

## MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL Recordings Of The Year 2018

This is the fifteenth year that MusicWeb International has asked its reviewing team to nominate their recordings of the year. Reviewers are not restricted to discs they had reviewed, but the choices must have been reviewed on MWI in the last 12 months (December 2017-November 2018).

The 130 selections have come from 25 members of the team and 70 different labels, the choices reflecting as usual, the great diversity of music and sources - I say that every year, but still the spread of choices surprises and pleases me.

Of the selections, 8 have received two nominations:

- Mahler and Strauss with Sergiu Celibidache on the Munich Phil
- choral music by Pavel Chesnokov on Reference Recordings
- Shostakovich symphonies with Andris Nelsons on DG
- The Gluepot Connection from the Londinium Choir on Somm
- The John Adams Edition on the Berlin Phil's own label
- Historic recordings of Carlo Zecchi on APR
- Pärt symphonies on ECM
- works for two pianos by Stravinsky on Hyperion

Chandos was this year's leading label with 11 nominations, significantly more than any other label.

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### MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL RECORDING OF THE YEAR

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In this twelve month period, we published more than 2400 reviews. There is no easy or entirely satisfactory way of choosing one above all others as our Recording of the Year, but this year the choice was a little easier than usual.

**Pavel CHESNOKOV** *Teach Me Thy Statutes* - PaTRAM Institute Male Choir/Vladimir Gorbik rec. 2016 **REFERENCE RECORDINGS FR-727 SACD**

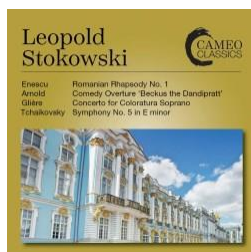
The most significant anniversary of 2018 was that of the centenary of the death of Claude Debussy, and while there were fine recordings of his music, none stood as deserving of this accolade as much as the choral works of Pavel Chesnokov. All three reviewers who wrote about this recording nominated it as a Recording of the Month, unheard of in my memory on MWI, and the two who contributed their ROTY nominations included it. [Full Reviews](#)

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### ROB BARNETT (FOUNDING EDITOR)

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Provocation, delight or exhilaration. Those are the criteria I have applied in riddling through the CDs that come through my letter box. It's hardly ever a hardship to listen and then try to bridge the unbridgeable gap between the experience of music and the written word. As is usual, the few who receive the apple, include both new recordings and, perhaps worryingly, reissues. Regrets? We seem rarely to gain access to review copies of the massive boxed sets that now tumble out of the companies in profusion once every few months. It's a part of the market we rarely cover.



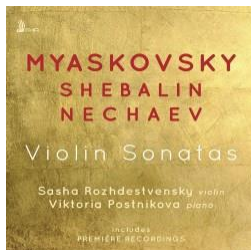
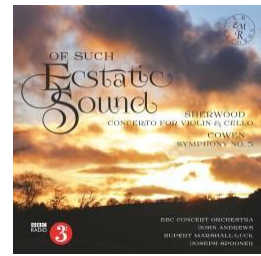
**Leopold Stokowski Works by Arnold, Enescu, Glière & Tchaikovsky** - Ilse Hollweg (soprano), BBC SO, International Festival Youth O rec. 1954/73  
**CAMEO CLASSICS CC9107**

This performance of Tchaikovsky 5 is rife with Stokowski trademarks. The results in this live performance are tremendously enjoyable. OK, so you need to put up with much shuffling, coughs and a few clicks but you can "feel the love". The blurt and blare of the finale is both excoriating and exciting.

Tchaikovskians need to hear this. Very special indeed and the Ilse Hollweg's Glière is no also-ran. A disc that has the wow factor. [Full Review](#)

**Percy SHERWOOD** Concerto for Violin and Cello **Frederic COWEN** Symphony No. 5 - Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin) Joseph Spooner (cello) BBC Concert O/John Andrews **EM RECORDS EMRCD047**

The Sherwood concerto stands in the tradition of one of my all-time favourite works: the Brahms double concerto. It benefits from but is not suffocated by this great example. Conversational warmth is the order of the day, not only between the violin and cello but also between each soloist and the orchestra. Cowen's Fifth Symphony encompasses stern grandiloquence as well as a sharply contrasted feathery buoyancy (similar to Parry's Fourth, as recently recorded by Chandos) while the finale matches reminiscences of the opening with a surging, swaying dynamism and brassy confidence. [Full Review](#)

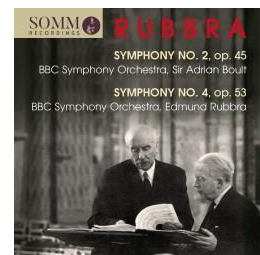


**Nikolai MYASKOVSKY, Vissarion SHEBALIN & Vasily NECHAEV** Violin Sonatas - Sasha Rozhdestvensky (violin) Viktoria Postnikova (piano) rec. 2017 **FIRST HAND RECORDS FHR57**

