

SECOND THOUGHTS AND SHORT REVIEWS AUTUMN 2017/3

By Brian Wilson and Dan Morgan

Reviews are by Brian Wilson except where signed [DM].

Autumn 2017/1 is [here](#) and Autumn 2017/2 [here](#).

As before, I must remind readers that preparing such a large review – especially large this time – carries the risk of incorrect catalogue numbers or purchase links, though I have tried to make the latter clearer than before. Please check before ordering.

Some time ago I mentioned that trusty old **Winamp**, though it works with downloads in Windows 10, has not been updated for quite some time and that I had noticed occasional glitches. Recently I have been trying another free programme, **MusicBee** (<https://getmusicbee.com/>) and have found it to work well after a few initial problems. It does everything that Winamp does and adds the ability to display the artwork, if it's included in the metadata – which isn't always the case. An alternative would be **MediaGo** (<http://mediago.sony.com/enu/download>), actually designed to work with the high-res digital Sony Walkman, but a useful programme in itself and operating very much like MusicBee.

Index

ABEL Symphonies_CPO

- String Quartet, Op.8/5_Hyperion

ALFONSO 'El Sabio' *Cantigas de Santa Maria*_Alia Vox

BACH CPE Cello Concerto_Hyperion

BACH Johann Bernhard Overtures_Ricercar

BACH JS *BWV...or not?*_Harmonia Mundi

BEN HAIM Chamber Music_Naxos_Chandos

BRIDGE Cello Sonata (Cello in Wartime)_BIS; *Oration*_BIS (In the Shadow of War)

BRITTEN Violin Concerto_Pentatone

BRUCKNER Symphony No.8_Profil

BUXTEHUDE and Friends Music for Christmas_DaCapo

CHILCOTT In Winter's Arms_Signum

COLERIDGE-TAYLOR Clarinet Quintet_Naxos_CPO_Hyperion

CROCE Motets and *Sacræ Cantiones*_Arcana

- *Carnevale Veneziano*_Chandos

DEBUSSY Cello Sonata (Cello in Wartime)

- Piano music_Hyperion

DURANTE String Concertos_Phoenix; excerpts_Hyperion (Neapolitan Music)

- *Concerto per quartetto* No.1_Hyperion (Music for the Kingdom of the two Sicilies)

- *Requiem*_Coro

DVOŘÁK Piano Quintet No.2; 'American' String Quintet_Supraphon

ELGAR *Falstaff*, Songs_Chandos

FAURÉ Cello Sonata No.1 (Cello in Wartime) BIS

FOSS The Prairie_BMOP

GIBBONS Consort Anthems_Signum, Harmonia Mundi

- *Fancies for the Viols*_Ricercar

GILL Before the Wreasting Tides, etc_BMOP

GOETZ Piano Concerto 2_Hyperion

GUÉNIN Symphony in d_Aparté

HAAS String Quartet No.3_Hyperion (*Brundibár*)

HANDEL *Messiah*_Alpha

HAYDN Cello Concertos in C and D_Hyperion; Cello Concerto in C_Linn

- Symphonies Nos. 19, 80 and 81_Alpha

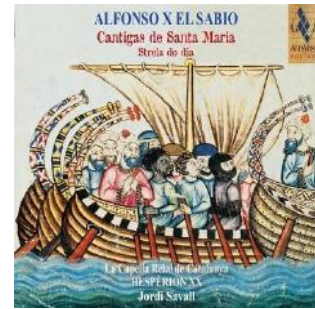
- Symphony No.83_Aparté
- Symphonies Nos. 82-84_Hyperion
- String Quartet Op.20/3_Ondine
HINDEMITH Violin Concerto_Pentatone
JIRÁNEK Concertos_Supraphon
KRÁSA *Brundibár*_Hyperion
KRAUS Symphony in c minor_Alpha
KREUTZER Septet; Trio_CPO
LAKS String Quartet No.3_Cedille (Voices of Defiance)
- Chamber Music_Chandos
MARCELLO Psalms_Arcana; (arr. AVISON)_Signum
MONN Cello Concerto_Linn
MOZART Piano Concerto No.17
- Piano Concertos Nos. 23 and 25_C-Avi
- Serenade No.10_LSO Live
- Requiem_Hyperion
- *Sogno di Scipione*_Signum
- Tenor Arias_Signum
PERGOLESI Violin Concerto, Sonata, Sinfonia_Hyperion (Neapolitan Music)
PROKOFIEV Piano Transcriptions_Atma Classique
RESPIGHI Church Windows, *Trittico Botticelliano, Il Tramonto*_BIS
SCHUBERT String Quartet No.15_Ondine
- Piano Sonatas D959, D960_DG
SHIELD String Quartet_Hyperion
SHOSTAKOVICH Piano Concertos and Sonatas_Signum
- Piano Concertos, *Assault on Beautiful Gorky*, etc_Classics for Pleasure
- String Quartet No.2_Cedille (Voices of Defiance)
SIBELIUS *Tapiola, En Saga*, Eight Songs_Ondine
- *Luonnotar*, Songs_Ondine
SOMERVELL Quintet_CPO
STRAVINSKY - Piano Transcriptions_Atma Classique
TCHAIKOVSKY Piano Concerto No.1; *Nutcracker* (complete)_CuGate
ULLMANN String Quartet No.3_Cedille (Voices of Defiance), Hyperion (*Brundibár*)
WALTHER Short Quintet_CPO
WEBBE String Quartet_Hyperion
WESLEY S String Quartet_Hyperion
WIENIAWSKI Piano Concerto_Hyperion

*Black Manhattan 3*_New World
*Evensong for Ascensiontide*_Argo
*Legends of St Nicholas*_Harmonia Mundi
*The Night of Saint Nicholas: A Medieval Liturgy for Advent*_Arcana
*Pastorali Italiene I*_Tactus
*Plays of St Nicholas*_Hungaroton

ALFONSO X 'El Sabio' (Alfonso The Wise) (1221-1284)

Cantigas de Santa Maria, Strela do dia

Introducción (CSM 176) [1:38]
Santa Maria, strela do dia (CSM 100) [2:57]
Pero cantigas de loor (CSM 400) [3:49]
 Instrumental (CSM 123) [3:41]
Muito faz grand'erro (CSM 209) [12:25]
Por nos de dulta tirar (CSM 18) [8:07]
 Instrumental (CSM 142) [4:13]
Pode por Santa Maria (CSM 163) [5:08]
Miragres fremosos faz por nos (CSM 37) [4:15]
 Instrumental (CSM 77-119) [4:08]
De toda chaga ben pode guarir (CSM 126) [10:05]
Pero que seja a gente (CSM 181) [6:19]
O ffondo do mar tan chã (CSM383) [8:36]
Conclusión (CSM 176) [2:52]
 Hespèrion XXI; La Capella Reial de Catalunya/Jordi Savall
 rec. 1993.
 Texts and translations included
ALIA VOX AVSA9923 SACD [77:58]



CD available from



I need not say much in welcoming the reissue, in improved sound, of this classic recording of the *Cantigas* of Alfonso: hauntingly beautiful music in praise of the Virgin Mary from the court of a king who welcomed European, Moorish and Jewish influences. The texts, thankfully included in the booklet, together with detailed and valuable notes, are in Gallego, the language of Galicia, more akin to Portuguese than to Spanish.

No one CD can do justice to this music. Apart from the ubiquitous *Strela do Dio* (no.100), Martin Best's selection on Nimbus **NI5081** offers a different selection – [review](#). The Joel Cohen recording from Boston, which I recommended there, is no longer available, though some of the tracks are included in *A Spanish Christmas* (Erato **2564676005**: download only budget price). More recently Hana Blaziková and an accomplished team recorded another very fine selection (PHI **LPH017: Recording of the Month** – [review](#) – [DL News 2015/9](#)). Eduardo Panigua has recorded a number of selections from the *Cantigas* for Pneuma – see, for example, **PN1510** – [DL News 2016/1](#).

The Night of Saint Nicholas: A Medieval Liturgy for Advent

La Reverdie; I Cantori Gregoriani
 rec. Modena, Italy, April-May 1998. DDD
 Texts and translations included
ARCANA A442 [73:55] Reviewed as mp3 press preview.

CD available from

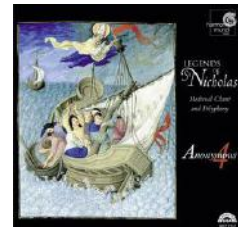


If the idea of the medieval Office of Saint Nicholas – a selection of psalms, antiphons, readings and prayers from Matins and Lauds for his day, 6th December – sounds like the equivalent of watching paint dry, this recording should make you think again. Drawn from thirteenth and fourteenth century manuscripts and very convincingly and ethereally sung, this reissue of a 1998 recording is very welcome – it shows that authenticity, with a few liberties of interpretation, can sound beguiling. Most of the music is in chant, with some sections in *organum*, the forerunner of polyphony. The rendition of the third reading, the saving of sailors from a storm, is most dramatic and the familiar *ex eius tumba* which follows wonderfully uplifting by contrast.



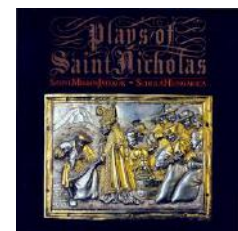
My only criticism is that some of the English translations in the booklet are a little wide of the mark. Why translate *naute* (sailors) in Lectio III, for example, as ‘navigators’? In the Prayer of St Godric which concludes the programme, the Middle English *at thi burthe*, translated ‘in the name of your principle’ simple means ‘by your birth’.

Perhaps more immediately appealing, but unfortunately less authentic, is a similar collection of music, *Legends of St Nicholas* – the progenitor of our modern Santa Claus – sung by Anonymous 4. On this album, which doesn’t restrict itself to liturgical usage, not all the music is taken from contemporary sources, but invented by analogy with known works by Hildegard of Bingen and the like. It’s still well worth hearing in these sonorous performances, but scholars of medieval music will have to bite their tongues at times – unfortunately too common a problem these days when a few telegenic ‘experts’ pontificate on television without getting their facts entirely correct. (Harmonia Mundi **HMU907232**¹, download only – reviewed as lossless download from eclassical.com, NO booklet). The lack of a booklet is a serious handicap; the usually reliable Naxos Music Library streamed version also comes without texts.



¹ Also available as part of a budget-price 4-CD set of Christmas music, **HMX2907411/4**.

The dramatic elaboration of readings at Matins, beginning with Easter Sunday, is generally held to have been the origin of drama. Between the dramatic third reading on the Arcana album and the full-blown mystery plays and miracle plays in the vernacular came the likes of the Latin *Play of Daniel*, the best known of the genre. Hungaroton have a 2-CD set entitled *Plays of St Nicholas*. There being no booklet with the download from eclassical.com, I’m guessing that these come from a variety of sources. The programme also includes the Mass of St Nicholas and two short excerpts from Vespers for his day, so offers a useful adjunct to the Arcana. (**HCD12887/88**: Ibolya Verebics (soprano); Schola Hungarica/László Dobszay, Janka Szendrei [100:39]).



Giovanni CROCE c.1557-1609

Motetti a Otto Voci, Libro Primo (Venice 1594)

Sacrae Cantiones Quinis Vocibus Concinendae (Venice 1605)

Voces Suaves/Francesco Saverio Pedrin

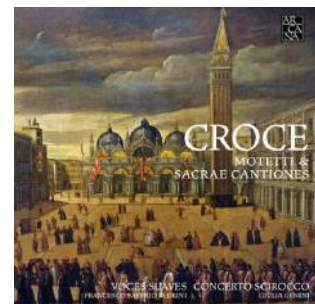
Concerto Scirocco/Giulia Genini

Pitch 466 Hz, Meantone temperament ¼-comma

rec.12-15 October 2015 and 6 March 2017. DDD.

Texts and translations included

ARCANA A439 [52:15] Reviewed as 24/96 download from eclassical.com with pdf booklet and from press preview.



CD available from



Chandos introduced us to *The Comic Faces of Giovanni Croce (Carnevale Veneziano, CHAN0665* – see below) but for his sacred music we have had to be content with walk-on parts on various albums. I'm grateful, therefore, to Arcana for this fine new recording of slightly conservative, but striking, music published in Venice on the very eve of Monteverdi's new style. Performances do the music full justice, as do those of the interpolated instrumental works by Croce's contemporaries, including both **Giovanni** and **Antonio GABRIELI**, these recorded earlier this year in the basilica of Santa Barbara in Mantua, with its 1565 organ. If you are looking for something unusual this Christmas, the final track is a 7½-minute setting of *Quæramus cum pastoribus* (Let us seek [the infant Jesus] with the shepherds).

52 minutes may look like short measure but the per-second eclassical.com charging policy means that the price is commensurate: \$9.39 for 16-bit and \$14.09 for the very fine 24-bit. It's worth paying the extra for choral music so clearly sung and recorded.

For the Chandos album of **Venetian Carnival Music** by Croce (mainly) and contemporaries on **CHAN0665**, UK readers may be better served price-wise by the download from chandos.net: the playing time [75:32] makes the download from eclassical.com rather expensive in 24-bit (\$20.30), though the 16-bit at \$13.53 is roughly comparable with the price from Chandos. However you obtain it, this unbuttoned music is very well performed by I Fagiolini and Robert Hollingsworth. The final track was recorded live at the BBC Proms in 2000, the rest earlier that year. The Chandos download comes with the pdf booklet, which the eclassical.com lacks – as the words are in Venetian dialect, the booklet is essential.



