 in B minor (in which the right hand’s gently hypnotic repeated *quavers* qualify it as Chopin’s unofficial ‘raindrop’ *prélude*, in contradiction to the droplets of No. 15 in D flat major) sounds appropriately stogie, while she correctly makes the left hand’s expressive *legno* line sound like a piano trying to simulate the *legno* quality of a cello.

Before ending this ‘white-stop tour’ of Dariescu’s virtues (in order to move on to the *préludes* by Dutilleulx), I will just mention some other positive and negative details in her rendition of Op. 28. In No. 13 in F sharp major (which is one of the liveliest neotunes that Chopin ever wrote) she gauges the slower tempo of the middle section and the return to *Tempo I* perfectly, in that the two tempos sound sufficiently different without sounding too dissimilar. The incessant triplets of No. 14 in E flat minor (which are an octave apart, with both hands in the bass clef) sound almost too

clear, when they should evoke the identical texture in the *Piccioso* finale of Chopin’s *Piano Sonata No. 2* in B flat minor, Op. 35, which has been blamed to ‘a wind whistling across the gravestones’. Her tempo in the *molto*, euphonious No. 17 in A flat major is well judged (meaning not too slow), though she seriously underemphasises the left hand’s soft yet resonant low A flat tolling bell (a major third below the low open C of the cello) that underpins the coda. The dramatic recitative of No. 18 in F minor is well caught, but its climax sounds too ‘safe’, so that the double trill on F and G flat (in both hands an octave apart) and the semiquaver triplets that follow it don’t really ‘have their fang’. The widely spaced, exuberantly uncomfortable two-handed triplets of the buoyant No. 19 in E flat major sing their snail song unsoftened by any sense of difficulty. In the *Ande* *Allegro* of No. 22 in G minor, Dariescu sounds not quite in rhythmic control, which lessens the fierce drama of the piece. The diaphanous quality of No. 23 in F major is slightly compromised by her ‘careful’ tempo, but the demonic No. 24 in D minor is appropriately driven. Like many other pianists, she pedals through the left hand’s three final tolling bells on low D (a major second above the low C of the cello), which increases their resonance, but disregards Chopin’s very clear *crescendo* notes at the end of each 1/4 bar. (Those three notes can certainly be pedalled, as long as the sustaining pedal is released with absolute precision on the third beat.)

The music of Henri Dutilleulx (1916-2011) is very elegant. In that respect it evokes Witold Lutoskiński’s work. Each of Dutilleulx’s *Trois Préludes* has a poetic title: ‘D’Ombre et de silence’ (‘Of shadow and silence’, 1971); ‘Sur un même Accord’ (‘On a [sic] the same chord’, 1977); ‘Le Jeu des Contraires’ (‘The play of opposites’, 1988). Dariescu plays them atmospherically, in a way that hodes well for her eventual recording of the Debussy *Préludes* (as this disc is called ‘Complete *Préludes*, Volume 1’). The two separate Chopin *préludes* and the programme with delicious consonance. Dave Rowell’s recorded sound accommodates the wide-ranging needs of the included music. A very good start, and we await the second and third instalments. Stephen Prud’homme

Fauré **NEW**
Ballade in F sharp minor, Op. 19.
Nocturnes – No. 5 in B flat, Op. 37; No. 6 in D flat, Op. 63; No. 13 in B minor, Op. 119. Thème et Variations in C sharp minor, Op. 73. Valse-capricios – No. 1 in A, Op. 30; No. 2 in D flat, Op. 38.
 Angela Hewitt (piano).

Hyperion CDA67875 (full price, 1 hour 13 minutes). Website www.hyperion-records.com. Producer/Engineer Lodge Bickenhoff. Date: August 19th-14th, 2012.

Comparisons:

Collard (Brilliant Classics) 98221

(1973, 1981, four discs)

Hewitt (Hyperion) CDA69151 (1994, four discs)

Musicians:

Thyssen-Valetini (Decca) 471 2272 (1986)



Angela Hewitt's vast discography may be dominated by Germanic works – from

the complete works of Bach to ongoing surveys of Mozart, Beethoven and Schumann – but she has emerged as a no-less-accomplished exponent of the French repertoire, with many distinguished releases of works from Couperin and Rameau, to Debussy and Ravel, Chabrier and Messiaen. To the latter list she here adds a recital disc of her favourite works by Fauré, and one that encompasses much of the variety on offer, from two storable works – the Ballade and the C sharp minor *Trine* at *Fantaisie* (cleverly modelled on Schumann's *Symphonic Studies* in the same key) – to two of the more light-hearted *Fa-la-croquis* and three *Nocturnes*, including Fauré's last piece for solo piano. As ever, Hewitt provides her own notes and they are a model of their kind, full of historical information whilst also conveying a personal touch with regards to her own upbringing with these works during her childhood in Canada.

These interpretations are clearly highly considered and there is no doubting the intensity of her commitment. Hewitt writes, 'As in all of Fauré's music, there is a grace combined with a contained strength behind every note. He was always complaining that people played his music in the half-light.' According to his own son, Fauré played with 'an iron hand in a velvet glove – and what velvet!' It is in this regard that Hewitt's performances distinguish themselves, with a clarity that many avoid, whether it be clarity of texture, or pedalling, or rhythm.

A comparison with Jean-Philippe Collard is very revealing, his reading of the *Trine* at *Fantaisie* seems as if through a Debussyan prism, with much greater use of keyboard colour and greater recourse to the sustaining pedal, especially in the opening statement, where Hewitt is considerably more strident and forceful. Likewise, Collard drives through the syncopations of the Third *Fantaisie* wonderfully frantically where Hewitt is precisely in time, and Collard tends to link each variation where Hewitt accentuates the separation of each. I admire Collard's playing enormously and his set of the complete Fauré piano works is one of the finest bargains

available (four discs for less than the price of one at full price on Brilliant Classics). However, I am sure over by the way Hewitt sees the colour and rubato for the final variation and her performance is all the more effective for her previous restraint, allowing her here a much greater contrast, when, 'in what can only be described as a moment of pure genius, Fauré switches to the major mode for his final variation which looks sparse on the page but is one of the most intense things he ever wrote. Every time I play it I get the chills.'

One cannot discuss a new recording of Fauré's *Nocturnes* without recourse to the performances in 1956 of Germanic Thyssen-Valetini, recorded on EMI and now available on the Testament label with a recording quality that belies its years. At the age of 18, in 1920, Thyssen-Valetini won the Premier Prix at the Paris Conservatoire when Fauré himself was the Director, but her marriage in 1924 and the arrival of five children led to a gap of a quarter of a century before she re-emerged. She did so to critical acclaim, particularly for her performances of Fauré, whose complete keyboard works she would programme over five evenings. Like Collard, her performances of the *Nocturnes* are more soft-lined, and visionary in the way in which these sudden and unexpected modulations are so exquisitely coloured; the opening of the Fifth *Nocturne* provides a case in point, with both marking the drifting chromatic harmonies where Hewitt makes every note clearly audible and every progression is heard to full effect. They are all highly effective and wholly convincing in their own ways, but Thyssen-Valetini's quiet authority is quite mesmerizing and her technical control is on a par with the finest, especially in the rippling passagework in the middle section of this same *Nocturne*.

It's hard to choose between these performers – all have their abundant merits – but Hewitt does offer a striking alternative, and Fauré would doubtless have approved of her avoidance of 'the half-light'. In this Hewitt is closest to Kathryn Stott, whose approach is similarly transparent and unadorned in her highly acclaimed four-disc survey, also on Hyperion. Those unfamiliar with Fauré's keyboard works will find that Hewitt's selection provides a perfect introduction. She is complemented by a fabulous recording quality and an instrument (five trusty Faurés!) that does her justice at every turn.

Nicholas Sabey

Hindemith

New

Piano Sonatas – No. 1 in A (with alternative second movement); No. 2 in G; No. 3 in B flat.
Markus Becker (piano).

Hyperion CDA67877 (full price, 1 hour 4 minutes).
Hindemith.com/hyperion-records.co.uk | Find out
Jeremy Hayes, Engineer Ben Corneilias. Date:
December 10th–12th, 2012, March 26th, 2013.

Comparisons:

Gould (Sony Classical) SKKX1270 (1967-68, 1972)

Hindemith's three piano sonatas are sharply contrasted works even though they were all written in the same year (1936). The First Sonata is the most expansive of the three – inspired by a Hillerlein poem – and this disc includes both second movements: the slow march that was Hindemith's eventual choice and a set of variations (composed a few weeks earlier) that he discarded. The Second Sonata is much shorter; a concise and cleanly argued four-movement work, while the Third Sonata is perhaps the finest of the three, ending with one of the most exalted fugues of any composed in the twentieth century. These three works form an impressive triptych, but while there have been several recordings, this music remains far too little known.

The Third Sonata – unsurprisingly – has been recorded more often than the others, including versions by Earl Wild and Maria Yudina, but for all three sonatas I have usually returned to Glenn Gould's unflinching and exciting set on Sony Classical. Gould plays with a combination of soul and technical control that remains extremely impressive: I'd never want to be without his record. However, Markus Becker's new disc is an immensely satisfying one, wonderfully played and in much better sound. Becker has an ability to bring out the playfulness in Hindemith's writing that eludes some pianists and he's very good at marking the points of harmonic arrival that are such a characteristic fingerprint of Hindemith's language.

In the finale of the First Sonata his playing brings out the dance-like character of the music superbly (as he does in the second movement of the Third Sonata). In the compact Second Sonata the way in which Becker always aims for freshness and clarity, full of light and shade, makes the most of the work. His sense of rhythm is captivating throughout. The gently pastoral opening of the Third Sonata is a case in point: the lilting phrases are never forced and the balance of chords is always impeccably judged, bringing out the luminous quality of Hindemith's harmonies. The closing *Fugue* is thrilling; a wonderfully vital and energetic performance of this superb movement that is made all the more compelling thanks to Becker's attention to detail and the care he takes over dynamics and balance. He isn't the first pianist to record the variations – the discarded second movement of the First Sonata – but his performance is as good as any I've heard.

With really fine sound and excellent notes by Malcolm MacDonald this is a splendid addition to the Hindemith discography. With playing that is an ideal combination of musicality, rhythmic control and sensitivity, this release deserves the greatest success – it's most impressive.

Nigel Simons

Kapustin

Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 39, 'Sonata-Fantasia', 24 Preludes, Op. 53.
David Brain (piano)

Ringwood RW662 (full price, 1 hour 10 minutes)
Website www.davidbrainpiano.co.uk. Producer Fiona Symon. Engineer Jeffrey Gims. Dates November 25th–28th, 2012.

Composers:

Rene Senzaki/Preludes – excerpt

Osborne (Hyperion) CD64718 (1998)

Rene Senzaki:

Kapustin (Osborne) CD66802718 (1988),

(Trove) OVCT 00221

24 Preludes:

David Wilde (Naxos) 8.572372 (2011)

Kapustin (Osborne) CD66802718 (1988),

(Trove) OVCT 00216

Almost totally unknown only a few years ago, Ukrainian composer Nikolai Kapustin (b.1917) now has a huge following. His popularity is not hard to explain: beneath a formidable list of sonatas, preludes, etudes and so on lies a mass of (mostly solo piano) music permeated by the sounds of mainstream jazz. His classical training – a member of Alexander Goldenweiser's piano class, for instance, which produced such illustrious alumni as Lazar Berman, Tatiana Nikolayeva, Oksana Yablonskaya and a certain Dmitri Kabalevsky – later metamorphosed into activities both revealing and (in the prevailing Soviet cold-war climate) possibly conspicuous: he played with Yury Sedykh's band in Moscow and toured for many years as pianist with Oleg Lundstam's Jazz Orchestra. His music, though undeniably good-humoured and delighted to listen to, is almost all fearfully difficult to play: full marks to David Brain (Birmingham-born, Manchester University trained, followed by Trinity College of Music) for being able to get round the notes at all. Ambitious fellow pianists, or sceptical score-readers wanting to believe their ears, should check publisher MacT's website for full sheet-music details.

In these more to Kapustin than what sounds like near-perfect transcriptions of pianists like Farrell Garner, Art Tatum and Oscar Peterson Brain contributes a valuable booklet-essay defence that manages to bring in everything from Brahms, Sate and Martini's Fourth through to Stevie Nicks, and claims structural and cellular ingenuity far beyond this. The case scarcely needs special pleading of its intensity – any self-respecting composer would, in the course of writing down what came to him, naturally tidy up and weld together different sections – but the argument is persuasively put, and its articulation makes for an invigorating read.

A healthy part of Kapustin's fan base lies in the Far East. Japanese pianist Masahiro Kawakami has recorded copiously for Nippon Acoustic Records and edited at least three printed compilations (Sonata No. 1 and three Op. 53 Preludes appear in Piano Album,

Volume 2). The composer's own recorded performances, admirably accomplished if occasionally stolid, appear on Osborne and Triton. The most accessible CDs in the UK, however, are probably those on Hyperion from Steven Osborne and Marc-André Hamelin (reviewed in September 2004). Hamelin's is the perfect introduction to this composer: gaps at the dazzling close of the 'Intensities', Op. 40 No. 7; beam with delight at the Bart-Bacharachian 'Pastorals', Op. 40 No. 6; laugh out loud at Op. 48 No. 1; Abbott and Costello on classical enhancements. However, Osborne's disc is more directly relevant to this review, for it includes Sonata No. 1 and 11 Preludes from Op. 53 – plus, for that matter, Sonata No. 2.

In pointing up the connection between Kapustin's and Chopin's books of preludes, Brain's essay emphasises the greater proportion of fast music in Kapustin. It's odd, then, that his tempos – even in the comparatively easier pieces – are often far below the prescribed metronome marks on the rival performances from Osborne and Kapustin himself. He further rhapsodises so dreamily as to bring the more languorous items almost to a standstill, an approach strikingly different from Osborne's stronger-backed pulse that Brain carries into the Sonata No. 1: in these hands a fantasia certainly, a sonata possibly less so. This music (whose first movement actually recalls not just Jan but John Ireland and, fleetingly, Scriabin) is probably strong enough to take more than one interpretation: just as well, for Kapustin himself also tends to the rhapsodic.

I still prefer Osborne: a clear recording (Brain's is fractionally noisier, though still better than Kapustin's own) and sensitively balanced textures enhance the appeal to newcomers, and his formidable technique, with an avoidable left hand, puts him as close as Kapustin himself (and closer than Brain) to the printed metronome marks. Listen from (on the Brain disc) 07:09 in the first movement: Brain (like Kapustin himself) devotes equal attention to triplefiguration and thereby almost-obscured waver motifs; Osborne's featherweight triple lets the melody through with ease, and his dazzling tempo in later movements will have you out of your seat with excitement. A clear winner, to me – and less than incontestable listeners may feel that in this always exhilarating but cumulatively exhausting idiom, 11 out of 24 Preludes is probably plenty. My own favourites are Nos. 19 and the Count Basie-ish 17; the whole set does include some easier ones, but jazz filigree is so much a part of Kapustin's style that pieces down of it can sound fearfulness by comparison. Consider first Brain's, or Catherine Goddabe on Naxos, coupled with Op. 40 (Kapustin himself fills up with shorter pieces); lovers of exhilaration in moderation might think the two Hyperions possibly enough.

Michael Round

Liszt

Tre Sonetti di Petrarca, Fandralles, 5173 No. 7, Mephisto Waltz No. 1, SS14, Liebesträume, SS41.

David Wilde (piano)

Delphian DCD34118 (full price, 1 hour 14 minutes)
Website www.delphianrecords.co.uk. Producer/Engineer Paul Rutter. Dates November 5th and 6th, 2011, December 3rd, 2012.

David Wilde, the distinguished British musician – composer, pianist, pedagogue – turns 78 this year. His remarkable career was prepared by studies with Solomon, Franz Reizenstein, Hindemith, Vaughan Williams and Boulogne. Early on he shared first prize with Hungarian pianist Gilbor Gabos at the 1961 Liszt-Bartik Competition in Budapest, a signal honour, given that no less a talent than Dino Ciani came in second. This new Delphian disc commemorates Wilde's victory with a beautiful Liszt recital, demonstrating many of the qualities that must have made him so appealing to the Budapest jury more than 50 years ago. It is tempting to say that we have not heard enough from Wilde since his return to the UK in 2001 after almost two decades teaching at the Music Academy in Hannover. But that would be greedy. In fact, there have been recordings of Chopin (five performances from the Wigmore Hall in 1994 and 1995, released in 2006) and of Beethoven sonatas (reviewed in May 2011), among others. Although Wilde has chosen eight of the most frequently encountered Liszt pieces in the repertoire for this new disc, we are the beneficiaries of the wisdom and insight he brings on them.

For all the richness of orchestrally tinged details with which Wilde imbues this first *Allegro* Waltz, it unfolds with the natural flow of a folk tale. Voice-leading is given special care and the scrupulous attention afforded the smallest agogic indications of the score serve only to enhance the overall impression of freshness and spontaneity.

With the two sets of love-song transcriptions, three *Liedensätze* and three Petrarch Sonnets, we are ushered into a world of quiet intimacy. Throughout the recording, Wilde favours the broadest possible tempos. In fact, one is not likely to hear any of these pieces played more slowly elsewhere. That said, in these settings of two poems by Ulman and one by Freiligrub, breadth of tempo lends these songs an air of extraordinary directness and urgency. Simplicity of utterance makes them all the more poignant. When the prevailing E major tonality of 'Selge Tod' suddenly shifts into C major, the effect is so disarming that one imagines the impact the poem must have made upon the beloved by Ulman himself. 'O lieb, so lang du lieben kannst', the most famous of all Liszt's songs, is stripped of extraneous gestures and allowed to take flight with an inevitably youthful ardour. Less, in this case, yields infinitely more.

The Petrarch Sonnets, heard in their familiar guise from the second book of *Jeune et pieuse*, are as vividly characterized as the three *Requiem*s, though with an unmistakably Italianate flourish: 'Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e 'l mese, e 'l anno' speaks with a delicate yearning that never oversteps the bounds of gentility. The most overtly rhetorical of the set, 'Pace non trovo', sounds here a masterpiece of understatement, seeming to float on clouds of adulation. When the text darkens, subtly conjuring polyphony reinforces the anguish. 'I still in terra angeli costoro' seems to suspend time in a very thrill of ecstasy. Only the hard-hearted will fail to be touched by these deeply personal readings.

Wilde's grasp of the expressive gestures comprising Fauré's encompasses personal grief, public mourning and national tragedy. He gives shape and contour to Liszt's most painful utterances, parting the clouds with rays of hope and heroism. It is an approach to this many-layered artwork that, by virtue of its integrity and forthright earnestness, breaks no liar of melodrama. Wilde comes as close as any pianist I know to what I believe Liszt intended in this patriotic moment.

Ultimately this is music-making that one feels grateful to experience. It is sane and healthy. Its vision surveys a vast terrain and its execution seems effortless and incontrovertible. It speaks with a voice of august nobility, the kind encountered all too rarely these days. I hope Wilde will see fit to let us have more.

Patrick Barber

Liszt at the opera

NEW

Valse de l'opéra Faust (Gounod), 5407. Reminiscences de Don Juan, 5418 (Mozart). Rigoletto. Paraphrase de concert (Verdi), 5434. Spinnerlied aus Der fliegende Holländer (Wagner), 5440. Ouverture zu Tannhäuser (Wagner), 5442. O du mein holder Abendstern (Wagner), 5444. holdens Liebstedt (Wagner), 5447. Wagner Tristan und holde – Prelude (transcr. Lortie).

Louis Lortie (piano).

Chandos CHAN16792 (full price, 1 hour 18 minutes). Website www.chandos.net

Producer/Engineer Ralph Cozens. Engineer Jonathan Cooper. Dates March 2nd and 4th, 2012.



In 1880, Liszt wrote to his pupil Gina Zichy, 'Perhaps practising

the art of transcription (which I basically invented) for fifty years has taught me to maintain the right balance between too much and too little in this field.' In this instance, few could accuse Liszt of false modesty or, for that matter, dispute the fundamental accuracy of his assertion. In some five dozen piano pieces based on the operas of other composers, Liszt carried the genre to an artistic zenith unequalled by his predecessors or contemporaries. Along with his transcriptions of Beethoven, Schubert and Berlioz, Liszt's opera fantasies remain the gold standard for translating one musical medium into another. Almost incidentally, their vast expansion of the technical resources of piano playing is without parallel since Beethoven. Louis Lortie's splendid new Chandos disc presents a representative sampling of these formidable pieces, drawn from Italian, French and German operas, brilliantly played with sympathy, wit and his characteristic trenchant musicality.

Three of the larger works on the programme stand out, each in a strikingly individual way. Bilowé said, in so many words, that the only piece he knew to cause Liszt himself difficulty at the keyboard was the *Tannhäuser* Overture transcription. Certainly not many pianists attempt it (there are currently fewer than 20 recordings available) and those who have – Meinelwitsch and Bolle come to mind – often make it a signature repertoire item. Lortie approaches the work with a thoughtful sincerity that, in the beginning, might almost be mistaken for diffidence. Yet, as he calmly builds an incremental crescendo over the first 17 bars of the piece, culminating in a titanic statement of the pilgrims' music, it becomes clear that Lortie is the past master of all that is to unfold. The ensuing *Allegro* fairly sparkles with vivid dynamic contrast, from the subtle *pianissimo* to enormous sounds that, for all their volume, never cross the thin line between massive beauty and banging. Lortie knows and exploits the capacities of the Fausti concert grand with obvious relish. For all of his earnestness and reverence for the score, this is a performance that fairly bursts with vitality, one that easily takes its place among the best.

The *Valse de l'opéra Faust* is almost equally remarkable. Commonly regarded as a licence for the most vulgar rabble of taste, and misconstrued as a Viennese rather than a French waltz, one almost wishes to see the piece on recordings or recital programmes. How refreshing it is to hear that Lortie has except received wisdom from the table and, in its place, crafted an incisive, probing interpretation from the ground up. His focus, instead of booming bass octaves and rapid right-hand glissandos, is the first encounter of Faust and Marguerite (Liszt actually quotes their dialogue in the score), with all its ominous implications. Within this broad psychological framework, all of

Lortie's spontaneity and capriciousness seems a contrasting enhancement of a gripping drama, rather than ornaments of empty display. But make no mistake: the pianist is as brilliantly dazzling as one could possibly desire. The critical difference is that here we encounter virtuosity that is inspired by the drama and serves the poetic idea.

Ultimate praise, however, must be reserved for the *Requiem*s of Don Juan, a work that, quite apart from dazzling technical requirements, poses thorny aesthetic issues for the interpreter. How precisely to reconcile the implacably classical *Jeune* *giovane* of Mozart and DaPonte from 1787 with Liszt's incendiary response, forged in 1841 after two revolutions and with a fervid enthusiasm that seems quintessentially Romantic? Perhaps the opera's subtitle, 'Il disincanto punito' ('The Libertine Punished') was in Lortie's mind as he developed his interpretation. Certainly his strenuous delivery of the stave Commemorator's music suggests horrific retribution. Molten runs in thirds, ascending from the bass and rising from the treble, effectively evoke hellfire and brimstone. The difficult transition from that infernal vision to Giovanni's seduction of Zerlina is accomplished with discerning ease. The 'Li ci davva la man' setting lives and breathes through exquisite delineation of the baritone and soprano voices.

In fact, throughout the two extended variations, who is crying what to whom in this dialogue is never in question. Another flawless transition leads to 'Tis chi'non dal vivo', played with such crystalline clarity and grace amidst shiffling abandon that one simply forgets the neuro-muscular feat involved. Here, to an extraordinary degree, are displayed the keys to Liszt's success with all the works on the disc. Vocal lines are beautifully articulated with an eye toward bold characterization and enriched with a refined sense of polyphony. Meanwhile, the contextual drama is ever present, supported by a wealth of detail, colour, dynamics and tempo that are as sure invisible and flexible.

This is not to slight the other works included here. The *Rigoletto* paraphrase, for instance, straggles that proton energy with which Liszt loved to set off the main thematic jewels. Played too deliberately and the piece is robbed of its magic; played too fast, the result is cheap and frenetic. Lortie strikes the perfect balance. Wolfstan's 'O, du mein holder Abendstern' speaks with eloquent simplicity, all the more effective for the wise inclusion of the optional recitative. Bolle's *Lobened* is prefaced by Lortie's own transcription of the *Tristan* Prelude, which is, in its economy and restraint, the equal of similar efforts in this vein by Gould and Koosis. In the *Lobened* itself, Lortie employs the same expert dexterity and contour which made the *Tannhäuser* Overture so singularly successful.

I don't know another recording of Liszt operatic fantasies quite as pleasurably satisfying as this one. In individual works, Lortie has entered the realm of the great Egon Petri. One word of caution: the recording is best dipped into a little at a time; proper enjoyment of such an embarrassment of riches may be difficult in a single sitting.

Jerrit Rucker

D. Matthews

Music for Solo Violin, Volume 1. Winter Journey, Op. 32. Three Studies, Op. 39. 15 Fugues, Op. 88.

Peter Sheppard Skavred (violin).

Tocatta Classics TOCC0152 (full price, 1 hour 2 minutes). hiby.com/toccatoclassics.com  Producer Peter Sheppard Skavred, Engineer Jonathan Skavred. Date August 17th and 18th, 2010.

Composer:

Three Studies/Fugue No. 10.

Sheppard Skavred (Violin) MNVCD00238 (2010)

Tocatta Classics continues its valuable coverage of David Matthews with the first instalment of his music for solo violin – a medium for which his contribution is second to none among composers of his generation, and which itself is dominated by probably the most extensive and surely the most impressive series of unaccompanied fugues from any post-war figure.

That said, these 15 Fugues came together gradually and almost coincidentally – Matthews recounting how what became the trunk in the overall sequence was written as a challenge for Peter Sheppard Skavred in 1998 that the latter not only met with ease but whose encouragement led to this cycle, otherwise written during 2001–02, which juxtaposes the most 'practical' major and minor keys in an absorbing succession of expressive contrasts.

This is the forthright initial 'Maestros' and is followed by a usually fluid 'Scorers', then by a warmly pastoral 'Moderato con moto' before an incantly moving 'Lento' precedes a vividly rhetorical 'Allegro festivo'. The sixth fugue is a 'Molto moderato' in steadily pianificato, while its successors are a Machiavelli-perched 'Con fantasia' and a harmonically quavering 'Allegro sostenuto', followed in turn by a wistful 'Allegretto', then the touchier 'Largo' which gave rise to the whole conception. The eleventh fugue is a highly evocative 'Andante con moto',

complemented by a searching 'Lento vivace', then a daring tremolo 'Allegro' and an almost whimsical 'Andante', before the sequence ends with a resolute 'Molto moderato'. Each of these studies would make for a rewarding score, though the fact that they are best experienced as a cumulative whole only underlines the skill with which Matthews has fashioned them into an integral cycle which instructs and entertains in equal measure.

The remaining two pieces are no less characteristic of their composer's writing for solo violin. The *Three Studies* (1985) was written for the 1986 Carl Flesch International Viola Competition and accordingly sets a stern test of the exponent's technical skill – ranging from the eloquent rhetoric of the initial 'Allegro appassionato', via a variation-like scherzo marked 'Vivo e fantasico', to a final study that progresses from a fragmentary 'Lento' to a propulsive 'Allegro'. This is *duply* music pure if not so simple, whereas *Winter Journey* (1982) is now revealed as among the most searching of Matthews's earlier works. Taking its title (and framed by two quotations) from Schubert's song cycle, it unfolds as a single entity whose 11 continuous sections do not provide a summary of the work which inspired it so much as paraphrasing its various moods according to a taut trajectory that slides poignantly between the governing D and D minor, with the dilt ambiguity of the final section confirming a mastery of tonal means toward powerfully expressive ends.