First Hand and the Rozhdestvenskys are to be congratulated for shaking out three unknown works. That said, it's not enough to deliver a disc of firsts: Being first is sort of significant but doing it well, indelibly well, is another. The musicians and engineers here deliver music-making that reaches out to delight and disturb ... mostly delight. [Full Review](#)

**Edmund RUBBRA** Symphonies No. 2 and 4 - BBC SO/Sir Adrian Boult, composer rec. 1942/54 **SOMM CÉLESTE SOMMCD0179**

Two Rubbra symphonies in historic mono and vividly performed. The Fourth, conducted at its 1943 premiere by the composer, all of three quarters of a century ago, stands tall, dignified and majestic. A magnificent performance now accessible to everyone. The Second is exemplary but the Fourth is the make or break and here it is definitely the 'make'. [Full Review](#)



**Torbjörn Iwan LUNDQUIST** Symphonies Nos 3 and 4 - Gothenburg SO/composer, Sixten Ehrling rec. 1982/85 **STERLING CDM3004-2**

Two otherwise unknown Swedish symphonies. On the one hand a Hollywood-like surreal pilgrimage and on the other a symphony that is often fast but gravely determined before it gives voice to a hymn to the joys of nature. It has already prompted me to find a rare Bluebell CD of the First. As for the Seventh it's on Phono Suecia and is next on the list. [Full Review](#)

**Ina BOYLE** Orchestral works - Benjamin Baker (violin) Nadège Rochat (cello) BBC Concert O/Ronald Corp rec. 2017 **DUTTON VOCALION CDLX7352 SACD**

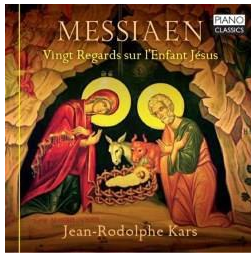
There is a vibrant world of musical experience in Ireland. RTÉ Lyric FM have been flying the island's flag with many issues but here Dutton and Ronald Corp have given us these finely proportioned but comparatively short and poetically leafy works by an Irish pupil of Vaughan Williams. [Full Review](#)



## STEPHEN BARBER

I like to use this opportunity to feature recordings you might have overlooked, rather than to praise again those which have already been sufficiently noticed. So, I shall just mention John Nelson's splendid new version of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* and Christian Tetzlaff's with Hannu Lintu of Bartók's violin concertos. John Wilson's continuing series of Copland's orchestral works goes from strength to strength. David Oistrakh's version of Hindemith's and Szymanowski's first concertos needs no praise from me, and I need only mention the latest discs of Rautavaara and Magnus Lindberg. I also had

impressive DVDs of the new MET production of Wagner's Ring with its first cast and of the much-travelled Terry Gilliam production of Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini* under Mark Elder. Here now are my six nominations.



**Olivier MESSIAEN** *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* - Jean-Rodolphe Kars rec. 1976 **PIANO CLASSICS PCL10134**

The pianist, French of Jewish origin, was much drawn to the music of Messiaen. In fact, the experience of studying and playing the *Vingt Regards* first converted him to Christianity and then led him to give up his piano career to become ordained as a priest. Shortly before he abandoned his career he gave this remarkable concert performance, superbly recorded live in the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, and imbued with a deep spirituality as well as all the virtuosity you could wish. [Full Review](#)

**Sir Michael TIPPETT** Symphonies 1 & 2 - BBC Scottish SO/Martyn Brabbins rec. 2017 **HYPERION CDA68203**

It is over twenty years since the last cycle of Tippett symphonies, so a new one is very welcome. It has got off to an auspicious start with the first two. They both have the soaring strings, punchy brass and rhythmic vigour characteristic of the composer and Martyn Brabbins follows up his fine recording of Tippett's piano concerto with Steven Osborne with these vigorous and idiomatic performances. [Full Review](#)

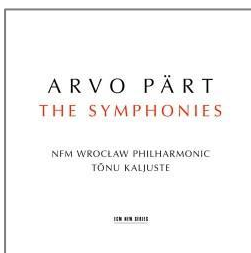
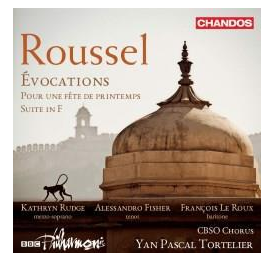


**John JENKINS** *Complete Four-part Consort Music* - Fretwork rec. 2016 **SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD528**

The English viol fantasias of the early seventeenth century are a delightful and too little-known body of music. They were written for aristocratic amateurs to play in their country houses, and they show wonderfully varied and intricate writing. The pieces are also quite short – only a few minutes each. Jenkins was one of the brightest stars in the world of viol consorts and these four-part ones are easier to follow than the five- and six-part ones. Fretwork play with practised ease and these make an admirable entry point to this repertoire. [Full Review](#)