In Chains of Gold: The Pre-Restoration Verse Anthem **Volume 1**

Orlando GIBBONS (1583-1625)

Complete Consort Anthems

Behold, thou hast made my days [4:33]

We praise thee, O Father [4:53]

In Nomine a5 No.1 [4:07]

This is the record of John [4:02]

Great King of Gods [4:41]

Do not repine, fair sun [7:41]

In Nomine a5 No.2 [4:09]

Glorious and powerful God [4:59]

Blessed are all they that fear the Lord [4:35]

O all true faithful hearts [3:42]

Sing unto the Lord [5:19]

In Nomine a5 No. 3 [3:42]

See, see, the Word is incarnate [5:48]

Lord, grant grace [3:10]

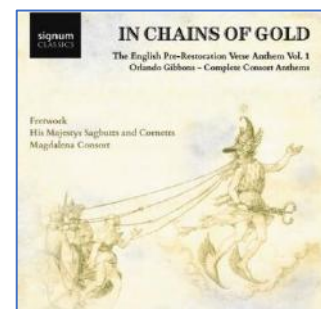
Fretwork

His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts

Magdalena Consort/Peter Harvey, William Hunt (pitch: A=466)

rec. November 2016, St George's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge. DDD.

SIGNUM SIGCD511 [66:38] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.



CD available from

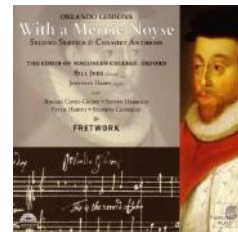


Just a handful of these anthems are well known: *This is the Record of John* probably tops the list, having been made familiar by a King's Cambridge recording directed by Sir David Willcocks, still available on a number of CD and download offerings, including an inexpensive Alto CD, where it and two other Gibbons pieces are coupled with music by John Taverner. (**ALC1183**). I thought the Alto a reasonable introduction to the music of these composers – dated in style but still enjoyable – though I mentioned four other recordings of Gibbons which I thought preferable – [review](#).

Good as all those are, however, none of them duplicates the new release: the Hyperion Helios from Winchester, for example, contains about half of the anthems, together with settings of *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* and the Easter Anthems (**CDH55228**) and the Oxford Camerata on Naxos also duplicate about half of the Signum offering (**8.553130**). While both these are well worth having, the new recording offers a unique collection, especially as even the more familiar works are best known with organ accompaniment rather than in the instrumental consort settings here.

The blurb stresses the dramatic and declamatory nature of the singing, but this is never over-done. With very fine contributions all round, this marks the beginning of what promises to be a first-rate series. Fortunately, considerations of authenticity of pitch don't extend to an attempt to reproduce the original pronunciation in a kind of Mummerset, but the diction is very precise without sounding precious. The more familiar items, such as *This is the Record of John* and *See, see the Word is incarnate*, are the equal of any that I have heard¹. Any choirs contemplating singing these verse anthems this coming Advent and Christmas would do well to listen to these performances, not least to Charles Daniels' contributions to both.

I should mention one other recording of the church music of Gibbons with instrumental consort. Made some time ago by the choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, directed by Bill Ives, it features an earlier incarnation of Fretwork together with some distinguished soloists: Rogers Covey-Crump, Steven Harrold (countertenors), Peter Harvey (baritone), Stephen Connolly (bass) and Jonathan Hardy (organ). Entitled *With a Merry Noyse*, it contains four of the anthems on the new album plus the morning and evening canticles from the Second Service.



(Harmonia Mundi **HMU907337**, download only, available from [eclassical.com](#) or to stream from [Naxos Music Library](#) – NO booklet from either, or from any download source that I can find). The performances are rather more reflective than on the new recording, to which they make an excellent foil.

Fretwork are pluralists in the music of Gibbons and his contemporaries: they also appear on an album of music for private devotion which includes *See, see, the Word is incarnate*, together with music by Tomkins, Taverner, Tallis, Downland, Byrd, Campion et al (*Tune thy Musicke to thy Hart*, with Stile Antico, **HMU857554** – [review](#) – [DL Roundup June 2012/2](#)). The classicsonline download is no longer available, replaced by a better, lossless, download from [eclassical.com](#), with booklet but 16-bit only, though the disc is an SACD, and about the same price as the SACD for UK purchasers.²

¹ The former makes the fine version on *Evensong 2016* (King's **KGS0015** – [review](#) – [Autumn 2017/1](#)) sound rather timid by comparison and highlights the limitations of live recording.

² It does, however, include a 2-minute bonus not on the SACD and not on the original download: Gibbons *If ye love me*.

Gibbons' *Fancies for the Viols*, recorded by the viol consort L'Achéron, directed by François Joubert-Caillet (treble viol) in April 2017, feature on a new Ricercar recording, offering 18 of his 42 extant works for viols. (Ricercar **RIC384**, reviewed as mp3 press preview; also available in 16- and 24-bit download from eclassical.com). As well as a selection of the 'fancies' or fantasias, the programme includes two examples of that peculiarly English form, the *In Nomine*, two galliards, and concludes with a 6-part arrangement the well-known *Go from my window*, more usually performed in Thomas Morley's arrangement for the lute or keyboard.



The principal competition comes from Phantasm, who offer a similar selection on Linn **BKD486**, a fine reissue of an Avie original, apart from the black square which spoils the covers of all these BKD series releases.

Bargain lovers will find a shorter selection of these viol works, with music for the keyboard, on a very fine introduction to his music on Naxos **8.550603** (Rose Consort of Viols, Timothy Roberts, organ). Those seeking the complete consort music will find it performed by Concordia on two CDs from Metronome (**METCD1033** and **1039**).

DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

Johann Bernhard BACH (1676–1749) Overture-Suites (c.1716?)

Ouverture in G [16:06]

Ouverture in e minor [19:31]

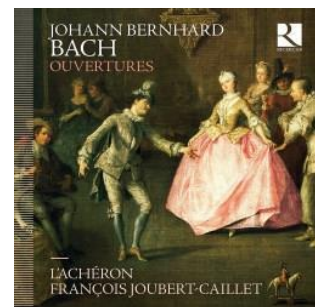
Ouverture in g minor [22:07]

Ouverture in D [19:06]

L'Achéron/François Joubert-Caillet (bass viol)

rec. Eglise Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste, Beaufays, Belgium, March 2016. DDD.

RICERCAR RIC373 [76:50]



CD available from



[Stream from Naxos Music Library](#)

Very little of the music of JB Bach – a second cousin of JSB's father – has survived, so it's hardly surprising if, like me, you have never come across him before. I seem not to have received this with my regular press previews from Outthere, the group to which Ricercar belongs, so didn't notice it until I read Nigel Harris's *Recording of the Month* [review](#). (But NB: the correct catalogue number, as listed above). These Overture-Suites are here receiving their only current recording – the first ever? Three of them were copied – and performed? – by the great man himself and the intriguing possibility exists that they influence his own Suites. Whatever the case may be, all lovers of Bach and Handel should go for this release.

Francesco DURANTE (1684-1755)

CD1

Concertos for Strings Nos. 1-5 [13:19 + 11:38 + 9:45 + 10:20 + 7:34]

CD2

Concertos for Strings Nos. 6-8 [9:50 + 8:46 + 12:37]

Harpichord Concerto in B-flat* [9:26]

Gerald Hambitzer (harpichord)*

Concerto Köln/Werner Erhardt

rec. 1900-1902.

PHOENIX 427 [53:02 + 40:43 = 93:45] reviewed as lossless download from eclassical.com (NO booklet) and as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) (with pdf booklet)



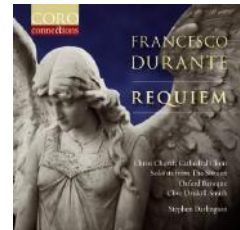
CD available from



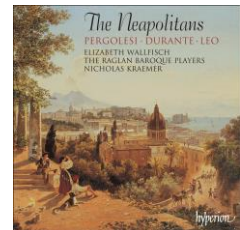
[Reviewing a Brilliant Classics release](#) of these concertos, Curtis Rogers preferred the greater variety of the Concerto Köln recordings, without giving catalogue details. The Brilliant set is certainly very good value – as little as £5.49 as an mp3 download and around £9 or \$9 on CD – but the Phoenix reissue of a Capriccio set from 1992 is worth the extra: as CR says, the greater variety of instrumentation makes the music sound more attractive. If only Brilliant had entrusted this music to their wonderful Vivaldi specialists, L'Arte dell'arco and Federico Guglielmo... Even though Concerto Köln's tempi are very slightly slower, they actually sound lighter and airier than the Brilliant recordings. The recording sounds fine. As Johan van Veen [wrote](#) of this set, this is a brilliant realisation of some pleasing and highly original music. For these two short CDs, eclassical.com's per-second timing policy brings the cost down to a reasonable \$16.79.

Both sets conclude with a concerto in B-flat, but on the Brilliant Classics set it's an alternative of the string concerto No.2, here receiving its first recording.

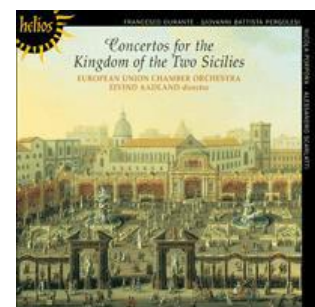
On Phoenix it's a keyboard concerto, played on the harpsichord, which appears to be the same work that is played on the organ on a Coro recording of **Durante's Requiem** in c minor (1746), performed by members of The Sixteen, Oxford Baroque, Christ Church Choir, Oxford and Stephen Darlington on **COR16147**, available to stream from [Naxos Music Library](#). Like the concertos, the *Requiem* is well-wrought without being essential, and the performances do it and, especially the concerto, justice.



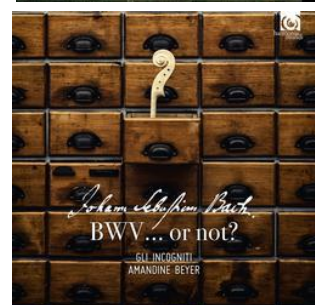
Three of these Durante String Concertos, Nos. 2, 5 and 8, appear on a Hyperion recording of **Neapolitan Concertos** performed by Elizabeth Wallfisch (violin) and the Raglan Baroque Players directed by Nicholas Kraemer. The other works are by **Giovanni PERGOLESI** – Violin Concerto in B-flat; Sonata in A and Sinfonia in F – and **Leonard LEO** – Concerto for four violins and strings in D. 'The Neapolitans': **CDA67230**, rec.2000 [57:40] – available as a lossless download, with pdf booklet, or from the Archive Service: both from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#). As with so many other recordings of this quality, it's a mystery why it has had to descend to the neither regions of the special order – sadly, *facilis descensus Averno* – but the download (£7.99) is readily available. If anything, these performances are even preferable to those of Concerto Köln: strongly recommended.



Durante's *Concerto per quartetto* No.1 in F appears with music by **Giovanni PERGOLESI**, **Nicola PORPORA** and **Alessandro SCARLATTI** on an album entitled **Concertos for the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies**. (EU Chamber Orchestra/Eivin Aadland, Hyperion Helios **CDH55005** – rec. 1988 [54:38]. See [DL News 2014/14](#).



Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750). BWV...or not? The inauthentic Bach contains a selection of works which have been attributed to JSB at one time or another and even given BWV catalogue numbers. It contains music by **Johann Georg PISENDELL** (probably), a Violin Sonata once listed as BWV1024, a sonata for flute and violin, possibly by JSB¹ in collusion with **CPE BACH** (BWV1038/H590.5), **CPE BACH's** Violin Sonata (listed as BWV1036), actually an early version of his Keyboard Concerto, H569/Wq145, **Johann Gottlieb GOLDBERG** Sonata for two violins and continuo (BWV1037), DürG13, a Fugue in g minor, which may be by JSB (BWV1026), the *Sonata on the King's Theme* from the *Musical Offering* (BWV1079) and a Suite for violin and keyboard, BWV1025, arranged from a



Lute Suite by **Silvius Leopold WEISS**, a composer whom Bach is known to have admired; it's listed as 'spurious' by most authorities but the notes appear to regard it as authentic, even to the extent that the opening *Fantasia*, not from Weiss, may be Bach's own work. Two items are not exactly 'inauthentic'; the Fugue may be genuine Bach and the other two items are Bach's arrangements of other composers' music – the theme which Frederick the Great gave Bach as the basis of his *Musical Offering*, here receiving as good a performance as any that I have heard.

All this music is good enough to make any misattribution understandable and it's all brought to life in fine performances from **Gli Incogniti**, directed from the violin by **Amandine Beyer**, recorded in Rome in February 2017 and available on Harmonia Mundi **HMM902322** [90:08]. Some dealers have this on CD – don't ask me how they fit 90 minutes on – but most offer it only as a download. My review download came in 24/88 format from eclassical.com, complete with pdf booklet.

¹ Most authorities list BWV1036-8 as completely spurious.

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Messiah, HWV56 (1754 Foundling Hospital version)

Sandrine Piau (soprano), Katherine Watson (soprano), Anthea Pichanick (contralto), Rupert Charlesworth (tenor), Andreas Wolf (bass-baritone)
Le Concert Spirituel Choir and Orchestra/Hervé Niquet
rec. 20-22 December 2016, Notre-Dame du Liban, Paris. DDD
Texts included.

ALPHA 362 [46:29 + 68:49] Reviewed from press preview and as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com



With Autumn well under way, it's inevitable that we should have yet another *Messiah* – originally intended for Easter but now indissolubly connected with Christmas.