Throughout the disc, Sheppard Skavred plays with an accomplishment and insight that explains why Matthews should have been encouraged to write extensively for solo violin. Comparing his earlier recordings of the *Three Studies* and the *Teuth Fugue* (heard as part of an enterprising miscellany) suggests he is now delving further into the music's emotional range as opposed merely to conveying its technical finesse. The sound makes the most of the spacious acoustic of All Saints Parish Church, while the booklet includes both the composer's succinct notes and the performer's detailed commentary – this latter being best read after making the acquaintance of some impressive music.

Richard Whitlock

Mozart

Mozart Sonatas, Volume 1. Piano Sonatas – No. 1 in C, K279K189; No. 2 in F, K280K188; No. 8 in A minor, K310K300A; No. 9 in D, K311K284; No. 17 in B flat, K570.

Christian Blackshaw (piano).

Wigmore Hall Live WHLive0061/2 (medium price, two discs, 1 hour 22 minutes). www.wigmore-hall.org.uk Producer Jeremy Hayes, Engineer Steve Fortiss. Date live performances at the Wigmore Hall, London on January 6th, 2012.

Composers:

Piano Sonatas Nos. 1, 2 and 8.

Price (CD) £15.99 (2012)

Piano Sonata No. 9.

Lipatti (EMI GRAC) 5 66888-2 (1947)

Price (CD) £17.99 (2012)

Piano Sonata No. 17.

Price (CD) £15.99 (2012)

I had most certainly heard of Christian Blackshaw before, but had never heard his playing. It took only the first few seconds of

Mozart's Sonata in C major, K279 to realize that Blackshaw's fingerwork and rhythmic control are utterly immaculate, while his dynamic nuances are superb, with the distinctions between subtle degrees of *forte* and *piano* absolutely audible to the listener. This would have been impressive enough under studio conditions, but recorded live it is exemplary.

Blackshaw performed the complete cycle of Mozart's 19 piano sonatas at the Wigmore Hall during 2012 and 2011, and these performances will be released in four volumes on the venue's ownname CD label. Though the first disc starts with Mozart's first two sonatas, each disc or set will proceed in strictly chronological order of composition. Here, the first CD concludes with the sparkling Sonata No. 9 in D, while the second starts with the late No. 17 in B flat and concludes with the great and tragic No. 8 in A minor, K310.

Blackshaw's staccatos are never dry or brittle; he possesses a range of non-legato touches, and his real legato is firm yet gentle, or else – when the music requires more intensity – is played very deeply into the key-hole of the instrument.

All but one of the comparative versions listed above concern Maria Julia Pire's marvelous versions on DG. Her complete six-disc set has long been available, both at full price and mid-price, but the three single CDs listed above (which contain the five sonatas on the present Blackshaw discs) are certainly still available online. 'All but one' refers to Enea Lippini's incomparable Abbey Road studio recording of the A minor Sonata, K310 (which is preferable to EMI's live recording of his entire last recital at the 1950 Bevanston Festival, which included the Mozart sonata, notwithstanding the moving aspect of that occasion, at the end of which Lippini was too ill to play the final waltz of the complete Chopin waltzes, and instead repeated Myra Hess's piano transcription of Bach's chorale 'Jesus, joy of man's desiring').

The booklet contains an extended note by Gavin Plumley about these sonatas and the circumstances of their composition, called 'The ultimate in expression', as well as a shorter note by Blackshaw himself. I do wish that the pianist's note had not been set in italics. No doubt it is thought that they convey the author's final 'voice' in a more 'personal' way, but italics are simply less available, in whichever font they occur.

That apart, I very much look forward to the release of Blackshaw's next three discs of the complete Mozart sonatas. **Stephen Priddy**

ADVERTISEMENT



Stanford

Complete Organ Works, Volume 1. *Fantasia and Toccata in D minor, Op. 57. Six Preludes, Op. 88. Organ Sonatas – No. 1 in F, Op. 149; No. 2 in G minor, Op. 151. 'Eroica'.*

Daniel Cook (organ).

Priory PRCD1085 (full price, 1 hour 20 minutes).
 Played on the Willis organ of Salisbury Cathedral.
 Website www.prioryrecords.co.uk  Producer
 Andrew Post. Engineer Neil Collier. Date: August
 2009–0ct, 2012.



From time to time, as various organ recital discs are issued from many companies, one encounters one or other of Stanford's works for the instrument, but I believe this new CD inaugurates the first integral recording of his substantial output of organ music. If the succeeding discs are as good as this, it will prove to be not only a most important series in itself but also will awaken interest in a fine body of music by a superbly gifted composer.

Stanford was a skilled organist, pianist, conductor and violinist, as well as being a composer of such inherent quality as to be a leader of the British musical renaissance. Much of his orchestral music is available on disc, as are examples of his chamber and instrumental music, but his contribution to the organ repertoire has, the occasional item notwithstanding, been largely overlooked.

Not any more. Once again, we have to thank Priory for its enterprise and dedication to the task in hand. Stanford's organ music, as a body of work, has been neglected for far too long, and I have no doubt that Priory's commitment and achievement – certainly in the latter instance, on the basis of this issue – will do much to reawaken interest in these works and it has chosen an ideal interpreter in Daniel Cook.

At the height of the Great War, Stanford began his series of what became five organ sonatas. Jeremy Dibble's excellent booklet notes make the point that the war had curtailed opportunities for the composition of large-scale orchestral music, from younger British composers in the wake of Stanford and Parry to the most eminent, including Elgar. It was probably the case in Germany, too, as we consider Reger's seven organ pieces, his Op. 145, dating from 1916, at least three of which were known to have been inspired by the conflict – for most of Stanford's five Sonatas have connections with the war itself, as we can hear most strongly in the large-scale (26 minutes) Second Sonata, the 'Eroica', which concludes this recording. Its

first and last movements are entitled 'Rheims' and 'Verdun', separated by a powerful Funeral March slow movement, in strong emotional contrast to the First Sonata (just 14 minutes in length) – although both are in three movements.

The programme chosen and sequenced throughout this well-planned CD is sufficiently varied as to give the newcomer the best chance of experiencing the range of Stanford's achievement. The *Fantasia and Toccata* is a very fine work, forming an ideal introduction to Stanford's style. It is immediately striking, having an inner life all its own: a truly 'organic' work. The *six Preludes* offer great contrasts, but they are not all miniature: they form a truly satisfying set, ending with perhaps the best known, the 'Prelude on Tallis's Canon' – a 'tranquil meditation' as Dibble rightly claims.

The performances by Cook are outstanding in every regard: his registration, technical adroitness, sensitivity and musical grasp of this music could hardly be improved upon, but I have left one of the most compelling reasons to acquire this CD to last – the quality of the recording. This is one of the best organ recordings I have heard for a long time: it is beautifully clear and recessed, entirely without artificialisation, one of Neil Collier's best to date, which is saying something. It is clear that a great deal of thoughtful preparation has gone into the making of this project: the result is first-class in every respect.

Robert Matthew-Walker

Villa-Lobos New

Complete Solo Piano Works, Volume 3. *Suites infantéis – No. 1, A053; No. 2, A057. A Prole do Bebê, Suite No. 1, A140. Carnaval das crianças, A157. Francetete et Piá, A237. As Três Marias, A411.*

Marcelo Bratke (piano).

Quartz QZ2086 (full price, 1 hour 10 minutes).
 Website www.quartzmusic.com  Producer Marcelo Bratke. Engineer Jeffrey Ginn. Date: April 2012.

Composers

Suites infantéis Nos. 1 and 2/Francetete et Piá:

Naxos (80) BSCD112 (1998)

Suites infantéis Nos. 1 and 2:

Naxos (80) BSCD100 (2007)

A Prole do Bebê/As Três Marias:

Naxos (80) BSCD100 (2007)

Francetete (Continuo) CRC2376

(2002, download only)

Prole (Amazon April) 0827-08817-2 (2010)

Marias (Hyperion) CDA67176

(1999, rev. Sep 2000)

Carnaval das crianças/Francetete et Piá:

Naxos (80) BSCD100 (2007)

Carnaval das crianças – complete:

Naxos, Portland (80) BSCD1712 (1998)

Carnaval das crianças – Nos. 1–3:

Prole (Decca) 478 033 (2012, rev. Nov 2012)

As Três Marias:

Naxos (80) BSCD1012 (1998)

Naxos (80) BSCD1012 (2008)

Having dispatched many of Villa-Lobos' larger works in Volumes 1 and 2 (reviewed in March 2011 and June 2012 respectively), Marcelo Bratke continues his complete cycle with a volume devoted to works for children – either for them to listen to, or in many cases only enough for them to play. Villa-Lobos had no children of his own, but his affection – with, on this evidence, energy, tenderness and great singling potential – came variously in various guises.

The disc opens with probably the best-known item of all, the first *A Prole do Bebê* ('Baby's Family') suite of 1918. Arthur Rubinstein's championing of these pieces – particularly *O Polvilho* ('Powder'), a favourite encore, then and since – was probably the single most helpful factor in launching the young Villa-Lobos' career. Musically, the suite owes Debussy from almost every bar, and its charm is irresistible. Nelson Freire plays it to the manner born, Marc-André Hamelin with his customary effortless virtuosity. Bratke's comparative caution is no hardship given the young ears of his target audience, though – as with Volume 2 – I was pained to record several slips and misreadings (the first as early as 07:11), few of which can be blamed on Villa-Lobos's notorious lack of poesy. He is, however, Hamelin in observing the musically senseless yet oft-repeated repeat in No. 4. This, I am positive, arose from a repeat mark elsewhere in the suite, omitted at proof stage from No. 7 and later reinstated at the right bar number – but in the wrong piece!

The following two Suites infantéis date from 1911 and 1912. No jungle rhythms here: this music is bland, and suitably easy to play. Bratke's suitably plain-and-simple interpretations match those of Debora Haddad and Sonia Rubinián, aside from a few agogic hesitations I also noticed elsewhere on the disc. Also written for near-beginners is the two-movement suite *Francoise et Piá* of 1928. This tells the story of a French girl and Brazilian boy, the former signalled with ex-rare quotations from *Je t'aime de la base et de la Messaline*, the latter by tunes marked in the score 'Música indígena'. The final movement is for piano duet; the booklet is silent on this point, and presumably Bratke has multi-tracked himself – with admirable precision if so.

As *Três Marias* ('The Three Marys', 1919) were three good girls who were rewarded in Heaven by being placed in the sky; the individual movement tales ('Abata', 'Alô! Alô!' and 'Mistaka') will be familiar to astronomers as the stars making up Orion's Belt. Both Hamelin and the young Freire – magnificent pianists both, of course – flash through these tiny pieces at *Six Weeks tempo*, sounding as if they'd be far happier playing big pieces for grown-ups. ('Mistaka' is marked 'poco animato', for goodness' sake.) Bratke's speeds are more child-friendly, though – here as elsewhere – his colleagues

do not achieve the lightness of Nohama Fernandez (on a Contax download), let alone the featherweight delicacy of Rubinsky, with her tenderly shaped melodies. Neither, on this occasion, does Haller.

Sensibly, the disc comes with the other big suite, the eight-movement *Canon des enfants* ('Children's Carnival') of 1919, also Debussy-influenced and later reworked wholesale into the piano-and-orchestra fantasy *Jeunesse*. As with *Fantaisie et Pié*, the final movement is for piano duo. One-to-one comparison with the recent Frivole is thereby ruled out, Frivole declining to multi-track, being along a partner, or even play this movement's authorized two-hands alternative. Bratke and (presumably) Bratke are at their best here, matching Haller and Pozniak, and ending this mainly high-pitched duo with satisfying depth and energy. Bratke is less good earlier, treating all too literally, rather than phrasing through, those accents by which Villa-Lobos habitually indicated every melody-note within a busy texture. Speeds are sensible, but again several misreadings (wrong chords, rhythms, beats and even a missed bar) imply a casual approach that a separate CD producer might have noticed, and revised it.

As the tangle of comparisons implies, most rival pianists spread these children's pieces over several discs, larded with adult works. Listeners without printed scores and sampling piecemeal will nevertheless find much to enjoy on this disc. Still to come from Bratke will be *Andantino* and the second *Le Petit d'été* suite, which depicts toy animals – both works (and, for all we know, the lost third *Le Petit d'été* suite, depicting children's games) in a ferocious idiom more like Bartók and Stravinsky at their most baroque. These will demand great concentration, for competition here is already fierce. **Michael Rudolf**

Organ

Widow Organ Symphonies, Volume 3.

Symphonies – No. 3 in E minor, Op. 13 No. 3; No. 4 in F minor, Op. 13 No. 4. Joseph Nolan (organ).

Signum Classics SIGCD334 (full price, 1 hour 5 minutes). Played on the Cavallé-Coll organ of La Madeleine, Paris. Website www.signumrecords.com. **U** Producer Adrian Peacock. Engineer Andrew Mellor. Dates August 09–10th, 2011.

Composers:

Symphonies Nos. 3 – example, 4 and 8

Alain [Jeanne Agnès] 2184 42297-2

(1917, two discs)

This third volume in Joseph Nolan's survey of Widor's Organ Symphonies is pure sonic joy and makes me keen to hear the earlier releases [reviewed in November 2012 and May 2013] by Robert Marshall-Walker, who was less than enthusiastic about the sound quality on both discs – [E]. Nos. 1 and 4, written in the early 1870s before the composer was 30, are not among the

most familiar of the ten, but right from the opening notes of the *Psalme* of No. 3 you listen with the anticipation of a discovery. It is a solemn but heartfelt call to attention reminiscent of the opening of Schumann's Fourth Symphony, with the same array of equal notes, here in 6/8, often held over a period point. The emotional impact is not to be missed, especially as sounded on the Cavallé-Coll organ at the Madeleine. It has the most superb grandeur, and of course one is reminded that these early works by Widor were written to show what this organ builder had already achieved. The sound is both tight, or perhaps dense, as if compacted like a pure mineral, and heavenly (as in the gentle *Adagio*, a dialogue between the Voix célestes and the Flûte harmonique). Widor was organist at Saint-Sulpice, in fact, but the Madeleine instrument shows equally the beauty of tone across all the stops, the sheer spirituality and effortless variations of dynamic that were among the innovations of Cavallé-Coll, who was apparently a good friend of the composer's.

After such a grand opening comes a jaunty *Allegretto*, a bright, boldly conceived March that gives the chance to enjoy the Full Organ sound even if it is possibly less interesting, and the contrasting *Adagio* mentioned above.

However, it is the last movement that contains music of the greatest originality. At 1'51" it starts to sound very like Saint-Saëns or even Fauré, with a strangeness in the harmonies and wayward bass lines that have a most exciting effect. There is also something of Wagner in the language, yet it is more satisfying, to my ears, than transcriptions in that it is conceived for these sounds. As well as this Widor can integrate techniques from the past into a homogeneous language, to wit the opening *Toccata* of No. 4, which nods at the eighteenth-century French courture with its dotted rhythms, superbly updated by the Romantic school. It also has enough variety constantly to surprise the ear. The format of the Symphony is like the preceding one: a suite, really, rather than a symphony, except perhaps in the scale of total colour. Cavallé-Coll's genius is again fully evoked in the *Fugue*, played on the 8-foot foundation stop. You just don't want the sound to end, ever, although when it does it is on a scale rising high in the table, a moment of exquisite shape worthy of Mendelssohn at his most elegant.

Mendelssohn's influence can be felt in the following *Andante cantabile*, marked *Andte* (played at Widor's funeral). It is a Song Without Words in which the melody is presented with faster accompanying notes in successive variations, influenced by Chopin. The *Scherzo* is irresistible in its playful figuration and chords, as if we were transported to the Madeleine in an alternate midsummer night's dream, perhaps prophetic with figures from Tietjens in the vast space. The *Adagio* uses the Voix humaine and the 8-foot foundation stops alternately, again

sounding very beautiful, is a movement that anticipates the *Fantaisie de la Libera se*, before the open-air feel of the finale (a march in triple time) on Full Organ.

Nolan plays these works brilliantly, bringing out their particular qualities on an organ apt to reveal their wonders. For instance, the end of No. 4's *Adagio* has a brightness in the bass figure – the bit that sounds like Fauré – that I can't imagine seeming as magical on a different instrument. It has that airy sound, even very deep, that makes it big and light at the same time. The Signum engineers have done a good job in setting down the sound as faithfully as possible, given that we cannot be there in the Madeleine. Comparing it to Marie-Claire Alain's version on *Érato* (extracts of No. 3 with Nos. 4 and 9, among others, now available on a budget-price Apex release), the sonority has more grandeur on this new recording, and the benefit is clear from the opening movement. Alain takes it slightly faster, and it sounds more ordinary, where Nolan is bigger and more imposing, and the heart of the music stands revealed. This release ought to lead to a reappraisal of Widor's importance as a composer who is far more than a one-piece wonder. **Andrew Parker**

A Grand Romance

New

Bortkiewicz *Lyrice Nova*, Op. 59 – *Andantino*. **Chasins** *Three Chinese Pieces*, Op. 5 – No. 3, *Rush Hour in Hong Kong*. **Cul** *À Argentine*, Op. 40 – No. 6, *Causerie*. **Hemselt** *12 Études caractéristiques de concert*, Op. 2 – No. 6, *Si c'était j'étais, à toi je volerais*. *Petite valse*, Op. 28 No. 1. **Lavitzki** *Valse*, Op. 2. **Moszkowski** *Huit Morceaux caractéristiques*, Op. 36 – No. 6, *Étincelles*. *Caprice espagnol*, Op. 37. *Six Fantaisies*, Op. 52 – No. 4, *La Jongleuse*. **Paderevski** *Miscellanea pour piano*, Op. 16 – No. 4, *Nocturne*. **Rubinstein** *Kammerlied*, Op. 10 – No. 22, *Rêve angélique*. **Schülzer** *Étude de concert*, Op. 1 No. 1. **Schulz-Evler** *Arabesken über Themen des Walzers "An der schönen blauen Donau"* von Johann Strauß. **Schütt** *Trois Morceaux pour piano*, Op. 28 – No. 2, *Canzonetta*. *Papillons d'amour/Souvenirs viennois*, Op. 59 – No. 2, *A la bien-aimée*. **Sgambati** *Gavotta*, Op. 14.

Jeffrey Siegel (piano).

Steinway & Sons 20017 (full price, 1 hour 6 minutes). Website www.atriumusic.com. Producer Dan Mironov. Engineer Daniel Shoen. Dates July 2010–2011, 2012.

Composers:

Moszkowski [Eusebio]

Hemselt [D] 477 8620 [1986, two discs]

Forever Group fictionally stated, 'Life is like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get.' 'A Grand Romance' is also like a box of chocolates, except its

contents, if not exactly predictable, are well within safe and tolerable boundaries. (I'm reminded of that classic Henry Python sketch in which the Wilno Chocolate Company is investigated by a health inspector for questionable varieties such as Crunchy Frog and Ram's Bladder Cup.) There are no frogs, crumby or otherwise, in 'A Grand Romance', only fond backward glances at more innocent times.

When I was a teenager, I found a volume of slow-ish material much like what pianist Jeffrey Biegel offers here. Eduard Schütz (1856-1911) and Adolf von Henselt (1814-89) were among the composers represented, and I hung around their names on an old upright piano while many of my peers were playing baseball. Thus, I feel an emotional connection with this material, and if it smells a little musty, the smell is not unpleasant. These works are worth performing, although I don't think many of today's conservatory students are encouraged to pay them much attention. They are worth hearing, too, although I think the day has gone when a recitalist, having completed an exhausting performance of Liszt's Sonatas in B minor, will thank his audience for their kind applause with a bow-hon such as 'Et I were a bird' or 'Rêve angélique'?

As Ray Bono's well-researched booklet note points out, all of these composers were pianists of distinction, with the exception of Cui. His 'Cassiope' (translated as 'Chat' in Bono's note, but as 'Conversations' on the back cover) begins with light sentimentality. In time, it becomes more passionate (policia is not the topic, evidently) although, showing good salon manners, the concertalists keep both feet on the floor. It ends with a triumphant flourish; methinks the young lady said 'Yes!'

The booklet note also relates the curious tale of Paul de Sclérou, who died in 1898. His *Andante* in E flat is one of exactly two works that he is supposed to have composed. Bono relates that Sclérou's two etudes actually might have been the work of Mstislav Moskowitz, 'who wagged – and lost – them in a card game to Sclérou'. The *Andante* is a flattery confession, not unlike Chopin's 'butterfly' *Andante*, although Sclérou's butterfly has squarish wings.

Speaking of Moskowitz (1854-1925), he is represented three times, more than any other composer on this CD. The *Gavotte espagnole* is a real charmer, and also a finger-killer, with its stereotypical chains of repeated sixteenth notes (OK!)... 'Étincelles' ('Sparks') was a Horowitz favourite, even late in his career. He played it faster than Biegel, even when it was perhaps unwise to do so. Compared to Biegel, Horowitz's late-period encore from Moscow sounds a little jumbled, here and there. On the other hand, the lightness of Horowitz's touch is phenomenal, and one senses a smile on his lips as he plays this trifle. Biegel is rather literal, as if he wants us

to recognise this as Great Music. 'La Joieuse' is delightful too. (It is also reminiscent of Chopin's butterfly.) What do the unexpected phrase lengths mean – a dropped ball or an unexpectedly deft manoeuvre? Here, Biegel plays up dynamic contrasts and sudden accents to very good effect.

Biegel, who studied with Adèle Marcus, has a varied discography, ranging from Christmas music to Mozart sonatas and modern works by Leony Anderson and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich. His's even recorded his own arrangement of Viviani's *Four Seasons*. Some readers may remember him as the first pianist, in 1997, to cybersave a live piano recital globally – from Steinway Hall, no less. Suffice it to say he has had an interesting life and career. In the booklet, Biegel calls this recital 'in part a personal tribute to Josef Havranek' whom he views as his 'musical grandfather' (Marcus was a Christiana pupil.) Nevertheless, Biegel's virtuosity, which is considerable, is more modern than old-fashioned. He seems unwilling to sacrifice technical perfection for the sake of expressiveness or excitement. As I suggested above, he also seems unwilling to treat these works as anything less than venerable cultural edifices. Some will find the seriousness of his playing at odds with the material; others will appreciate his reluctance to 'camp it up', at least a little. For my part, I don't think a little more charm and humour would have hurt, although it would be wrong to suggest that Biegel entirely lacks those qualities. Warm, balanced engineering prevents his Steinway in an unobjectionable light.

Ronald S. Tuttle

Music from the Age New of Louis XIV

d'Anglebert Tombeau de M. de Chambornières. **F. Couperin** Troisième Ordre in C minor – Les Laurentines; La Lugubre; La Lutine; La Ténébreuse; **Seconde Courante**. **L. Couperin** Pavanne in F sharp minor. **Jacquet de la Guerre** Suite in F. **Lully** Chaconne de Phélon. **Dans nos bois**. **Le Jeune Iri**. **Les songes agréables d'Alys** (all transcr. **Jean-Henry d'Anglebert**). **Marchand** Suite No. 1 in D minor.

John Kinchen (harpsichord). **Delphin DCD04109** (full price, 1 hour 18 minutes). Played on the 1755 Ballon harpsichord from the Rodger Mirny Collection. Website: www.delphinrecords.co.uk | prodcont@delphin.fr | www.delphinrecords.com. Date: January 9th and 10th, 2010.

Composers

L. Couperin Pavanne
Vivini (Marché) 1872 (1988)

After his acclaimed CD focusing on the music of Louis XV (DCCD04112), John Kinchen now goes back one Louis, presenting music from the age of the Sun King himself. The focus for both CDs is of course not solely or even primarily on the monarchs but on the

instruments of the Rodger Mirny keyboard instrument collection at the University of Edinburgh; the last instalment featured the 1769 Taffin while the current instalment moves to a 1755 instrument by Luigi Ballou. It is somewhat more recent than the repertoire itself but this is unlikely to bother any but the most severe of organologists.

This is by no means a meagre collection but includes substantial selections by Louis Marchand (a nine-movement suite in D minor), Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (an eight-movement Suite in F major) and François Couperin (five movements from the *Troisième Ordre*). The brooding side of the harpsichord is well represented, as is the French tendency to dwell on the extremely satisfying sonorities available in the bass of the instrument. The brilliant dappled opening of the Marchand sets the tone: this is delivery of a high order, virtuosic, articulate and supple in rhythm. Kinchen's uncompromising approach to temperament is potent enough in more familiar harmonies, such as in the D minor of the Marchand Suite, but comes into its own in the Louis Couperin F sharp minor *Pavanne*. Here even the consonances are dissonant and the dissonances pass into the realm of the microtonal; the nominal tonic is less harmonically stable than some of the modulations. (Blasius Verlet contributed an even more eloquent and certainly just as dissonant an account in her survey of Louis Couperin's harpsichord works for *Atrévise*. Like the great majority of her wonderful recordings it seems to have sunk without trace into the *Atrévise* archives. Perhaps a petition is in order.)

The Jacquet de la Guerre Suite at last brings a touch of the major mode to the palette although the opening *Tocade* spends an inordinate amount of time in the minor for a piece supposedly in F major – as if to compensate, the closing cadence has a touch of Beethoven in its insistence. As agreeable as the d'Anglebert and Lully/d'Anglebert selections are (one can seldom go too wrong with a good chaconne) the François Couperin headlist does rather dwarf them musically – Kinchen's programme perhaps sees its greatest musical rewards for last. The repeated sequences grinding down toward the bass in *La Tristesse* are satisfyingly gruesome in effect and *La Lugubre* is no less intense in its progressions, with *La Lutine* bringing the recital to an appropriately ratiocinematic conclusion.

Delphin's recording captures plenty of gain in the sound, with just a touch of mechanism lowering the purely instrumental sonorities. (There are some quick fade-ins – perhaps the engineers had some air conditioning to grapple with.) In both programming and performance, this can stand alongside some of the finest issues of this repertoire from its homeland. A fine achievement and an extremely satisfying release.

Carl Roman

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

SUBSCRIPTION, DIGITAL AND SINGLE COPY ORDER FORM

In addition to offering an annual subscription service, we are able to supply copies of many back issues, not the Digital as yet*. The costs are indicated below. New non-Digital subscriptions can be backdated to our first issue (March 2000). A bulk delivery will then be made of all back copies requested and the regular supply will commence with the next published issue. *subject to availability

- I wish to take out a subscription to International Record Review for one year (12 issues) commencing with the (month) issue _____
- Please supply the following single copies _____

Please tick	Annual Subscription	Single Copy/copies
United Kingdom	<input type="checkbox"/> £94 sterling	<input type="checkbox"/> Single copy, £6.00
Europe	<input type="checkbox"/> £75 sterling	<input type="checkbox"/> Single copy, £7.90
Rest of the World	<input type="checkbox"/> £90 sterling	<input type="checkbox"/> Single copy, £8.90
USA or Canada	<input type="checkbox"/> \$110 US dollars	<input type="checkbox"/> Single copy, \$20.00
<small>(US and Canadian residents only)</small>		
Digital Worldwide	<input type="checkbox"/> £55 (US\$90)	<input type="checkbox"/> £6 (US\$10)

● Gift subscriptions are available. Please attach the name and address of recipient together with a short greeting.