**Albert ROUSSEL** *Évocations, Pour une fête de printemps*, Suite - François le Roux, City of Birmingham SO Ch, BBC Philharmonic/Yan Pascal Tortelier rec. 2017 **CHANDOS CHAN10957**

Roussel is best remembered for the neoclassical works of his third period, such as the Suite in F here, a bracing work. However, the other two works come from his middle period, in which he moved from impressionism towards a more full-blooded idiom. *Évocations* lives up to its title, and, though somewhat rambling, is lush and atmospheric. *Pour une fête de printemps* was originally written for Roussel's second symphony, and is a strange work, moving through a variety of moods. Superb performances with Tortelier back with his old BBCPO team. [Full Review](#)

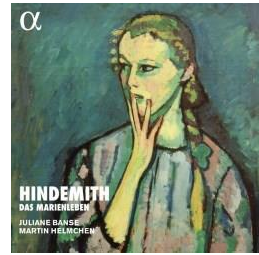


**Arvo PÄRT** Symphonies 1-4 - NFM Wrocław PO/Tõnu Kaljuste rec. 2015/16 **ECM NEW SERIES 2600**

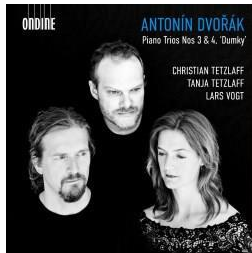
Pärt's first two symphonies date from his early modernist period, and will come as a surprise to those who know only his later tintinnabuli style which has brought him such a following. The third symphony is a transitional work, from the otherwise fallow period in which he was working out his later style. These three works are all interesting but the fourth, dating from some thirty-seven years later, is a masterpiece, an extraordinarily impressive and at times anguished work. This is its second recording, and greatly superior to the first. [Full Review](#)

Paul HINDEMITH *Das Marienleben* - Juliane Banse, Martin Helmchen rec. 2017 ALPHA CLASSICS 398

I am not normally much of a one for *Lieder* but I make an exception for this wonderful though demanding song cycle which sets Rilke's beautiful and mysterious poems on the life of the Virgin Mary. On the rare occasions when it is performed, singers usually choose the composer's revised version, but this is the still more taxing, adventurous and arguably more rewarding original. At last we have a recording which really does justice to it, and I am happy to replace the old version by Roxolana Roslak and Glenn Gould with this commanding and idiomatic new one. [Full Review](#)



## DAVID BARKER

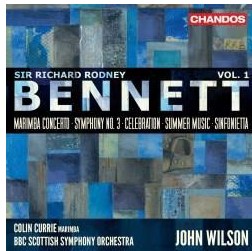


Antonín DVOŘÁK Piano Trios 3 & 4 - Lars Vogt (piano), Christian Tetzlaff (violin), Tanja Tetzlaff (cello) rec. 2018 ONDINE ODE1316-2

I thought I was not going to be able to contribute a nomination to this year's list. Plenty of music heard throughout the year had been enjoyable, but nothing stood out until this came along. These are incredibly intense performances which would be extraordinary to witness in concert. That said, while the Dumky is as good as I've heard, I'm not sure I could listen to them every day; it might be too exhausting. [Full Review](#)

## NICK BARNARD

Not a vintage year in terms of the number of stand-out discs, but the choices here did pretty much self-select as highlights, listed in chronological order through the year.

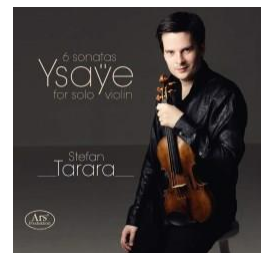


Richard Rodney BENNETT Orchestral Works Vol. 1 - BBC Scottish SO/John Wilson CHANDOS CHSA5202 SACD

Volume 2 of this survey has already been released and this is really a joint award. Bennett deserves a comprehensive reappraisal and this series serves that purpose to perfection. Superb Chandos sonics back up Wilson's insights and the players' - soloists and orchestral - considerable skill. [Full Review](#)

Eugène YSAÏE Sonatas for Solo Violin - Stefan Tarara ARS PRODUKTION ARS38241 SACD

Stunning playing where technique is totally at the service of the music. Performances to make you realise the musical worth of these works, not just their virtuosic demands. [Full Review](#)



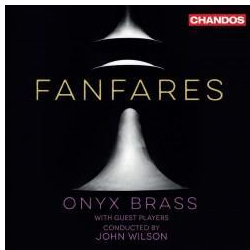
*The Gluepot Connection* Londinium Chamber Ch/Andrew Griffiths SOMM SOMMCD0180