With so many excellent accounts of this music, any new version needs to be very special. Hervé Niquet's avowed *raison d'être* for this new recording is the use of the 1754 version 'rarely played because it calls for five soloists: two sopranos, alto, tenor and bass... I've opted here for an operatic interpretation, taking its cue from the drama inherent in this account of the life of Christ'. Actually, using the Foundling Hospital version is not as distinctive as the use of the 1751 version, with boy trebles, by Edward Higginbottom and New College Choir on Naxos (**8.570131/2** – [review](#)) or John Butt's decision with the Dunedin Consort to reconstruct the 1742 Dublin original (Linn **CKD285: Recording of the Month** – [review](#) – [DL Roundup November 2009](#)).

Polyphony on Hyperion **CDA67800** offer a modern-instrument recording with a real sense of period style and on offer at budget price – [review](#) – [review](#). Among the most recommendable period-instrument versions of *Messiah*, that directed by Paul McCreesh is directly comparable with the new recording since it, too, uses the 1754 version. (DG Archiv Duo **4779574**, budget price). So, too, is Christopher Hogwood's Decca L'Oiseau Lyre recording, also of the 1754 version, which has the advantage of Emma Kirkby and Judith Nelson among the soloists and, in addition to the 2-CD set and download, has recently been made available on blu-ray audio (**4788160**).

Comparing the times of these two earlier recordings of 1754 with the new recording reveals an anomaly which for me rules out the new version, general fast tempi and pruned repeats:

- McCreesh – Part 1: 49:08 Part 2: 50:31 Part 3: 32:06
- Hogwood – Part 1: 52:40 Part 2: 51:27 Part 3: 31:59
- Niquet – Part 1: 46:65 Part 2: 42:58 Part 3: 25:51

As the work progresses Niquet and his team seem to become more and more bored, rush the tempi and fail to observe all the repeats. For the Foundling Hospital version on period instruments, then, I recommend staying with McCreesh or Hogwood, the latter still available to download as part of a 25-hour set *The Baroque Era 1* – [review](#) – with many other fine performances. It's on **4787094** and Presto offer it for £39.22 or £49.03 (mp3/lossless) – no texts but these are available from <http://www.loiseau-lyre.co.uk/>.

Benedetto MARCELLO (1686-1739)

Sonata a tré for viola di gamba, violoncello and basso continuo: Op.2/2 [11:59]

Estro Poetico-Armonico – Salmi

Psalms Nos. 14 [8:52], 21 [28:49], 38 [10:36] and 27 [15:10]

Caroline Pelon (soprano), Mélodie Ruvio (contralto)

l'Amoroso/Guido Balestracci

rec. 23-26 September 2016, Auditorium of Museo Diocesano in Molfetta, Bari, Italy. DDD.

Texts and translations included

ARCANA A441 [75:22] Reviewed from mp3 press preview



CD available from



Marcello's settings of the first fifty psalms in an Italian paraphrase have not been much recorded, though there's a selection on Atma **ACD22233**, which I haven't heard. Signum have recorded Charles Avison's adaptations of some of them with English texts – no overlap with the psalms recorded here by Arcana (**SIGCD391** – [review](#)). Reviewing the Signum, Johan van Veen thought a recording of the originals long overdue but, while the Arcana is very welcome, these low-key performances with solo vocals more than adequate but not wholly amenable, don't quite do the music justice. Indeed, some of the best singing comes from Antonio Magarelli, who intones the Hebrew interjections of the 'Spanish Jews' and 'Germanic Jews'. Perhaps it's simply that we've been spoiled by the likes of Emma Kirkby in this repertoire or that, as noted in the booklet, Goethe felt that it took a little time to get used to this remarkable and often quite unpredictable music. Indeed, I became more attuned to these performances as the music progressed.

František JIRÁNEK (1698-1778)

Concerto in D for violin, strings and basso continuo, RV Anh.8/Jk Ap.1 poss. attrib. Antonio Vivaldi [16:28]

Concerto in B flat for oboe, strings and bass continuo, Jk17 [11:52]

Concerto in G for bassoon, strings and basso continuo, Jk20 [10:40]

Concerto in D for flute, strings and basso continuo, Jk11 [9:23]

Concerto in F for oboe, strings and basso continuo, Jk15 [10:26]

Triple Concerto for flute, violin, viola d'amore, strings and basso continuo, Jk22 [9:43]

Sergio Azzolini (bassoon): Xenia Löffler (oboe): Jana Semerádová (flute): Lenka Torgersen (violin): Vojtěch Semerád (viola d'amore)

Collegium Marianum/Jana Semerádová (period instruments)

rec. April 2016, Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren in Prague, Vinohrady. DDD.

SUPRAPHON SU4208-2 [69:09]



CD available from



There isn't much of Jiráněk's music on record and most of what there is comes from Supraphon, apart from a Concerto in d minor played by Ars Antiqua Austria as a not over-generous filler to their

interesting but not essential recording of Vivaldi's *Seasons* (Challenge Classics **CC72700** – [review](#)). Because I was very taken with that work, so similar in style to Vivaldi, whose student Jiránek may have been, and after reading Jonathan Woolf's very positive [review](#) of this Supraphon album I couldn't resist sampling from [Naxos Music Library](#) – and sampling led me to purchase it: recommendation enough. Supraphon claim this as a world premiere recording of these concertos and I see no reason to doubt that.

Carl Friedrich ABEL (1723–1787)

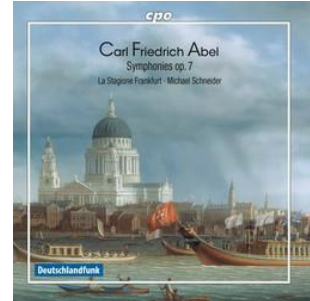
Six Symphonies, Op.7

No.3 in D [10:44]; No.2 in B-flat [9:02]; No.1 in G [11:40]; No.6 in E-flat, K18 [12:47]; No.4 in F [8:50]; No.5 in C [8:19]

La Stagione Frankfurt/Michael Schneider

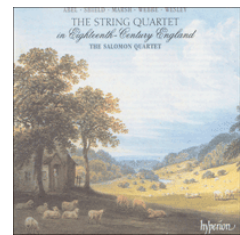
rec. Deutschlandfunk Kammermusiksaal, Cologne, March 2015

CPO 777 993-2 [62:02] Reviewed as lossless download from [eclassical.com](#) (NO booklet) and as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) (with pdf booklet). For CD purchase links see [review](#) by Nigel Harris.



These symphonies, composed in London, are so enjoyable that Symphony No.6 was long thought to have been an early work by Mozart, hence the spurious K number. That apart, if you like the music of Abel's better-known contemporary in London, JC Bach, this album should prove very appealing. A new CPO 2-CD set of Op.1 and Op.4 is in the offing, due to be released in December 2017 in performances from Kölner Akademie and Michael Willens. I expect it to be well worth looking out for.

I hope that it isn't symptomatic of a lack of appeal of Abel's music that a 1996 Hyperion album containing his **String Quartet in A**, Op.8/5 has been relegated to their special-order Archive Service. In addition to the Abel there are quartets by **William SHIELD**, **John MARSH**, **Samuel WEBBE Jr.** and **Samuel WESLEY**, whose Quartet in E-flat (c.1800-1820?) is the outstanding work here. (*The String Quartet in Eighteenth-Century England*, Salomon Quartet: **CDA66780** [69:17] Archive Service CD or lossless download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#)).



Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

Symphony No.83 in g minor (*La Poule*: The Hen) [22:21]

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.17 in G, K453 [29:21]

Marie-Alexandre GUÉNIN (1744-1835)

Symphony in d minor, Op.4/3 [11:15]

Julien Chauvin (piano); Le Concert de la Loge/Justin Taylor (violin)
rec. Auditorium du Louvre, October 2016 and February 2017. DDD.

APARTÉ AP157 [62:57] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#).



CD available from



It looks as if we are due to have a complete set of Haydn's 'Paris' Symphonies from these performers, courtesy of Aparté: they have already given us No.85, 'La Reine', on **AP131** – [review](#). That first release includes music by Haydn's contemporaries, Rigel, Sarti and JC Bach. This time, again, the coupling is of music by a familiar composer and a less familiar. It's a sign of the times that whereas Volume 1 was released on CD, its successor seems to be download only from some dealers.

Only those who wish to have an all-Haydn or an all-Mozart programme should look elsewhere: *La Poule* receives a lively performance and Julien Chauvin plays the Mozart piano concerto with a delicacy of

touch which makes his instrument sometimes sound like a fortepiano without the disadvantages – but that doesn't mean that the performance is lacking in power or emotional appeal. The slow movement is kept moving at a reasonably fast pace considerably faster than Géza Anda's classic DG Originals account, with Nos. 6 and 21. Mitsuko Uchida on her Decca recording, with No.25 takes the movement even more slowly than Anda, but the marking is *andante* and the movement never sounds over-driven on the new Aparté.

To the best of my knowledge, this is not only the sole current recording of any music by Guénin, but also the first to date.

For those seeking an all-Haydn alternative, Hyperion offer the period Hanover Band directed by Roy Goodman in the first three 'Paris' symphonies, Nos. 82-84, on **CDH55123** [78:57] at mid-price, available to download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk, though I should point out that some dealers are still offering the CD for slightly less than the download. Though Goodman's tempos are far from slow, he gives the third and fourth movements a little more time to breathe than Justin Taylor.



On an all-Mozart programme Angela Hewitt adopts a very similar tempo to the new recording for the *andante* of K453 – Hyperion **CDA67919**, with Orchestra da Camera di Mantova and Hannu Lintu, coupled with Concerto No.27, K595. I made that a **Recording of the Month** in 2013 – [review](#) – and Geoff Molyneux was also enthusiastic about it – [review](#). There are many other alternatives, of course, but I mention the Hewitt because Julien Chauvin's lightness of touch reminds me of hers, in particular. Because of the rather short playing time, it can be downloaded from hyperion-records.co.uk at an attractive price: £6.50 (16-bit) or £7.30 (24-bit).

HAYDN 2032 is a series which is due to include not just a section of the series but the whole set of 104+, due for completion in 2032. It now reaches Volume 5 (*L'Homme De Génie*) with performances switched from Il Giardino Armonico to Kammerorchester Basel, but still on period instruments and directed by Giovanni Antonini. The contents are **Symphonies No. 19** in D, **80** in d minor and **81** in G, with **Joseph Martin KRAUS (1756-1792)** Symphony in c minor, VB142. (**Alpha 676** [78:25] – rec. Teldex Studio, Berlin, July and October 2016: reviewed as mp3 press preview and as 24-bit download from eclassical.com.) Some of the other works which have formed the couplings in this series to date have been less than obvious choices, but Haydn is known to have thought highly of the music of Kraus, who died young. You may even find that this Symphony in c minor leads you the complete Naxos box set of his symphonies (**930195**, download only – 4+ hours for as little as £4.79 in lossless quality or separately on four CDs – [review](#) of Volume 4).



CD available from



For Haydn's symphonies Nos. 80 and 81 the most recent competition comes from lively but not over-charged performances from Accademia Bizantina and Ottavio Dantone (Decca **4788837**, 2 CDs for the price of one – [DL News 2016/5](#) – also in 36-CD box set). If I prefer Dantone and his team slightly, there's not a great deal in it, merely that he makes the music, especially No.80, sound a trifle more striking than Antonini and observes all repeats. Both recordings are very good, the Antonini excellent in 24-bit format.

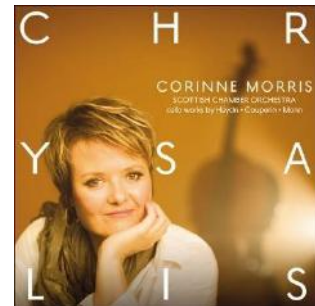
Two new recordings of **Haydn's Cello Concerto in C** are in direct competition. On Hyperion **CDA68162 Steven Isserlis** performs it, together with the **Cello Concerto in D**, with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. He adds **CPE Bach's Cello Concerto in A**, H439, Wq172 and the *Adagio* of **Luigi Boccherini's Cello Concerto No.7** in G and a *cavatina* from Mozart's *La finta giardinera*. This is a first-class modern replacement for earlier recordings which couple the two concertos, including Isserlis' own earlier recording with Roger Norrington (Sony). I'm preparing a review for the main MusicWeb pages, but you don't need to wait for that: it's well worth obtain on CD or in 16- or 24-bit download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.



CD available from



Corinne Morris and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra also perform the **Concerto in C** together with an arrangement of **François Couperin's Pièce en concert** for cello and strings and **Georg Matthias Monn's Cello Concerto in C**. (Linn **CKD562** [58:11] – reviewed as 24-bit download from hyperion-records.co.uk). Either will do very well depending on your choice of coupling. The Isserlis would be my marginal preference and the coupling is more interesting and more generous time-wise. It's also slightly less expensive as a download but the Linn is very special, as it marks Corinne Morris's very welcome return after a period during which a form of repetitive strain prevented her from playing¹ and it's available additionally in 24/192 format from Linn. Also, the Monn concerto is not over-represented in the catalogue.



¹ Hence the 'Chrysalis' logo rather unnecessarily plastered across the cover.

CD available from



Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.23 in A, K488 (1786) [29:15]

Piano Concerto No.27 in B-flat, K595 (1791) [35:31]

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

La Cathédrale engloutie (*Préludes* Book I) (Encore) [3:17]

Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Nocturne No.20 in c-sharp minor Op. posth. (Encore) [4:41]

Mazurka in a minor Op.17/4 (Encore) [5:07]

Menahem Pressler (piano); Magdeburgische Philharmonie/Kimbo Ishii

rec. live 15 and 20 May 2016, 15/16 December 2016, Theater Magdeburg. DDD.