Title _____ Initials _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode/Zip _____ Country _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Signature _____

E-mail _____

I enclose a UK cheque or International Bankers Draft made payable to International Record Review Ltd.

Please debit my: MasterCard Visa Switch

Delta Connect Amex

Valid from _____ Expires date _____ Switch issue no. _____ Card Security no. _____

Valid from
[][] [][]

Expires date
[][] [][]

Switch issue no.
[][]

Card Security no.
[][][][] [][][][]

See rights on the signature strip

Please send completed form to:
International Record Review Ltd.
9 Spring Bridge Mews
Ealing, London W5 2AB

E-mail to: barry.irving@recordreview.co.uk
<http://www.recordreview.co.uk>
Tel: +44 (0)20 8567 9244

NEW RELEASES



Christmas Lullabies
Charlotte de Rothschild, soprano
Daniela-Pavoni, lute
NI 5986



Christmas Choral Works
for Female Chanters Choir
Lucy Simon
NI 6249



Schumann: An Intimate Recital
Charlotte de Rothschild, soprano
Adrian Farnes, piano
NI 5988



Hans von Bülow
Works for Piano Volume 2
Mark Anderson, piano
NI 5987



Elgar & Sarasate Violin Sonatas
Steinberg Duo
NI 6240



Chopin Sonata in B minor
& 21 Preludes
Nick van Blommestein
NI 6235



HALLE
Hallel: The Hymns of Jesus
Delius Sea Drift & Cynara
Halle • Sir Mark Elder
Roderick Williams, baritone
CDH417935



Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
RCS Jazz • Things Considered
Young Ideas in Jazz
NI 6284

For further details please contact
Wyatstone Estate Limited, Wyatstone Leys, Monmouth, NP25 3SR
Tel: 01600 890087 Email: sales@wyatstone.co.uk
or visit our website www.wyatstone.co.uk

Vocal

J. S. Bach

New CD/SACD

Cantatas, Volume 16.

O ewiges Feuer, o Ursprung der Liebe, BWV34. Gelobet sei der Herr, mein Gott, BWV173. Erhöhtes Fleisch und Blut, BWV173. Erwünschtes Freudenlicht, BWV184.

Gefilinde Süssmann (soprano); **Petra Noskaiová** (mezzo); **Christoph Genz** (tenor); **Jan Van der Crabben** (baritone); **La Petite Bande/Sigiswald Kuijken** (violin).

Accent ACC2316 (full price, 1 hour 5 minutes). German text and English/French translations included. Website www.accent-records.com. Produced/Engineered/Edited by Ingeger. Dates June 10-12, 2012.

This disc is the sixteenth volume of Sigiswald Kuijken's and his colleagues' recording project of a complete cycle of Bach cantatas for all the Sundays and high feasts of a whole liturgical year. Thus, unlike Tom Koopman and Masaaki Suzuki, Kuijken and his team do not intend to record the complete Bach cantatas. With this volume, they have reached Postevent, 50 days after Easter: BWV34, 173 and 184 were written for the three days of Postevent (respectively in the 1740s, 1724 and 1710 or so) and BWV129 was for the first Sunday after Postevent, known as Trinity Sunday (in 1736 or 1727). Only this last was a completely new work, the rest being Bach's arrangements of earlier works for a wedding, a birthday and a New Year's Day celebration during his period in Köthen from 1717 to 1723.

I went to bed last night listening to this disc on my headphones and most have quickly fallen asleep since I have no recollection of listening to anything after the opening chorus of the cantata *O ewige Feuer* (BWV34). I awoke suddenly and disoriented in the dark. The tenor aria, 'Glick und Segen sind herein', of *Erwünschtes Freudenlicht*, BWV184 (track 15), was playing. It is sung by Christoph Genz, who is a most unappealing singer and it is baffling why Kuijken has used him on all but four discs of the series so far. His voice is grating and strangled, but worse is his unsteady tone, erratic volume, abominably wavering pitch and, on occasion, strangely sagging vibrato. In Bach's trills and other rapid passages, he mostly sounds laboured and off-balance (for example, in the recitative opening *Erhöhtes Fleisch und Blut*, BWV173). Moreover, in Bach's beloved long melismatic passages (such as in the lengthy recitative preceding the 'Glick und Segen' aria), Genz almost sings each note in isolation, nearly oblivious to its connection with those preceding and following it and thus obscuring Bach's meaning lines.

Kuijken adheres to the theory of one-voice-per-part performance of Bach's cantatas, besides giving the choir's greater flexibility and responsiveness, this also means each voice is more prominent than in the traditional chamber choir of 12 or so singers. Kuijken's expertly led instrumental forces are also reduced: two first and second violins apiece and a single viola, cello (smaller than the customary model and held 'à la quilla' or across the chest instead of between the legs, as Kuijken decreases at length in his programme notes), basso continuo (slightly smaller than a violone) and organ, with occasional contributions from pairs of transverse flutes or oboes and a trio of trumpets with tangos. The resulting sound is lean but not at all unaccommodated, though the violins have an interestingly rosy tone.

Regrettably, with such reduced forces one solo singer can ruin not only his or her own solos but damage the choruses too. In the three Postevent cantatas, the tenor, besides five recitatives (two quite lengthy and elaborate) and two arias, is prominent in many of the choruses in the three Postevent cantatas, starting with a disappointing passage two minutes into the opening of BWV34, the disc's very first track.

The other singers, by contrast, are all splendid, particularly with the attentive and polished accompaniment provided by the instruments. The soprano Gefilinde Süssmann makes a delightful contribution to her sparkling successive duets with the bass Jan Van der Crabben and then Genz in BWV173 and with the mezzo Petra Noskaiová in BWV184. She also delivers a refined account of her gentle yet quite florid single aria, 'Gelobet sei der Herr', in BWV129. Even more remarkable are Noskaiová and Van der Crabben. Noskaiová has been an accomplished participant throughout the series and her three arias on this disc are models of Bach singing (most notably in BWV129, supported by Vincenzo Raduini's especially beautiful *chœur d'amore* playing) but Van der Crabben, whose attractive and supple voice was already impressive from the start, seems only to get better with each volume. His aria in BWV129 is a high point of the disc for his control and keenly intelligent phrasing.

In fact, BWV129 makes a superb conclusion to the recording. Although it has no solos or prominent choral passages for tenor, it owes its success to the high quality of the singing and playing overall rather than Genz's virtual absence – as well as some of Bach's best cantata music ever and Kuijken's alert, perfectly judged direction.

As always with Accent, the recording is transparent and natural. However, this is a

hybrid Super Audio CD, which means that, besides the stereo recording playable on a standard compact disc player, it also includes separate stereo and multi-channel versions in a high resolution format playable only on a dedicated SACD player or universal DVD player with SACD capability. On such a player, the greater detail revealed both in the voices and instruments and in the acoustic surrounding them gives the recording marginally greater immediacy.

Christopher Price

Hommage à Chopin
Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem,
Op. 45.



Bo Erenas (soprano); **Andrew Foster-Williams** (bass-baritone); **Collegium Vocale Gent;**
Orchestre des Champs-Élysées/Philippe Herreweghe.

The Fryderyk Chopin Institute NFDVD0062

(1 hour 5 minutes). German text and English/French translations included. Website www.nfi.pl. VHS Region 0. PCM 2.0. DTS 5.1. DVD Director Walter Szustak. Engineer: Jacek Duzicki, Gabriela Richter, Julia Emanakowa, Krzysztof Barwicki. Date live performance at the Swedish International Music Festival 'Chopin and his Europe' at the Holy Cross Church, Warsaw on August 16th, 2011.

Any Brahmsian looking for a DVD of the German Requiem accompanied by period instruments need look no further. This is Philippe Herreweghe at his most ardently persuasive, with a youthful choir and speeds that are at the quick end of the spectrum. He's that in company with the likes of John Eliot Gardiner (on Philips) and Sir Don Gustaf and Otto Klemperer (especially his Cologne Radio performance on DG) with overall timings of just over an hour. This contrasts markedly with the approach of Herbert von Karajan (1961) or Bernard Haitink, both of whom are a lot slower (1 hour 16 minutes), but allow the vastly expansive Sargis Criffielder in Munich (1 hour 28 minutes). There will be those who prefer more spacious readings, but for the most part they leave me with an abiding impression of dragging the music through treacle in slow motion (an exception is André Previn's Teldec recording, which is as slow as Haitink's and Karajan's but more imaginatively shaped and more intense than either).

Crucial though it is, tempo isn't the only important factor. The use of period instruments and an agile choir helps a great deal with underlining the essential clarity of Brahms's textures (often lost in a wash of sound in modern-instrument versions) and in bringing out the score's inner life. Despite the resonant acoustic of the Holy Cross Church in Warsaw, Herreweghe does a splendid job – again and again, details emerge with seemingly effortless clarity, and the approach is one that aims for (and achieves) lightness and transparency, and a very careful

observation of dynamic markings. All that may sound a little clinical but this performance is certainly not that: you need look only at the intensity of Herreweghe's gaze, and the faces of his singers and players, to see how involved they are. In a few places, especially in the final movement, Herreweghe will be too fast for some collectors, but such is the conviction of the performance that it works: it's a curious thing how unimportant raw speed can be when an interpretation is as imaginatively conceived and persuasively performed as this one. The delicacy of the orchestral writing in places will come as a surprise to anyone new to hearing the work on period instruments, as will its brilliance and boldness (occasionally reminiscent of Beethoven's later orchestration, in the Ninth Symphony and *Missa solenne*) in others. Herreweghe follows Bruders' declared preference for two harpits – good to see and hear.

Herreweghe has two excellent soloists in soprano Be Verrens and Andrew Foster-Williams. Verrens is touching and unannounced in 'The late nun Transfiguration', with a tone that is crystal-clear but warm, and she phrases beautifully. Foster-Williams sings with just the right kind of authority and his basso-harmonie is always impressively focused as well as expressive.

The filming of this performance has been well done, and the building is very beautiful – the Holy Cross Basilica is one of the finest Baroque churches in Warsaw – though the performing space for the players looks distinctly cramped. The camerawork is sensitive and the sound is good, capturing the church acoustics well. This DVD can be very warmly recommended to anyone wanting a deeply felt, historically informed and always compelling performance of Bruders's Requiem.

Nigel Simons

Mark Padmore

Dove The End.

Vaughan Williams On Wenlock Edge.

Tom Blake Song.

Warlock The Curlew.

New CD/SACD

Mark Padmore (tenor); **Emor McDonough**

(flute); **Nicholas Daniel** (oboe/cor anglais);

Jacqueline Shaw, **Miranda Dale** (soprano);

Claire Finimore (alto); **Caroline**

Dearnley (alto); **Yvaw Watkins** (piano).

Harmonia Mundi USA HMU807566 (full price,

1 hour 12 minutes). English text and French

translations included. Website www.harmonimundi.com

Producer Robina G. Young. Engineer Brad

Michel. Chris Bauer. Date May 2012.

Comparisons:

Vaughan Williams On Wenlock Edge/Warlock

Gilchrist, Tilden, Cox, Hale, Ffrencham CD

(Label) CXC236 (200), rev. July/Aug 2007

Partridge, Mark Group of August

(IAM British Composer) S 45389-2 (1977)

Vaughan Williams On Wenlock Edge

Armsby, Sarah Inc (Hyperion) CDA67148

(1999, rev. Oct 2000)

Padmore, Schubert Era (Chandos) CHAN10803

(2007, rev. May 2008)

Warlock:

Thompson, Davies, Duke CD (Naxos) 8.552715 (1999)

Unlike to this release, which otherwise increases some moderately well-titled English ground, is a recent (2012) setting by Jonathan Dove of a fine poem by Mark Strand, *The End*. First published in 1996, in a collection called 'The Curlew's Lie', the poem is actually a meditation on death, and even feels in places like a response to Tolstoy's famous *Coasting the Ice*. For instance, it employs the same kind of maritime imagery: 'Not every man knows what he shall sing at the end, / Watching the pier as the ship sails away ...'. Unlike Tolstoy, though, this poem is not confident of meeting any 'Pike, face-to-face'. The poem is quite short, just a dozen lines, always tender, very touching. Dove was immediately drawn to it, and at the instigation of the performers on this disc, members of the Britten Sinfonia, has made a gentle setting of it, some nine minutes long: one that respects the contours and flow of the verse, as well as capturing its elegiac mood perfectly. Further, it was a happy idea to opt for the same instrumentation, of two wind instruments (flute, cor anglais) and string

quartet, as that chosen by Peter Warlock for his Yeats setting *The Curlew*. The two works counterpart each other nicely, those preceding Warlock at the end of the disc.

Both have the inimitable advantage, too, of Mark Padmore's tenor caught on prime form. Such pleasing timbres, such luminous diction, such sensitivity to word and phrase, such restraint – but also such strength! You feel that he inhibits the intense melancholy, not just of Strand's 'traces of circus and cloud' but also of Yeats's deeply Irish and brooding 'lonely Edgely of streams'. Fine recordings of *The Curlew* exist already, of course, such as James Gilchrist's, relatively recent, and Adrian Thompson's, from a while ago now; but for a state-of-the-art version, superbly recorded with dry-eyed clarity rather than any kind of Celtic mist, and performed with the utmost refinement by singer and instrumentalists alike, I do not think this latest version can be bettered.

The production is by Harmonia Mundi USA, which accounts for Nicholas Daniel's instrument in the above-mentioned works being listed as 'English horn', for which of course the English-English is actually cor anglais! Along with Padmore, he is the star of the show here. Before the Dove and Warlock settings, he is heard on the cello in the *Ten Blake Song* of Vaughan Williams. For anyone unfamiliar with this extraordinary work, I urge immediate acquaintance. These songs are late VW, the result of a film commission, actually set just for cello and voice – and indeed, in one or two places, the cello drops out altogether. The composer, of course, knew his Blake intimately, not the 'musician for dancing' job, where Blake's illustrations were a main source of inspiration. Many of Blake's finest, most condensed verse utterances are here, Innocence and Experience nestling side by side; darkness is ever-present, as we move, for instance, from the *Sadflowers*, 'weary of time', to the blackness of 'Crosby has a human heart' – and only then to the comforting 'Divine Image'. *Ten Blake Song* is a bleak masterpiece and Padmore and Daniel are exceptional.



Special offers ending 28th November 2013

Allia Vox

Save 20% when you buy any 2 or more

Signum

Save 20% when you buy any 2 or more

Hungaroton

Save 15% when you buy any 2 or more

Halle

Save 15%

Delphian

Save 30% when you buy any 2 or more

Special offers ending 31st December 2013

Hyperion

Save 25% when you buy any 2 or more

Toccata Classics

Save 25% when you buy any 2 or more

C Major Entertainment DVDs

Save 30% when you buy any 2 or more

Hansler

Save 25% when you buy any 2 or more

SDG / Monteverdi Productions

Save 5% when you buy any 2 or more

More details at www.crotchet.co.uk or phone 0121 459 5566 - extra discount for IIR readers SAVE an extra 5% on orders over £50 (excl shipping).

Use code IRR and valid until 31st December 2013.

Just to cap it all, at the start of the disc is found a deeply stirring rendition of another masterpiece, this time from the earlier, early end of Vaughan Williams's long career.

Once again, for *On Winded Edge*, alternatives abound. Ian Partridge made memorable recordings of both the VW and Warlock: I grew up with them and nothing is going to displace them from my affection. However, Padunaru's take on these half-frozen settings of A. E. Housman is different. Altered by an accompaniment from a quartet of strings from the Britten Sinfonia, and Hovhannissian's piano replacing the oboe, whose collective close attention to every detail in the score, from the rustling of leaves to the single tolling bell of mourning – and much else besides – Padunaru presents a version that surely sees *On Winded Edge* as a self-contained mini-drama with its own architecture and stark emotional curve. Such upfront incisiveness may not be to all tastes, but it certainly convinces me that this is a way of doing it, and doing it well. This fine release comes plain on every front.

Piers Burton-Page

Eisler New

Erste Gesänge[®]. Lieder[®] – An den kleinen Radiosapparat; Die Ballade vom Wasserrad; Die Nacht; Frühling; Die Heimkehr; Der Kirchhof; Die Landschaft des Exils; Hotelzimmer 1942; In der Frühe; Lied von der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes; Ostermontag; Solidaritätstied; Spätsommer 1942; Über den Selbstmord; Lied an die ersten Zeiter; Verfehlt Liebe; Vom Sprengen des Gartens. Piano Sonata, Op. 1. **“Matthias Goerne (baritone); Thomas Larcher (piano); Ensemble Resonanz. Harmonia Mundi HMC902124** (full price, 54 minutes). German texts and English/French translations included. Website www.harmonia-mundi.com  Producer Martin Sauer. Engineer René Müller. Dates September 2012, February and March 2012.

This survey of Hanns Eisler may be short but it is certainly pitiful and makes a very strong case for the composer as a key figure in twentieth-century music. Ringing in different ways between atonality and something approaching Weill, there are also reflections of Weill, Strauss and early Schoenberg, yet it amounts to a remarkably cogent utterance. Unity is provided not only by a galvanising musicality – he was apparently Schoenberg's favourite pupil and the Piano Sonata presented here was enthusiastically championed by him – but also by a deep concern with politics and communist ideals which he carried to America in the war years and back to East Germany via Vienna. It was a life at the epicentre of the times.

This CD reflects this movement and restlessness but backwards, more or less, opening with the *Ensemble Gesänge*, written for baritone and string ensemble in the last two years of Eisler's life in 1961–62. From the quiet opening string section the music seems to rise from the deepest despair, following the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party at which the truth about Stalinism had been revealed in all its awfulness. When the voice enters it is in a meandering setting of Hölderlin's *Apf* – the refuge is song itself – that seems to wander through the wreckage of a shattered life, yet the effect is incredibly beautiful. The sadness which permeates all seven songs (three of them to texts by Hölderlin of stunning eloquence) is offset by a luminous quality in the music, which matches the verse it is oscillating between despair and hope.

There is nothing monochrome about Eisler's music even if it does reflect disillusion, and he pushes the range of sounds with use of pizzicato and *col legno*, *col portello*, sudden wide leaps and blurring changes of mood, all vividly caught by Ensemble Resonanz. Against this there is the remarkably fine grain of Matthias Goerne's voice, subtle in timbre in Eisler's wispiest lines that might blow away in the chill wind, or hardening to something thicker, more ominous, in ‘Verweilung’ (‘Despair’) to get that mood in an instant. The last song attempts a Straussian opulence that is intensely moving against the ambiguity of the verse, caught between mortality and the sacred rush of life – there's a distant echo of the *Five Last Songs*, perhaps, but with an irony like *Five Last Songs*. There are so many memorable things in these 13 minutes, for instance the yearningly repeated line ‘Leben, ohne Angst zu haben’, which seems to hover over the span.

Goerne follows this with a selection of songs with piano written in the early 1940s in Los Angeles. The note describes them as neo-romantic and they certainly seem to look back more than the *Ensemble Gesänge*, with Weill being most often recalled. The texts are nearly all by Brecht – just one Mörike setting and one by Heine suggest that other voices are heard in the 47 songs that make up the collection. Brecht's verse takes a fairly everyday tone to relate snapshots from his experience of exile and impressions of life elsewhere, always with a sense of justice for mankind coming through. Surprise is a key factor in Eisler's settings, with a vast range of mood from the playful (if ironic) *Ich an und die Frauen Zeiten* to *Über den Selbstmord* which follows it directly. This short statement on suicide taps into something heart-rending in the shortest musical space. There is a tendancy to abrupt endings, and postulates that recall Schoenberg's manner, giving a sense of a collage.

At this point the programme breaks its reverse chronology by putting the Sonata before three cabaret-style numbers, however,

this is probably a more satisfying arrangement. Thomas Larcher, already bringing out so many nuances in the piano part in the songs, reveals this first essay by Eisler to be a splendidly punchy work in the style of Schoenberg's Op. 11 pieces. An angularity and ambiguity characterize the middle *Innocenza*, while the last movement has a repeated pulchid, spidery chord figure in the treble that is very appealing. The three songs round off the recording in a more popular idiom, reflecting Eisler's move to Berlin in 1925 and turning away from the ideas of Schoenberg. Somehow the idiom is more classical and less sensual than Weill's, with the famous *Soldatenmarsch* ending on a note of spirited defiance of injustice that sadly never goes out of date.

Andrew Parker

Handel New

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato, HWV55.

Maria Kochane (soprano); Julia Doyle (soprano); Benjamin Huftet (tenor); Andreas Wolf (bass-baritone); Kätlin Kameschauer; Collegium Cartusianum/Peter Neumann. Carus Verlag CV81.395 (full price, two discs, 1 hour 59 minutes). English texts and German translations included. Website www.carus-verlag.com  Producer Jens Schürmann. Engineer Reinier Kuit. Date October 21st–26th, 2012.

Composers

Bramble, Dancan, Daniels, Enbridge, Miles, Bach CH, Paris Orch Bruckner (Virgin Classics) 1.01017-2 (2009)

In Handel's ode *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, the first two stiles are those of the two poems by John Milton that Handel set. *Il Moderato*, with text by Charles Jomene, became the separate third part, whereas verses from the Milton poems are interspersed with each other in Jomene's selection of them. *L'Allegro* is the outgoing person, with *Il Penseroso* representing melancholy, which does not mean that one is filled with quick, jolly music and the other slow and sad. What Handel did do was to accompany most of *Il Penseroso* with strings but using woodwind and brass in *L'Allegro*. *Il Moderato*, as the name suggests, falls between the two.

Markus Schöning states in his note that ‘hardly another composition by Handel was subjected to so many changes after its first performance’ and writes that ‘it is therefore practically impossible to reconstruct an ‘authentic version’ today’. He tells us that the basis for this recording is the London performances of January and February 1781, which means that the soprano aria ‘May at last my weary age’, added later by the composer, is not included. It can be heard on the Virgin Classics set sung by counter-tenor David Daniels. Two movements from Handel's *Giocoso-gioco*, Op. 6 No. 1 have been used as an introduction to this new release. Let

as leave all that to the musicologists and listen to a work which Winton Dean considers 'the profoundest evocation in music of the English countryside'.

All but six of the pieces play for under four minutes, but among those six is the long (17:57) and beautiful aria 'Sweet bird, that dostn't the noise of folly', one of the 'Penseroso' excerpts that are not restricted to a string accompaniment, for in this de operaria Handel introduces the flute to represent Philomel, the nightingale, and flautist Marcus Root shows how alive he is in his playing.

The Cologne church in which this recording took place has some reverberation that covers the words at times: it affects Maria Keshane most. Whether that is because her particular timbre does not stand out from the resonance or because of where she was placed I cannot know. In 'Sweet bird', she and the flute sometimes create oscillations as voice and instrument divide. She has all the 'Penseroso' arias except 'Far from all resort of mirth', which is altered to Julia Doyle.

Handel's colourful orchestrations draw a lightness from Collegium Cartusianum, the period-instrument orchestra that is the successor to the Barockorchester Ecks, with a string contingent of 7-3-2-1. Peter Neumann's stylish direction elicits an elegance from the players. Many of his tempos are a bit slower than those of John Nelson, but no sense of plodding or heaviness is discerned. Kähler Kammerchor (7-6-5-5-4) has together the needed flexibility. Among the sopranos' names is that of Constanta Radules. Is she the singer who has recorded as a soloist on various issues?

It cannot be a direct comparison between this Carus set and that from Virgin Classics, if only because the use of a countertenor is the older recording has no equivalent here, so, if your personal opinion is not shaky, why not have both? On Virgin, the two sopranos, Christine Brandes and Lynne Dawson, do not concentrate on the music of one poem, as is the case with Neumann's couple, and it does not matter: there are no characters in this pastoral ode.

Of Carus's sopranos, Keshane has a rather stronger timbre than does Doyle, which does not imply a better voice either way. Doyle has a silvery lustre, a touch lighter in weight as well as colour. Both sing freely, but with Doyle clearer in the acoustics, each manages both the softer arias and the lyrically underlying undervalued ones without showing any problems. Keshane takes part in one of the work's finest pieces. This penultimate number is the ode's sole duet. 'As steals the morn upon the night', a gorgeous setting for soprano and tenor described by Scherzing as 'a real treasure'. Handel's employment of oboes and bassoons with the strings is delightful. It is sweetly sung by Keshane and Benjamin Hallett.

It is not only there that Hallett makes a good impression. One point in his favour

is that he sings naturally; there is no exaggerating or distorting of consonants and his enunciation is very clear. Whereas in 'Come, and trip it' some young tenors would no doubt sing 'trip', Hallett pronounces it correctly. He also articulates short, quick notes with clarity, as in the preceding 'Blaze thee, ay, ay'. This is another admirable addition to his discography.

As in *Armida abbandonata*, Handel serves the bass soloist with the smallest piece of the cake. Listed in the short note about him in Carus's booklet as a bass-baritone, Andreas Wolf does not possess the most ornate of voices, his being a shade shallower in tone, but agility is there, as shown in 'Come, with native lustre shine' in 'Il Moderato', and, as with his colleagues, he has no need of aquietes. Martial Miles on Virgin has more sap in his tone, but Wolf is more than adequate.

This set deserves serious consideration. The booklet contains the text and good notes.

John T. Hughes

Handel Cantata 01. Armida abbandonata, HWV105. Ne' tuoi larmi, o bella Clori, HWV133. Notte placida e cheta, HWV142. Qualor l'egre pupille, HWV152. New

Roberta Mameli (soprano); **Contralto Ammonico** (Stefan Plewniak, Enrique Gómez, Cabrero Fernández, violins; Marta Serkiss, cello; **Matteo Vitale** (harpsichord).

Ayres AY-HC01 (full price, 1 hour 1 minute), tablet text and English/Polish translations included. Website: www.ayres.com. Production/Engineer Guido Tschelbass. June-April 16th-19th, 2012.

Composers:

Armida abbandonata/Notte placida e cheta:

Gaß, *La Rincorsa/Berlusconi* (Globe) 022870232

(2005, rev. July 2007)

Notte placida e cheta:

Kirkby, *London Baroque* (BIS) SACD 1495

(2007, rev. Oct 2008)

This disc is the Ayres label's first release and is headed 'Cantata 01'. In fact, it continues the Italian harpsichordist Matteo Vitale's ambitious project to record all of Handel's 100 or so known Italian cantatas with his period-instrument group, Contralto Ammonico, which has seen four volumes already issued on the budget Brilliant Classics label. Ayres, which is not a budget label, was funded by Vitale largely for this purpose.

Handel wrote the four cantatas on this disc in Rome in 1707, the second year of the energetic young composer's immensely successful four-year Italian sojourn. They were commissioned by the Marquis (later Prince) Francesco Maria Ruspoli and were intended for the star soprano Margherita Durastanti, a regular at the Marquis's weekly musical soirees, though this is not absolutely certain in the case of the lovely *Notte placida e cheta* (HWV142). Both this cantata and

the dramatic *Armida abbandonata* (HWV105) are reasonably familiar. Most recently, they were included on Volume 2 of Fabio Bonissini's seven-disc recording on Glossa of Handel's Italian cantatas with instrumental accompaniment, sung by the soprano Emanuela Galli (recorded in 2005), and *Note placida* appeared on Emma Kirkby's and London Baroque's 'Handel in Italy' disc for BIS (2007).