Probably my favourite disc of the year. Such an interesting programme and a brilliant concept for a disc. Favourite works such as *Mater Ora Filium* receive powerful performances with revelatory Lutyens in the mix as well. Excellent documentation and recording complete the package. [Full Review](#)

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH Piano Trios 1 & 2, Violin Sonata - Ilya Gringolts, Daniel Haefliger, Gilles Vonsattel CLAVES CD 50-1817

Magic can happen when a pick-up group of top players come together. Stunning performances of the two 'main' works with the curious early piano trio convincing as much as it can. [Full Review](#)





**Fanfares** Onyx Brass/John Wilson rec. 2017 **CHANDOS CHSA5221 SACD**

My second John Wilson/Chandos disc in the list. Clearly a niche product - 58 brief fanfares are not likely to be heard at a single sitting. But this will surely act as a reference recording for years to come and in doing so hopefully stimulate more performances. Joyous music making and some wonderful discoveries. [Full Review](#)

**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN** Symphony 3 **Richard STRAUSS** Horn Concerto 1 - William Caballero, Pittsburgh SO/Manfred Honeck rec. 2012/17 **REFERENCE RECORDINGS FR728 SACD**

For the second year in a row this team of performers and record company make my year-end list. 'Standard' repertoire receiving searching and challenging interpretations that are exciting as they are convincing. The technical presentation by Soundmirror is simply spectacular. [Full Review](#)



## MARC BRIDLE

I had considered nominating just two discs as my Recordings of the Year - not only because those two recordings (of Ferneyhough and Rachmaninov) were just miles ahead of anything else I heard or reviewed in 2018, but because they also stand out as important, and in the case of the Rachmaninov something else entirely. But this was a good year for Bruckner - which is not often the case.



**Anton BRUCKNER** Symphony 9 - O Ntl de la RTF/Lovro von Matačić rec. 1963 **ALTUS ALT380**

One of the earliest discs I reviewed in 2018 was Altus's release of Lovro von Matačić's live Bruckner Ninth recorded in Paris in 1963. It was exceptional then, and it still is today, even though recordings of this symphony this year, especially from Japan, have been very fine. It's a performance of inexorable power, tremendously sculpted and has greatness written all over it. The playing

leaves an unforgettable impression and the 1960's stereo sound is remarkable for the time. [Full Review](#)

**Anton BRUCKNER** Symphony 5 - Altomonte O St Florian/Rémy Ballot rec. 2017 **GRAMOLA SACD 99162**

A second Bruckner recording, which I reviewed back in May, was unexpected. I have not previously enjoyed any of Rémy Ballot's earlier Bruckner performances but his new recording of the Fifth was the finest I have heard of this symphony for some years. When this conductor isn't setting records for the longest Bruckner performances - which he certainly doesn't for this Fifth - he shows a gift for clarity, ravishing observation of detail and a command of structure which is very impressive. A bonus is the first rate playing of the Altomonte Orchester and the superb acoustic of the Stiftsbasilika in St Florian. [Full Review](#)



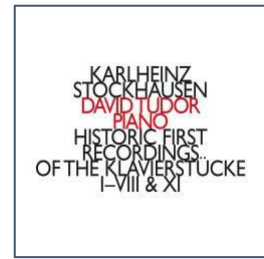
**Brian FERNEYHOUGH** *Liber Scintillarum, Plötzlichkeit, Missa Brevis, La terre est un homme* - ensemble recherché, EXAUDI/James Weeks, BBC SO/Martyn Brabbins rec. 2006-12 **NMC D231**

The BBC Symphony Orchestra's live performance of Brian Ferneyhough's *La terre est un homme* was astonishing for lots of reasons. The music is monumental and kinetic, terrifying and sometimes destructive, but it's also profoundly complex and notoriously difficult - not least for the orchestra which plays it. This disc, which also includes a definitive performance of Ferneyhough's *Plötzlichkeit*, reveals how wonderful a composer for orchestra Ferneyhough is. It also showcases the unparalleled supremacy of the BBCSO in this particular repertoire. A magnificent disc, one which is unlikely to be

surpassed anytime soon, and probably the most significant contemporary music release of the year. [Full Review](#)

**Karlheinz STOCKHAUSEN** Klavierstücke I–XI - David Tudor rec. 1958/59  
**HAT[NOW]ART 172**

In so far as Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke* have ever been "fashionable", the last quarter of this year has seen a new recording on Wergo by Sabine Liebner and this reissue of David Tudor's benchmark performances from 1958 and 1959. Tudor's historic recordings, although incomplete, and in at least the case of *Klavierstück VI* playing a version that Stockhausen was to substantially re-compose, have never been bettered. [Full Review](#)



**Sergei RACHMANINOV** Piano Concertos 2 & 4 - Daniil Trifonov, Philadelphia O/Yannick Nézet-Séguin rec. 2015/18 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 483 5335**