C-AVI AVI8553650D [78:24] Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



CD available from



It's disappointing to discover that the story of Ponce de León's disappearance while searching for the Fountain of Youth in Florida is another of those myths that needs to be swept into the dustbin of history. The story has some substance in that European explorers regularly enquired of the Amerindians about the existence of tall stories they had read in Mandeville's *Travels* – a copy of which Columbus took with him – and similar books. Oh yes, they would be told, the Fountain of Youth, or the Golden Man (*El Dorado*) or those men with faces in their chests were just over the next range of

unassailable mountains. The natives of Guiana even told Sir Walter Raleigh what the latter were called – *Ewaipanoma* – anything to keep the gullible Europeans happy.

Yet I could almost believe that Menahem Pressler (b.1923), erstwhile founder and pianist of the great Beaux Arts Trio, had discovered the said fountain: here he is in his 90s still performing like someone half his age. These two (live) Mozart recordings, made in his home town in 2016, join other recent releases on La Dolce Volta, including solo Mozart on **LDV19D** and **LDV34D**. Without being particularly insightful, these are idiomatic and enjoyable performances and both the orchestra and conductor, though I don't remember hearing either before, offer very competent support. If I warm more to the performance of K488 than that of K595, that's more to do with my own preferences than the performances.

My benchmark remains Clifford Curzon's 2-CD set containing these two concertos, plus Nos. 20, 24 and 26, with the ECO/Benjamin Britten and the LSO/István Kertész (Decca Legends **4684912**, download only, though [Amazon UK](#) have a few CD sets left as I write). Stephen Kovacevich's very fine recording of Nos. 20 and 23, once available at super-budget price, can be obtained as a [special Presto CD](#) for £12.75.

The live recordings are good. Apart from an unfortunate cough in the Chopin Nocturne, the audience is unobtrusive. Brief applause is retained after each item. The booklet contains plenty of information about the performers but beginners would learn nothing about the music from it.

The only other recording that I've been able to trace by the Magdeburg Orchestra and Kimbo Ishii is a Naxos album of the music of **Hermann GOETZ** two Piano Concertos and Spring Overture (**8.573327** – [review and purchase details](#)). That's available as an inexpensive 16-bit lossless download from [eclassical.com](#) or for subscribers to stream from Naxos Music Library (both with pdf booklet). For Goetz's Second Piano Concerto, you may prefer to pay a little more for the Hyperion recording, with Hamish Milne as soloist, with Wieniawski's g minor concerto (**CDA67791** – [review](#) and see below).

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART

Gran Partita: Serenade No.10 for winds, K361 (c.1781/2 or 1783/4 [47:43]

LSO Wind Ensemble

rec live LSO St Luke's, October 2015. DSD.

LSO LIVE LSO5075 SACD [47:43]

Reviewed from stereo SACD layer. Available as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#).



CD available from



There are lots of arguments in favour of this album: it's the most recent recording of this most enjoyable music; it captures the mood very well; it comes in excellent sound as a hybrid SACD¹ or 24-bit download and, though the playing time is very short, the very reasonable price² more than compensates. The SACD usually costs around £8.50 but is on offer from one dealer as I write for £7.00. Though 24/192 downloads are a little expensive at over £11, [Hyperion](#) offer 16-bit lossless for £5.50 and 24/96 for £8.25, both with pdf booklet.

The EMI Triples recording of Serenades 10-12, the Clarinet Quintet and the *Entführung* wind-band music which I recommended in 2008 – [review](#) – is now download only, though still good value in that format. Another very good value option comes from the Albion Ensemble: like the LSO offering Serenade No.10, with no coupling, but available to download from [Hyperion](#), with pdf booklet, for

£5.99 (**CDH55093**). The CD equivalent of that is now available only from the Archive Service. I could be happy with either of these or, indeed, the new LSO recording, for relaxation on my Desert Island. Those seeking period performances should find the Double Decca with Amadeus Winds directed by Christopher Hogwood to their taste (Serenades 10-12 and Divertimenti, **4580962**, download only). Still best of all, however, is the classic complete wind music recorded by the London Wind Soloists directed by Jack Brymer (Decca **4557942**, 3 CDs, download only). For another fine recording of Serenades Nos. 10 and 11, including a scholarly revision of the latter, on Divine Art please see the [Late Autumn 2016 Retrospective](#).

¹ Reviewed from the 2-channel SACD layer.

² Pace what Simon Thompson says – ‘not even at bargain price’ – in his otherwise very helpful [review](#).

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Requiem in d minor, K626 (1791) (completed Franz Xaver Süssmayr, revised Pierre-Henri Dutron 2016)

Sophie Karthäuser (soprano), Marie-Claude Chappuis (alto), Maximilian Schmitt (tenor), Johannes Weisser (baritone)

RIAS Kammerchor; Freiburger Barockorchester/René Jacobs
rec. 17-18 July 2017, Teldex Studio, Berlin. DDD.

Texts and translations included

HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902291 [46:01] Reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#).



CD available from



[Stream from Naxos Music Library](#)

I had hoped to include the new Hyperion recording of the Fauré *Requiem* in this edition, but pressures of time and space mean that I have had to leave it over till next time. To have looked at both together would have been appropriate since one thing which they have in common is that they exist in a variety of formats, so there can never be one ideal recording of either. On **CDA68209** David Hill offers a very worthwhile version of the Fauré in its original small-scale garb.

In the case of **Mozart**, the question is whether to leave the work as an incomplete ruin, as it left Mozart's hands, or whether and how much to trust the work of his pupil Franz Xaver Süßmayr, engaged by Mozart's widow Constanze, in dire financial need, to complete it. Or do we instead trust more radical modern attempts at reconstruction of what Mozart would have intended? Or what about the completion by Neukomm, as performed in Brazil in 1821 and recorded by Jean-Claude Malgoire and his Écurie du Roy (**K617 617180** – [review](#))?

Whatever else, we need to put aside all that we have 'learned' from *Amadeus*, a superb film but a work more of fiction than of history, though the sound-track was directed by Neville Marriner, whose two recordings are among the best of the classic accounts: the Philips CD is available as a Presto special (**4320872**) or as an inexpensive ClassicFM download (**4783360**); the earlier Decca recording remains available at budget price (**4783360**).

Some time ago I said that the 'best' Mozart *Requiem* was one of those things that could never be determined, like what song the Sirens sang to Odysseus – in [Download News 2014/4](#). I compared four recent versions there, each with something different to offer:

John Butt (Linn **CKD449**) performs the complete Süßmayr version, re-edited by David Black (2013), with period-scale forces and adds as an appendix a reconstruction of the opening *Requiem* and *Kyrie*, as performed at Mozart's own memorial service. **Christoph Spering** combines the Süßmayr completion with a separate performance of the parts which Mozart left incomplete (Naïve **V5108**, download only).

Philippe Herreweghe (Harmonia Mundi **HMX2961620**, download only or 30-CD set **HMX290882655**) shows how a less dramatic approach can work well, whereas **Teodor Currentzis** (recently reissued at mid-price, Alpha **377**) makes the opposite treatment work well in a cobweb-expelling recording.

Herbert von Karajan's fans and subscribers to the old school generally will not be let down by the Beulah reissue of his 1961 Berlin Phil recording, coupled with his 1959 Vienna Symphony No.40 (**1PDR24** – [Download News 2016/8](#)). The best download – lossless sound for the same price that others offer mp3 – is from [Qobuz](#). **Peter Schreier's** Dresden recording offers a very fine half-way house between old-school and more recent takes on the work and it's very generously coupled with the 'Coronation' Mass (**4784824**, download only).

A few months later than reviewing those four recordings, in [2014/14](#), I added Sir **Charles Mackerras's** recording of the Robert Levin edition, which seeks to improve on Süßmayr: first-rate even for those happy with the conventional completions. (Linn **BKD211**).

With a few reservations [John Quinn liked](#) the BIS recording, directed by **Masaaki Suzuki** and using a text edited by his son Masato Suzuki. It's better value than most, apart from the Schreier, in offering a substantial filler, the *Vesperæ solennes de confessore* (**BIS2091**, SACD and 24-bit download from [eclassical.com](#)).

The new **Harmonia Mundi** uses a recent (2016) edition in which Süßmayr's work is retained but in a revised form, the work of Pierre-Henri Dutron, who persuaded René Jacobs to take up his revision and perform it to general acclaim in concerts Europe-wide. Now Jacobs has recorded that revision. I doubt if most listeners will notice much difference but the changes are mostly for the better and the performance and recording offer persuasive support.

The booklet contains a chart showing which sections of the work as recorded here were completed by Mozart, which parts of these were re-used by Süßmayr in other sections, which composed by Süßmayr, and which of the latter two were revised by Dutron, with recourse to the manuscript. There is also a detailed note by Dutron about his motives and methods. Indeed, the booklet is excellent in all respects except that the English version appears to lack a lengthy and valuable section included both in the French original and the German translation.

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Il Sogno di Scipione (The Dream of Scipio, Dramatic Serenade) K126 (1771)
[108:08]

Scipione – Stuart Jackson (tenor)

Costanza – Klara Ek (soprano)

Fortuna – Soraya Mafi (soprano)

Publio – Krystian Adam (tenor)

Emilio – Robert Murray (tenor)

Licenza – Chiara Skerath (soprano)

Classical Opera Choir and Orchestra/Ian Page

rec. October 2016, St Augustine's Church, Kilburn, London. DDD.

Texts and translation included

SIGNUM SIGCD499 [58:17 + 49:57] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#).



CDs available from



Ian Page and his team once again place us in their debt with a very fine account of one of Mozart's lesser-known works. The Philips recording of *Il sogno di Scipione*, once available as part of their

Complete Mozart Edition, is now download only, as is the Brilliant Classics set from Musica ad Rhenum with Jed Wentz.

Cicero's account of the dream of Scipio, or, rather Macrobius' commentary on it – the original was lost for a time – was a great influence on late medieval Dream Vision poetry, mentioned at the opening of *Roman de la Rose*¹ and several times by Chaucer. In Macrobius Scipio, staying as a guest with a local ally of Rome, Masinissa, dreams that he is visited by his adoptive grandfather, Scipio Africanus, whom he had been discussing beforehand. Scipio senior reveals that he, Scipio junior, will rise to fame as the destroyer of Carthage and discusses with him in neo-Platonic terms the divine nature of the soul and the destiny of those who are drawn by virtue to true glory.

Mozart's librettist Metastasio demotes the elder Scipio a smaller part – here known as Publio – and conveys his message via a pair of allegorical figures, drawn from another source: constancy and fortune, who vie for his affections. Guess which he chooses, bearing in mind that this one-act dramatic serenade was intended for Mozart's Archbishop employer.

The plot is not very dramatic but it inspired Mozart to some very attractive music. If you enjoyed these performers' excellent recording of *Il Rè Pastore*, another Salzburg work, this is equally recommendable. (SIGCD433 – [review](#) – [review](#). Available to download in 16- and 24-bit with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk).

1 *Ung acteur qui ot non Macrobes;/ Qui ne tint pas songes à lobes;/ Ainçois escrist la vision/ Qui avint au roi Cipion.* [An author that hight Macrobes, / That halt not dremes false ne lees, / But undoth us the avysion / That whilom mette king Cipioun. Chaucer's (?) translation. 7-10].

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART: An Italian Journey

Il desio di vendetta (Lucio Silla)

Sposa cara (La finta semplice)

Quercia annosa (Il sogno di Scipione)

Dentro il mio petto (La finta giardiniera)

Se vicendo, Sul puo (Il rè pastore)

Il padre Adorato, Vedrommi intorno, Fuor del Mar (Idomeneo)

Misero! o sogno K431

Il mio Tesoro (Don Giovanni)

Un'aura amorosa, In qual fiero contrasto (Così fan tutte)

Se all'imperio (La Clemenza di Tito)

Jeremy Ovenden (tenor)

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment/Jonathan Cohen

rec. October 2010, St Silas the Martyr, Kentish Town, London. DDD.

SIGNUM SIGCD251 [67:28] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.



CD available from



The new *Sogno di Scipione* led me to this attractive collection of tenor arias from the whole gamut of Mozart's career, which we seem to have missed when it was released to well-deserved acclaim.

Conradin KREUTZER (1780-1849)

Septet in E-flat, Op.62, for clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, violoncello and double bass (original version) [39:06]
 Trio in E-flat, Op.43, for fortepiano, clarinet and bassoon [22:40]
 Ensemble 'Himmelpfortgrund'/Tobias Koch (fortepiano)
 rec. 9-13 March 2015, 25-26 January 2016, Hans-Rosbaud-Studio, Baden-Baden. DDD.

CPO 555067-2 [62:07] Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from Naxos Music Library



CD available from



There's not too much of Kreutzer's music available and I can't claim that it's anywhere near as inspired as that of his contemporaries¹, such as Mozart's wind music – see above – or Beethoven's Septet, but it's accomplished and entertaining and the early manuscript edition employed here is rather more adventurous than the printed version. In fact, the charming but inconsequential cover shot which CPO have chosen for the CD matches the music very well and these period-instrument performances, well recorded, make a good case for it.