To my knowledge, the disc's two cantatas with basso continuo accompaniment only, *Qualor l'egre pupille* (HWV152) and *Ne' tuoi larmi, O bella Clori* (HWV133), have never before been recorded. Despite their obscurity, they are real gems – *Ne' tuoi larmi* in particular fully deserves the accolade of 'extraordinary masterpiece' given by the American Handel expert Ellen T. Harris in her notes. Interestingly, although written for Durastanti, the protagonists in both are love-struck men. One of Durastanti's specialities was trouser roles (many years later Barney described her person as rather coarse and masculine) and she was also reportedly a gifted actress. In light of this and the fact that she did not have a particularly high soprano voice, her sound may have had a castrato-like robustness.

Possibly this influenced Bonissini's choice of the powerful-voiced Galli for his recording. Roberta Mameli, Vitale's soloist on his new disc, also has a strong and brilliant voice, but her tone is smoother and simply more beautiful than Galli's. Both singers have considerable experience in historically informed Baroque performance practice. However, Mameli's approach is closer to that of Kirkby, despite her very different vocal personality. Like Kirkby in *Note placida*, she articulates her line thoughtfully, employing great vocal flexibility and a judiciously applied light vibrato (almost a shimmer) to help shape her phrases and colour her expression. Her predecessors in Vitale's series, Stefania Truse and Klaartje Van Veldhoven, had lighter voices than Mameli, but also relied too much on vibrato. They also lacked Mameli's sheer vocal beauty. Galli for Bonissini also suffered (somewhat uncharacteristically for her) from a heavier and more persistent vibrato than Mameli, which detracted from her line. Her expression also sometimes veered towards the histrionic, especially in the vividly dramatic *Armida abbandonata*. Mameli, while not adopting the heightened expression of Galli, brings a little more flesh and blood than Kirkby to her interpretation of *Note placida* and the other works on this disc. Galli's singing reflects Bonissini's offbeat and highly coloured direction. While Vitale's pacing is still animated and lively, with Mameli he prefers slightly slower tempos than Bonissini. Consistently with this, his basso continuo realizations are also less extravagant and spiky. This gives both Mameli and Contralto Ammonico's small complement of instrumentalists greater opportunity to

cover the melodic and harmonic richness of Handel's writing, albeit at the expense of some emotional power. It also allows Mánuel to focus in particular on beauty of tone and precision (a notable instance being the relatively difficult first aria, 'Ah, crudel!', in *Amelia* abundantly) and to apply imaginative ornamentation.

Ultimately, Mánuel and her colleagues stand between the serious-minded drama of Galle and her musicians and the ultra-refined, albeit affecting manner of Kirby and here. Ally supported by Contraltos Armonico, Mánuel adopts a slightly more playful approach, which perhaps reflects the circumstances in which these works came into being: a semi-private gathering of fashionable cognoscenti seeking entertainment in refined poetry, music and conversation rather than as mere spectators of high operatic drama.

The recorded sound, captured in a not too reverberant Polish church, is transparent and balances the handful of instruments nicely against Mánuel's brilliant voice. Haric's programme notes are excellent, with a very helpful detailed commentary on the text and music of each work.

Strongly recommended. **Christopher Price**

Ireland Songs, Volume 1. New

The Bells of San Maria. The East Riding. A Garrison Churchyard. Hawthorn Time. The Heart's Desire. Here's to the Ships. Hope the Hornblower. In Praise of Neptune. The Land of Lost Content. Sea Fever. Song from O'er the Hill. Songs of a Great War. Five Songs by Turley Royce. Two Songs to Poems by Rupert Brooke. Spring Sorrow. The Vagabond. We'll to the Woods No More.

Mark Stone (baritone); **Sholto Kynoch** (piano).

Stone Records SO60192/780260 (full price, 1 hour 7 minutes). English text included. Website www.stone-records.co.uk. Production@stone-records.co.uk. Date: March 10-12, 2012.

Comparisons:

The Vagabond

Trefel, *Martina* (2011) 441 988 2 (1995)
Williams, *Barnaby Rasin* (2007) 8370807 (2007)

In my review of the live Britten *War Requiem* from Utrecht on Challenge Classics in September 2012 I described Mark Stone's singing as 'a revelation' and wrote of his 'bringing something new and convincing to [the] role, thereby enriching our experience of it'. This first volume of a complete collection of songs by John Ireland, on the singer's own label, does not quite justify such high praise, but its virtues are very considerable indeed. Stone is blessed with a most beautiful voice, which he uses intelligently, and his words are crystal-clear. Only a little more variety of tone colour throughout the recital might have given a better idea of the scope of these songs. The recorded sound is excellent, as is the booklet,

where you will find a measured introduction to the composer, background and descriptive notes on each song written by Stone himself, and complete song texts.

The programme has been intelligently planned. It opens with three of Ireland's best-known songs, all settings of Macaulay. The key to Stone's interpretation of the first two is found in his note on *The Bells of San Maria*, where he writes that the song 'is possibly sadder than the poem would immediately suggest'. I think he is probably right, and the atmosphere of melancholy that steady tempo brings to this song and to the preceding *Sea Fever* is both surprising and convincing. When it comes to *The Vagabond*, Stone's view is close to that of Roderick Williams on his excellent Nones CD – fairly straight, and, like Williams, sounding faintly uneasy with the poem's colloquialisms. Bryn Terfel reveals another possibility. He is very free with the rhythm, the vagabond's speech simple and artless. The song's pathos is enhanced by Terfel's extraordinary dynamic range, especially his passionate singing. Some find this excessive, but I find it irresistible.

Even Stone's committed advocacy cannot transform into masterpieces the group of songs that follows, though there's more than enough value to make them worthwhile. The Hoosier settings offer more substantial fare. *The Land of Lost Content* is very well done here. The notes draw attention to a possibly unnoticed quotation from *Barnaby Rasin* in the first song, 'The Lost Lily', but it is Vaughan Williams's setting of *London All (In On Hoosier Edge)* that comes more readily to my mind. He'll to the Woods No More, two songs plus a piece for piano solo, is Ireland in darkest mood. The somber tread of the title song's highly chromatic piano accompaniment is well brought out by Sholto Kynoch, whose playing throughout the disc is of great sensitivity. Stone, too, is particularly poignant in the more passionate phrases of this anguished piece. Two other Hoosier settings provide some respite, particularly *The Heart's Desire*, with its charming and typical use of the modal flattened seventh.

A group of wartime songs follows. Ireland's setting of Rupert Brooke's famous poem 'The Soldier' has somehow passed me by thus far, and though I am glad to make its acquaintance, I do feel that there is more to these words, well known as they are, than Ireland's rather comfortable setting finds there. Better that, though, than the unpleasant, martial music for 'How out, you bigger', notwithstanding the traces of his better nature to be heard at the thoughtful close. I prefer altogether the straightforward simplicity of *Spring Sorrow*. In the first of three settings of words by Eric Thirkield Cooper, the post-soldier explores God to give him back his sight. Ireland sets this most touchingly to homophonic music, like a hymn. The second is a grief-stricken prayer asking God to restore a lost comrade to life,

and this provokes from Ireland music that is harsh, dramatic and bitterly dissonant. A Garrison Churchyard, a recently discovered addition to the Ireland catalogue, describes a cemetery in Malta where many of the poet's friends are buried.

Between 1911 and 1913 Ireland published 'regal ballads' under the pseudonym Turley Royce. Stone has recorded five, though the outstanding John Ireland Compton (Brydell and Brewer, edited by Lewis Foreman) catalogues only four. These songs, presumably composed for financial gain, are in a deliberately popular style meant to entertain listeners rather than to challenge them. You may or may not take pleasure in these songs – I'm saying nothing – but you will probably admit that they are beautifully crafted, and among the finest examples of the genre. They make a satisfying group with which to close this highly enjoyable collection.

William Adley

Guillaume de Machaut New Songs from 'Le voir dit'.

Dame, se vous n'avez aperçu. Dis et sept, cinc. Longuement mi sui tenus ('L'air de Bonne Espérance'). Nes que on porroit. Fleuriz dames. Puis qu'en cubli. Quant Theseus/le quier veoir. Sans cuer, dolers. Se pour ce muir.

The Orlando Consort (Matthew Venner, counter-tenor; Mark Dobell, Angus Smith, tenor; Donald Greig, baritone).

Hyperion CDAG727 (full price, 1 hour 4 minutes). French text and English translation included. Website www.hyperion-music.co.uk. Producer Mark Liner. Engineer David Witt. Date: July 2nd-5th, 2012.

Here is a project for which Machaut fans have been waiting a long time. The *Liex des rois dit* ('Book of the True Tale') is usually considered the fourteenth century poet's and composer's greatest accomplishment. It was written in the late 13th when Machaut was a cultural figure of huge international reputation. Yolanda Phelanly tells us in her excellent booklet essay that luxurious editions of his works were avidly collected by members of Europe's greatest ruling families. The *Liex des rois dit* purports to tell the story of the composer's own love affair with a young woman whom he names 'Tozue Belle', but at one point hints at her real name in an anagram. Modern scholars think they have identified her. The book takes a largely epistolary form, containing letters, lyrics and songs exchanged between the lovers. Some of the songs, supposedly written in the course of this romance late in Machaut's life, actually survive in earlier sources, or at least elements of them do, so the book's claim to be a true account are at least in part a poetic fiction. The book contains nine songs, one a la for a single voice lasting over 20 minutes, and the Orlando Consort has recorded all of them on



The Orlando Consort

Apraron

this disc. (Orford Camerata recorded six of them on Naxos 8.551813 back in 1996.)

All the songs are remarkably sophisticated in compositional technique. However, they are far more immediately appealing than most of the highly complex works of the contemporary 'Ars Subtilior' composers. Machaut is sometimes called the 'last troubadour' owing to his equal proficiency as a poet and a composer. The title is also apt in light of his rich melodic gifts, which he shared with many of the troubadours and troubadours but few of the sublater composers. The three-voice ballade *Ne que en prison* has a particularly catchy melody, which Machaut advised 'toute belle', would also work well played instrumentally on organ, cornamuse or other instruments. The complex double-texted ballade (*Quar Thous/Ne que non* was created as a result of a competition or 'jeux') between Machaut and one of his colleagues at Reims Cathedral, where he was a canon. The lyrics by both contributors are replete with classical and biblical allusions, but Machaut, who knew his own worth, was confident that he was the victor. Professor Plumley tells us that this song was greatly admired and imitated by Machaut's contemporaries.

While Machaut himself hints that the use of instruments could be counteracted in his songs, the Orlando Consort opts to perform them all purely vocally. For the most part, the lively and perfectly tuned voices are more than equal to the challenge and one never feels that instruments should have been employed. In the early days of the revival of Medieval music, performers often emphasized Machaut's *avant-garde* complexities and sometime use of locking techniques, resulting in angular, even jolty performances, often with quite fast tempos. The Orlando Consort's performances are rather more measured and decorous, just occasionally, such as in *Ne que en prison*, I think the main

melodic line could have been delivered with a little more punch without risk of vulgarity or unwieldy haste. Still, a slight excess of restraint and refinement is much more forgivable than the opposite tendency. (Regrettably even the Orlando Consort has in the past fallen prey to the tiresomely common practice of combining Medieval music and jazz.) The singers employ old French pronunciation, which is an important element in music and lyrics of this kind. Also importantly, the recording venue, a Gothic revival parish church in Essex, seems very sympathetic to the music and the performers.

In some ways, the greatest challenge on the disc is the enormous *Langoustes au tonon* (*La de Rome Espouze*), which Angus Smith, one of the Consort's two tenors, sings unaccompanied. The only other complete performance I can recommend (though it is now unavailable) was an old LP production, which included a truncated narrative from the *Fos de recited* by René Jacobs. If I recall correctly, Jacobs sang the *La* accompanied throughout by a gottic harp. Some time later, Regis Coxy-Crump recorded two other lengthy Machaut *La*s without accompaniment on L'Oiseau-Lyre and did so magnificently. Smith has a pleasant timbre and generally good control, but occasional small lapses show that he does not have the complete mastery of Coxy-Crump (or today's most accomplished Machaut singer, Marc Mauillon). Perhaps the Orlando Consort should have released and allowed Smith some instrumental support.

That they could do, this is an important and rewarding disc that any lover of Medieval music will want to own. **Andrew O'Connor**

Ries

New CD/ACD

Der Sieg des Glaubens, Op. 157.

Christiane Libor (soprano); **Wibke Lehmkuhl**

(contralto); **Markus Schäfer** (tenor); **Markus Flaig**

(bass-baritone); **Rheinische Kantorei**;

Das Kleine Konzert/Hermann Max.

CDP 777 738-2 (full price, 1 hour 15 minutes).

German tenors and English translators included. Website www.rps.de. Producer Günther Wellerstein. Engineer Ingoque Kordts. Dates September 178-198, 2008.

Five years ago I was excited by a CPO world premiere recording of Ferdinand Ries's 1817 oratorio *Der Kampf im Jenseit*, a dramatic retelling of the biblical story of Saul and David, which seems to me a long forgotten masterpiece (it was reviewed in July/August

2008). Now virtually the same forces have turned their attention to Ries's earlier oratorio *Der Sieg des Glaubens* ('The Triumph of Belief'), and though I wouldn't rate it nearly as highly, this proves to be a most interesting work with some sterling music which adds to our ever-increasing knowledge of this masterly pupil of Beethoven whose oeuvre resides on the cusp of the Classical and Romantic eras.

His first attempt at oratorio, the two-part *Der Sieg des Glaubens* was the result of a commission for the Lower Rhine Music Festival of 1819. The subject is not scriptural, nor is it fundamentally dramatic; instead this is a rather abstract, philosophical musical debate about Christian faith and its (imagined) opposite. The libretto by Johann Baptist Rousseau (NB: no relation to Voltaire's enemy Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, nor to the great humanist Jean-Jacques Rousseau – now that would have been really interesting!) posits a debate or struggle before Golgotha between a group of peace-loving Christian believers and another of power-worshipping atheistic unbelievers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Believers have the lion's share of the argument – the voices of the Unbelievers aren't even heard until the concluding chorus of the oratorio's first part – and they have numbers on their side too, fielding what is essentially a double chorus and up to three soloists at a time, whereas their adversaries sing as a single chorus with usually a solitary soloist at most.

Ries is able to conjure a wide range of music from this set-up. The work is essentially chorus-driven (there are no purely orchestral sections except the introductions to the two parts; the second of these is especially fine, and throughout we find evidence of his great skill in handling an orchestra), but he writes several affecting arias, duets and quartets, and the choruses themselves (including a 'fivefold chorus' in which the argument is at its most intense) cover many contrasting moods and include two spirited fugues. The Believers, piggish good-godlies in Rousseau's text, are embodied by some beautiful music, and the Unbelievers – conventional caricatures *villains* – receive some effective inventions, none more so than the hollow, sinister 'Look out, we're coming to get you!' chorus (it paraphrases Rousseau rather freely, but that's essentially what they're saying) just before the oratorio's moment of revelation. This comes in the shape of a pair of Angels as angels. To the strains of two harps – a new tone-colour, used with meticulous skill – the Angel of Faith (contralto) and Seraph of Love (soprano) descend from the Heavens and show the Unbelievers they're on a hiding to nothing with this one. Acknowledging defeat and accepting Christian Grace, the former Unbelievers join with their erstwhile opponents in the concluding choruses of pious rejoicing.

Die Frau des Gläubers was apparently a huge public success at its 1829 premiere in Aachen, but it can't have been heard very often since. As with *Die Könige in Israel*, this is its premiere recording. Some elements in the work anticipate *Die Könige in Israel* – the skillful anticipatory phrasing and employment of male and female choruses, the sudden appearance of harps at a crucial moment – but the overall effect is much more static than in the later work. Once again, however, Hermann Max directs the Rheinische Kantorei and Das Kleine Konzert in a sincerely felt and obviously carefully prepared and idiomatic performance, recorded in the churchy acoustic of the Klosterbühne at Knechtsteden in 2009. Among the four principal soloists Christiane Liber deserves special mention for her fresh-voiced and very attractive embodiment of the roles of A Believing Maiden and the Seraph of Love. Once again, our knowledge of Riev's output has been significantly enlarged. **Colin MacDonald**

Grenzen der Menschheit

Schubert Der Fischer, D225.

Die Bürgschaft, D246. Hektors Abschied, D312*. Der König in Thule, D367.

An Schwager Kronos, D389. Gruppe aus dem Tartarus, D583. Prometheus, D674. Grenzen der Menschheit, D716.

Schumann Der Handschuh, Op. 87. Nachtlied, Op. 96 No. 1. Lieder und Gemänge aus 'Wilhelm Meister', Op. 38a – No. 2, Ballade den Harfner; Op. 4, Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß; No. 6, Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt; No. 8, An die Türen will ich schleichen.

Johannes Martin Kränzle (baritone), 'Theresa Kronthalner' (mezzo); Hilko Dummo (piano).

Challenge Classics CC72680 (full price, 1 hour 8 minutes). German texts and English translations included. Website www.challengeclassics.com.

Producer/engineer Christopher Tarnow. Date November 6th-8th, 2012.

This is a very interesting disc. Johannes Martin Kränzle, a baritone of wide operatic experience, and his excellent accompanist, Hilko Dummo, have put together a recital that mixes ballads with visions and meditations (no love songs), familiar with unfamiliar words, texts by Goethe with texts by Schiller, and, above all, early Schubert with late Schumann. All six Schumann songs were composed in 1849-50, almost a decade after his great song cycles, and all eight Schubert songs were composed between 1815 and 1821, well before *Die schöne Melusine* and *Winterreise*.

The centrepiece of the recital, and, according to a cheerful but not very informative interview with Kränzle in the booklet, the initial inspiration for the disc, is a performance of *Der Ringelohf*, a lofty Schiller ballad in high Romantic-Medieval style, set most audaciously by the 18-year-old Schubert. This song, over 17 minutes long,

is rarely given, but deserves to be much better known. It tells the story, mostly in atmospherically accompanied recitative, of a faithful friend rushing back, against the clock, to a tyrant's court where his loyal stand will be killed if he is late. Pouring rain, a broken bridge, flooding waves, a tremendous storm and a band of brigade delay him: these nightmare hindrances are brilliantly suggested in Schubert's piano writing, as is the magical blessing of a very Schubertian brook that answers his prayer for help. Although he is told he is too late, his friend is alive to greet him and the tyrant is so moved by their embrace that he reprieves them both, this to a noble passage sung to powerful chords framed by silences. *Der Ringelohf* is a terrific song, here sung and played with strength and sensitivity from both artists. Kränzle's voice, without the roundness and richness of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's or Matthias Goerne's, is full of character and most agreeable to listen to; very occasionally he misses the middle of the note.

Shorter ballads by both composers throw the scale of *Der Ringelohf* into relief. Schubert's well-known settings of Goethe's *Die Könige in Thule* and of another Goethe ballad, *Der Fischer*, are set straightforwardly and simply and are given straightforward performances here. Thirty-four years later, though opening this recital, is Schumann's setting of Goethe's 'Ballade des Harfners' from *Wilhelm Meister*. The song, accompanied by harp-like figuration, tells of a harper rewarded by a king for his song with a gold chain that he turns down, preferring a goblet of wine and his independence. Kränzle gives a spirited account of the song and produces a lovely *pianissimo* for the harp's self-deprecating 'Ich singe, wie der Vogel singt' ('I sing as a bird sings'); this ballad is like a (very) miniature *Motetsong*. It is followed here, appropriately, by Schumann's settings of the three harper's songs, oblique, reflective, lonely and resigned; the postludes beautifully played by Dummo, and Kränzle too, in 'Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß', at the realisation of the truth 'Denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erde' ('then all guilt is paid for on the earth'), and poignantly foreshadow the best of these songs. 'An die Türen will ich schleichen', they are all more directly self-fulfilling than similar moments in *Winterreise* (credit to Müller as well as to Schubert).

A remarkable and rarely heard late Schumann song is his setting of another, strange, Romantic-Medieval ballad by Schiller, *Die Bürgschaft*, in which heroes will animals are handed by a knight to fetch a lady's golden hair and stiffness in the watching court are wonderfully conveyed in bare music uncharacteristic of Schumann, as is the shock of the knight's rejection of the lady after his feat has been achieved.

In the rest of the recital further contrasting songs are juxtaposed: Schubert's terrifying vision of hell in his familiar setting of

Schiller's *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus*, with Kränzle's climactic repeated 'Ewigkeit' ('eternity') electrifying, is followed by another rarely heard piece, Helios Abschied, a duet, also with words by Schiller, for which Kränzle is joined by the mezzo Theresa Kronthalner, who sings her two stanzas most touchingly, for the soldier's farewell to his wife, Andromache, as he goes to fight and to die. Two big Goethe settings deliver a richer contrast: *Prometheus*, often performed, has Schubert, grandly dramatic in an emphatic sense, straggling a bit to keep up with Goethe's furious defiance of the gods. But the less well-known and much quieter *Grenzen der Menschheit* ('Limitations of mankind'), a resigned, even humble acknowledgement, from Goethe 50 years older, of the smallness of human life, in an undemonstrative setting, Schubert resisting all temptation to illustrate clouds and wind, and giving a gentle calm to the question: 'Was unterscheidet Götter von Menschheit?' ('What distinguishes gods from mankind?'), which Kränzle sings with moving thoughtfulness. The answer is calm and accepting.

The only weak song on the disc is Schubert's *An Schwager Kronos*, the music joggling insistently – horses tended to get this delightously rhythmic rhapsody from Schubert – as the young Goethe turns a journey in a coach to a rather pretentious journey through life; the old man pictured in the music sounds a little like Miss. But the recital ends with Schumann's very beautiful, very quiet setting of 'Nachtlied', Op. 96 No. 1, neglected on account of Schubert's wonderful song to the same lispid Goethe words.

No one who loves Lieder will want to be without this disc. Unfortunately the booklet is something of a shambles: the 1902 translation of *Der Ringelohf* is unacceptably bad; the booklet note by Janice Orto is no more than an extravagant justification of the decision to call the recital 'Grenzen der Menschheit'; and two songs are reversed in *Leslie Beckert*

Stanford Parsongs

The blue bird. Chillingham. Corydon, aniel. Diaphema. A dirge. Farewell, my joy! God and the Universe. The haven. Heracitus. The inkbottle. Like desert woods. A lover's ditty. My heart in thine. On a hill there grows a flower. On Time. Out in the windy West. Peace, come away. Praised be Diana. Shall we go dance? The Swallow. To Chlora. To his flocks. The train. When Mary thro' the garden went. The witch.

Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir/ Paul Spicer.

Sonn Céléste SOMMCD0128 (medium price, 1 hour 15 minutes). English texts included. Website www.sonn-recordings.com. Producer Gita Oka. Engineer Paul Arden-Taylor. Date June 24th and 25th, 2012.

The beginning is tremendous. 'Oly, serious Time, till thou run out thy race' (Oly Time). The text is Milton at his most imperious. Time and Death and Chance (an interesting combination) are imperiously dispatched, in the grandest rhetorical style, in favour of Truth and Peace and Love. It's the longest, most substantial, perhaps even most demanding of the 25 partsongs by Stanford found here. The Birmingham Chamber chorists under their splendid director Paul Spicer seize us by the throat at the very first instruction to flight, and never release their grip.

Stanford's exercises in this field are a permanent delight. Many of the numbers recorded here with the admirable and generous support of the Stanford Society are premieres on disc. None is a dud and all would surely be of interest to choral societies up and down the land in search of new and stimulating repertoire, not inoperably taxing technically, either. Anyone tired of, say, Stanford's ubiquitous *The Blue Inn* – nothing against it, by the way: it's a beautiful little number, deservedly popular and beautifully done, too, with immaculate passimios and at a tempo slightly faster than sometimes heard, which de-sensitises it – might investigate some of the other Stanford settings of the same poet, Mary Coleridge (no relation to Wordsworth's class, I think, though you never know). The *Love*, for instance: it's in rather the same vein, subdued almost throughout, maybe even a little bleak in terms of sentiment – the word 'gray' is a repeated motif – but subtle in utterance, demanding in terms of legato. Once more, Spicer and his accomplished team of 24 singers are spot on.

As with their previous fine set of DeLius and Ireland partsongs (reviewed by me in these pages in December 2012), the recording was made in a Birmingham church. St Alban the Martyr: it's weirdly resonant, so there is a lovely halo round the sound, but the Sussex engineers have had the good sense not to swamp the choir in an acoustic bath, since by and large, Stanford's chosen texts are secular rather than sacred. Quite a few might even be familiar to aficionados of the Hixtham madrigal, or the tradition of English parsonage: there are not a few innocations of Corydon and Chloris, Diana and Diaphania, a charming Shepherd's roundelay in *Shall we go down?* But there is also Tommaso: in particular, a fine setting of *God and the Universe*, Stanford responding securely and sensitively to its mystical heights, such as the final reference to 'the Opener of the Gate'. And who could resist the exuberant setting of A.C. (*Land of Hope and Glory*) Bennett's hymn to Queen Victoria, beginning *Out in the early Eve* and building classically to the final fervent prayer, 'Reign on, Victoria, Reign!'.

Stanford expert Jeremy Dibble contributes a succinct note that manages to put each song in its context. He underlines Stanford's

regular returns to the poems of Mary Coleridge, and indeed all eight partsongs of Stanford's Op. 177 are included here. One or two – The moon or the delightful The sabbath – may be familiar already; others, not. But in the last resort, everything on this finely-voiced disc is worth hearing, and the final track, the well-known (or it ought to be) *My heart is those, it is moving as ever*.

Piers Burton-Page

Verdi New
Quattro pezzi sacri: Ave Maria, Libera me*

Donika Mataj, Maria Agresta (soprano); Coro e Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia/Antonio Pappano.

Wamer Classics 9 865242 (full price, 57 minutes). Latin texts and English translations included. www.wamerclassics.com | Producer David Green. Engineers Valterio Bartini, Igor Fiorini. Date of live performance is the Sala Santa Cecilia, Rome on December 10th, 11th and 12th, 2012. Studio recordings on May 20th, 2012.

Comparisons:

Quattro pezzi sacri:

Brown, Movement 01, ORF/Gardiner

(Philips) 652 1422 (1992, two-disc)

Baker, Philharmonia Choir and Orchestral

(EMI Classics) 5 67560-2 (1982, two-disc)

Chicago Symphony Choir and Orchestra

(Decca) 675 7735 (1977-78, two discs)

R. Shaw, Chorus, NBC 90/Toscanini

(RCA) 76121 23273-2 (1966, two-disc)

This is surely a great record. Antonio Pappano and his Santa Cecilia forces give memorable performances of all the works on this disc at the 2013 Proms: vibrant, heartfelt accounts of two rarities and the *Quattro pezzi sacri*. It's that late masterpiece – or rather, collection of four pieces, published as a set in 1898 – that is probably going to be the main draw of this disc, especially the mighty *Te Deum* and *Sabot mae* – Verdi's two last completed works, both for chorus and orchestra. This disc was made in the Sala Santa Cecilia in Rome a few months before the Prom performance, with the *Quattro pezzi sacri* recorded in live concerts. It's incredible that the *Te Deum* – surely one of the greatest 20-minute stretches of music in all Verdi – isn't even listed in the *World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* (1961), but since then there have been a number of recordings, including the live 1954 Toscanini NBC version, Giulini's Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra disc for EMI and Solti with Chicago forces on Decca. Toscanini's may be in fairly primitive sound, but it's an astonishing and essential performance of the work. Giulini's is perhaps the most ardently spiritual of all, but his disc suffers from some distortion at climaxes, and Solti's is good, but not as fiery as his best Verdi. Among more recent versions, John Eliot Gardiner's Philips recording with period instruments is very

fine indeed, but there is certainly room for another really impressive new recording.