I'll get straight to the point: Daniil Trifonov's new Rachmaninov disc contains one of the two greatest performances of the G minor concerto ever recorded. This CD has hardly been off my player since I got it, and the more I hear it the more dazzling it sounds. The C minor is given a performance that is almost as good - but it's the Fourth you should be going crazy for. The playing of the Philadelphia Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin is a model of its kind. [Full Review](#)

**DOMINY CLEMENTS**



**Improvisations for Two Organs in the Cathedral Metropolitana, Mexico City** - Jürgen Essl, Jeremy Joseph rec. 2018 **CYBELE RECORDS 061801 SACD**

Improvisation is hard to do really well, but this recording is much more than a series of waiting around for special 'moments.' We need more of this sort of thing, with its unique location, fantastic sound and the superb synergy between these two players all joining forces to make this something truly special, and some tracks get my ASMR going every time. [Full Review](#)

**Ottorino RESPIGHI** Trittico Botticelliano, Il Tramonto, Vetrate di Chiesa - Anna Caterina Antonacci, Royal PO de Liège/John Neschling rec. 2016 **BIS BIS-2250 SACD**

None of the alternatives top this BIS recording for sheer magnificence in this repertoire. If you're a fan of Respighi and romantic music in general, or are just seeking somewhere to go beyond the 'Roman triptych', then you owe it to yourself to acquire this superb disc. [Full Review](#)



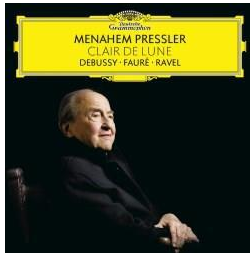
**Olivier MESSIAEN** Catalogue d'Oiseaux - Pierre-Laurent Aimard rec. 2017  
**PENTATONE PTC5186670 SACD**

Pierre-Laurent Aimard is superb in this *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*, and the quest for a recording that can consistently challenge Peter Hill in this repertoire has finally been achieved. Excellent presentation from Pentatone as well – don't lose those feathers! [Full Review](#)

**Tomasz SIKORSKI** Twilight - Szabolcs Esztényi, Ewa Guziołek-Tubelewicz, Warsaw PO/Zsolt Nagy rec. 2006/17 **DUX 1466**

This 'modern stuff' won't be to everyone's taste, but Tomasz Sikorski deserves wider recognition and his art is excitingly captured on this stunning recording. The main work, *Music in Twilight* is so good it always brings a tear to my eye, and the whole 'imprints on the memory like a fiery brand'. [Full Review](#)





**Menahem Pressler Works by Debussy, Fauré & Ravel rec. 2017 DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 8756**

New recordings by living legends are another rarity these days, and Menahem Pressler's *Claire de lune* recital is a beautiful almost-direct link to some of the greatest French composers for piano: 'like receiving a box of liqueur chocolates, the contents of which have been extravagantly sourced from rare vintages'. [Full Review](#)

## MICHAEL COOKSON



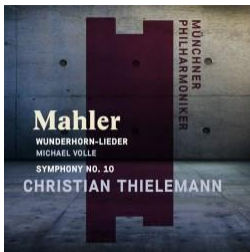
**Vienna: Fin de Siècle Barbara Hannigan, Reinbert de Leeuw rec. 2017 ALPHA CLASSICS 393**

Barbara Hannigan, together with pianist Reinbert de Leeuw, has programmed a collection of *Lieder* from Schoenberg, Wolf, Webern, Zemlinsky, Alma Mahler and Berg, composers who in this époque were at the vanguard of the transformation of music centered around Vienna. This beautiful collection, stunningly performed by Hannigan and Leeuw, is a special album. [Full Review](#)

**Giuseppe VERDI *I Due Foscari* - Plácido Domingo, Francesco Meli, Lucrezia Contarini, O Teatro alla Scala di Milano/Michele Mariotti rec. 2016 C MAJOR 742104 Blu-ray [137 mins]**



This C Major release of Verdi's *I Due Foscari* features Plácido Domingo as Francesco Foscari, the Doge of Venice and Francesco Meli as his son, Jacopo Foscari. Here, Domingo sings as well as in any of his baritone reincarnations that I have seen. I find his interpretation of the suffering Doge totally convincing and affecting, and of course he is singing a role that is actually older than his age. In this shadowy and intensely tragic plot, Latvian stage director Alvis Hermanis has provided a largely traditional staging, rather sparse with little in the way of 'regie' gimmickry or provocation and the period costumes are striking too. [Full Review](#)



**Gustav MAHLER *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, Symphony No. 10 *Adagio* - Michael Volle, Münchner Philharmoniker/Christian Thielemann rec. 2011 MÜNCHNER PHILHARMONIKER 9305211271**

In this selection of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the assured Michael Volle is in prime form throughout and one senses he is relishing every word of the text. Christian Thielemann's interpretation of the *Adagio* from Tenth Symphony, which seems to stretch emotions to their limit, is both convincing and