¹ He wasn't even the eponymous dedicatee of Beethoven's *Kreutzer* sonata – that was Rodolphe Kreutzer.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

String Quartet No. 15 in G, D887 (1826) [50:17]

Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

String Quartet in g minor Op.20/3 [24:59]
 Tetzlaff Quartet [Christian Tetzlaff (violin); Elisabeth Kufferath (violin); Hanna Weinmeister (viola); Tanja Tetzlaff (cello)]
 rec. September 2015, Sendesaal, Bremen

ONDINE ODE1293-2 [73:51] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



CD available from

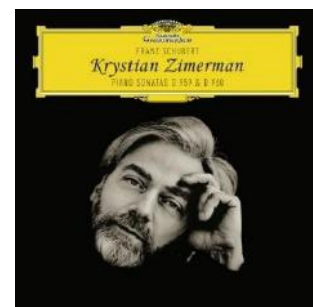


I seem to have missed this when it was released in Spring 2017, though Ralph Moore, who made it a **Recording of the Month** – [review](#) – was far from alone in praising it. I did, however, catch up, in a [review](#) of independent labels, with the Doric Quartet recording, which couples Schubert's final quartet with his *Quartettsatz* in fine performances which also earned a **Recording of the Month** accolade – [review](#). Choice between the two may safely be left to preference of coupling which is Haydn in this case, despite one supplier claiming that it's Brahms!

RECORDING OF THE MONTH**Franz SCHUBERT (1797–1828)**

Piano Sonata in A, D959 [38:54]
 Piano Sonata in B-flat, D960 [43:12]
 Krystian Zimerman (piano)
 rec. Kashiwazaki City Performing Arts Center Art-Forêt, Japan, January 2016

DG 4797588 [82:06] Streamed from Naxos Music Library, with pdf booklet.



Also available on vinyl from some dealers.

CD available from



These two sonatas, especially D960, join Beethoven's late masterpieces at the top of the pile. There are many very fine recordings, but Clifford Curzon is the arch interpreter of D960, though his recording is now bound up in a number of multi-CD sets, including *Clifford Curzon: The Complete Decca Recordings* (4784839, 23 CD + DVD). That's reduced by Presto to £46.80 until January 2018, but even at the normal price of around £80 it offers good value: 25 hours of wonderful music from an underrated and self-effacing performer. Curzon didn't record D959 but the set includes the Sonata D850, The 'Wanderer' Fantasia, D760, and several other fine Schubert interpretations.

Curzon doesn't observe all the repeats in the outer movements, but Krystian Zimerman does, as does Stephen Kovacevich (EMI, with *Moments Musicaux*, download only). That makes for a very long first movement, 20:15 against Curzon's 13:15, but the music is so wonderful that I'm very happy to listen to it expounded at such length in such an intense performance. Zimerman really does get to the heart of the music as well as Curzon and he gives us so much more of it. In the other movements, too, while I would never wish to be without Curzon, Zimerman proves his equal. Add to that the fact that he also gives us a splendid D959 and this becomes very special, indeed.

Zimerman's instrument is unique in having a keyboard of his own design spliced onto a Steinway piano. I found the tone just a tad hard at first, but it had the advantage of making me sit up in the same way as the opening notes of Beethoven's String Quartet No.12, Op.127, which was my introduction to that work from the Budapest Quartet, sounding as if playing on metal strings. I soon became habituated to the clarity of the sound, however.

Those who prefer the sound of the fortepiano, which Schubert would have expected, should turn to Sir András Schiff's ECM 2-CD set coupling D960 with the Sonata in G, D894, Impromptus, and other works – [review](#). To the purchase links there add [Presto](#). Even inveterate haters of the fortepiano won't have to exercise too much tolerance.

As I close this review, I note that Stephen Greenbank has also made the new DG album a *Recording of the Month* – [review](#).

Anton BRUCKNER (1824-1896)

Symphony No. 8 in C minor, WAB 108 (ed. Haas) [82:57]

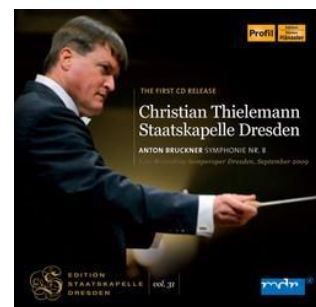
Staatskapelle Dresden/Christian Thielemann

rec. live, 14 September 2009, Semperoper, Dresden

No booklet

PROFIL PH10031 SACD [58:46 + 24:51] – from [eClassical](#) (mp3 & 16-bit lossless).

Previous review: [Michael Cookson](#) (*Recording of the Month*)



SACD available from



Cards on the table: Christian Thielemann is not a baton-waver I warm to, but when I read my colleague's enthusiastic review of this Dresden Eighth I felt compelled to give him another try. Significantly, perhaps, he replaced an indisposed Fabio Luisi; he also changed the programme. As ever, there's so much competition in Bruckner, not least from Eugen Jochum, Herbert von Karajan, Günter Wand and Sergiu Celibidache. I've highlighted the old guard rather than the young Turks, as Thielemann seems more like the former than the latter in his mien and music-making. Watching his Blu-rays of the [Beethoven symphonies](#) rather confirms that view.

This recording was issued on SACD, but as far as I'm aware the download goes no higher than 16-bit lossless. That said, I still expected much better sound than this. The bass is lumpen, the treble is wiry and the balances – with jumbo sized strings – are far from ideal. Add to that an airless, almost claustrophobic feel to the presentation and it's clear this performance needs to be very special if it's to overcome these pretty significant obstacles. But even if this lack of breathing space isn't a deal-breaker for you, the performance will surely do the job.

From the start Thielemann is an irksome interventionist; why, for example, does he insist on counter-intuitive gestures, such as that curious 'focus pulling' in the tuttis? It blunts these magnificent peaks and threatens to snap the symphony's narrative line. And if you're looking for spirituality of some kind, you've come to the wrong place, for this earth-bound, stony-faced reading doesn't scale those heights, either. Thielemann grinds his way through the sublime *Adagio* and there's a hint of roughness – of aggression, even – in the *Finale*. In short, a most frustrating performance.

I've not subscribed to the *Gramophone* for a decade now, but after listening to this Profil release I read Richard Osborne's scathing review of it. A curmudgeon of the old school, who's also an unrepentant Karafan, he does at least praise Thielemann's Munich accounts of the Fourth and Seventh (as does [Rob Maynard](#)). Furthermore, he liked the last movement of this Eighth rather more than I did. Frankly, I couldn't wait to get this off my hard drive.

Idiosyncratic and ill-advised; avoid. **[DM]**

Hermann GOETZ (1840-1870)

Piano Concerto No.2 in B-flat, Op.18 [40:48]

Józef WIENIAWSKI (1837-1912)

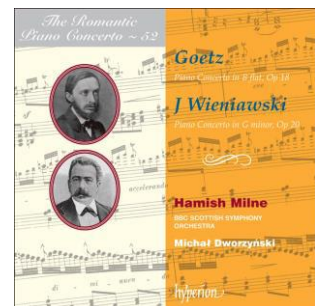
Piano Concerto in g minor, Op.20 [28:42]

Hamish Milne (piano)

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Michał Dworziński

rec. City Hall, Candleriggs, Glasgow, 16/17 September 2009. DDD

HYPERION CDA67791 [69:29] Reviewed as lossless download with pdf and epub booklets from hyperion-records.co.uk. See earlier [review](#).



CD available from



Those with long memories or a taste for nostalgia should go for the very inexpensive Brilliant Classics 40-CD box of recordings from the Vox catalogue, which includes Michael Ponti's recording of the Goetz. That can be downloaded for as little as £10.79 – incredible value for a 21½ hour walk down memory lane. (**95300BR** – [review](#)).

Ponti's is a more bravura performance than Hamish Milne's; it's heavily cut, and the recording is only fair, yet it's still well worth hearing. Milne and Michał Dworziński give us a more thoughtful reading that's probably closer to the spirit of the work than Ponti or the Naxos recording of both concertos. (See above: Mozart Piano Concertos 23 and 27).

As far as I'm aware, this is the only recording of the Wieniawski, who is better known for his virtuoso violin music.

Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)

The Nutcracker (complete ballet), Op. 71 (1892) [89:46]

Piano Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, Op. 23 (1875) [35:37]

Nodar Gabunia (piano)

Tbilisi Symphony Orchestra/Djansug Kakhidze
rec. Tbilisi, Georgia, 1996
No booklet

CUGATE CLASSICS CGC034-2 [125:37] – from [Qobuz](#) (16-bit lossless). Previous review: [Rob Maynard](#)

CD available from



With the festive season fast approaching and intrigued by Rob Maynard's enthusiastic comments, I wasted no time downloading this *Nutcracker*. The conductor and orchestra are new to me, but I've encountered CuGate once before; that was [From the Movies](#), a very entertaining selection of film music by Shostakovich and Sviridov. As for this charming ballet, there are splendid versions from Ernest Ansermet and Charles Dutoit (Decca), André Previn (EMI-Warner) and Sir Charles Mackerras (Telarc). Alas, I was underwhelmed by two more recent accounts, from Neeme Järvi ([Chandos](#)) and Dmitri Kitaïenko ([Oehms](#)). I'd not wish to find either in my Christmas stocking.



Initial impressions of this Tbilisi *Nutcracker* are quite positive, although I suspect there's some 'spotlighting' of the harp and woodwinds. Given that the playing is pretty decent, that's not necessarily a bad thing. Less welcome is the fairly recessed recording, which takes some of the sparkle out of this lovely score. Otherwise, this is a robust performance, even if Kakhidze's tempi and dynamics are eccentric at times. Also, the set-pieces are curiously subdued; indeed, *sans* ordnance the battle seems little more than a mild altercation. But what I really miss here is a keen sense of anticipation, of impending apotheoses, both of which I find in the better readings of this colourful score.

And what a pity the children's chorus is omitted from the *Waltz of the Snowflakes*; in fact, I can't recall a complete performance without it, either live or on record. This creates a strange vacuum at this point, and that's hardly what the composer intended. Now, if only Kakhidze could summon up some brio and bounce – especially in the national dances – this would be a more compelling and competitive performance. A bolder, more three-dimensional recording would have helped.

Thanks to Nodar Gabunia – who's also new to me – Tchaikovsky's evergreen concerto sounds lively and spontaneous. Kakhidze and his orchestra are certainly more alert here, and the bright, rather forward presentation adds to the *frisson* of this performance. Gabunia shapes the slow movement well, although he's a little *too* impetuous at times. Goodness, there's a lot of testosterone sloshing about. Those in search of a more subtle and sensitive reading should look no further than the recent [Signum](#) release with Alexandra Dariescu, Darrell Ang and the Royal Philharmonic.

The ballet is underpowered, the concerto oversexed; the sound varies accordingly. **[DM]**

Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Piano Quintet No.2 in A, Op.81¹ (B 155, 1887) [42:04]

String Quintet in E flat, Op.97² (B 180, 1893) [32:37]

Pavel Haas Quartet [Veronika Jarůšková (1st violin), Marek Zwiebel (2nd violin), Radim Sedmidubský (viola), Peter Jarůšek (cello)] with Boris Giltburg (piano)¹, Pavel Nikl (viola)²

rec. Dvořák Hall of the Rudolfinum, Prague, 18-19 May (Op.97) and 26-27 June 2017 (Op.81). DDD

SUPRAPHON SU41952 [74:44]

CD available from



It's quite some time since I caught up with the Pavel Haas Quartet's earlier Supraphon album coupling Dvořák's String Quartets Nos. 12 and 13 – [Download Roundup November 2011/1](#), with links to two reviews from MWI colleagues, one a Recording of the Month. I thought that a mandatory purchase even for those who already had a good recording of No.12, *The American*. Not unexpectedly, the new recording, which contains the companion 'American' Quintet, has already received several well-earned plaudits.



There's a lot to be said for pairing the two American-inspired works, Op.96 and Op.97, as on the budget-price Keller Quartet recording – [review](#) – and, more recently, the Skampa Quartet – [review](#) – [Autumn 2017/1](#)¹ – but, that apart, the new Pavel Haas Quartet recording is highly recommendable. My favourite recording of the ethereal Piano Quintet, from Clifford Curzon and the Vienna Philharmonic Quartet, is coupled with a less ideal account of String Quartet No.10 from the Boskovsky Quartet (Eloquence **4804715**) so, all in all, the new Supraphon now becomes my top recommendation. What it loses in tranquillity by comparison with Curzon *et al*, it gains in energy.

Just to complicate the issue, however, I must remind readers of the excellent recent Takács Quartet recording of Op.97, with Lawrence Power (viola), and the Op.105 String Quartet (Hyperion **CDA68142** [64:57] – from hyperion-records.co.uk on CD and in 16- and 24-bit downloads with pdf booklet).

¹ with several other reviews of Dvořák's chamber music.

Sir Edward ELGAR (1857–1934)

Falstaff, Symphonic Study in c minor, Op.68 (1913) [35:57]

Songs, Op.59 (1909–10) [6:31]

Songs, Op.60 (1909–10) [6:37]

Two Movements from *Grania and Diarmid*, Op.42 (1901) [10:10]

The Wind at Dawn (1888) [3:13]

The Pipes of Pan (1899) [3:48]

Pleading, Op.48 (1908) [2:23]

The King's Way (1909) [4:05]

Kindly do not smoke (1919) [00:49]

Roderick Williams (baritone)

BBC Philharmonic/Sir Andrew Davis

rec. MediaCityUK, Salford, Manchester; 17 January and 22 January 2017. DSD.