Pappano doesn't disappoint. There is the most sensitive attention to detail and feeling for line, and the total conviction of his conducting is palpable, drawing a superbly committed response from his Roman singers and players. The only thing that slightly lets things down is the recorded sound: it's perfectly adequate – more than that if you're not too worried about details – but it doesn't quite match the power of the performance. At the *Te Deum*'s first 'Sanctus', for instance, the result is a little safe rather than the earth-shattering (and speaker-threatening) *fortissimo* that it should be (and, incidentally, was in the Proms performance). The recording of the double-chord antiphonal writing at 'Plebi sunt coeli – Sanctus' (bars 23-26) is a little muddy – but on Gardiner's recording it has thrilling clarity. However, Pappano is utterly idiomatic, and he conducts with a warmth and fervour that are engaging, so this is no easy choice: I would not want to be without this performance. In the *Sabot mae* (Verdi's last work), the Santa Cecilia version has a marvellous sense of poetry and a kind of spiritual intensity that is extremely moving. The Italian chorus is also good in the two unaccompanied pieces, the *Ave Maria* on an 'enigmatic scale', and the female-voice *Land alle Vergine Maria*, but Gardiner's Monteverdi Choir has more secure intonation – and a more beautiful tone – than any of its rivals.

So what to do? If Pappano's performance had been recorded as well as Gardiner's, the Santa Cecilia disc is the one I'd go for, and on balance – despite reservations about the cautious engineering – I think it probably still is, but I wouldn't want to be without Gardiner either (coupled with his remarkable performance of the Verdi Requiem). However, another good reason to acquire Pappano's record is the additional music on the disc: the 1880 *Ave Maria* for soprano and strings, and the *Litane* too in the version Verdi wrote for the collaborative *Messa per Rossini*, a project that was aborted. Verdi revised this music for the *Requiem* a few years later, but it's fascinating to have the original as performed here. The young Italian soprano Maria Agresta is the soloist in both these rarities and her voice is ideally suited to this music: not too sweet, with a little edge to it in places, but always pure and beautifully projected. Incidentally, the recorded sound for these two works (made in the same hall, but without an audience present) has a clarity that would have been beneficial in the *Quattro pezzi sacri*.

I wonder, though, why the choral *Pater Noster* isn't on this disc. There would certainly have been room for it, as the playing time is under an hour. The booklet includes an informative note by Stephen Jay-Taylor as well as complete texts and translations. Seeing aside any slight disappointment with the sound, this is an extremely worthwhile disc. Nigel Shorton

Wallace

Alice. Bird of the wild wing. Cradle Song. The Desert Flower – Through the pathless forest drea. The Gipsy Maid. Go! Thou restless wind. Good night and pleasant dreams. Happy birdling of the forest? It is the happy summer time. The leaves are turning red. Old friends. Orange flowers? Over the silvery lake? Seabirds wing their way. Softly, ye night winds. The spring and summer both are past. The Star of Love. Why do I weep for thee? Wild flowers. The winds that waft my sighs to thee.

Sally Silver (soprano); **Yvonne Howard** (mezzo); **Anna Noakes** (flute); **Richard Bonyng** (piano).

Sonus Cælestis SOMMCD0121 (streaming price, 1 hour 2 minutes). English texts included. libeatsite.com/store-encodings.asp.  Producer Jeremy Silver. Engineer? Tony Phillips. Dates March 24th–26th, 2011.

Recordings exist of Vincent Wallace's operas *Mañana* and *Lucina*, but few of his songs have been committed to disc, so this Sonus recital by Sally Silver and Richard Bonyng is welcome, making ungrateful my wish that as the CD lasts only 62 minutes a few more could have been added. Born in Ireland, Wallace went with his wife and child to Australia, whence he departed without them when he entered into debt. He settled in New York in 1843, left for London in 1845 and died in France in 1846.

The 20 songs on this CD include a piece for tenor from Wallace's opera *The Desert Flower*. (We could do with a disc of vocal excerpts from his operas, including the unsuccessful *Battala of Hungary* and the unproduced *The Maid of Zurich*, if the music is available.) Andrew Lamb's helpful notes tell us that among the singers for whom Wallace composed songs were Jenny Lind, Henriette Sonntag and Adolina Patti's sister Anzola. The songs here cover many styles: a lullaby (*Cradle Song*), a Spanish romance (*The Gipsy Maid*), a waltz (*The Star of Love*) to *Happy birdling of the forest*; in the last the singer's coloratura is in duet with the flute, whereas in *Over the silvery lake* the duetting is for soprano and mezzo. In 1853, Wallace wrote four canzonets, one for each season. I do not know why only three of them are on this CD or why they are not played together. It cannot be for want of space, any more than can the omission, though it is printed in the booklet, of the second verse of *Go! Thou restless wind*, a romance in which the restlessness is mainly in the piano accompaniment.

Almost all of these songs are strophic and it is not only *Go! Thou restless wind* in which the piano has the more intricate and involved music, so one is pleased that although he is an octogonarian Bonyng retains sufficient suppleness in his fingers. Some songs will

be considered by critics to be sentimental. So what? They are what they are and of their period. A slow tempo is found in about three-quarters of them.

Two, however, are decidedly not slow. *Happy birdling of the forest*, listed as a barcarole song, was composed in 1851 for the Irish soprano Catherine Hayes. The soprano and flute, the latter skilfully played by Anna Noakes, vie with each other in the scalenwork. Here and elsewhere an exposed top note from Silver is sometimes pinched. The other aspect which may cause of the singing, noticed as early as the opening song, *Why do I weep for thee?*, is that legato is not Silver's strongest suit in that a stressed final consonant interrupts the smoothness of the line. Following *Happy birdling* in *The Gipsy Maid*, written for Jenny Lind. It is the second quick song, well managed by both singer and pianist. I wonder why Bonyng did not record both songs with Joan Sutherland, whom they would have suited admirably.

The middle of Silver's voice is advantageously heard in the disc's final item, *The leaves are turning red*, which is the autumn portion of the four canzonets about the seasons. It is firm and sure and fits well a poem that closes with the lines 'Tint that stains a southern sunset / Shed a glow o'er earth and skies'. Winter's contribution to these canzonets, *The spring and summer both are past*, is another song which I enjoyed, with Silver in full tone. Six lines of it are sung without being printed in the booklet; Silver's enunciation is clear though. Also among the best in this selection is the duet *Over the silvery lake*, a barcarolle, in which Silver's voice is joined by the soft warbling of Yvonne Howard's. In *Orange flowers*, to words by the critic Henry Chorley and one of only three songs that go beyond four minutes in length, it is again flautist Noakes who is the partner for Silver and Bonyng. This piece, dedicated to Sonntag, also requires the soprano to manoeuvre her strong voice over the vocal handles, which she does with success.

Bonyng's contribution is appreciated. Wallace was a skilled pianist and wrote a number of solos for his instrument, which explains why some of his songs have been given first from simple accompaniments, with which Bonyng deals destructively.

What an adventuresome move it is for a record company to provide listeners with the opportunity to hear songs that have not been committed to disc time and time again. There are many nineteenth-century composers whose vocal works, be they opera, oratorio or song, would be of interest, if an still waiting for a CD devoted to Henry Bishop.) They are a neglected part of Britain's musical heritage. Sonus's choice of the charming Victorian painting by Elsie Sant on the front cover of this disc, *A show inside Rose*, suits the music.

John T. Hughes

Choirbook for the Queen

Bedford May God Shield You on Every Step. **Bingham** Corpus Christi Carol. **Burrell** O Joyful Light. **Davies** Advent Calendar. **Finnissy** Sincerity. **Goebel** Cities and Thrones and Powers. **Gier** Prayer. **Osborne** A Prayer and Two Blessings. **R. Panufnik** Joy at the Sound. **Philips** Church Music. **Sawer** Wonder. **Rutter** I my Best-Beloved's Arm. **Taverner** Take Him, Earth, for Cherishing.

The other aspect which may cause of the singing, noticed as early as the opening song, *Why do I weep for thee?*, is that legato is not Silver's strongest suit in that a stressed final consonant interrupts the smoothness of the line. Following *Happy birdling* in *The Gipsy Maid*, written for Jenny Lind. It is the second quick song, well managed by both singer and pianist. I wonder why Bonyng did not record both songs with Joan Sutherland, whom they would have suited admirably.

This collection is of 13 from the 44 anthems compiled in the 'Choirbook for the Queen', published to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2012, a project which, according to the anonymous introduction in the booklet, 'aspire[s] to many of the qualities of its Tudor predecessor, the *Item* Choirbook'. That is quite a claim, and one that one would imagine would hardly be supported by the diversity of musical language of the composers involved in the new project in comparison with the consistency of the same in the mastery works contained in the *Item* collection. How surprising, then, to discover just how completely most of the works on the disc inhabit the world of the Anglican anthem!

Of course this has to do in great measure with the sound of a British choir – with or without organ – and the official, celebratory nature of the occasion, but it really is noticeable just how many composers here were seduced by the sound-world of what one might call traditional twentieth-century Evensong fare. One can sense the shadows of Britten, Walton, Leighton and others in much of the music on this disc, even in such an unlikely candidate as David Bedford's *May God Shield You on Every Step*, in spite of the chugging minimalist organ writing that characterises its first part. There is a quite infectious general delight in almost-tonal choral writing and chromatic colouring, though I find Peter Maxwell Davies's *Alone Calenda* earnest and dull, unlike its remarkable text. Similarly, Michael Finnissy's *Sincerity* seems an abstract construction rather than a reflection of, or complement to, Christopher Smart's poem.

The two works that stand out for me, perhaps because they are the furthest from the 'standard anthems', are Nigel Osborne's reflective *A Prayer* and *Two Blessings* and Roxanna Panufnik's writing of Roger McGough's *Joy at the Sound*, which evinces joy in the sound in no uncertain terms. One final curiosity is that John Rutter's *I my Best-*

Island's *An* (at least the opening section) sounds more like John Tavener than the Tavener work included here, *Take Him, Take It, for Chanting*.

Performances throughout are outstanding, the BBC Singers showing their customary ability to jump any stylistic or technical hurdle, under the sure direction of Stephen Cleobury, and with sterling contributions from organist Stephen Daley. This is a fascinating collection that should be investigated by anyone interested in the British choral tradition.

Jan Moody

The Hours Begin to Sing **NEW CD/SACD**

Bolcom Cabaret Songs⁴ – Song of Black Max; Can't sleep; At the last lousy moments of love; Angels are the highest form of virtue; George. **Corigliano** Three Irish Folk Song Settings⁴. **D. Garner** *Vilna Poems*⁴. **Getty** Four Emily Dickinson Songs⁴. **Haggie** From the Book of Nightmares⁴. **L. P. Woolf** *Rumi: Quatrains of Love*⁴.

Lisa Delan (soprano) with "Maxim Rubtsov (flute); David Krakauer (clarinet); Matt Haimsovit (trumpet); Kristin Pankovik (piano). **Pentatonix Classics PFC5186 458** (full price, 1 hour 19 minutes). English/Yiddish text and English translations included. Website: www.pentatonix.com.  Producer: Job Meares. Engineer: Roger de Scher. Date: September 2012.

It's always a pleasure to find *IRE* quoted in a CD booklet, and all the more in this case since I can't do better than Nigel Simeone when he wrote in the June 2009 issue that Lisa Delan is a singer "with an unusually versatile voice, ranging from rich operatic tones to Broadway belt". Here she is, with a distinguished team of instrumentalists friends, in a recital of contemporary American vocal works, most of which were composed for her and for this collection. All the song texts appear in the booklet, translated into English where necessary, along with an introduction to each work by its composer.

A child's nightmare is the subject of Jake Haggie's short cycle. Not every composer would have found Galway Kinsell's poetry suited to musical setting, and you might not have guessed that the cycle is a "tender meditation about our brief, impermanent time on the planet" had the composer not told us so in the booklet. The musical language can be challenging, though there are sweeter sounds in the last song, a kind of lullaby as the child returns to bed. The instrumental postlude immediately loses touch with reality once more, suggesting that there will be more nightmares to come.

Avrom Sotnikover was a Lithuanian poet who endured two years in the Jewish ghettos in Vilnius. His poems, written in Yiddish, are smothered, though the subject matter ranges widely. There is defiance there, and so self-pity. This mood has been skillfully re-created

by David Garner in *Vilna Poems*, and the imaginative writing for the instrumental trio is a major part of this. David Krakauer's characteristic clarinet playing is particularly brilliant. Less compelling, I think, are the flute arabesques and harmonic underpinnings that accompany the voice in John Corigliano's *Three Irish Folk Song Settings*. Delan's singing, too, seems rather too artificial, though folk songs in any real sense they are not.

This is the first music I have heard by Gordon Getty, famous for another reason, and the impression is favourable. Finally Dickinson's verse is sparing with words and the subject matter narrow. Getty's equally sparing music proves an effective vehicle, with the old-fashioned virtue of aiming to complement or enhance the meaning. It is a lesser composer indeed who decides to take on Copland by setting *Because I could not stay for Death*. Getty refers to the "clip-clop of the horse carriage", and indeed the early part of the poet's journey "toward eternity" is jaunty and sounds like fun. The setting makes more sense as it progresses, and the short piano postlude is highly effective.

Rumi: Quatrains of Love is made up of ten short settings, some exceeding two minutes, of texts by the thirteenth-century Persian poet Rumi. The cycle explores differing aspects of love, including its "dangerous" side – loss of identity and freedom. Death – the end of love – rears its ugly head towards the end. If you respond to ideas such as "I want no conscious day or night, / I thought I knew who I was, but I was you" then you might respond more favourably than I to Lisa Pearl Woolf's settings. The opening quatrain is sung into the open piano so that the strings resonate, not a new idea, not ineffective, but it hardly seems to "grow" out of the text. Much of the work is successful: the setting of the words quoted above, for example, is both appropriate and beautiful. Later, though, when Delan successfully "kiss" her tone for the quatrain that begins "When I die, lay out my corpse", she cannot transform the music into anything more than a fairly predictable response to the words. The work is expertly written for the forces here and superbly performed by all concerned.

Many cabaret songs feature in William Bolcom's catalogue, and, as one might expect, the five recorded here inhabit quite a different world from the rest of the programme. A female organ-grinder, a woman cruelly betrayed, Messiaen, Puccini and a murdered, transverse singer all feature in *Ansil*. Weinstein's texts, and Bolcom has conjured up music that fits like a glove. Like the best songs of this type, they are funny, serious and even horrific, sometimes simultaneously. The high note at the end of the last song brings the house down, and I'll risk the wrath of the superb musicians on this disc by saying that it is in this work, of the six, that Delan sounds most at home.

William Hedley

Libera nos

The Cry of the Oppressed.

Rynd *Civitas sancti tui. Infelix ego. Miserere mei Deus. Plorans ploravit. Quomodo cantabimur? Cardoso* *Sitvat anima mea. Cristo Inter ventibulum. Lachrimas sitivat anima mea. Morrie Super flumina Babylonis. Peerson* *Laboravi in gemitu meo. Tallis* *In jejuniis et fletu. Libera nos. Salvator mundi. Contrapunctus/Duon Rees. Signum Crucis SGCD318* (full price, 1 hour 10 minutes). Latin text and English translations included. Website: www.signumcrucis.com.  Producer: Adrian Peacock. Engineer: Dave Heintz. Date: November 20th-20th, 2012.

Duon Rees's credentials as musicologist and conductor of, in particular, British and English polyphony with the Cambridge Tavener Choir and A Capella Portuguesa are well established. This is the first time I have heard his more recently founded group, Contrapunctus: the results are impressive indeed. The programme is an intelligent and fascinating mixture of English and Portuguese works on the theme of "Cries of the oppressed". Lost that subtitle lead anyone to think that there is the slightest risk of monotony, it should be pointed out immediately that this is avoided by the remarkable variety of compositional voices in the music chosen.

The proceedings begin with stately accounts of Rynd's *Civitas sancti tui*, surely one of the perfect expressions of the symbolism of the destruction of Jerusalem ever written, and a vocal reconstruction of Tallis's magnificent *Libera nos*, hitherto considered as a purely instrumental work. Rynd's *Quomodo cantabimur?* receives a similarly inspired reading. The three Portuguese works, by Cardoso and Pedro de C里斯, provide very interesting company for the English pieces not only for thematic reasons but for their stylistic differences and similarities. The lamenting intensity of Cardoso's masterly *Sitvat anima mea*, beautifully captured in this performance, is certainly on a par with the works by Rynd recorded here.

Martin Peerson's music remains little known, so it is particularly good that his impressive *Laboravi in gemitu meo* is included here (the upturn voice has been reconstructed by Richard Rastall – the absence of this voice in the manuscript containing Peerson's motets is of course a principal reason for his neglect on the part of performers), though the classical poise of the Rynd *Because* that follows is the more telling after Peerson's madrigalistic style. The sound of the ensemble is in general rounded and well blended, though there are moments when a voice (usually an inner one) will be noticeable precisely for the lack of such blend, generally, I think, on account of an excess of enthusiasm, and there are one or two entries that could have been tidier. These are very nice quibbles, however, and the choir's sound is beautifully captured by Signum's team.

Jan Moody

Opera

Rivoli

Bononcini *Griselda* – In te, spena
Griselda — Cara spena.

Broschi *Artaserse* – Son qual nave.

Leo *Andromaca* – Tolor che into è il
vento. Demetrio – Freme orgogliosa
l'onda.

Vinci *Alessandro* – Risveglio lo sdegno.

Il Medo – Sento due fiamme in petto;
Non è più folle lusinga. Taci o di morte.
Semiramide riconosciuta – In braccio a
mille furie.

David Hansen (countertenor); **Academia**

Montis Regalis/Alessandro de Marchi

(producer)

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 8883 74401-2

(full price, 1 hour 16 minutes); Italian text and
English/French/Swedish translations included; website
www.sonymasterworks.com | Producer/Engineer
Sean Lewis. Dates: June 12th–16th, 2013.

Remember when it was easy to pick between
countertenors? You had Alfred Deller and
Russell Oberlin, depending on where you
lived. Then along came James Bowman, Paul
Esswood and Drew Minter. Recordings were
relatively scarce, devoted to late songs and/or
folk songs, and Baroque Masses and oratorios.
Most of these men had diaphanous sounds,
not trained for the opera house, and hardly
anyone knew that Vivaldi had written dozens
of operas with castrati as star singers; women
were cast in castrati roles in Handel operas
(or the parts were sung by baritone) and
names like Vinci, Leo and Broschi were
footnotes. In addition, the countertenor range
rarely went above the G atop the treble clef.

With the release of the 1994 film *Fennell*,
a whole new audience found interest in the
strange exotic sound and phenomenon of the
castrato, even if the voice used in the film was
a digital composite of mezzo-soprano Lisa
Malin-Goldfarb and countertenor Derek Lee
Ragie. That same year, David Daniels drew
international fame as Noro at New York
State's Glensburgh Festival, repeating it at
the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1996; in
1997 he was the coveted Richard Tucker
Award (the first countertenor to do so) and
his recording career began that year as well.
He introduced the world to a more muscular
tone, rounder, more focused, less 'beady' and
more even from top to bottom. He also added
a tone or two to both ends of the scale.

By then the interest in Baroque opera had
taken hold and since then it has been raising
countertenors. Some have already come and
gone – Jochen Kowaldki and Brian Asawa
come to mind – while others have become
superstars. Most have been alto (the term
Deller preferred); lately there are sopranos,
both in tone and range. Philippe Jaroussky's

Now

very feminine sound is beautiful and backed
up with fine focus; Michael Mancini's higher
range – about a fifth above the 'norm' –
wanted for pitch accuracy and could be strident;
Max Emanuel Cenčić seems sophisticated,
with what is basically an alto sound that can
become fascinatingly ferocious at top. And
here we have the young Australian David
Hansen, who is sure to cause controversy.

The 'Rivoli' of the CD's title are Farnell,
Caffrelli, Cavosini and other castrati of the
eighteenth century. Hansen's voice, as far
as one can tell on a recording (backed up
by some YouTube studying) is a good size
and has a decidedly soprano timbre. He can
swell a note from a nice *pianissimo* to forte
and add or subtract vibrato. The registers are
equalized and the range is stupendous in a
run near the end of Broschi's 'Son qual nave'
(from *Artaserse*), here performed in a version
which includes some of Farnell's ornaments.
Hansen manages a cascade from a low F-sharp
up to a high C-sharp and almost back around.
In the same aria, he takes 178 notes in one
30-second run (I didn't count them; the
statement is in the notes and I listened,
astounded – at 4'37", by the way). He never
drops a note. It's dazzling. But one can't help
hearing in the octave leaps up to high A flat
(around 3'00"), that those A flats come out
vaguely as squawks. He can sustain a high B
like Juan Sberlender. The 'sulfur B' section
of the aria exhibits some of the loveliest
singing you'll ever hear from any voice range;
the legato is pure, the diction, while not in
the Baroque class, excellent, the knowledge of
precisely where the long caesura is going is
exquisitely musical.

The CD opener, from Vinci's *Semiramide*
evanescente ('In braccio a mille furie'), with
bass and strings back-up, is a wild ride, with
big leaps and Hansen's decorations in the
de capo are splendid; an aria from the same
composer's *Il Medo* ('Sento due fiamme in
petto') is a lament with sad sobos; Hansen's
trills are both expressive and lovely. 'Take
che into è il vento' from Leo's *Andromaca*
(another 'singing wind and tempestuous sea'
aria) is a brief stunner and one could learn
about the art of embellishment listening to
Hansen. A sustained B flat near the aria's
close – utterly vibrato-free – will astound
many; the addition of the tone makes it
sound almost sharp and those allegro to this
kind of acting party will complain. Indeed,
throughout, it's the brightness of Hansen's
tone that may cause the controversy
mentioned above: when he sings in the
middle of his range and lower, there is great
warmth and sensibility – 'Cara spena' from
Bononcini's *Griselda* is filled with sadness and
regret. But the upper octave – the 'noisy

ness' which makes him so special – can be a
tall strident. The secret is not to listen to the
whole CD – about 76 minutes – in one
sitting, but that is as true here as it has been
with Pavarotti, Nilsson et al. In brief, Hansen
is a miraculous singer with a unique sound,
spectacular technique and a strong streak of
madness, when called for, even on high.
Those who do not like the countertenor
voice in general will not be able to make
their mind 'He sounds like my Aunt Hilda'
excuses, like David Daniels and Cenčić, this
is a voice backed up by strength and a fierce
desire to communicate. I hope to hear much
more of Hansen, but wouldn't mind if he
wrote's recorded quite as close-up as he is
here. I've given short shrift to Alessandro
de Marchi and Academia Montis Regalis
simply because they are ideal. Most of the
arias here are recorded for the first time:
lovers of great singing and the Baroque are
in for a treat. **Robert Levine**

Britten Peter Grimes, Op. 33

Now

Alan Oke (tenor) Peter Grimes; **Giselle Allen**
(soprano) Ellen Orford; **David Kempton**
(baritone) Captain Baldrade; **Gaynor Keeble**
(mezzo) Auntie; **Henry Waddington** (bar-
baritone) Swallow; **Catherine Wyn-Rogers**
(mezzo) Mrs Sedley; **Christopher Gillett** (tenor)
Red Herring Adams; **Richard Rice** (baritone)
Ned Kocor; **Stephen Richardson** (bass-baritone)
Hobson; **Charmian Hutton** (soprano) First
Niece; **Alexandra Bedford** (soprano) Second
Niece; **North Murray** (tenor) Bob Bole; **Chorus**
of Opera North; **Chorus of the Guildhall
School of Music and Drama**; **Britten-Pears
Orchestra/Stuart Drax**.

Signum Classics SIGCD348 (medium price, two
discs, 2 hours 17 minutes); English lyrics included.
Website www.signumrecords.com | Producer Nick
Parker. Engineer Mike Hatch. Dates: Live performances
at Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Snape on June 7th
and 8th, 2012.

Comparisons:

- Wibbers, Hagen, Summers, *Cambridge* et al.
- BOH Chor and OnCk. Davis (Philips) 682 887-2 (1976)
- Langridge, Watson, Opie, *Garnon* et al.
- UFO Chor, City of London Festival/Hobson
(Chandos) CND990238 (1991)

How fitting that the one new *Peter Grimes*
on CD during the Britten year should
come from Aldeburgh. It's taken from
two performances undertaken in June 2011,
with Stuart Bedford achieving marvellous
results with an orchestra made up entirely
of young musicians, as is half the chorus.

Let us begin with Bedford, whose
interpretation is clearly a peak in his long
association with Britten's music. It should be
noted first that the conductor has inspired a
truly exacting standard of musical preparation
from cast, chorus and orchestra. The sheer
precision is evident in every page of the score
never one astonished, doubly so given that the opera
is being performed 'live'. The youthful Britten-

Fears Orchestra consistently achieves a quality of sound as magnificent as that heard in any complete *Grimes* on CD (the recorded sound, by the way, is absolutely top-notch). From the start – in the orchestra's brief responses after each line of Swallow and Grimes in their exchange during the *Prologue* – it's clear that Bedford has brought forth a tremendous degree of detail in the playing. Each section of the orchestra beams admirable timbre and terrific articulation. Excellence is evident not only in mass but in any contribution from a soloist (especially the cellist in the *Pasaglia*). The entire ensemble has completely mastered the technical and expressive needs of Britten's exceptionally demanding instrumental interludes. At the same time, never have I heard a Grimes orchestra that is more truly a character in the drama of each scene.

What a lovely idea it was to bring choruses from the Guildhall together with the Opera North Chorus. Together they make a most impressive showing, with the sound never excessively heavy but certainly as powerful as the music requires, and with quite exceptionally good diction. As one might expect, a peak of excitement for the listener comes in the wordless, large-scale, wave-like lines preceding the repeated cries of 'Peter Grimes!' – I don't know any recording that handles this episode more effectively.

The title role is something of a disappointment. Alan Oke gives a satisfactory performance, but, of course, that is not enough. An ex-baritone, he has the crucial lower register for Grimes, he's musically and he sings text as clearly as the rest of the cast. The voice, though, is limited in colour, and under strain when Britten asks it to 'sit' above the staff full on (as in the 'Old Joe has gone fishing' episode at the pub). It sounds like a large character tenor rather than the 'full lyric' ideally required. He has the fierceness of Grimes, and the defiance, but never the vulnerability, leaving one in the end unmoved.

The stand-out among the principals by some distance is Gwilio Allen's Ellen Orford, a role to which surprisingly few sopranos have managed to do full justice vocally. Allen lacks a distinctive timbre, but the voice has a solid centre (making the union phrases with Oke's Grimes in the *Prologue* rather more effective than one usually hears). The lower middle, very important in this role, is excellent. Janice Watson on the Chandos recording offers more 'cream' in the tone overall, but Allen gives the more memorable characterization, thanks largely to a more penetrating textual delivery. Here is a notably positive and vigorous Ellen, with a dramatic involvement to match that of Heather Harper on the Philips recording.