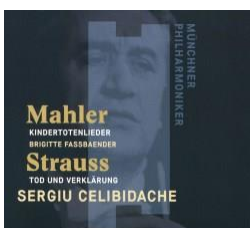
uncommonly compelling. [Full Review](#)

**Bohuslav MARTINŮ Symphonies 1-6 - ORF Vienna RSO/Cornelius Meister rec. 2011-17 CAPRICCIO C5320**

In Munich March 2017, Cornelius Meister conducted the Bayerisches Staatsorchester in probably the finest concert I have ever attended. So, I am delighted that he turned his attention to the complete symphonies of Bohuslav Martinů, recording them in live performances at Konzerthaus, Vienna. The orchestra is in such spectacular form that I can't praise this set highly enough.



[Full Review](#)



**Gustav MAHLER *Kindertotenlieder* Richard STRAUSS *Tod und Verklärung* - Brigitte Fassbaender, Münchner Philharmoniker/Sergiu Celibidache rec. 1979/83 MÜNCHNER PHILHARMONIKER 9305211296**

These glorious Herkulesaal, Munich accounts of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and Richard Strauss' *Tod und Verklärung* from the radio archives of the

Münchner Philharmoniker are given by two master interpreters of their craft: the legendary Sergiu Celibidache, who conducts both works, and mezzo-soprano Brigitte Fassbaender, the soloist in Mahler's orchestral song cycle. Fassbaender communicates a breathtaking feeling for Rückert's text; the aching sorrow and sense of total despair produced by her implacably expressive vocal timbre is almost too sad to bear. Under Celibidache it's a penetrating and affecting performance that I would confidently describe as a great one. Celibidache's interpretation of *Tod und Verklärung* feels judiciously paced and in a moving, often dramatic performance he achieves a remarkable internal balance of orchestral sound. [Full Review](#)

**Gustav MAHLER** *Das Lied von der Erde* - Magdalena Kožená, Stuart Skelton, Bayerischen RSO/Sir Simon Rattle rec. 2018 **BR KLASSIK 900172**

In Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* tenor Stuart Skelton's weighty, ringing tone provides a lovely contrast to Magdalena Kožená's cultured mezzo-soprano voice and he comes close to matching her capacity for vocal expression. Rattle's approach to *Das Lied von der Erde* with the impeccably prepared Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks feels freshly minted. I can't fault the beautiful and unaffected playing of total conviction from one of the world's finest orchestras. [Full Review](#)

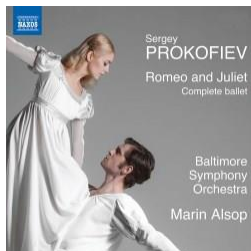



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## ROBERT CUMMINGS

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To select a handful of the best recordings in a given year is a challenge, to say the least. One must rule out some fine efforts after long deliberation. To cite just two that narrowly missed inclusion, there are the excellent Rachmaninov Third of Boris Giltburg and a dark horse consideration, David Korevaar's fine disc of Lowell Liebermann Nocturnes and other piano pieces. Anyway, here's my list with the choices in order of preference.



**Sergei PROKOFIEV** *Romeo and Juliet* - Baltimore SO/Marin Alsop rec. 2015 **NAXOS 8.573534-35**

Marin Alsop has already given us an excellent cycle of the Prokofiev symphonies on Naxos (Nos. 2 & 4 were outstanding), and now she turns to his great ballet. This is just as compelling a version as two classic accounts from the 1970s, by Maazel and Previn, respectively. But Alsop has up-to-date sonics, giving her the clear edge. [Full Review](#)

**Frédéric CHOPIN** Complete Mazurkas - Eugene Mursky rec. 2015/16 **PROFIL PH16100**

Eugene Mursky is a natural Chopin interpreter and here he delivers a complete set of the Mazurkas in totally convincing performances, placing him alongside such icons in this repertory as Artur Schnabel, Janina Fialkowska, Van Cliburn and others. [Full Review](#)



**Ottorino RESPIGHI** *La Campana Sommersa* - Cagliari Teatro Lirico Chorus & Orchestra/Donato Renzetti rec. 2016 **NAXOS Blu-ray NBD0072V**

While this is not a major opera, it is a very attractive work still and deserves greater attention. This production and performance of it are splendid from just about every standpoint and should offer substantial rewards to the jaded opera lover. [Full Review](#)



**Paul HINDEMITH** Symphony “Mathis der Maler”, Symphonic Metamorphosis, Five Pieces, Ragtime - Frankfurt RSO/Paavo Järvi rec. 2010/13 **NAÏVE V5434**

If there is an unjustly neglected composer from the 20th century it is Hindemith. Here his major orchestral works receive stunning performances, led by a conductor who has championed his cause, Paavo Järvi. [Full Review](#)



**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN** Symphonies 2 & 7 - Vienna SO/Philippe Jordan rec. 2017 **WIENER SYMPHONIKER WS015**

While there are countless excellent recordings of each of the Beethoven nine symphonies, new entries should not be dismissed simply because they dare to enter the fray. These are wonderful performances by the Vienna Symphony.