Texts included

CHANDOS CHSA5188 SACD [74:25] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



SACD available from



We are extremely fortunate to have Elgar's *Falstaff* in his own recording, in more than tolerable if slightly cavernous sound (Naxos Historical **8.111256**, with Symphony No.1 – [review](#)) and in digital sound, from Sir Andrew Davis (Warner Apex **2564622002**, with *Froissart* and music from *Grania and Diarmid* – [review](#)). That 1995 recording comes at budget price, albeit as a download only.¹ More recently we have had a fine version from Sir Mark Elder and the Hallé (**CDHLL7505**, with Cello Concerto – [review](#) – [review](#)), reviewed as a lossless download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. Sir Adrian Boult's 1956 Nixa stereo recording is available from Beulah (*Music of England 6*, with other Boult recordings – [DL News 2013/6](#)).²

The Apex recording has been my version of choice since it was reissued and in direct comparison with the Hallé it remains so. Good as the latter is, you may well have another recording of the Cello

Concerto, though those who find the concerto unbearably heart-on-sleeve may prefer Heinrich Schiff's performance to the highly-wrought Jacqueline du Pré version with Sir John Barbirolli.

If you happen to find the Apex on CD somewhere for around £5, I recommend choosing it. The new *Falstaff* is equally good and the recording, in 24-bit guise outshines even the very fine Apex. There are none of the problems of over-wide dynamic level which I have noted on some other recent Chandos offerings. Had this been more congenially coupled, I would have had no hesitation in making the new Chandos a **Recording of the Month** and possibly of the Year. I was, however, less captivated by the vocal items, splendidly as they are sung by Roderick Williams, whose voice is absolutely suited to them. With a few exceptions, however, I failed to engage with their rather sentimental Edwardian mood.

The King's Way 'borrows' material from another Elgar work which may be familiar to you, while the final *Smoking Cantata* – some 'cantata' at less than a minute long – ends on a humorous note. Those more sympathetic to the vocal works may well find this the *Falstaff* that they have been looking for. For others, it is possible to purchase the 11 tracks which comprise the main work separately. As always, Naxos Music Library allows subscribers to compare the new [Chandos](#) with other recordings.

¹ How such a wonderful recording can have disappeared on CD and how it can now cost more than when it was on disc is beyond logic.

² Ignore the Amazon and iTunes links: now best downloaded for the same price in lossless sound for the same price from [Qobuz](#).

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Claude DEBUSSY (1862–1918) *Printemps* (Spring, 1884) [16:17]

Serge RACHMANINOV (1873–1943) *Vesna* (Spring Cantata, 1902), Op.20* [16:04]

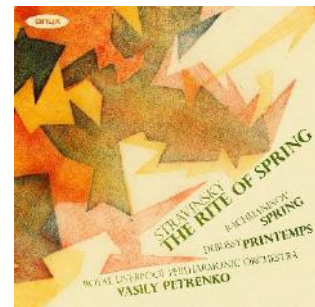
Igor STRAVINSKY (1882–1971) *Le Sacre du printemps* (The Rite of Spring, 1913) [34:22]

Rodion Pogassov (baritone)*

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus*/Vasily Petrenko
rec. Liverpool Philharmonic Hall, 9-11 June and 22-24 November 2016

Text not included

ONYX ONYX4182 [66:43] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#)



CD available from



It may seem odd, with Autumn about to metamorphose into Winter as I write, to release an album of Spring-themed music. Perhaps Onyx thought we needed cheering up – but why use autumnal colours for the booklet? Those are my only two slight reservations – if reservations they be – in the case of this recent release in a series of excellent offerings from the RLPO on Onyx, from Vasily Petrenko (Tchaikovsky Symphonies: **ONYX4150** and **4162**, Elgar Symphonies **ONYX4145** and **4165**) and Andrew Manze (Vaughan Williams Symphonies, **ONYX4155** and **4161**).

This arrived late in the day, as I was completing this review, so, in brief, this is the best recording of Debussy's *Printemps* that I have heard since the classic Munch which I owned on RCA Victrola¹ and one of the finest recordings of *The Rite of Spring*, as good as those of Doráti and Stravinsky himself. The Debussy is especially welcome – one of the most evocative Spring-like works ever written, in the right hands – and these are the right hands, as they are also for the other works. We have enough superb versions of Vivaldi's *Seasons* to sink several ships, but how about another similarly-themed album for Spring 2018, perhaps with a recording of Schumann's Symphony No.1 (*Spring*) to match what for me remains the most evocative recording of that work from the LSO and Josef Krips (Decca Eloquence **4804325**, with Symphony No.4 and Brahms Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4)?

¹ See [Spring 2017/2](#).

The Cello in Wartime

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Sonata for cello and piano, L144 (1915) [10:32]

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941)

Sonata for cello and piano, H125 (1913–17) [23:08]

Gabriel FAURÉ (1845-1924)

Sonata No.1 in d minor for cello and piano, Op.109 (1917) [18:34]

Anton WEBERN (1883-1945)

Drei kleine Stücke, Op.11 (1914) [2:53]

Four pieces played on a 'trench cello':

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921) *The Swan* [3:35]

Sir Hubert PARRY (1848-1918) *Jerusalem* (1916) [2:19]

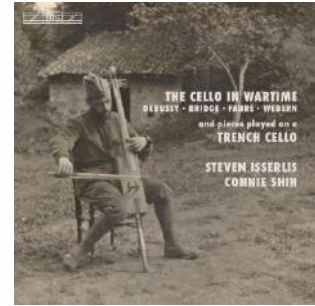
Ivor NOVELLO (1893-1951) *Keep the Home-Fires Burning* (1914) [2:02]

Traditional: *God Save the King* [0:50]

Steven Isserlis (cello); Connie Shih (piano)

rec. November 2016, Potton Hall, Westleton, Suffolk. DSD

BIS BIS-2312 SACD [65:38] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#)



SACD available from



The *raison d'être* of this recording is twofold: all the music was composed during the first World War and the performances on a normal cello are followed by four short pieces played on a surprisingly mellow sounding 'trench cello'. This was either a home-made device, sometimes made from the detritus of war, or, as with the instrument pictured on the cover, a bespoke instrument which could be telescoped into a manageable piece of luggage.

The coupling of the main works is, to the best of my knowledge, unique. While I may prefer, for example, the Debussy with other music by the same composer or in the classic recording by Mstislav Rostropovich and Benjamin Britten (Decca Originals **4758239**, with Schubert Arpeggione Sonata and Schumann *Fünf Stücke im Volkston*), the BIS wartime theme makes a good deal of sense and the performances and recording do the music full justice.

A good way to pursue the wartime music theme would be to follow this up with *In the Shadow of War*, on which Steven Isserlis plays Bloch *Schelomo*, Bridge *Oration* and Hough *The Loneliest Wilderness* (BIS-1992 – [review](#)). It's available as a hybrid SACD or in mp3, 16- and 24-bit downloads with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). I thought that I had reviewed this in an edition of Download News, but the search engine says otherwise, so this is by way of belatedly making well-deserved amends.



RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

Masques (1903-1904) [4:50]

... *D'un cahier d'esquisses* (1904) [4:54]

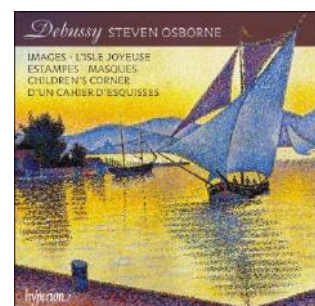
L'isle joyeuse (1903-1904) [5:59]

Images I (1905) [14:44]

Images II (1907) [13:16]

Estampes (1903) [13:47]

Children's Corner (1906-1908) [15:47]



Steven Osborne (piano)
rec. 2016, Henry Wood Hall, London
Pdf booklets included

HYPERION CDA68161 [73:13] – from Hyperion-records.co.uk (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless). Previous review: [Michael Cookson](#)

CD available from



There's no doubt that Steven Osborne is a thoroughbred among pianists; indeed, he's one of several from Hyperion's fine stable. In 2016, I [reviewed](#) his superb recital of works by Morton Feldman and George Crumb, which I felt was blessed with 'epiphanies aplenty'. Then there's his near-legendary recording of Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, a set I would most definitely want on my desert island. Factor in Hyperion's reputation for field-leading solo-piano sound and this new Debussy album looks like a dead cert.

I must say, Osborne's *Masques* disconcerted me, not because of the performance but because of the unusual piano tone. Ditto ... *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, which has a darker cast than I'm used to. That's just a preference though, a passing remark that in no way challenges or diminishes Osborne's mastery of the idiom. I simply marvelled at his control of shape, colour and rhythm in *L'isle joyeuse*, a piece that epitomises both the composer's painterly skills and this pianist's exemplary art.

These *Images* are finely wrought, *Reflets dans l'eau* infused with a haunting evanescence and the baroquerie of *Hommage à Rameau* is cleanly and aristocratically done. Osborne is easeful and intuitive throughout, the music flowing from his fingers like a tide responding to the mystic pull of the moon. *Cloches à travers les feuilles* and *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut*, both from Book 2, demonstrate a control of touch and dynamics that's just extraordinary. Indeed, it's those qualities that make Osborne's Feldman and Crumb performances such a rewarding experience.

Can this album get any better? Most certainly. The oriental shimmer of *Pagodes*, from *Estampes*, is a musical and sonic treat – kudos to engineer David Hinitt for the latter – and those famished flowers respond to heaven-sent succour with such joy in Osborne's *Jardins sous la pluie*. As for *Children's Corner*, there's much to enjoy there, too. Dr Gradus emerges with delightful fluency and fluidity, Jimbo's jazzy little lullaby is great fun, and this *Golliwogg's cake-walk* is as witty and insouciant as I've ever heard it. Good notes by Roger Nichols complete the package.

Debussy to die for; one for the desert island. **[DM]**

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Jean SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Tapiola, Op.112 (1926) [18:14]

En Saga, Op.9 (1892, 1902) [18:40]

Eight Songs (orch. **Aulis SALLINEN, 1935-**) [18:04]

De bågge rosorna, Op.88/2

Sippan, Op.88/4

Dold förening, Op.86/3

Under strandens granar, Op.13/1

Kyssens hopp, Op.13/2

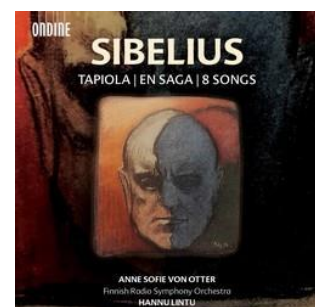
Hennes budskap, Op.90/2

Men min fågel märks dock icke, Op.36/2

Jägargossen, Op.13/7

Anne Sofie von Otter (mezzo)

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra/Hannu Lintu



rec. Helsinki Music Centre, Finland, May and December 2016. DSD.

Texts and translations included

ONDINE ODE12895 SACD [54:58] Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



The purely orchestral parts of the programme are standard fare, with plenty of competition. For accounts of *Tapiola* and *En Saga* which take some beating, and which come with a collection of Sibelius' other tone poems, I look in the first instance to Neeme Järvi's 1986 Goteborg recordings, included in the complete Tone Poems, **BIS-1900**, 5 CDs for 3 – [review](#): download from eclassical.com¹.

By comparison, on first hearing I thought Hannu Lintu's performance of these two great tone poems a little cold but then *Tapiola* is Sibelius' evocation of the frozen forests of the North and I warmed much more to both works – no pun intended – second time around. He's a little faster than Järvi in both works, but there's no sense that the music is being hurried

Anne-Sofie von Otter has already recorded the complete Sibelius Songs, for BIS, but with piano accompaniment. The eight which she performs here are not among the best known but it's primarily for that reason that I think they add to the value of an already highly recommendable recording. By a margin, however, they don't lessen my admiration for Soile Isokoski with Leif Segerstam and the Helsinki PO in a splendid account of *Luonnotar* and a collection of orchestral songs which includes some of these same works in different orchestrations, also from Ondine (**ODE10805: Recording of the Month** – [review](#)). That's available on hybrid SACD or in mp3, 16- and 24-bit download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



¹ NB: follow this link for the best price; eclassical.com also offer the set for much more!

Ottorino RESPIGHI (1879–1936)

Trittico botticelliano (1927) [20:06]

Il tramonto (The Sunset) (1914) [16:24]

Vetrate di chiesa (Church Windows) (1926) [28:49]

Anna Caterina Antonacci (soprano)

Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège/John Neschling

Text and translation included.

BIS BIS-2250 SACD [66:26] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



Another very recent release which I have had only a short time to hear and which was not yet advertised on SACD when I checked. Collectors of John Neschling's series of Respighi recordings for BIS, first with the Sao Paulo Orchestra and more recently with the Liège Royal Philharmonic, will want to add it to their collection and they can do so in the knowledge that all three works receive fine performances. Staying with this series avoids duplication. If this coupling is not what you are looking for, however, all three works are also available in other fine versions, though in listing these I must make it clear that the new release is little, if at all, inferior to the best of them and the music is some of Respighi's most evocative.

Fans of Janet Baker – I'm emphatically one – will find her delightful account of *Il Tramonto* as a Collins Classics download, coupled with *Trittico Boticelliano*, *Aretusa* and *La Natività* (**CC1349** – [DL News 2015/11](#): download from Presto, mp3 and lossless). *Il Tramonto* and *Trittico* are coupled with *Gli Uccelli* (The Birds) in performances from Linda Finney, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta and Tamas Vásary on Chandos **CHAN8913** – a now elderly release, though none the worse for that, but surely overdue

for mid-price reissue. *Il Tramonto* and *Trittico* are joined by *Gli Uccelli* and the foot-tapping first *Suite of Ancient Airs and Dances* on Atma **ACD22732** – for that and other Respighi recommendations, including an attractive budget-price Chandos twofer containing *Vetrata di Chiesa* see [DL News 2016/2](#).