Listen to Allen's 'We have no power' in the final scene and you'll hear the full extent of Ellen's despair.

The other ladies are Catherine Wyn-Rogers (Miss Sedley), still solid vocally, remarkably fearless musically, pristine textually – one needs to look even once at the libretto when she's singing – but not quite nasty enough in Act 1; Gaynor Keeble (*Auntie*), with the necessary richness for her lines in the women's quartet, and with a suitably earthy, heavy portrayal; and Alexandra Hinton and Chiamia Bedford (*Nieces*), a bit white-toned above the staff but astonishingly well matched in vocal timbre and suitably lively in manner.

The men do well, especially Henry Waddington's heavy Swallow. Charles Rice's Ned Krone sounds quite youthful but with an aptly light lyric baritone, relishing the role with a kind of glee in his delivery that he tends to overdo. One's ear immediately notices the mellow timbre of David Kemper (Billette), but always vocally steady in the first act but impressing in that respect thereafter. He is not quite the sympathetic aural presence one feels from Chandos's Alan Oke. Stephen Richardson offers the big, heavy, dark-toned instrument needed for Hubson. The supporting tenors, Robert Murray (Bob Boole) and Christopher Gillett (Reed Adams), haven't much beauty of

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW DIGITAL ISSUE

We are delighted to be able to offer readers an annual subscription to IRR in a fully searchable PDF format. Initially, a PDF of the November 2013 and subsequent issues will be sent to your email address approximately five days prior to the publication of the paper edition.

Eventually this service will be part of our website, where your subscription PDF will be accessible for you to download.

Single specified issues as PDFs will be available from and including the November 2013 issue, but as yet the IRR archive of issues back to March 2000 has yet to be transferred to a usable digital format.

At present we want to keep the service as simple as possible. To subscribe to the digital issue you can use the coupon below, phone us or email us to place a subscription.

The worldwide cost of a 12-issue Digital Subscription will be £55 (US\$90).

A single specified Digital issue will be £6 (US\$10).

- Please send me a single Digital November 2013 issue Please send me a single Digital December 2013 issue
- Please commence a Digital Subscription with the issue
- Please debit my MasterCard / Visa / Switch / Delta / Connect / Amex

Card Number

Valid from Expiry Date Security Code

Name Address

Signature email

International Record Review, 9 Spring Bridge Meads, Ealing, London W5 2AB, Great Britain
Tel: +44(0)20 8567 9244 email: bary.ining@recordreview.co.uk Website: www.recordreview.co.uk

sound, especially the latter, but here again, the words are put across with phenomenal clarity and poise, which amply compensates.

The booklet includes a complete libretto, but individual tracks within the text are not indicated. There are also artist biographies, plus a brief but fascinating essay regarding the development of the work.

The Philips recording (1978) remains my first choice: Jon Vickers in the title role, Colin Davis conducting with forces of the Royal Opera House who, having truly lived with this piece, gave it the ultimate in dedication and accomplishment. I will return to the Aldeburgh performance on many occasions, however, especially for the contributions of orchestra and choruses, which continually renew one's admiration for Britten's genius as a musical dramatist.

Roger Pines

Buxton Doktor Faust, K303.

Wolfgang Koch (baritone) Doktor Faust; **John**

Daszak (tenor) Mephistopheles/Nightwatchman;

Catherine Naglestad (soprano) Duchess of

Parma; **Raymond Vey** (tenor) Duke of Parma/

Soldier/Maglor; **Steven Humes** (bass) Wagner/

Gravik; **Alfred Kuhn** (bass) Master of

Ceremonies; **Adrian Sampetran** (bass) Natural

Scientist/Second Student from Cracow/Amoldus/

Student; **Ulrich Rees** (tenor) Lieutenant/First

Student from Cracow/First Student from

Wittenberg; **Christian Rieger** (baritone)

Theologian; **Klaus Barten** (bass) Jurist; **Rüdiger**

Trebes (bass) Third Student from Cracow/Levit/

Third Student from Wittenberg; **Kenneth**

Roberson (tenor) Beelzebub/Terror-oly; **Jason**

A. Smith (tenor) First Protestant Student; **Marc**

Görg (tenor) Second Protestant Student; **Werner**

Kind (bass) Third Protestant Student; **Ingolf**

Kumbriek (tenor) First Catholic Student; **Jochen**

Schüler (tenor) Second Catholic Student; **Elmar**

Schlöter (organ); **Chor und Extrachor des**

Bayerischen Staatstoper; Bayerische

Staatstheater/Toniál Netopil.

Ohne Classics OC96 (medium price, three discs,

2 hours 23 minutes). German libretto included.

Website www.ohneclassics.de

Producer

Wilhelm Meister. Engineer Klausen Kamp. Date

live performance at the Staatstoper, Munich on June

28th, 2006.

Companions

Henschel, Begley, Jelic, Karl et al.

Lyric National Op. Chor and Orff/Riegens

(voice) 3384 21031-2 (1987-88)

Buxton wrote his own libretto for Doktor Faust, starting work on it as early as 1910, preceding his composition of the score some years later. At the time of his death in 1954 the work was still not finished. Later, Philipp Jarnach undertook the completion of the opera, which received its premiere in Dresden on May 21st, 1957, with Robert Burg as Faust, Theo Stocker as Mephistopheles and Meta Seimoneyer singing the Duchess of Parma, conducted by Fritz Busch.

Faust and his assistant Wagner are visited by three students from Cracow, who hand him a magic book. On reading it, Faust summons the spirits of darkness, of which the sixth and last is Mephistopheles, who demands that Faust should serve him, to which agreement is given. In the next scene, Mephistopheles brings about the death of the soldier whose sister Faust has seduced. The wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Parma finds Faust infatuated by the bride. They leave together. Wittenberg is the background for the next scene. Faust comes an argument between Protestant and Roman Catholic students. Mephistopheles throws down the corpse of the Duchess's child, which turns into a bundle of straw that the devil sets alight. Mephistopheles next appears as a nightwatchman and Faust gives money to a beggar, who is revealed as the ghost of the Duchess. At midnight, Faust dies.

As expected, the Ohne Classics booklet contains the libretto in German only; I am following the performance with the English translation from the Frano set, a recording which begins with a spoken prologue (by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau) and ends with Jarnach's music (Antony Beaumont's 1984 completion comes as a bonus). In the Munich Festival's performance here, the producer centred both, so the opera ends musically inconclusively with Faust speaking rather than singing.

Although the earliest complete performance of Doktor Faust was issued by DG, with Fischer-Dieskau and Wilhelm Cocherus under the baton of Ferdinand Leitner, the set that I have to hand for comparison is the Frano. For a start, the sound on that recording is clearer, better focused than that from this live performance, which is hard and sometimes hollow, less easy on the ear than the Frano. Toniál Netopil is generally more forceful in his direction (not meant pejoratively) than Kent Nagano, who presents a more lyrical interpretation: each conductor is seconded in his live by his singers. That does not mean that Netopil necessarily sets faster tempos; he may be quicker in one piece, only for Nagano to adapt a brisker speed elsewhere.

Some telling contributions come from singers of secondary roles here, Steven Humes and Ulrich Rees being good examples, but of those with more substantial parts the Frano cast members create the better impression, though between the relative interpretations of Mephistopheles and Faust it is a matter of approach. Dehnen's Wolfgang Koch has a stronger voice than that of Dietrich Henschel on Frano and his approach is the more 'operatic' (other characters in his repertoire include Alceste and Barak). It is also of a darker hue than his counterpart's and a bit rougher. He does, however, sound as well at the end of his long aria as at the beginning. Henschel, who is one of the best exponents of Lieder in his generation, reflects his skill in that field by singing with more variety in his use of colour and volume than Koch

does, creating a man of introspection and deep inner thoughts. Both are valid interpretations.

Between Kim Begley and John Daszak as Mephistopheles there is also a differentiation of vocal colour, and again it fits the general picture in the respective performances. Buxton is somewhat unkind to his devil by requiring him to deal with some awkward lines of high tessitura, one example being the short scene of Mephistopheles and the Duke of Parma at the end of the first scene of what is called the 'Principal Action': 'Was Wichtige, sagt Ich!' Daszak assumes a Mime-type timbre, almost a whine, which is effective if not pretty, whereas Begley's tone is warmer and round and suitable for Nagano's reading. The photo in the booklet of Daszak as a hirsute figure suggests basic nastiness; Begley's singing indicates, perhaps, a more subtle tempter. (Of 16 photographs, 11 show Koch, plus two more on the box.)

At Munich, the Duchess of Parma is sung by Catherine Naglestad, and in this role I do prefer Frano's soprano, Eva Jessi. In the Duchess's aria, 'So ruft mich', Naglestad shows a heat in her voice which goes beyond being just vibrato, especially when she is not singing softly (she does produce two or three nicely placed top notes), although her understanding of the role is noticeable. Jessi is less outgoing, more reflective in the aria. She is also sweeter of tone than Naglestad, who is definitely not helped by the recording, which adds a stately edge to her voice. The Duke is also better served on Frano, if only because Torsten Kroll, vocally warm and firm, has a voice which is superior to that of Raymond Vey, whose singing in another role, the brother of the woman seduced by Faust, Gretchen, is less appealing than that of Frano's Detlef Roth.

This present issue is not to be ignored, but on several counts, as I have pointed out, my preference is for the Frano set. On DVD it is a performance from Zurich in 2006, conducted by Philippe Jordan, with Thomas Hampson as Faust and Gregory Kunde as Mephistopheles (Arthaus Musik, reviewed in April 2008), which I have not seen.

John T. Pugh

Lortzing Regina.

Daniela

Kirch (soprano) Richard/Freedom Fighter; **Ralf**

Simon (tenor) Kilar; **Detlef Roth** (baritone)

Stephan; **Albert Ponsdorfer** (bass) Simon; **Jean**

Brokhuisen (mezzo) Barbara; **Peter Schöns**

(baritone) Wolfgang; **Theresa Holzhauser**

(mezzo) Beate; **Fragan Philharmonic Chorus**;

Münchner Rundfunkorchester/Ulf Schirmer.

CPD 777 716-2 (full price, two discs, 2 hours

27 minutes). Website www.cpd.de. Producer

Torsten Schriever. Engineer Tom Schirko. Date

live performance at the Prinzregententheater,

Munich on January 28th and 29th, 2011.

Companions

Klein, Wecker, Kowals, Friedrich et al. Berlin Radio

Chor und Orchester (Walfart) WLL20081 (1982)

Although Lortzing composed *Agnes* in 1848, it was not performed until 1899 at the Berlin Court Opera with an altered text. Apart from this new issue from CPO, the only recording known to me is one from an East Berlin Radio broadcast in 1951. The two versions are not the same, and the radio performance contains only about half the opera.

1848 was a year in which Austria saw mobs of agitators plundering Vienna. Against this background Lortzing set *Agnes*. The workers in Simon's factory are threatening to strike for higher wages. They are calmed by Richard, the manager, who is rewarded by Simon's agreeing to the marriage of his daughter Regina and Richard, much to the displeasure of the foreman Stephan, who proceeds to abduct the young woman. He takes her to the cottage of Barbara, whose son Kilian works at the factory, but then moves her to a nearby powder magazine. Kilian makes Stephan's accomplice Wolfgang and his revolutionaries drunk and fires Regina, but at the beginning of Act 3 it transpires that Stephan has kidnapped her again. Richard and some armed men approach the powder magazine, whereupon Stephan threatens to blow up himself and Regina, but she saves his gun and shoots him, thus reuniting herself with Richard.

The opera begins with a lively and useful Overture, which could be considered essential to the seriousness of the plot but is enjoyable in its own right, played with a spring in its step by IHI Schirmer's Munich Radio Orchestra. Throughout the whole of the work is pleasing music in arias and ensembles. A small amount of German dialogue occupied four tracks, just under eight minutes altogether. Sadly, each of these four tracks is separated from those with music, in the unhelpful manner in which CPO inserts so few track markings in the score. For instance, to access early Richard's aria 'Der seid bedrickt' one has to go forward 4'11", even though it absolutely craves out for its own track. The finale to Act 1 is on a single 20-minute track. I should have used about nine.

Having listened to the complete opera, I cannot think why *Agnes* is not regarded as being on a par with Lortzing's more well-known ones. It contains some attractive melodies, well displayed by singers and orchestra. Two arias from Act 1 alone are worthy of inclusion in vocal CDs: Richard's 'Der seid bedrickt', his address to the factory workers, which involves the chorus, and Stephan's 'Doch nun vermannt' (preceded by the recitative 'Was sprach der alte Tui?'). The weakest aria is that of Barbara, 'Nicht so Heilich kann die Trübheit', at the beginning of Act 2: a single piece for a secondary character, which the American mezzo Jean Brocklitz sings competently enough in her light tones.

Lortzing wrote roles for two tenors, Richard and Kilian, both of importance but neither dominating in a way that one

might expect from an operatic tenor. Like Piskerton in *Malina* (hopefully, Richard does not appear in the second act, which is devoted mainly to Regina and Stephan, who have a long and interesting duet beginning with Regina's words, 'Noch einmal, Unausweich' ('Once again, monsoon'). Each of these four roles contains at least one aria, as does that of Simon.

The Prague Philharmonic Chorus and the Munich Radio Orchestra add to the life of the performance under Schirmer's vital direction, but then taking part in this neglected opera cannot induce a sense of routine. The soloists are not international names in the main: the short biographies in CPO's booklet, a welcome inclusion, show that many of them sing primarily in second-track opera houses. In spite of that, they all make notable contributions.

The title role is taken by the German soprano Johanna Storz, whose repertoire includes *Agathe*, *Tatiana* and *Donna Elvira*. She holds her own both vocally and dramatically, dealing with Regina's melodramatic passages adroitly and facing Stephan's threats with vocal resolution, showing that this Regina is no wimp.

To the part of Richard, Daniel Kirch brings a voice with a rather cutting edge (not unpleasant) and a clarity of utterance, heard not only in his aria but in the song to Betty at the end of the opera. Not greatly dissimilar in timbre but a shade less weighty is Ralf Simon, equally clean in production. He has a strophic song (not allotted a track of its own) near the close of Act 2, 12'10" into the finale. Although its first line is 'Hilms, hilms in schweifer Firt', the first two verses are omitted although the words are printed in the booklet. It is a hoarse number with a refrain of 'di di dan, di di dan' sung initially by Kilian then by the chorus of revolutionaries as they become more and more drunk. To Schirmer's sprightly beat, Simon sings it bravely, in a tone low full and warm that Ernst Kusch's on the Wallfahrt set, Kusch (1925-71) was then in his mid-twenties and went on to sing Florentin and various Wagner roles. That was Simon the tenor, but Simon the Factory owner is performed by the deep-voiced Austrian bass Albert Pöschendorfer, securely rolling out a voice which has been heard as Fasolt, Fafner and Hagen.

As so often, it is the villain who is the most colorful character. Stephan has much fine music, not only in 'Doch nun vermannt'. Fortunately, the casting of the high baritone Detlef Roth was a good choice. He sounds almost a tenor *masqué* with his fine, ocular upper register; the few weak notes at the lower end of his range do not really detract from a compelling performance of what is actually the largest assignment among the men. Roth crosses a greatly appreciated addition to the catalogue.

John T. Hughes

Mozart Così fan tutte, K588

NEW

Miah Persson (soprano) **Friedlrig**; **Angela Brower** (mezzo) **Dorabella**; **Moïsa Edmundo** (soprano) **Despina**; **Rolando Villazón** (tenor) **Ferrando**; **Adam Placheta** (bass-baritone) **Giuglietto**; **Alessandro Corbelli** (baritone) **Don Alfonso**; **Vocalensemble Rastatt**; **Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Yannick Nézet-Séguin**. **DG 479 0641** (median price, three discs, 2 hours 58 minutes) Italian libretto and English/French/German translations included. www.deutsche-gramophon.com  Producer Gail McClaughlin. Engineers: Rainer Mallard, Daniel Kemper, Claudio Becker-Fox. Date of live performance at the Festspielhaus, Baden-Baden in July 2012.

Comperions

Beechey, Maestri, James, Todd et al., Monteverdi

Or, *Baroque* (Naxos) 017 839-2 (1992)

Isaković, Group, Argentina, Schäfer et al.

La Petite Bande Choir and Orchestra

(Naxos) ACCO29480 (1992)

Talbot, Nelt, Beck, Wierling et al., Drottningholm

Court Theatre Choir and Orchestra

(Naxos) 855 136-2 (1990)

Finning, van Otter, Isenhardt, Laparra et al.

London Voices, CDH501 (Decca) 001 170-2 (1994)

This is the second instalment of a projected survey of Mozart's seven mature operas, from *Idomeneo* to *Le donzelle di Tiro*, under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin (I reviewed *Don Giovanni* in December 2012). This *Così* live tape comes from live concert performances at the Baden-Baden Festspielhaus in 2012, like its predecessor a year earlier, but with a different orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe rather than the Malibu Chamber Orchestra. On the evening I attended, the Ferrandos, Rolando Villazón, was said to be suffering from an allergy at half time – he had sounded underpowered in 'Un aura amorosa', but not alarmingly so – and he marked his part in the ensembles in Act 2. His aria, 'Tadino, scherzino' and the sublime duet with Friedlrig, 'Tua già angosci', were cut. Here he sounds in rude health – perhaps too rude for Mozart – and the opera is given in a very full version of the text, with only Ferrando's second aria, 'Ah! In veggio' – rarely sung live and dropped in most of the 'classic' recordings – omitted from the sequence of concerted numbers.

Alongside the conductor, Villazón is the other constant of this series, and he will apparently feature in all of the sets – presumably apart from *Le nozze di Figaro*, unless he has ambitions to sing Don Basilio's aria about the act's din – at Tannus and Belmonte, Tino and Idomeneo. On the basis of his *Ottavio* and now Ferrando, I am not convinced this is an exciting prospect for Mozartians, although it may be one for Villazonians.

Certainly, it is a rare pleasure to hear such a full, Mediterranean-sounding voice in Mozart's tenor roles. Ferrando was, of course, written for an Italian singer, the otherwise obscure Vincenzo Calzoni, a member of the Vienna troupe for which Mozart was writing in the late 1780s and

1780, the year of *Caï fau tate's* premiere (he also created roles in Salieri's *La grotte di硢ofino*, Strakos's *Gl'apostoli* – based on the Comedy of Errors – Salieri's *L'aboz de Diana* and the letter's *Una Cosa una*, which Mozart quotes in the second finale of *Don Giovanni*). Villain's idiosyncratic and expressive Italian diction in the recitatives stands out among the otherwise Swedish (Mish Persson), American (Angela Brooker) and Czech (Adam Plachetka) quartet of lovers, but his romantic style, initially unobtrusive in the opening trio, quiet and sweet of Act 1, becomes obsessive as he piles on the emotion at the crisis of Act 2 when Guglielmo reveals that Dorabella has been unfaithful. All kinds of voracious mania, sobs and postures, disturb the Mozartian line and unbalance the equilibrium of an otherwise well-matched ensemble. As Don Ottavio – more of a 'star' part in any case – Villain's anachronistic style was evident but it mattered less than it does here. For all the pathos of his tone and his evident sincerity, his Ferrando belongs to a different stylistic world from the rest of his colleagues.

The other singer common to the *Don Giovanni* set is the recent DG signing, Mojca Erdman, a thin-voiced Zurlino here, an even more dull and irritating Despina here, who interpolates stratospheric 'Zerbisetta' notes on the words 'pieta Mommica' (Dr Mommica's magnet) in her 'Tutti' – not! – doctor's voice. Erdman is a different kind of throwback from an earlier *Caï fau tate* tradition of casting very sweethearts in the role: of the maintenance lined in my selected comparisons, Eirian James (Gardiner), Adelina Scarabelli (Solti), Georgine Bivick (Ortmann) and even the light-voiced Nancy Argenta (Kaufman) are all superior. Erdman is a major blot on this set and the series so far.

It's a shame as so much of the recording is very enjoyable indeed. Nivart-Sigala proves a thoroughly modern Mozartian, aware of the advantages period instruments have brought to the music – ailer string textures, effortlessly highlighted wind solo – without turning his back on an older tradition – most strongly represented by Karl Böhm, who made three commercial recordings of the opera – one that banished in Mozart's baby antlers.

The young Canadian's spacious tempo for the opening of the Act 1 finale 'Alto tu tutto in un momento' reflects the melancholy of the girls as they contemplate the departure of their lovers and the initially unconvincing attention of the rustic 'Albanians', their *nonno* in disguise. Nivart-Sigala is expansive, too, in the slow sections of Fiordiligi's Act 2 rounds, 'Per pietà', and her subsequent duet with Ferrando. His control of the momentary in the Miggia 'action' ensembles and the two finales is exhilarating and exemplary. For a young conductor who has worked mainly on the concert podium, his sense of theatre is remarkable. He encourages his singers to keep the recitatives moving at a cracking

pace, too, abetted by his lively continuo players (Borjania Kyf, harpsichord, and Richard Lester, viola).

Persson's Fiordiligi – already captured for posterity on the beautiful 2006 Nicholas Hymen production from Glyndebourne on DVD (reviewed in April 2007) – is the most treasurable performance here: with his fresh, still young-sounding soprano, she puts on a good show of disc histrionics in 'Come scoglio', but her true nature is revealed in her heart-stoppingly lyrical 'Per pietà' – the lone solo deserves plaudits, too – and in the wonderful scene of self-evaluation in which she despises herself in one of Ferrando's uniforms and hat and marvels at the transformation in a mirror. The rising Munich-based mezzo Angela Brooker blends well with Persson's bright, creamy soprano, without ever threatening to upstage her. She is fiery and flighty, throwing off a deft 'E amore un labovello' in Act 2 – her soprano purely 'Sensu implacabile' in Act 1 sounds forced, but that may be intentional.

The Guglielmo of Adam Plachetka – Glyndebourne's Figgis last summer – is Muff and solid, but it's a shame that Luca Pisaroni, the brilliant Leporello of last year's *Don Giovanni* and probably optimum casting for Guglielmo today, was not available for the recording. The cast is completed by Alessandro Corbelli's Don Alfonso, a veteran solo performance certainly, but one which ranks with the greatest on disc for savour and ironic delivery of Da Ponte's text.

Like my selected comparisons above, this new set is not without obvious drawbacks, but its *Caï fau tate* on record is perfect from first to last. This one is vividly revealing, with only a few background times revealing the presence of an audience. If you love this opera as much as I do, you will want to hear it for the conductor, orchestra, Persson's lovely Fiordiligi and Corbelli's idiosyncratic Alfonso. Villain's Ferrando is a special case, always worth hearing, too, even if he sounds out of place in this company and context.

High Caming

Mozart

Die Zauberflöte, K620.

Bernarda Bobro (soprano) Pamina; **Norman Reinhardt** (tenor) Tamino; **Daniel Schmutzhard** (baritone) Papageno; **Ana Durlovski** (soprano) Queen of the Night; **Alfred Reiter** (bass) Sarastro; **Eike Wilm Schube** (baritone) Speaker/Second Man in Armour; **Dénise Beck** (soprano) Papagena; **Martin Koch** (tenor) Monostatos/First Man in Armour; **Magdalena Anna Hofmann** (soprano) First Lady; **Verena Gutz** (mezzo) Second Lady; **Katrin Wurdum** (mezzo) Third Lady; **Lalla Salome Fischer** (soprano) First Boy; **Eva Dworschak** (soprano) Second Boy; **Dyfnyn Meijts** (mezzo) Third Boy; **Elzsharlov Chladt** (baritone) Priest; **Prague Philharmonic Choir; Wiener Symphoniker/ Patrick Summers**.



C Major Entertainment 712708 (2 hour, 20 minutes). Subtitles in Chinese/English/French/German/Korean/Italian. Website www.cmajor-entertainment.com. NTSC. 16:9. Region 2. DTS 5.1. Stage Director David Pountney. Video Director Felix Brisch. Date: Date two performances at the Brugger Festival in July 2011.

This production of *Die Zauberflöte* created by David Pountney for the 2011 Brugger Festival is colourful as regards both the setting by Julian Engels and Marie-Jeanne Lecca's costumes, with fantastical creatures resembling an imagined joint enterprise by Heath Robinson, Ronald Searle and Maurice Sendak. They include three dragons standing permanently at the back and to each side of the set.

Over the years, much has been written about this opera: what this represents, what that means, what symbolism was intended by Mozart and his librettist Schikaneder, what point they were making about the Roman Church and about Freemasonry. For me, the theorists can express their views and read into the story what they want, but I am happy to listen to the music and the performance rather than indulge in airy-fairy speculation. Am I the only one?

In Pountney's production, the Three Ladies are not so hot as puppets atop some prehistoric creatures each manipulated by three (visible) men. If the idea pleases, one will find that it works well here, with deft synchronization by the puppeteers. As the artists take a bow at the end of the performance, the three singers appear, so presumably they sang from backstage. Wherever they were, they sang most creditably, blending successfully. The Three Boys, voiced by women, resemble dolls with overgrown plastic heads, neither clever nor attractive. Again, the vocalists are separate. The two Men in Armour are likewise represented by models. In each case I should have preferred to see the singers.

Professor Clive Brown of Leeds University has been reported as saying that Mozart and Beethoven would be shocked to hear how their works are played by the orchestras of today and suggests that they would have expected the musicians to interpret the music freely, as jazz players do. I have not read his comments in detail and so do not know his reasoning but I am sure that Mozart would have been surprised to see how the position of the conductor has been inflated. Would it not be an education for all of us if we could travel back to his time to hear performances of operas, concertos or symphonies? In this Brugger *Zauberflöte*, Patrick Summers conducts the Vienna Symphonic Orchestra and perhaps misses some light and shade at times.

The singers are wearing small microphones close to the mouth. One hears a full sound from both them and the chorus and orchestra, with clear pictures to enhance viewing. The video director captures the important parts of the action.

A scene from *Die Zauberflöte*

© Major Entertainment

A small question of uncertainty involves the role of Pamina. This DVD contains what must be taken from more than one performance as no specific date in July is given. As a result, the cast list printed in the booklet and that on the back of the box announces Bernarda Böhler in the part, but the final credits name both her and Gisela Stille: the latter certainly sang on the opening night. One must assume that most of the role is sung by Böhler, who seems rather placid on occasion but produces an easy sound, particularly limpid in the scene with Tamino and the two Men in Amour.

Singing Tamino is an American tenor whom I had not heard before but want to again. Norman Reichardt possesses a somewhat dark-headed lyric tenor with a strength and steadiness to intensify his vocal achievement. Tamino is not a role that challenges its performer with the scalework of Ottavio or Monnozo, and I should like the chance to hear him in such fare. Based on his work here, Reichardt is a welcome addition to my collection.

So too is Ana Dariașki as the Queen of the Night. At the start of her first aria, 'O stinno mie!', her tone is so full that one might wonder how she will cope with the strophic notes that Mozart wrote for his sister-in-law Josepha Hader, who created the role. Nevertheless, she does, showing no strain on the staccato high F with which Mozart confronted Herold eight times in 'Der Hölle Rache', the second aria. On one descent there, Dariașki does dither through a couple of notes rather than articulate them, but that is a minor matter in this impressive interpretation. If you think of the Queen as being a light, ethereal soprano à la Rita Streich one may be surprised by Dariașki.