[Full Review](#)

**Sergei PROKOFIEV** *Ivan The Terrible* - Berlin RSO & Ch/Frank Strobel rec. 2016 **CAPRICCIO C5311**

There have been many fine recordings of Prokofiev’s brilliant music for Eisenstein’s film in various arrangements, but here is the complete original score, containing more music than other previous versions of the complete score. Moreover, the performances by all parties, under conductor Frank Strobel, are excellent. [Full Review](#)




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## ROBERT FARR

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Last year I restricted myself to four recordings, all with one exception being of filmed opera performances with that one exception being a Gala of sung operatic items from Baden-Baden. All had received my personal imprimatur as Recording of the Month from the previous year’s issues. I pleaded the sparsity of four was due to two factors. First, my advancing age and second, as nearly all my reviews had concerned staged opera performances, the intrusion of my prejudices against many modern staged productions where far too often, in my view, directors usurped composers’ intentions with updating and other gimmicks. This has been particularly true of performances emanating from mainland Europe where Concept and Regietheater have been the name of the game. Many filmed productions emanate from that region, and whilst trying to temper my prejudices in this respect, it still sticks in my craw when a director and his designer make unwarranted, and often tasteless, additions to the composer’s intentions and even, on occasions, the source of the story. Typical is the staging from London’s Royal Opera House of Donizetti’s *Lucia Di Lammermoor* where the heroine appears in bloodied dress, attributed in the production concerned as being caused by the lady’s miscarriage! Pure invention! Neither the Scott novel, nor the libretto, is the source of such an aberration. So, whilst I have tried to temper my prejudices this year, I have also sought out directors I know who are more likely to respect the composers intentions to the extent of purchasing discs that have not come in for review, and extended to an issue two years old, albeit not reviewed at that time.

On a personal note, my choices this year is made from twenty-four reviews. The increase in productivity is due to my not being able to spend six weeks in France on holiday, without film playing facility or hi-fi sound, due to my wife’s recuperation from surgery.



**Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART** *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* Sally Matthews, Edgaras Montvidas, O Age of Enlightenment/Robin Ticciati rec. 2015 **OPUS ARTE DVD OA1215D**

Like most opera lovers I have my favourite composers and operatic works. High on my list are Verdi and Mozart. There are often multiple productions of most of their compositions available on film. However, in this work, few manage truly to represent the composer’s intentions, with its unique challenges. This staging, and performance, by Producer David McVicar, Designer, Vicki Mortimer under Conductor Robin Ticciati achieves near

perfection. It was one of only two recordings this year that I gave my imprimatur of Recording of the Month. [Full Review](#)

**Jacques OFFENBACH** *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* - Vittorio Grigòlo, Kate Lindsey, Ch & O Royal Opera House, Covent Garden/Evelino Pido rec. 2016 **SONY DVD 88985376619**

This was announced as the last revival of John Schlesinger's opulent staging of 1980. The theatre did well with the casting even if Hoffmann's nemesis, in the persona of the American baritone Thomas Hampson, lacks a little of the ideal satanic vocal nuance. Nonetheless, I felt the whole deserved my imprimatur of Recording of the Month because of the quality of the staged performance and of the other singers. [Full Review](#)



**Richard STRAUSS** *Der Rosenkavalier* - Elina Garanča, Renée Fleming, Günther Groissböck, Metropolitan Opera Ch & O/Sebastian Weigle rec. 2017 **DECCA Blu-ray 0743945**

All good things come to an end. The great duo of soprano Renée Fleming and mezzo Elina Garanča were retiring their roles from their repertoire after this series of performances. Renée because of age and Elina because of changes in her voice that were leading her towards more dramatic repertoire. [Full Review](#)

**Gaetano DONIZETTI** *Il Borgomastro di Saardam* - Tsar Pietro - Giorgio Caoduro, Juan Francisco Gatell, Ch & O Donizetti Opera/Roberto Rizzi Brignoli rec. 2017 **DYNAMIC Blu-ray 57812**

I include this first video recording of this rarely performed early Donizetti opera, firstly because of its rarity of production and second as it contrasts, in musical terms, with my fifth recommendation that marks the composer's later style following his move to France. [Full Review](#)



**Gaetano DONIZETTI** *La Favorite* - Celso Albelo, Veronica Simeoni, Ch & O Maggio Musicale Fiorentino/Fabio Luisi rec. 2018 **DYNAMIC Blu-ray 57822**