Samuel COLERIDGE-TAYLOR (1875-1912)

Clarinet Quintet in f-Sharp minor, Op.10 [33:50]

Paul BEN-HAIM (1897-1984)

Clarinet Quintet, Op.31a [28:18]

Klaus Hampf (clarinet); Quartetto di Roma [Marco Fiorini, Biancamaria Rapaccini (violins) Carmelo Giallombardo (viola) Alessandra Montani (cello)]

rec. Berlin, 25-28 May 2015. DDD

NAXOS 8.551376 [62:08] Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#).

Available only as a download from some dealers.



CD available from



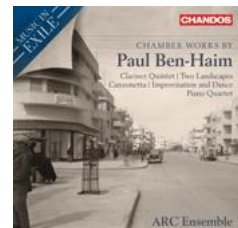
Comparative versions (Coleridge-Taylor)

- Nash Ensemble – Hyperion **CDA67590** (with Piano Quintet and Ballade) – [review](#). Reviewed as download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#).

- Stephan Siegenthaler/Leipziger Streichquartett – CPO **7779052** (with **SOMERVELL** Quintet in G; **WALTHER** Short Quintet in E-flat) – [review](#). Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#).

The Hyperion is currently available both to download and on CD at budget price. I chose it as one of my Top 30 Hyperion recordings – [review](#) – so any rival would have to be very good, especially as it offers an all-Coleridge-Taylor programme.

I don't think that the new recording quite does that: in fact, I've passed the parcel on it twice from edition to edition because I didn't wish to seem to damn it with faint praise. Both works are attractive and well performed and recorded but, as with the Coleridge Taylor, the Ben Haim is probably best obtained elsewhere – in the company of some of his other chamber music on a very fine album in the Chandos *Music in Exile* series (**CHAN10769** – [review](#) – [review](#)). The Chandos can be streamed by Naxos Music Library subscribers – [here](#).



DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

Transcriptions for piano

Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

3 Mouvements de Pétrouchka (1921) [16:38]

The Firebird Suite (1919 version, arr. Guido Agosti) [11:38]

Sergei PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)

10 Pieces from Romeo & Juliet, Op. 75 (1937) [30:48]

David Jalbert (piano)

rec. 2016, Salle Raoul-Jobin, Palais Montcalm, Québec

Pdf booklet included

ATMA CLASSIQUE ACD22684 [59:04] – from [eClassical](#) (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless). CD from [AmazonUK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



CD available from



This is a very sensible collection of Russian ballet transcriptions, played by the Canadian pianist David Jalbert. He's new to me, but I see from his biography that he's picked up some prestigious prizes, including four Prix Opus awards from the Conseil Québécois de la Musique. As for the Montreal-based ATMA Classique, I've enjoyed several of their albums, among them [Festival au grand-orgue](#) and some splendid pieces for chorus and organ by [Vierne and Widor](#). Both demonstrate the label's commitment to home-grown talent and strong musical values.

I'll start with the most substantial piece, Prokofiev's transcription of ten key scenes from his 1935 ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*. Jalbert faces tough competition here, not least from the veteran pianist-conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy; the latter's 1995 recording, which I [reviewed](#) as an Eloquence reissue, is the most beautifully characterised account of the suite that I've ever heard. Then again, he's no stranger to the full-length scores, his RPO *Romeo and Juliet* and Cleveland *Cinderella* – also for Decca – among the best in the catalogue.

Jalbert is both supple and colourful in 'Folk Dance', the piano sound at once warm and nicely detailed. His jewelled playing in the street scene is a delight, the minuet is attractively shaped and 'Young Juliet' is deftly done. Ashkenazy may be a little more dramatic in 'Masks' and 'Montagues and Capulets', and he captures the simple piety of Friar Laurence in a way that few rivals can match, but it's a measure of Jalbert's sensitivity and style that he's never far behind. Indeed, his 'Mercutio' is as animated and subtly inflected as any. And who could resist his charming, fleet-footed account of 'Girls with Lilies', or be unmoved by the wistful, underlying inwardness of 'Juliet Before Parting'?

Jalbert has been described as a 'virtuoso with a warm, elegant style', and that really comes through in the Prokofiev. I did wonder whether he'd do as well in the Stravinsky, but his exhilarating *Danse russe* dispelled all doubts. By turns febrile and fantastical – and always rhythmically astute – this is a first-rate *Petrushka*, as well balanced and recorded as the Prokofiev. Ditto the *Firebird – Danse infernale, Berceuse* and *Finale* – which shows the pianist at his bravura best. Guido Agosti's transcription is pretty good as well. Couple that with Carlos Prieto's lovely, luminous recording – presented in a sympathetic and airy acoustic – and this ATMA release can take its place alongside the best from BIS or Hyperion. High praise indeed.

Jalbert, a pianist of astonishing musicality, is a real find; superb engineering, too. [DM]

Voices of Defiance

Viktor ULLMANN (1898–1944)

String Quartet No.3, Op.46 [14:46]

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906–1975)

String Quartet No.2 in A, Op.68 [35:55]

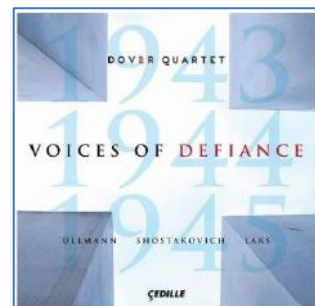
Szymon LAKS (1901–1983)

String Quartet No.3 [22:19]

Dover Quartet

rec. 19–21 March 2016, Rolston Recital Hall, the Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada. DDD.

CEDILLE CDR90000173 [72:58] Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) with pdf booklet.

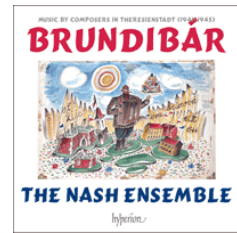


CD available from



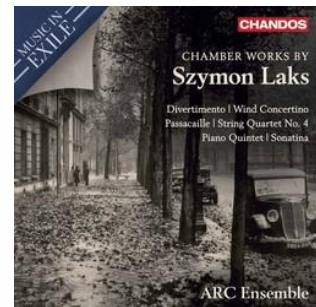
Clever planning for the Dover Quartet's second outing on record brings together excellent recordings of three powerful works from the Second World War, composed between 1943 and 1945. Of these the Shostakovich is relatively familiar, the Ullmann rather less so, and the Laks was completely unknown to me.

The most recent recording of the Shostakovich, from the Takács Quartet (Hyperion **CDA67987**, with Piano Quintet: *Recording of the Month* – [review](#) – [review](#)) won praise pretty well all round, and the Ullmann can also boast a very fine recording from the Nash Ensemble, again on Hyperion (**CDA67973**, with *Krásá Suite* from *Brundibár*, Klein String Trio and Haas String Quartet No.2 – [review](#)). I missed that on its first appearance but, having downloaded it in 24-bit sound, with pdf booklet, from hyperion-records.co.uk, an inexpensive purchase at £9.75, with 16-bit lossless at £6.50, I'm happy to confirm this album of music by composers imprisoned in Theresienstadt as first-rate.



Assuming that you have the *Brundibár* recording or are intending to obtain it – not least for the Haas quartet – and have or intend to have a recommendable version of the Shostakovich, the question is whether the Laks quartet which rounds off the new album makes it worth duplicating the other works. It's not included on the excellent Chandos selection of his chamber works, though its arrangement as a Piano Quintet is (**CHAN10983** – [review](#) – [review](#)). It is included on a Dux recording, with Nos. 4 and 5, but I have not been able to hear that (**DUX1286** – [review](#) – [review](#)).

It's the outstanding work for me on the new Cedille recording – the other two are established favourites already – and, like the rest, it receives a persuasive performance from these winners of the 2013 Banff competition. More from them, please. Their performance of the Laks persuaded me to download the Chandos album of his music, too, from eclassical.com, with pdf booklet, a recommendable set of performances for the ARC Ensemble in their Music in Exile series. At \$14.74/\$22.11 (16/24-bit) that's a little expensive for UK purchasers with the decline of the £; they may prefer to download from chandos.net, but they don't seem to offer 24-bit in this case.



Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

Violin Concerto in d minor Op.15 (1938/39) [34:59]

Paul HINDEMITH (1895-1963)

Violin Concerto (1939) [30:43]

Arabella Steinbacher (violin)

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra/Vladimir Jurowski
rec. April 2017, Haus des Rundfunks, RBB, Berlin. DSD.

PENTATONE PTC5186625 SACD [65:47]

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

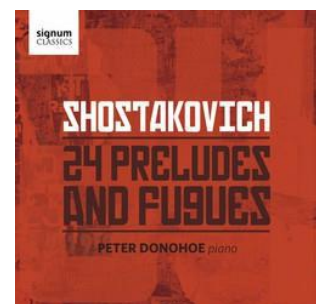


SACD available from



There are numerous recommendable recordings of both concertos, mostly coupled with other works by the same composer, but this coupling of two concertos premiered on the brink of WWII by composers who were both affected by the coming conflict is just as logical.

This is another recording which arrived too late for more than one listening session, but both concertos receive very proficient and idiomatic performances which on repeated hearing may well become as much part of my listening in Britten as Tasmin Little and Edward Gardner (Chandos **CHAN10764**, with Piano Concerto – [review](#) – [DL News Recording of the Month](#)) or Anthony Marwood and Ilan Volkov (Hyperion **CDA67801**, with Double Concerto – [Recording of the Month](#) – [DL News](#)). For the Hindemith my heart still lives with David Oistrakh on a single-album download (Decca **4330812** or Eloquence **4674422**, both with *Mathis der Maler* Symphony and Symphonic



Variations) or a 2-CD download with Bruch and Mozart (**4767288**). Here again, the new recording comes close enough to make this well worth considering for those attracted to the coupling. In fact, I found the Hindemith more compelling than the Britten, but that probably reflects my preferences as between the two works.

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Piano Sonata No.1, Op.12 (1926) [12:21]

Piano Concerto No.1 in c minor, Op.35 (1933) [21:40]

Piano Sonata No.2, Op 61 (1943) [26:42]

Piano Concerto No.2 in F, Op.102 (1957) [19:00]

Peter Donohoe (piano)

Hugh Davies (trumpet)

Orchestra of the Swan/David Curtis

rec. Malvern Theatre, 2016 (Op. 35); Cheltenham Town Hall, 2015 (Op. 102); Britten Studio, Snape

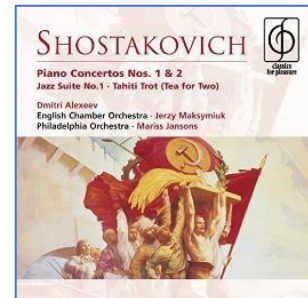
Maltings, 2015 (Opp. 12 & 61)

SIGNUM RECORDS SIGCD493 [79:43] Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#). (NO booklet).

CD available from



Having read Dan Morgan's [review](#) of this recording as I was converting it to html, I decided to stream it before bothering to download. I'm sorry to say that I agree with him that although the sonatas receive fine performances, the concertos only partly come to life by comparison with the wonderful Dmitri Alexeev recording, with the ECO and Jerzy Maksymiuk, miraculously still available at super-budget price on CD¹ (Classics for Pleasure **3822342**) even after most of its companions on that label were swept aside following the Warner take-over of EMI. I also liked the recent Giltburg/Petrenko recording (Naxos – [review of independent labels](#)) but stopped short of an all-out recommendation because of the wonderful account of the mini-concerto *The Assault on Beautiful Gorky* and excerpts from the Jazz Suites on the CfP. One drawback to buying the Naxos download has, however, been diminished now that eclassical.com offer the label at more realistic prices: in this case \$6.98 (16-bit) or \$10.47 (24-bit).



¹ Around £5. Mp3 downloads marginally less expensive but lossless is likely to cost more than the CD.

Lukas FOSS (b.1922)

The Prairie (1943/44: adapted from a poem by Carl Sandburg)

Elizabeth Weigle (soprano), Gigi Mitchell-Velasco (mezzo), Frank Kelley

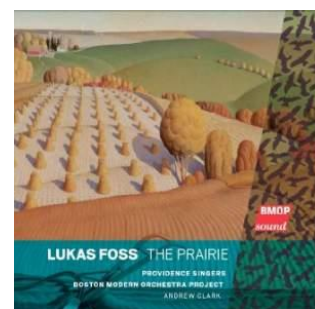
(tenor), Aaron Engebretth (baritone)

Providence Singers

Boston Modern Orchestra Project/Andrew Clark

rec. 15 March 2007, Mechanics Hall, Worcester, MA.

BMOP SOUND 1007 [53:01]



Some time ago I reviewed in positive terms the 2-CD BMOP recording of Lukas Foss's four symphonies – [DL News 2015/9](#) – [review by Paul Corfield Godfrey](#). I didn't notice at the time that I had missed this recording of *The Prairie*; I'm grateful to their PR consultant for access to a lossless download.

I mentioned that although Foss had experimented with *avant garde* composition, the influence of Stravinsky and Bach, apparent in his music, makes it more than palatable even to old stick-in-the-muds like myself. That's equally true of this extended setting of a Carl Sandburg poem from his collection *The Cornhuskers*, premiered in 1944 by Robert Shaw. In an early review, Virgil Thomson spoke of the

work in the context of Hindemith, Haydn and Weil. I might throw Virgil Thomson himself, Aaron Copland and Roy Harris into the mix, too, but that certainly doesn't mean that the music is derivative. I'm very glad that I was able to catch up with this recording.