Sarastro, the Queen's antagonist, is played by Alfred Reiter, whose straight tone is not the jolliest or most suspenseful to have sung the part but is evenly produced in his arias. In this production, Sarastro, without his robes, is seen occasionally watching events but does not sing.

Contrasting with these four serious characters is Papageno, given a light-hearted touch by Daniel Schanzhandl in a voice of youthful security and a breezy manner. He draws the humour from the bird-catcher without resorting to slapstick and makes good use of his instrument in portraying the man's desires and fears. Less appealing is the overplaying of Divine Beck's old, pre-transformed Papageno. Was it her idea or Pountney's? Her lot of piled croakery is amusing; it is her coughing which is not.

The Three Ladies are vocally a fine trio; the Three Boys too, sung here by women, which means that we do not have the boyhood notes that boys sometimes produce. Martin Koch supplies a fuller sound than what one hears at times as Monnozo, who in this production, despite singing at least twice that he is Mack, is obviously not so. The Speaker of Eike Wilo Schulte is firm. For some reason, 'Soll ich dich Trauer', the trio for Pamina, Tamino and Sarastro, is omitted, as is the short duet 'Bewahret Euch' for the two priests.

John T. Hughes

Verdi Otello.

New CD/ SACD

Aleksandra Antonenko (tenor) Otello;
Kristelina Stoyanova (soprano) Desdemona;
Carlo Genufi (baritone) Iago; **Juan Francisco Castel** (tenor) Cassio; **Michael Spyrkes** (tenor) Rodrigo; **Barbara Di Castri** (mezzo) Emilia;
Eric Owens (bass-baritone) Lodovico; **Paolo Battaglia** (bass) Montano; **David Govertsen** (bass-baritone) Herald; **Chicago Children's Choir**; **Chicago Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Riccardo Muti.**

CSO Record CSOR901 1261 (full price, two-disc, 2 hours 16 minutes). Italian libretto and English/French translations included. Website www.cso.org/record. Producer David Frost. Engineer Christopher Will. Dates live performance in the Orchestra Hall, Symphony Centre, Chicago on April 7th, 8th and 12th, 2011.

Comparisons:

O'Neill, Schwanerstein, Farley, Clayton et al, London Iym Chor and Guelic Davis (SO Live) 1302700 (2009, SACD, rev. Nov 2010)
Antonella, Pajkovic, Almaraz, Castello et al, Salzburg Festival Children's Choir, Vienna State Op. Chor, VPO/Muti (C Major Entertainment) 201108 70108 (2008, Blu-ray/DVD, rev. Apr 2010)
Pountney, Te Kanawa, Nunn, Belle Johnson et al, Chicago Iym Chor and Orchestra (Decca) 031 809-2 (1991, CD)

As destiny would have it, the latest disc to land on the review pile following my final report on the gigantic Tanno Verdi box (page 18) was this concert recording of *Otello* from Chicago. It features Riccardo Muti on the podium and Aleksandra Antonenko in the title role, just as they were in the 2008 Salzburg Festival production which ended up halting the Tanno Verdi project when the Parma staging was scrapped at the last minute. Stephen Langridge's Salzburg production was one of the undoubted highlights of the set, superbly cast and bowdlered from Muti's own direction of the Vienna Philharmonic.

Given in 2011, marking a return to the podium for Muti following a period of ill-health, this performance bears the hallmarks familiar from that Salzburg production. In many ways, it is a cool, somewhat calculated performance, but reveals many inner workings in Verdi's miraculous score. The opening storm isn't taken at head-on speed, which allows a wealth of orchestral detail to emerge. Once again, Muti opts for the revised version (Paris, 1894) of the Act 1 concertaria, with a longer solo for Desdemona and which details Iago's plotting far more clearly. In 'Cassio's dream', Muti again denies the baritone his high octave for the line 'E io destino impugno che al Moro ti doni', bringing him down an octave, which sounds odd after he's been permitted it for the first quotation from Cassio's supposed sleep-talking.

The orchestral sound is splendid, particularly the incisive brass, who Mass lightly but without the 'glare' which characterized the Chicago sound under Solti in their recording, also taken from concert. Orchestra Hall offers a superb acoustic which considerably outshines that of the Barbican on Colin Davis's 1980 Live recording, another concert performance on disc. Both boast surround sound, but employed very differently. The 1980 Live engineers add thunder and cannon effects not heard in the Barbican performance itself, while those absent in Chicago. The CSO Record team uses surround sound to envelop the listener; offstage trumpets emerge from behind, as do the mandolins in the chorus of Cypriotes. The Herald makes his announcement from the rear right speaker.

The Chicago Symphony Chorus, sounding considerably more Italianate than for Solti in

1991, often careful rather than lassy singing in 'Fucos di gioia', where Mari draws out the wonderful flickering woodwind lines, but is charming in the Act 2 Cypriot duos where – praise be! – the Chicago Children's Choir is employed instead of women taking their vocal line, as happened in London. The choral sound of 'Viva Viviva!' on the arrival of Ludovico, the Venetian ambassador, is overwhelming.

'Oho that he'd not wisely but too well', Antonenko is every inch the finest Otello before us today. His interpretation has changed little, vocally, since Salzburg, his dark tenor sound quite capable of opening up at the top to create a thrilling 'Imbuto!' and a commanding 'Abbasso lo spade' to silence the drunken riot in Act 1. In the great Act 2 scene with Iago, Antonenko's Otello briefs with anger, especially explosive at the line 'amore e gelosia vadan disperso insieme!' as Otello demands proof of Desdemona's infidelity. Mari pushes him faster than I'd suggest he wants to go in 'Ora e per sempre addio' but there's no intrusion in a beautifully sung 'Dio! mi potrei scagliar' with little resorting to declamation or extramusical sob, which also applies to 'Nias mi torna'. Simon O'Neill's reading of the title role for LSO Live (literally sight-reading) and Paterson's for Solti (also his first – and only – Otello) pale into insignificance against one who is more so associated with the role onstage at Antonenko.

Kassimira Stoyanova has a darker, larger voice sound than many sopranos who take on the role of Desdemona, but she sings in such gorgeous long phrases that it's easy to be won round. She isn't as gifted an actress as Mariya Poplavskaya, but does to convincing indignation in Act 1. In Juan Francisco Gatell, Mari has a good, bright-sounding tenor for Cassio and the minor roles are luxuriously cast: Eric Owens as Ludovico and Michael Sprus as Rodrigo both stand out.

So what steps this recording matching Mari's outstanding Salzburg performance? Sadly, it is scuppered by the lags of Carlo Guelfi, who marks, grows and blusters his way through the role. I admire strong characterisation in the role – Iago's villainy in his 'Credo' is unmistakable – but Guelfi's nasal tone is a severe trial and it sounds as if he is singing between gritted teeth at times. He is completely outshone by Antonenko in 'Si, pel ciel marmoreo giuro'. It's not an interpretation to live with.

For an audio souvenir of Antonenko's Otello and for its brilliant orchestral playing, this is a welcome issue. Choose the DVD/Blu-ray option, however, and you get the best of this release – Antonenko and Mari – plus the Vienna Philharmonic, a fine production, Poplavskaya's enchanting Desdemona (she's done nothing finer) and Carlos Álvarez's malevolent, but well-sung, Iago. You pay your money ...

Mark Pilkinger

Vivaldi: *Catone in Utica*, RV705. **New**

Topi Lehtipuu (tenor): *Catone*; **Roberta Mameli** (soprano): *Conzia*; **Ann Hallenberg** (mezzo): *Emilia*; **Sonia Prina** (contralto): *Marzia*; **Romina Basso** (contralto): *Fabrizio*; **Emoke Baráth** (soprano): *Arbace*; **Il Complesso Barocco/Alan Curtis**.

Naïve OP32545 (medium price, three discs, 3 hours 41 minutes), Italian libretto and English/French translations included. www.naive.fr  Producer: Giulio D'Allesio. Engineer: Jean-Daniel Nèze, Ken Yoshida. Date: September 2012.

I thought I'd go the extra mile for this one ... in fact all the way to Italy, to examine Vivaldi's autograph manuscript of *Catone in Utica* in the National Library of Turin. It now forms part of the Fdi-Giordano collection, presented by two wealthy families (in memory of their young sons) in the late 1800s. These bequests finally reunited two halves of a unique and invaluable library – Vivaldi's own personal archive of scores. There are over 450 works, sacred and secular, including all but one of Vivaldi's 30 or so surviving operas. Most importantly, the majority of these manuscripts are in Vivaldi's own hand, some in his beautiful scribbled writing but also many first drafts and 'working copies', bristling with re-writes and revisions, which offer extraordinary insights into his working method. Vivaldi's manuscripts are also overflowing with his meticulous performing instructions – ornamentation, dynamics, articulation, bowing – even fully written-out cadenzas.

For years these manuscripts provided a private playground for scholars, but in 2000 Naïve founded its Vivaldi Edition – an ambitious, long-term project to systematically explore and record the entire Turin collection for a wider public. Gradually this series has revealed a very different Vivaldi from the one we thought we knew. Vivaldi certainly wrote a lot of concertos and some excellent church music, but it's now clear that it was the opera house that dominated his career. Indeed, together with Alessandro Scarlatti, Vivaldi was one of the most important and prolific opera composers of the late Baroque. He claimed to have penned 94 operas, though modern scholars have tactfully reduced this to between 50 and 70.

So, back to *Catone* – preserved in Volume 18 of the Fdi Collection. It's on the desk in front of me, giving off the subtle aroma of ancient papyrus, its pages offering crisp resistance to my nose, and the writing betraying the rapier-like strokes of Vivaldi's white-hot quill ... and sometimes the heavy nose-beak of midnight dog.

There's so much of Vivaldi himself in these pages it's hard to concentrate on the music. But I've noticed that there appears to be rather less of this opera than there should be. Rather alarmingly the manuscript of *Catone* begins with Act 2. I check ... no, nothing in Volume 17, or anywhere else in fact. All that



Simon Hughes examines the score of Vivaldi's *Catone in Utica*

survives of *Catone in Utica* – staged by Vivaldi in Verona in 1717 – are the last two acts.

Vivaldi may never have written the first act; collaborative operas were quite common. But the surviving Venetian score book mentions only Vivaldi as the composer, and a single aria from Act 1 seems to have been reused by him the following year in his opera *Roméo*. Well, that's one aria down – six more to find. But the solution adopted here lies not in detective work, but in re-composition – a task undertaken by the Italian musicologist Alessandro Ciccolini. He's rejected the usual method of supplying such missing music – which is simply to take suitable arias from Vivaldi's other operas and fiddle with them until the words of the missing aria finally fit. Since Vivaldi often did something similar himself, this method has its merits. But in this case, Ciccolini wanted to explore another quick compositional technique used by Vivaldi, which involved delving into his concertos for inspiration. Ciccolini meticulously documents his methods and sources in the CD booklet, and we learn that of the seven arias in Act 1, Ciccolini has recomposed four using material from Vivaldi's concertos; one is loosely based on material from an aria from the opera *Le fidele amfe*; one closely follows an aria in *Amadigi*; and there is one surviving original aria which was later reused in *Roméo*, from which it can be borrowed back. The opening Sinfonia is transferred straight from *L'Orlando* – a typical Vivaldian short-cut. However, the recitatives here all had to be composed from scratch.

I asked the conductor of this hybrid score, Alan Curtis, whether he really thought it was worth devoting 70 minutes (the whole of the first CD) to so much semi-Vivaldi. He was frank: 'The simplest way I can put it is to say honestly that I do not feel any particular rise in the quality of the music when we progress from Act 1 to Act 2. If you care about the drama, for me, Act 1 is as necessary to a CD of an opera as it is to a performance of this opera in the theatre.' I almost agree. Ciccolini's

new arias are very convincing indeed, especially those for Cesare; but when I first listened through to the opera not quite realising the extent of the reconstructive surgery, it was only in the last two acts that I picked up the remote control to repeat such glorious emotional effusions as 'Nella foresta', with its braying horns, 'Se in campo', with its belligerent trumpets, and the long, hooded 'Se mai senti spirarti' – nothing in Act I quite reaches these heights.

I am also struck by just what excellent recitatives Vivalli writes in his two surviving acts. When I spoke to Finnish tenor Topi Lehtinen, who sings the title role, he was absolutely clear that 'when it comes to Vivalli's approach to characterization, we get to know Cesare better through his recitatives than his arias. They are so dramatically effective ... there's lots of subtle psychology at work.' Curtis agrees: 'In Cesare Vivalli's recitatives are unusually good', but he admits that 'some of the arias are not particularly dramatic, and the ending is anti-dramatic'. It's true. Vivalli grafted a rather contrived happy ending onto the plot, and the third act – with just three arias and a short duet – feels a little short. But even if a few of the arias – like Cesare's parting shot 'Sarebbe un bel dillo!' – seem weak in their dramatic context, they are nevertheless strong musically. The plot – very briefly – concerns the old Roman senator Cesare's resistance to the rise of Gildo Cesare. Cesare falls to Ilirica with his daughter Marcia; Cesare follows, falls in love with Marcia, and in the 'happy' version of Metastasio's libretto preferred by Vivalli, Cesare's death is prevented and Cesare and Marcia marry.

Initially, the opera was one of Vivalli's great successes. 'My opera is praised to the skies', he wrote to the Marquis Bontevoglio, 'and if God blesses the season to the end, there will be a profit, and not a negligible one.' Much of the credit was probably due to the excellent cast: a typical Vivalli amalgam of cheapish, rising talent and trained regulars who never asked for outrageous fees. The same is true for the current cast – which probably wasn't cheap, but is certainly stellar. Lehtinen, as Cesare, is a dignified statesman in his first-act aria, but a furious father in his Act 2 'Dovra sermanti allora', where Lehtinen really does his teeth as he adds real tooth bite to the curses rained down on Marcia. She is sung by one of my favourite feisty Baroque contraltos – Sonia Prisa. Good to hear her as a woman for a change – as often she takes old contralto roles. Her enunciation – the way she modulates suitably consonantonic text – is as deliciously chery as ever and she runs away with gleeful, gritty determination in the pitiful 'Se parto'. Ana Halloberg is not really a newcomer anymore – she's a regular in the Vivalli Edition – but she should be so much better known, since is her palpable emotional intelligence and utterly captivating vocal precision. As the scheming Fausta she strides

in the climactic aria of Act 2, 'Come istano il mare istano', reliving all the stormy sea imagery, and in the following act she hantes blissfully with a pair of hunting horns in 'Nella foresta' – bringing some much-needed dramatic grit and ornamental glitter to the finale.

However, it's Roberta Manoli's emotionally comprehensive portrait of Gildo Cesare which wins top honours here. It helps that she gets some of the best music, even in Act 1 where she utterly changes her vocal tone to one of concentrated lusty-hot-sickness in Ciccolini's 'Aprì le luci e mi sa', Love for Marcia also dominates Manoli's beautifully poised performance of the long 'Se mai senti spirarti', where hooded browses are hinted at in muted and pizzicato strings, as Manoli's lungs know no restrictions in her coolly sustained and subtly nuanced phrases.

The cast is rivalling in the recitatives. The singers are so animated and involved in the drama you just have to find out what's going on by following the action (text and translation) in the accompanying booklet. Curtis shapes the drama generously, with notably more spacious speeds than some of his colleagues in earlier operas, and there's no lack of dramatic tension or excitement. Indeed, I love an exciting performance in which, according to that favourite reviewer's phrase, 'the notes are really lifted off the page'. Here, having seen the original notes myself, I can honestly say that they were already in flight – such is the propulsive energy of Vivalli's handwriting. How wonderful that this translates into a truly uplifting performance. **Simon Hughes**

Wagner

Das Rheingold.

Rene Pape (bass-baritone) Wotan; **Doris Soffel** (mezzo) Fricka; **Stephan Rigamer** (bass) Loge; **Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacke** (tenor) Mime; **Johannes Martin Kränzle** (baritone) Alberich; **Anna Samul** (soprano) Freia; **Marc Jentzsch** (tenor) Froh; **Jun Buchwald** (baritone) Donner; **Anna Larsson** (mezzo) Erda; **Kwangchul Youn** (bass) Fasolt; **Timo Rihonen** (bass) Fafner; **Aga Mikolaj** (soprano) Woglinde; **Marla Gorbunovskaya** (mezzo) Wellgunde; **Maria Prudenskaya** (mezzo) Flohziele; **Dancers of the Eastman Ballet Company, Antwerp**; **Orchestra de; Teatro alla Scala/Daniel Barenboim.**

Arthaus Musik 101 682 (also available as **Blu-ray 108 090**) (2 hours 43 minutes). Subtitles in English/French/German/Italian/Spanish. Website www.arthaus-musik.com. NTSC. 16:9. DVD 9. Region 0. PCM Stereo. Dolby Digital 5.1. Stage Director Guy Cassens. TV Director Emanuele Girolato. Date live performance at La Scala, Milan on May 26th, 2010.

Competition

Minskoy, Schwann, Zwibel, Reich et al., Bayreuth Festival Orchestra (DVD) 073 8038 (1980, rev. Sep 2002)

Outstanding singing from several principals just about manages to sustain one's attention in La Scala's 2010 performance of *Rheingold* (co-produced with Berlin's Staatsoper unter den Linden). The visual side falls rather flat, to my great disappointment.

Director-designer Guy Cassens places Alberich in a few inches of water, splashing it to with the Rheinnixen behind him. There's a massive pile of gold bricks behind him, on which light flickers – that's about it for the first scene. It's rather a relief that Cassens doesn't bother with the usual fake swimming from the Rheinnixen; they're standing throughout, creeping up at the back of Alberich, fondling him and driving him crazy. A rather pretty projection of green foliage serves as background for the opening of Wotan's scene with Fricka (you first see him sleeping standing up). Later, when Fasolt is singing, there are large silhouettes of Freia and the giants projected onto the backdrop, detracting one sadly. Of course, for Freia, Donner and Froh, there's a good deal of the usual standing around with nothing to do. Loge is given an onerous physical characterization, but it reveals nothing of the character.

Down in an aptly murky Nibelheim, there are no physical transformations for Alberich, and once he's captured and above ground, one misses the Nibelungs bringing the hoard up from below (the scene only to imagine that it's happening, with pain as he goes through the whole 'schandliche Schmach' speech). We also don't see the ring being pulled off Alberich's finger. Actually, it's not a ring at all – it's a sparkly glue. Freia's appearance makes its presence felt (please study to Anna Larsson's glorious singing), but Fasolt's dazing and the gods' entrance into Valhalla are ineffective, the latter totally unworthy of the majesty supporting it in Wagner's orchestra.

The costumes feature dark, textured, flimsy-dressed gowns for the Rheinnixen, who confront an Alberich who sports a sort of hunter-like outfit. Fricka, Freia and Erda all are given highly textured, not especially attractive grey evening dresses (Fricka has gloves to match). Wotan has a casual grey suit. Loge a more stylish light-gold suit with high collar (one can imagine Willy Wanda wearing it). The giants are a surprise – they're in chic black ensembles, but no significant make-up.

Nine simply-dressed dancers appear in every scene, proving exceedingly distracting. Even the principals are in close-up, one can't always concentrate sufficiently on them because of dancers following them around or entering close by. It's graceful movement, but it weakens out its welcome within about two minutes.

Not unexpectedly, the performance is skilfully and confidently controlled by Daniel Barenboim, but he provides little imagination. While the listener will appreciate the intimacy the conductor seems to have encouraged in characters' exchanges onstage –

whether between gods, giants or Nibelungs – Rheinhelm doesn't see that intimacy to achieve genuine interpretative detail. The Scala players get the job done handsily, and it's rather thrilling when they finally unleash their full tonal grandeur in the opera's final few minutes.

The cast creates character only when their own natural instincts take them beyond the insufficient direction. This is particularly true of baritone Johannes Martin Klein's Alberich. Although a lighter voice than is usual in this role, the baritone sells through it, offering spectacularly fatidic music-making and much warmth of tone. He makes no forced or ugly sounds, achieving all the needed intensity through meaningful textual projection and wonderful physical expressivity. A 'natural' on camera, Klein is a terrifically shy Alberich, aptly ghoul in the Nibelung is at his most powerful, then curiously devastated in defeat.

Read Page, too, is in excellent voice, his Wotan registering more strongly than in the Martinelli's *Ringsgold* CD which I reviewed in the last issue. Page's wanted vocal velvet is on display in a portrayal emphasising *his* case. With more specificity from the director, he could surely achieve superb results dramatically, as it is, he has the essential dignity, and there's a great deal of his face showing quiet satisfaction once Wotan has the ring in hand.

Opposite Page is a genuinely regal Fricka, Doris Soffel. The veteran mezzo can still float exquisite passages, giving many phrases an irresistible allure. Her full voice has lost some 'Schmaltz' but she has great authority, making every phrase count. The lovely Anna Samul (Frisla) is blessedly un-bloomy vocally, and Larsson's altogether exceptional Isida displays amazing sangfroid singing her entire address standing on a tiny platform that rises many feet above the stage. The Rheinnaiden are lovely to behold with voices to match, although Wolfgang and Flohde are occasionally prone to excessive vibrato.

The other principals all have something to offer. Page's colleague from the Martinelli recording, Stephan Rappner (Loge), makes a stronger impression here, even if the voice remains thin. He has more variety of expression than on CD, and a basic likability. As with Alberich, it's a relief to hear musical singing rather than lecturing from the giants. Krzysztof Yon (Fasolt, marvellous at Trevis, die holder), with wonderful diction throughout) and Falter (Timo Kilbom). Jan Buchwald (Donner) and Marco Jentsch (Frick) bring strong, solid tone to their brief assignments. As always, that sterling character tenor Wolfgang Ablinger-Spörckhauf (Mime) relates every word and note of his role.

The sound is superb, the video direction frequently inset, while also clearly doing little justice to the projections that play a vital role in this production. Arthur Maik's booklet contains only a track listing and an essay

by Michael P. Steinberg that lauds Casiner's conception for its manner of showing 'how the globalised moment of 2011 continues to build on Wagnerian vocabularies of 1870'. Maybe it works in the theatre – it doesn't on the small screen.

Choosing among nearly 20 *Ringsgold* DVDs is difficult for some, but in my view nothing surpasses Bayreuth's *Chiron* production – controversial in 1976, justly revived by the time it was filmed in 1980. Musically and vocally other performances certainly equal it, but for miraculous theatricality and detailed, revelatory characterisation it remains incomparable.

Roger Pines

Wagner Rienzi.



Torsten Kerl (tenor) *Rienzi*; **Marika Schönberg** (soprano) *Isida*; **Richard Wiegold** (bass) *Stefano Colonna*; **Daniela Sindram** (mezzo) *Adriano*; **Stefan Heidemann** (bass-baritone) *Paolo Orsini*; **Robert Bark** (baritone) *Cardinal Orsini*; **Marcel Heller** (tenor) *Barnocelli*; **Leonardo Nilva** (bass-baritone) *Cecco del Vecchio*; **Jennifer O'Loughlin** (soprano) *Messenger of Peace*; **Chœur du Capitole**; **Coro dell'Accademia Teatro alla Scala di Milano**; **Orchestra Nazionale du Capitole/Vincos Steinberg**.

Opus Arte OA1118D (also available on **Blu-ray OABD12SD**) (two discs, one Blu-ray, 2 hours 56 minutes).

Extra features include cat gallery and interviews with surge Lavelle, Richard Steinberg and other members of the cast and crew (55 minutes). Subtitles in English/French/German/Italian. Website www.opusarte.com/MTC_1639 (anamorphic). DVD R, Region 0. LPCM 2.0. DTS Digital Surround. Stage Director surge Lavelle. TV/Video Director David Catlett. TV Producer Pierre Malton. Sound Engineer Joff Soupiris. Date-of-performance at the Théâtre du Capitole, Toulouse on October 7th and 8th, 2012.

Comparison

Kerl, Nyland, Jankovic, Altmann et al., Deutsche Oper Chor und Orch, Berlin/Langensiefel (Arthur Maik) 101 521 (2012)

Rienzi was Wagner's first success, debuting in Dresden in 1842. That premiere evening lasted for six hours, complete with ballet – it was very much in the French Grand Opera mould but with the occasional vocal line redolent of Italian opera (Wagner was conducting *Norma* while he composed *Rienzi*). Indeed, years later, Hans von Bülow referred to it as 'Meyerbeer's best opera', doubly ironic since Meyerbeer had been instrumental in getting *Rienzi* produced and later Wagner opted to despise him. The epic work centres on the life of a Roman populist figure, Cola di Rienzi (1311-54), the 'people' versus the nobles and the conflict between the Colonna and Orsini families. Rienzi, named Tribune, manages to empower the people; the nobles rebel and he, with the backing of the Church, wrests control from the nobles, one of whom, Adriano Colonna, had previously rescued Rienzi's sister, Iside. Adriano swears Rienzi

a plot to assassinate him by the nobles, and when the plot is foiled, Rienzi convinces the people to spare the world-be assassin. Another uprising is attempted and with Rienzi fighting alongside the people, the leaders of the Orsini and Colonna clan are killed. The loss of life in general, however, has angered the people, and they, the church and the nobles – including Adriano – all turn on Rienzi. The opera ends as the nobles set fire to the Capitol with Rienzi, Iside and Adriano inside.

An aside or two: Hilfer saw a production of *Rienzi* in Lina in 1905; he later claimed that it was the story of the populist anonymous hero that motivated him to think about a career in politics, rather than continue with his painting. In addition, he kept the score in his bunker and it is said to have perished with him. Performance scores since then have relied on copies. A BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra performance (on four Pops CDs – POCD1040) from 1976 conducted by Edward Downes lasts for four hours and 40 minutes. In 1983, Wolfgang Sawallisch edited that edition down to a (workable) three-and-a-half hours (on three Orfeo CDs – C346 951D), in the edition under consideration here, recorded in October 2012 at Toulouse's Théâtre du Capitole, running time is about 40 minutes shorter than the Sawallisch. I own both; the Downes takes patience – it is weighed down by endless marches, choruses, preludes and postludes – and the Sawallisch, in a fine edition, is spoiled by casting a tenor in the role of Adriano, a trouser part in Wagner's score.

Finally, if historically, I find this current edition, led by Pinchas Steinberg, enough made – enough *Rienzi*. The wonderfully energetic finale to the second act, with wacky coloratura in the upper female voices, has been shown of a repair, but that's the only patch I miss. Steinberg's leadership is fearless, with forward propulsion (helped by the cuts) that actually turns the opera into real drama. He also gets superb playing from the Orchestra Nazionale du Capitole and glorious choral work from both the Capitole and La Scala singers. The former make their superb impression during the wonderful Overture, with its right-on brass calls, silky string playing and plangent winds. The two choruses, with plenty to do, prove themselves able to sing at all dynamic levels and with fine attention to the text.

The vocal star of the show is, quite rightly, tenor Torsten Kerl, who is making somewhat of a specialty of this crucial demanding part. (He appears in the *Artush* DVD from the Deutsche Oper as well; more about that later.) Kerl is nimble, and while his tone can be a bit leathery, it is mostly appealing and he's an intelligent artist. He emphasizes the leader-as-man-of-the-people side of Rienzi, which is what Wagner (at the time, a left-wing, quasi-revolutionary) intended, rather than the power-corrupts side, which is filled

with 20:20 hindsight in the Deutsche Oper production that makes clear the Rinaldi-Höfer connection. Koff's last-act Prayer is as effective as his outbursts; the voice has no audible problems. Soprano Marika Schönborg sings *Irma's* music with great feeling but occasionally flies wildly sharp, particularly noticeable in the trio in the fourth act, and elsewhere her dull top trill irritates, but her security and involvement never falter. Mezzo Daniela Studran's Adriano is delivered with power and thrust, the tone true. A tall woman, her height adds to the character's stature; he is brave, loving and resolute (and the vocal range is formidable). Richard Wiegand and Stefan Heidemann as Colona and Orietta, respectively, sing with power and expressivity and Robert Bork, as Cardinal Orietta, is a proper bully. The others, with not much to do, are all first-class.

The production is odd and fiercely stylised. Beginning with films of civil unrest, demonstrations, police actions and the fall of the Berlin Wall, it then moves to a timeless, non-specific region, but probably the late nineteenth century. All of the characters are in neo-Kabuki whiteface. Riccardo Sanchez Caerola's minimalist (to say the least) sets consist of metal walls, faintly rusty and full of rivets; they cause the air-fighting to be almost suffocating. A gigantic wooden cross, a rolling platform and candles spruce up the scene. One can barely tell the Phobos from the Patricians – probably the point – and the choruses representing them all act as one – much thinking, much rule. There's very little colour – the men are invariably in dark coats and they wear hats, splashes of red decorate the clergy and Rinaldi (who enters on a white horse as he ascends to power – a scene which, oddly, has little effect other than to show off a white horse) and Irma wears a red gown. The women, at times, are dandied and veiled in white/off-white threads, a scene with them in red is effective. All of the costumes are handsome (by Francesco Zito); Jorge Lavelli directs, but not with much purpose: the subplots are left pretty much on their own with their music to create character and the choruses move in unison. The bombing of the Capitol is impressive.

What to do? The *Artista/Reina* version is superior (totally) only in the role of Irma; it is ugly to look at (the cast wear grotesque masks) and as mentioned above, its directorial stance is to equate Rinaldi with [place name of hideous dictator here], which is invalid within the framework of the character, who is noble and genuinely wishes to unite, rather than destroy. There are those who will not approve of a *Rinaldi* that has almost two hours of music removed, but this does not feel like a 'highlights from *Rinaldi*' project. It gives a good sense of what Wagner was doing at 26 – and is even more remarkable when one realises the giant step he took with the opera that followed – *Die Jugendstil-Hilfende*.

Robert Levine

Arias for Caffarelli

Cafaro L'ipermestra – Rendimi più sereno. **Masse Sirco** – Fra l'orror della tempesta; Ebbi da te la vita. **Leo Demofonte** – Misero pargoletto; Sperai vicino il lido. **Mama Lucio Papiro** dittatore – Odo il suono di tromba guerriera. **Lucio Vero** oia il vologoso – Cara ti lancio, addio. **Fenoglio** Adriano in Siria – Lieto così talvolta. **Porpora** Semiramide riconosciuta – Passagger che sulla sponda. **Sarro** Valdemaro – Un cor che ben ama. **Vinci** Semiramide riconosciuta – In braccio a mille furie.

Franco Fagioli (counter-tenor); **Il Pomo d'Oro/Riccardo Minasi** (soprano).

Naïve VG23 (full price, 1 hour 10 minutes) Italian text and English-French translations included. Website: www.naive.it | Production/Engineer Denis Guerdin. Engineer Lucio Negrari. Date: August 20th–September 1st, 2012.

This disc pays thrilling homage to one of the greatest cantati, Gaetano Majorani (1710–83), a.k.a. Caffarelli. He and his rival, Farinelli, both studied in Naples under the famously exacting Nicola Porpora. At just 16 Caffarelli debuted onstage in Rome playing a female role, Alvira in Domenico Sarro's *Falsetto*. Despite his prickly, sensitive, extravagantly self-regarding personality, he became the idol of Italian audiences during the next decade, prior to a single season in London (1737–38), where his singing of several Handel operas was unsuccessful. He was best loved in Naples, where he reigned for many years as long-time leading singer of the chapel royal.

Caffarelli was a mezzo-soprano, and in today's (thankfully) castrato-less musical world, his repertoire lies too high for the vast majority of counter-tenors. *Naïve's* disc identifies the Argentine singer Franco Fagioli as a counter-tenor, but on his evidence, his instrument – while boasting easy access to nearly three octaves – belongs in mezzo-soprano territory. He's probably better equipped to take on high-flying male writers for contrast than any other male singer on disc. By comparison, male soprano Aris Christoffis some years ago was juvenile in timbre and interpretively dull, while today's French star counter-tenor, the technically brilliant Philippe Jaroussky, lacks sufficient tonal depth and variety of colour. Former male soprano Max Emanuel Cenac – with much warmer sound than those two – is, like Jaroussky, a fabulously accomplished artist, but he's now really an alto, lacking the staggeringly full-throated upper extension that Fagioli brings to his Caffarelli programmes.

In timbre, technique and style, Fagioli frequently bears a startling resemblance to Cecilia Bartoli. Stylistically they share a remarkable attention to matters of style, and vocally they're each utterly flawless. Fagioli possesses complete control throughout his voice's vast range (some low notes are

admittedly a little odd – certainly not 'true' chest tone, but nonetheless rather horizontal, sounding unbalanced with the rest of the voice). Occasionally Fagioli is below pitch above the stage, but never distressingly so. In negotiating especially difficult colouratura, he's definitely comparable to anyone singing pre-1800 repertoire today. He fields a reliable trill and his marvellousness in staccatos is astounding. In the more emotional and aggressive sections of these arias, his singing – as with Bartoli's – can seem excessively supercharged. He's most impressive in his long-valdeted legato, his security is soft, unprepared high attacks and his command of *mezza di voce*.

The aria cover two generations of composers, the oldest being Sarro (b.1679), the youngest Pasquale Cafaro (b.1716). In the nine *opus* sets represented, texts are mostly by Metastasio, with the aria types generally typical of the first several decades of the eighteenth century: the 'aria di favore', the exhilarating call to arms, the reflections of lovers both despairing and enervated, etc. Of course, there had to be at least one aria featuring nature-inspiration – in this case, it's the nightingale in 'Lieto così talvolta', sung by the lovelorn prince Farinago in Porpori's *Alvira in Siria* (the singer chats with *natura* about ravishing effect). Only one selection – from Porpora's *Semiramide riconosciuta* – lacks character, seeming musically a mere collection of effects. Of the two arias from Leonardo Leo's *Demofonte*, more interesting is the second, 'Sperai vicino il lido', in which alternating legato and *allegro* sections are both characterised by hair-raisingly wide leaps in the line. The most memorable material of all comes late in the disc: the exquisite 'Rendimi più sereno' from Cafaro's *L'ipermestra* (worthy of Handel's *Ruggiero* or *Artaban*), enriched here by the glow of Fagioli's timbre at lower dynamics) and 'Odo il suono di tromba guerriera', a spectacular showpiece with especially prominent horns from Gaetano Mama's *Lucio Papiro*.

Il Pomo d'Oro performs immaculately, with an almost feathery reed, under violinist/conductor Riccardo Minasi. There are only 24 players, but their sound is more than imposing enough for the more vigorous pieces (listen to the magnificently sonorous brass in the exhilarating 'mille furie' aria from Leonardo Vinci's *Semiramide riconosciuta*) and their string timbres in the quieter aria are breathtakingly lovely.

The recorded sound is terrific. *Naïve's* booklet includes texts, translations and an essay regarding Caffarelli, but neither synopsis of the operas nor the detailed material on the composers and their music that listeners will be craving (for that, I would gladly have sacrificed portraits of the composers and the article on churches of Naples). Nonetheless it does indicate whether these are world-premiere recordings, but any detective work has turned up only three of the aria elsewhere on disc.

Roger Pines

Classified Advertisements

NOTES: The rate for longer classifieds is 50p per word inclusive of VAT in the UK (2005-05).

There is a minimum charge of £3.00 in the UK (£3.00), Semi-daily (twice) advertisements are £20 per 2000 (£200) per 1 inch. **SIZE NUMBERS:** This service is available for an extra £2.50 (US). Replies should be sent to the relevant Box Number, c/o International Record Review, 9 Spring Bridge Mews, Ealing, London W5 2AB.

PAYMENT: Remittance must be enclosed with advertisement copy. An invoice must be included if an acknowledgment is required. Banknote cannot be made over copy has been processed.

COPY: Standard abbreviations and normal typographical errors are one word. Telephone numbers count as two words as do fax numbers. E-mail numbers count as three words. Name and address must be included and paid for if included. A firm appears alone to be used or photographed if required.

ADVERTISEMENTS BY FAX: We are able to accept classified advertisements by fax, prepared by Credit card. The advertiser's name, address, credit card number and expiry date must be included. Advertisements should preferably be typed, or written in capitals using black ink, on a single sheet of A3 paper. The fax line to the Subscription Department is +44 (0)20 8840 5447.

ADVERTISEMENTS ARE REMOVED: of the requirements of the Trade Descriptions Act, and to avoid any misrepresentation of goods offered for sale. Also the Business Information (Disclosure) Order, 1997 requires all ads to set out goods in the course of a business to indicate this clearly in an advertisement.

The Publishers retain the right to refuse or withdraw advertisements at their discretion and are not responsible for printers' errors or omissions, although every care will be taken to avoid mistakes.

COPY: by the December 2011 issue of the magazine should arrive no later than November 15th, 2011.

Please state the heading under which you would like your advertisement to appear (e.g. Records Wanted) _____

Title _____ Initials _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Post code/Zip _____ Country _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____ E-mail _____

I enclose a UK cheque or International Bankers Draft
made payable to International Record Review Ltd.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please debit my: MasterCard Visa Switch Delta Connect Amex

Card Number _____ Valid from _____ Expiry date _____ Switch issue no. _____ Security code _____

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12

Please send this order form (or photocopy) to International Record Review, 9 Spring Bridge Mews, London W5 2AB, Great Britain. Fax: +44 (0)20 8840 5447

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

The magazine is on sale through a limited number of UK bookshops. High Street outlets in the UK and Europe in Ireland. It is also available from the following specialist record shops and record retailers:

Barbican Music Store, London • Bath Compact Discs, Bath
Blackwells Music Shop, Oxford
Blackwells Music Shop, Edinburgh • Free Records, New
Fragh-Bellevue Ltd, Manchester • Flogies, London
Harold Moore, Norwich, UK, London • Hatters-England, Cambridge
MkMusic-Bathmore Music, Edinburgh

Symphony Hall Shop, Birmingham • Presto Music, Royal Leamington Spa
Prestige Music, Bristol • Record Centre, Guildford
Royal Opera House Shop, London • The Collection, Norwich, Salisbury
Slovene Hall, London
J. D. Widdowson, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

The magazine is also available by subscription from the following offices and agents:

REGIONS:
 Cardiff Central • Norwich • London • Glasgow Central
 Liverpool Street Station • Birmingham • Manchester • Plymouth
 Wakestone • Paddington • Southampton • Bristol • Victoria

AGENTS:
 Cabinet (North and South)
 Glasgow
 Heston (Thames) East 2
 Luton
 Manchester (Thames 1 and 2)
 Norwich

Copies are available from the Publishers and can also be ordered from any messenger who is part of the last list above.
 Tel: 020 8840 5446
 website: www.international-record.co.uk
 or email: glr.orders@international-record.co.uk

Records for Sale

COLCHESTER CLASSICS
 Passionately passionate about Classical music in Colchester and everywhere. More than just an award-winning CD & DVD company!

Tel: 0845 370 4994
www.colchesterclassics.co.uk
 @ClassicsCDs facebook.com/colchesterclassics

Overseas Tel: +44 (0)2020 540056
 Colchester Classics, PO Box 938, Colchester CO3 9BE

RECORD CORNER
INDEPENDENT CLASSICAL SPECIALIST
 established 1968

Whatever your musical tastes
 email or phone for our
 friendly and knowledgeable service

Email: Sales@therecordcorner.co.uk
 Phone: (+44) 01483 422008
 Shop: Pound Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1BX

Classical CDs post free: Appointed Regis and Alto
 stocks. Please ask for our free monthly Newsletter and
 Bargain list. Penny Post Classics: 01646 692752

Send S.A.S. or mail for current list of brand new
 unplayed CDs and DVDs at reduced prices. Squires
 Classical Music Centre Ltd (R&R), 615 Liphams Road,
 Blackpool, Lancs FY4 1RL. Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1253
 605599. Email: squiresgate@squiresmusic.com

MUSIC BOOKS: Currently disposing of a small
 library of books on music and recording. Please send
 your wants lists to PO Box R152, c/o RR, 9 Spring
 Bridge Mews, London W5 2AB

Societies

British Music Society
 Promoting the music of neglected British
 composers worldwide.

Details: 7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster,
 Essex RM14 4DE
 or e-mail: secret.bms1943@tdk.org

The **Reverehome Trust** and Friends of Alan
 Rawsthorne. Details from 'The Alps', Main Street,
 Hovinghrough, Selby YO8 6GF.
 Tel/Fax: (+44) 01535 630 256

HAROLD MOORES RECORDS **VISIT THE HAROLD MOORES WEBSITE** **HAROLD MOORES RECORDS**

<http://www.hmrecords.co.uk>

Browse the international record catalogues. Lots of exciting new releases and special offers.
 New on-line ordering facilities. News and views. E-mail: sales@hmrecords.co.uk
 2 Great Marlborough Street, London W1F 7HQ Tel: 020 7437 1576 Fax: 020 7287 0377

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

Back issues of INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW are available as follows

Please tick the appropriate box

- Volume 1** (March 2000 to February 2001) – A set of 10 issues (June and October 2000 are out of print) is £36.66 (UK), £64.16 (Europe), \$90.75 (USA), £74.25 (Rest of World)
- Volume 2** (March 2001 to March 2002) – A set of 10 issues (September and November 2001 are out of print) is £36.66 (UK), £64.16 (Europe), \$90.75 (USA), £74.25 (Rest of World)
- Volume 3** (April 2002 to April 2003) – A set of 9 issues (July, September 2002 and February 2003 are out of print) is £33.00 (UK), £57.75 (Europe), \$81.67 (USA), £66.82 (Rest of World)
- Volume 4** (May 2003 to May 2004) – A set of 10 issues (June 2003 and April 2004 are out of print) is £36.66 (UK), £64.16 (Europe), \$90.75 (USA), £74.25 (Rest of World)
- Volume 5** (June 2004 to June 2005) – A set of 10 issues (June 2004 and April 2005 are out of print) is £36.66 (UK), £64.16 (Europe), \$90.75 (USA), £74.25 (Rest of World)
- Volume 6** (July/August 2005 to July/August 2006 – both joint issues) – A set of 10 issues (May and June 2006 are out of print) is £36.66 (UK), £64.16 (Europe), \$90.75 (USA), £74.25 (Rest of World)
- Volume 7** (September 2006 to September 2007 – July/August 2007 was a joint issue) – A set of 12 issues is £44 (UK), £75 (Europe), \$110 (USA), £90 (Rest of World)
- Volume 8** (October 2007 to October 2008) – A set of 11 issues (February 2008 is out of print) is £40.32 (UK), £70.57 (Europe), \$99.82 (USA), £81.67 (Rest of World)
- Volume 9** (November 2008 to November 2009) – A set of 11 issues (October 2009 is out of print) is £40.32 (UK), £70.57 (Europe), \$99.82 (USA), £81.67 (Rest of World)
- Volume 10** (December 2009 to December 2010) – A set of 11 issues (March 2010 is out of print) is £40.32 (UK), £70.57 (Europe), \$99.82 (USA), £81.67 (Rest of World)
- Volume 11** (January 2011 to January 2012 – July/August 2010 was a joint issue) – A set of 12 issues is £44 (UK), £75 (Europe), \$110 (USA), £90 (Rest of World)

Please send me single issues dated _____

I enclose a UK £ or US \$ cheque made payable to International Record Review Ltd

Please debit my MasterCard / Visa / Switch / Delta / Connect / Amex

Card Number

Valid from Expiry Date Switch issue no. Security Code

Name _____

Address _____

Post code / Zip _____

Signature _____

Copies can be obtained from: International Record Review,
 9 Spring Bridge Mews, Ealing, London W5 2AB Great Britain
 Tel: +44(0)20 8567 9244 Fax: +44(0)20 8840 5447
 Email: barry.iring@recordreview.co.uk
 Website: www.recordreview.co.uk

Czech Music Direct



CD of the Month Das Lied von der Erde

The 14 Instrument
Martingale Ensemble
conducted by Ken Seiden play

Mahler arr. Schoenberg
MSR Classics 1406
Recorded "Live"



www.czecheverything.co.uk
cmd@czecheverything.co.uk
 Tel: +44 020 8346 0088



Your Online Guide to Classical Music

CLASSICS TODAY

REVIEWS · NEWS · FEATURES

<http://www.ClassicsToday.com>

Index to Advertisers

AAM Records	6	ICA Classics	35
Albion Records	19	IRV Back Issues	91
BS	27	IRV Digital Issue	81
Bridge Records	42, 65	IRV Subscriptions	69
British Music Society	90	King's College, Cambridge	3
Chandos Records	11	LAWO	11
ClassicsToday.com	91	MDG	40
C Major Entertainment	25	MDT	23
Colchester Classics	90	Nimbus Alliance	23
CORD The Sixteen	11	Nimbus Records	69
Crochet & Co	7, 71	NMC	39
Czech Music Direct	91	Orndie	9
Divine Art	7	Orchid Classics	39
Eloquence	Inside Back Cover	Record Corner	90
Halle	69	Regent Records	23
Harold Moore Records	90	Warner Classics	Back Cover
Heritage Records	53	Wyatone	69
Hyperion Records	Inside Front Cover		

Too many records

My fascination with 'the record' started as long ago as I can remember. My parents owned a modest number of 78s of singers from the 1950s such as Michael Holliday, Rosemary Clooney and Nat 'King' Cole. There were also a few LPs of Perry Como, The Seekers, and one classical LP – Beethoven's recording of Grieg's *Pav Gyst*. I listened to them constantly and (inspired by the design on the old Columbia label) apparently spent hours writing and drawing 'notes' in front of our Radiogram. By the age of five or six I had become a devotee of Cliff Richard, Cilla Black, Rolf Harris and suchlike, acquiring the latest singles as they came out. It wasn't until I became a chorister at York Minster when I was nine that the whole amazing universe of classical music was opened up to me. Singing a vast repertoire from Tallis to Stravinsky opened my ears and inspired my musical appetite. The first classical LP I remember getting at this time was Brüssy's Mozart Symphonies Nos. 40 and 41.

When I went to Chetham's School of Music in Manchester in 1976 at the age of 13, I began to collect music on record more seriously, although I still had a fairly narrow view of music. Suddenly I was exposed to new and exciting records that my fellow dorm-mates had with them: Shostakovich symphonies and quartets, Bartók concertos, Supertramp, Genesis, Yes ... I remember going home in the holidays and inviting my parents by playing records of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8 (Hiltsink), Orff's *Carmina Burana* (Jochum) and Gluck's *The Echo* (Yes) very loudly. From then on my horizons expanded in all directions. One particular 'stark' moment occurred when I was 16. Having taken Music O-Level a year early, our music class was allowed a year of 'free-wheeling'. During a double-period I went into the music library and poked through the LPs. One heard-not quite caught my eye: 'Music of the Gothic Era'. I had no idea what this could possibly contain. I pulled it out and spent the next two hours (three LPs) open-mouthed and transfixed by the extraordinary music and equally extraordinary performances by David Munrow and his Early Music Consort of London. I was particularly blown away by the music and the performance of the *Pavetta* (Byzantine Tunes) Oases – I still find it a benchmark recording. Munrow's amazing ability to communicate the excitement of this music with his performers is something that I love. That desire to communicate has become something that I value tremendously, and all of the musicians I most admire demonstrate this quality.



Richard Egarr is Music Director of the Academy of Ancient Music. *Alex Rossignol*

At Clare College, Cambridge I was again hugely influenced and inspired by my fellow undergraduates. All had their own area of interest and we would listen to music in each other's rooms for hours. From one I got to know Wagner and Strauss opera, from another Gibson, Diamanda Galas, Fernyhough and everything avant-garde, from another Odeghem and music from the *Finlandia*. My own interests were taking me in a Baroque direction. I was Organ Scholar at Clare, and there was a harpsichord in the ante-chapel. I began exploring this weird instrument, playing chamber music and parting on concerts of larger Baroque repertoire. I also began avidly collecting LPs around this time, particularly certain performers of 'Early Music'. I snapped up the Leclair/Harmoncourt Bach *Contra Altus* on Teldec, the Mozart Symphonies by Harmoncourt, and anything by Reinhard Goebel and Musica Antiqua Köln. The excitement, commitment and degree of communication that these performers brought to the music they performed inspired me in my own exploration and performance. It was also at this time I became interested in historical performers: Patachango, Toscanini, Schnabel, Curran, Casals, Gilfi. These years at Cambridge (1982-86) saw the emergence and supremacy of digital recording and the CD. With this came a certain clinical obsession with perfection of sound and performance which I feel led to a musical virtualization and sterility in a great number of recordings. The 'live', unedited, often technically 'flawed' performances I found on historical recordings were, I think, for me an important lesson and counterbalance to what was happening, especially in the recording of 'Early Music'.

After Cambridge and a post-grad year studying harpsichord at the Guildhall School

of Music & Drama in London, I was lucky enough to spend a year in Amsterdam with Gaster Leendhardt. His lessons and the busy musical environment in Amsterdam broadened my horizons once again. The one musical event that overwhelmed me was a performance of Mahler's First Symphony. I managed to get a ticket for this at the Concertgebouw – the conductor was Leonard Bernstein. This live performance was issued by DG as part of Bernstein's last Mahler cycle. The real thing in the Concertgebouw was utterly stunning. Again the sheer force of musical understanding, depth of commitment and direct communication of Mahler's music by Bernstein through the orchestra and to the public was unbelievable.

I am lucky enough to have a rich and diverse musical life playing solo, chamber music, directing from the keyboard, conducting opera/oratorio and large modern symphony orchestras. Although perhaps pigeon-holed as an Early Music specialist, I remain a total music addict. I will play or listen to everything that I find to be 'good' music in any way, shape, or form. Apart from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century music which occupies a great deal of my time, I am a keen advocate of forgotten nineteenth-century repertoire, Hubert Parry, and (much to the confusion of some of my colleagues) as arid proponent of Stravinsky's work as a conductor and arranger. I adore Tippett, Adès, Prince and Eljick (who I would love to work with). My collection of recordings is still growing rapidly, seeking out new live recordings of Horowitz, historical piano recordings by Pechman and Kozubski, and finding decent transfers of piano rolls by Carl Flesch and Saine-Saïus. My collection of 78s is woefully small, but this is something I can see may occupy me in the future. As I believe that playing Bach, Beethoven or Schumann with the appropriate understanding and attitude on instruments from their time can greatly inform and help us perform their music, I also think that playing recorded music on an appropriate machine can help us appreciate a performance. There is nothing quite like hearing the opening five minutes of the 1974 *Die Spähe* with Karajan and the BPO played back (at high volume) on vinyl through a great hi-fi system. The ultimate 'live-in-the-room' experience, though, is hearing Casals, Gilfi or Chailin play back on a 1920s HMV Gramophone – utterly spectacular.

Richard Egarr
AM Record has just released its first disc, 'The Back of the Symphony: Handel to Haydn', which is reviewed on page 50.

ELOQUENCE NEW RELEASES

Rare chamber music recordings, including the first release on CD of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with Peter Schmidl and the New Vienna Octet



BRAMMS Clarinet Trio, Horn Trio, Piano Quintet, Clarinet Quintet, Schumann Variations
András Schiff, Vienna Octet, Takács Quartet



Musique pour la Chambre du Roy
Christopher Hogwood



STRING QUARTETS - Borodin 2, Shostakovich 8, Tchaikovsky 1
Borodin Quartet, Galinski String Quartet

Christopher Hogwood's first recording for L'Oiseau-Lyre (Arne Sonatas), plus international CD premieres of the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book and Weber Songs



Fitzwilliam Virginal Book
Christopher Hogwood



ARNE Sonatas
Christopher Hogwood



WEBER Songs
Martyr Hill, Christopher Hogwood

Tuckwell's glorious survey of Mozart's music with horn; bon-bons for violin and orchestra from Gruenberg and Sakonov; Rostropovich's rare Rococo with Rozhdestvensky



MOZART Horn Music
Kenny Tuckwell



GREAT VIOLIN ENCORES
Nikolai Gruenberg, Josef Sakonov



SHOSTAKOVICH Cello Concerto 2,
TCHAIKOVSKY Rococo Variations, Andante cantabile, GLAZUNOV Chant du rossignol
Mstislav Rostropovich



Liszt
Wilhelm Kempff Lisztian



SCHUBERT Sonatas in A minor,
D958 & B flat, D960



BACH Inna, Joy of Man's Dairning
Favorite Piano Transcriptions



BACH The Well-Tempered Clavier
(book 2)



Kempff plays Liszt
The 1960s Decca Recordings



Kempff plays Schubert
The 1960s Decca & Decca Recordings



Kempff plays Chopin
The 1960s Decca Recordings



Kempff plays Mozart: Vol. 1
Piano Concertos 8, 11, 22, 23, 26



Kempff plays Mozart: Vol. 2 Piano
Concertos 9, 10, Sonatas & Fantasias



WARNER
CLASSICS



Album of the month

PERGOLESI: STABAT MATER Julia Lezhneva, Philippe Jaroussky

Two voices of celestial beauty and expressive poignancy come together in this new recording of Pergolesi's exquisite, but tragically charged *Stabat Mater* as Philippe Jaroussky is joined by the rising young soprano Julia Lezhneva. Diego Fasolis leads I Barocchisti in this programme of the *Stabat Mater* and two other choral works by Pergolesi, the *Laudate Pueri*, which features a solo soprano, and the *Confitebor tibi domine*.

Other titles to look out for...



AROUND THE WORLD
Emmanuel Pahud

A dazzlingly diverse recital travels across four continents and three hundred years with the virtuosity and imaginative flair that are hallmarks of Emmanuel Pahud's playing. His travelling companion is the guitarist and composer Christian Rivet, presenting both arrangements and original works that tap into ancient cultures of expression through sound and music. The musicians perform together at London's Wigmore Hall on 22nd December.



SCHUBERT: ARPEGGIONE
Gaetano Cappozzi

With this collection of works for cello and piano, Gaetano Cappozzi and Paula Straley pay tribute to two towering musicians of the 20th century, Mieczysław Rozycki and Benjamin Britten, who recorded all four of the works on the programme: Schubert's *Arpeggione* Sonata, Debussy's *Cello Sonata*, Schumann's *Fünf Stücke im Volkston* and Britten's own *Cello Sonata* in five movements, which received its first performance at the Aldeburgh Festival in 1961.



BRITTEN: STRING QUARTETS
Endellion String Quartet

Benjamin Britten's string quartets have been a speciality of the Endellion String Quartet for nearly thirty years. Recorded in July this year, this new recording is a major contribution to the Britten centenary celebrations and marks the start of the Endellion String Quartet's own 20th anniversary season featuring concerts at the Wigmore and Bishopsgate Halls in London and at West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge.



www.warnerclassics.com



amazon.co.uk