Bob CHILCOTT (b.1955) *In Winter's Arms*

Wenceslas [26:11]

Jesus, springing: I am the heart that houses the cone [4:46]

My perfect stranger [14:58]

The Nine Gifts: I bring you my body, darling dear [4:16]

Gloria [15:44]

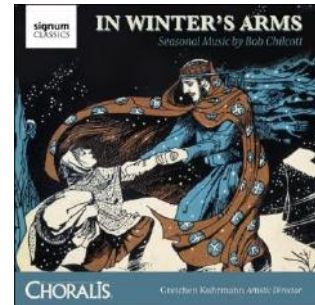
Tod Fickley (organ)

The Classical Brass Quintet, Cantus Primo Youth Choir

Choralis/Gretchen Kuhrmann

rec. April 2017, The Church of the Epiphany, Washington DC. DDD.

SIGNUM SIGCD512 [65:55] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. See [review by John Quinn](#) for CD purchase links.



The principal work, illustrated on the cover, is Bob Chilcott's setting of Victorian hymnologist J M Neale's invented story of Good King Wenceslas. Whereas Neale set the words to a traditional Latin carol, Chilcott, though hinting at the traditional tune, ploughs his own furrow through the story. Neither it, nor most of the rest of the music here, makes great demands of the listener, though it's all attractive and enjoyable – the concluding *Gloria* especially so.

Jeremy GILL (b.1975)

Before the Wrestring Tides (2012) [16:11]

Serenada Concertante (2013) [18:38]

Notturmo Concertante (2014) [21:53]

Ching-Yun Hu (piano), Erin Hannigan (oboe), Chris Grymes (clarinet)

Boston University Marsh Chapel Choir

Boston Modern Orchestra Project/Gil Rose

rec. 13 May 2016, and 19 February 2017, Jordan Hall Boston, MA. DDD.

Text included

BMOP/SOUND 1055 [56:44] Reviewed from lossless press preview. Available on CD from bmop.org.



Though, as regular readers will know, I'm not 'into' much contemporary classical and jazz music – and I gave up on what now passes for 'pop' a long time ago – I enjoyed this new recording of three recent concertos, for piano, oboe and clarinet respectively. The opening *Before the Wrestring Tides*, which sets a poem (*Voyages II*) by Hart Crane, was composed as a modern analogue of Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*. Apart from the usual wish that contemporary composers could offer something a little more cheerful – everything here is intense, challenging or wistful – if you like, say, Benjamin Britten's *Canticles* or Peter Warlock's *The Curlew*, you should find this latest release from the Boston Modern Orchestra Project very amenable.

A Russian Journey

Cesar CUI (1835-1918) Prelude in g minor [3:02]

Prelude in in A-flat [4:05]

Sergej LJAPUNOW (1859-1924) Prelude Pastoral Op.54 [9:26]

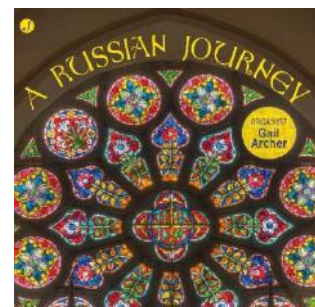
Alexander GLASUNOW (1865-1936) Prelude and Fugue in d minor Op.98 [8:36]

Sergej SLONIMSKI (b.1932) Toccata [4:12]

Alexander SCHAWERSASCHWILI (1919-2003) Prelude [3:45]

Fugue [3:44]

Modest MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881) A Night on the Bald Mountain (arr. for organ) [14:07]



Gail Archer (organ) Instrument, place and time not specified.

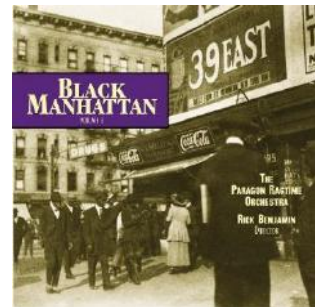
MEYER MEDIA MM17035 [50:57] Reviewed from press preview. Available to stream from [Naxos Music Library](#) (NO booklet but details available from gailarcher.com)

The documentation is very poor – there's no indication of which organ was used or when the recordings were made, and the booklet is not included with the streamed version from NML or Qobuz. I've listed the composers' names as given at the back of the booklet, even though many of them are hardly standard spellings in general use in the US and UK – and they are spelled quite differently in some cases in the notes themselves. Finally, Winamp and Qobuz report the overall timing as 50:57 and Windows Explorer as 50:59, both well short of the 58:11 claimed in the booklet.

Having got those grumbles out of the way, there is much to like. The notes in the booklet by Gail Archer herself – if you can get it – though a little anecdotal, are very good, which makes their lack of availability all the more deplorable. The performances are well worth hearing, especially as some of the items are not exactly standard repertoire: I can't find any other recordings of the Cui Preludes, for example, and I don't recall coming across Shaversashvili or Schawersachwili, however spelled, before. The Mussorgsky *Night on a Bare Mountain* receives a lively performance, though some of the impact is lost because even an organ cannot capture the colours of the full orchestra.

The performances are good, though a little less illuminating than those of Konstantin Volostnov on Priory – [review](#) – or Russian Art Classics – [review](#) – where the Glazunov Prelude and Fugue, Op.98, receives a dashing performance. The documentation there, and on Volostnov's more recent Art Classics recording – [review](#) – is also superior to the new Meyer Media; it even contains the organ specification where the new recording doesn't even identify the organ at all. A goodly ship spoiled for a ha'porth of documentation.

It's been quite some time since the **Paragon Ragtime Orchestra**, directed by Rick Benjamin, recorded *Black Manhattan* – theatre and dance music of **James Reese EUROPE**, **Will Marion COOK** and members of the legendary Clef Club for **New World Records**. That was released in 2002, with Volume 2 following in 2012, but Volume 3, recorded in June 2017, is no less welcome for the wait. Given that I find so much modern jazz as unapproachable as too much contemporary classical music, these easy-going arrangements by the likes of **Scott JOPLIN** and **Eubie BLAKE** are balm to the troubled mind. The booklet is a model of how to do it – as full and informative as those which Hyperion give us, and even including a Bibliography, so it's a shame that it's not included with the downloads, and these were the only way to obtain the album in the UK at the time of writing.



I enjoyed this so much that I opted to say more about it on one of my rare guest appearances on the MWI jazz pages.

It's the wrong time of year to be recommending *Evensong for Ascensiontide*, as recorded by St John's College, Cambridge and the London Brass Ensemble, on Argo **4832436** (download only – available from [Presto](#) or stream from [Naxos Music Library](#), NO booklet). As well as separate availability, it forms part of a box set of George Guest's St John's recordings, all rather overshadowed when they first appeared on Argo LPs by the better-known choir next door at King's, but well worth at least sampling from Naxos Music Library. The rather short playing time is reflected in the price of the download: £6.34/£7.93 for mp3/lossless and



the lack of texts is no great matter – the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which contains most of them, is easily available online.

The complete box of 42 CDs of St John's recordings is currently on offer for less than £80 (**4831252**, normally more than £100).



Christmas being still some time off, though you might not think so, given the displays in the shops, I'm easing you gently into the seasonal music with some not-too-obviously-Christmassy recordings.

Pastorali Italiane I (XVII and XVIII) contains music by **Girolamo FRESCOBALDI**, **Tarquinio MERULA**, **Domenico ZIPOLI**, **Arcangelo CORELLI** – Concerto Grosso Op.6/8: *Largo* (arr. for organ) – **Domenico SCARLATTI** and some lesser-known composers. The performances are by Francesco Tasini (organ) with Lia Serafini (soprano) in four of the items. (Tactus **TC690001** [75:21]). Tasini is one of the great interpreters of the organ music of this period and Serafini sings much more alluringly than on some of her other recordings. Overall – delightful.

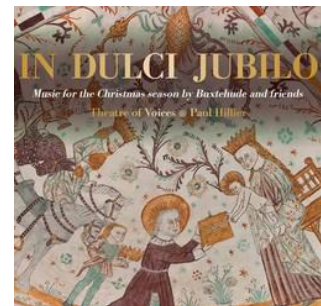


The texts and notes are in Italian only, but they do contain the full spec of the organ of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Bologna (1776, restored 2001). The recording, made in 2002, though originally in 24-bit, is available in 16-bit form only from eclassical.com (NO booklet) or for streaming from Naxos Music Library (with booklet).

CD available from



In Dulci Jubilo: Music for the Christmas Season by Buxtehude and Friends strays a little further onto the ho-ho-ho territory, but not by too much. In addition to music by **Dietrich BUXTEHUDE**, there are works by **Heinrich SCHEIDEMANN**, **Franz TUNDER**, **Matthias WECKMANN**, **Jan Pieterszoon SWEELINCK**, **Christian GEIST**, **Johann Adam REINCKEN** and, inevitably a member of the **BACH** family – **Johann Christoph (1642-1703)**. Performances are by Theatre of Voices, directed by Paul Hillier, with Allan Rasmussen (chamber organ and main organ). (**DaCapo 6.220661 SACD** – rec. Garnisonskirken, Copenhagen, 29 January–1 February 2017. DXD [77:45] – reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet, containing texts and translations, from eclassical.com.) It's early days yet but this seems likely to be one of my favourites this festive season. (NB: the 24-bit file is very large, at 2.45 GB: HD fans will be delighted that it's at 24/192 instead of the usual 24/96).



SACD available from



And a more detailed appraisal from Dan Morgan:

In dulci jubilo – Music for the Christmas season by Buxtehude and friends

Else Torp, Kate Browton (soprano), Kristin Mulders (mezzo), Mark Chambers (countertenor), Johan Linderoth, Paul Bentley-Angell (tenor), Jakob Bloch Jespersen, Steffen Bruun (bass), Fredrik From, Jesenka Balic Zunic (violin), Kanerva Juutilainen (viola), Judith-Maria Blomsterberg (cello), Mattias Frostenson (violone), Jane Gower (bassoon), Allan Rasmussen (organ)
Theatre of Voices/Paul Hillier

rec. 2017, Garnisonskirken, Copenhagen

Pdf booklet includes sung texts and translations

DACAPO 6.220661 SACD [77:45] – from [eClassical](#) (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless)

I freely admit that Christmas recordings aren't my bag, but I'm happy to make some exceptions. Among the few festive CDs I own that haven't become coasters are: Paul McCreesh and his glorious Gabrielis in Michael Praetorius's *Lutheran Mass for Christmas Morning* ([Arkiv](#)); and a collection of Christmas preludes, played on the Grand Organ of the Abbey Church of Muri ([Audite](#)). Both have a radiance – not to mention a powerful sense of occasion – that gives me pleasure all year round. The recordings are outstanding, the latter one of the loveliest and most engaging organ discs in my library.

Dacapo also have a reputation for superior sonics – offhand, I can't think of a single release from them that's been anything less than superb – and even a quick listen to this newcomer suggests the label's high production values haven't been compromised. That's also true of Paul Hillier and his Theatre of Voices; indeed, [Jonathan van Veen](#) remarked on the quality of their earlier Dacapo album, *Buxtehude and his Circle*. Incidentally, this ensemble ranges far and wide; I was mightily impressed by their account of Karlheinz Stockhausen's signature piece, *Stimmung*, as was my colleague [Tony Hayward](#).

Now back to the collection under review, which consists of solo-organ works (for small and large instruments) and pieces for accompanied voices. The music is presented in four distinct sections: The Annunciation & Advent; The Shepherds; The Nativity; and New Year, Epiphany & Annunciation. Allan Rasmussen's organ playing is warmly idiomatic and the Dacapo engineers – who must be so familiar with Copenhagen's Garnisonskirken by now – do him proud. The chatter and chortle of Reincken's *Fuga in G minor*, played here on a chamber organ, is a special delight.

The instrumental groups are sensibly balanced, the vocal soloists are well matched, and there's a pleasing aural spread throughout. I can't be certain, but it sounds to me as if the pitch is raised, and that gives the music a bright, 'authentic' edge that should satisfy the Hipsters. Also, Hillier insists on a clarity and separation of voices that should appeal to casual listeners and specialists alike.

That said, I find this album – its character determined largely by the works chosen – to be a little dry at times. Which is why, though immaculately presented and recorded, it may not be a good choice for those in search of seasonal cheer.

A quality product; short on joy, though. **[DM]**

Contents

THE ANNUNCIATION & ADVENT

Heinrich SCHEIDEMANN (c. 1595-1663)

Preambulum in F major [1:25]

Christian Geist (c. 1640-1711)

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern [5:35]

Johann Christoph BACH (1642-1703)

Merk auf, mein Herz [10:07]

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE (c. 1637-1707)

Nun komm der Heiden Heiland [1:53]

THE SHEPHERDS

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE

Fürchtet euch nicht [8:09]

Christian GEIST

Pastores dicite quidnam vidistis [2:54]

Johann Adam REINCKEN (1623-1722)

Fuga in G minor [4:23]

THE NATIVITY

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE

Das neugeborne Kindelein [6:24]

Franz TUNDER (1614-1667)

Ein kleines Kindelein [4:09]

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE

In dulci júbilo [5:50]

Heinrich SCHEIDEMANN

Preambulum in D minor [3:38]

NEW YEAR, EPIPHANY & ANNUNCIATION

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE

Jesu dulcis memoria [8:27]

Matthias WECKMANN (1619-1674)

Rex virtutum [4:05]

Jan Pieterszoon SWEELINCK (1562-1621)

Ab Oriente venerunt Magi [4:04]

Dietrich BUXTEHUDE

Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern [6:39]