Although a filmed recording has appeared with a better singing cast, it is of an ultra-modern production that does little to represent Donizetti's creation. This production is more in the spirit of the music of this opera that opened the door to the composer's fame in Paris and his later compositions there, as well as the other notable final works that preceded his premature death. [Full Review](#)

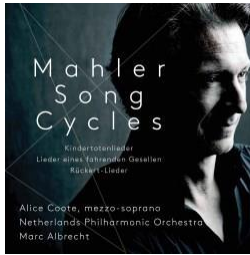
**Giuseppe VERDI** *Messa da Requiem* - Dinara Alieva, Olesya Petrova, Francesco Meli, Dmitry Belosselskiy, Bolshoi Theatre Ch, St. Petersburg PO/Yuri Temirkanov rec. 2017 **DELOS DVD DV7012**

In a year that saw the death of two of the finest opera singers of their generation, Montserrat Caballé and, at the young age of 56, the Siberian baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky, it is the opportunity to commend a performance of one of the greatest Requiems, that of Giuseppe Verdi, performed in Russia shortly after the latter singer's premature death. Obviously prepared at short notice, but with a distinguished if not wholly ideal cast, a magnificent setting, choral singing and orchestral performance of spirituality and drama under conductor Yuri Temirkanov, it has much to admire in a very competitive market of this work. [Full Review](#)



## GÖRAN FORSLING

Looking back on the past 12 months I invariably find that there have been lots of enjoyable discs. In fact most of the discs have had something positive to offer. To make it easy this time I picked the six that were awarded a Recording of the Month, confident that they are predestined to be more than just temporary visitors to my CD-player.



**Gustav MAHLER** Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen, Kindertotenlieder, Rückert-Lieder - Alice Coote, Netherlands PO/Marc Albrecht rec. 2015/16 **PENTATONE PTC5186576 SACD**

Alice Coote's capacity as recitalist is well-known by now after several excellent CDs, but this Mahler programme surpasses everything through her deep understanding of the texts and her involved identification. Add to this the rapport between her and the conductor Marc Albrecht which feels like a parallel with the legendary Janet Baker – John Barbirolli radar couple fifty years ago. [Full Review](#)

**Franz SCHUBERT** *Winterreise* - Bo Skovhus, Stefan Vladar rec. 2016 **CAPRICCIO C5291**



Last year I made a recording of *Winterreise* with Danish bass-baritone Johan Reuter one of my Recordings of the Year. It was special insofar as it was sung with accompaniments by a string quartet. Now his compatriot, Bo Skovhus concludes his second traversal of the three Schubert cycles with a reading that 'catches you from the beginning and keeps you hooked until you stand there exhausted, barefoot on the ice, beside the hurdy-gurdy man'. [Full Review](#)



**Song of the North** 441 Hz Chamber Ch/Anna Wilczewska rec. 2017 **DUX 1405**

I can't summarize my reactions better than quoting my original review: 'This is one of the most riveting choral discs I've ever come across! Based mainly on folk music and other traditional sources but dressed in modern outfit and with sometimes disrespectful accessories, the music is challenging, entertaining, often great fun and all the time inspirational'. [Full Review](#)

**Das ewige Rätsel** Johannes Martin Kränzle, Hilko Dumno rec. 2017 **OEHMS CLASSICS OC1887**



The song cycle by the little known German composer Richard Rudolf Klein that opens this recital was my find of the year, but coupled with Mahler, Martin and Ravel we are treated to a marvellous examination of aspects on 'The Eternal Question' i.e. the end of life and a possible afterlife. The singing of Johannes Martin Kränzle elevates the music further. [Full Review](#)



**George Frideric HANDEL** *Finest Arias for Bass Voice* - Christopher Purves, Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen rec. 2016/17 **HYPERION CDA68152**

One never gets tired of Handel's music; it's always stimulating and life-enhancing. And the singing of Christopher Purves (such beauty and technical expertise – his vocal range is phenomenal) is a further asset. Voice-fanciers and Handelians will both love this disc. [Full Review](#)

**Richard WAGNER** *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* - Franz Hawlata, Artur Korn, Klaus Florian Vogt, Michael Volle, Bayreuth Festival Ch & O/Sebastian Weigle rec. 2008 **OPUS ARTE OACD9031D**



The production as such was not much to my liking when I saw it in Bayreuth, but I liked the singing very much and this recording confirmed my impression from 2008. There are stage noises but few recordings from the stereo age of this masterpiece can boast a more homogenous cast, with Klaus Florian Vogt and Franz Hawlata in the lead. [Full Review](#)

## STEPHEN GREENBANK

I'm conscious of the fact that this year half of my choices feature the music of Claude Debussy. Having said that, though, this year we've commemorated the centenary of his death. The record labels have done him proud. As we're only permitted to nominate six choices, it's inevitable that some recordings,

sadly, have to be passed over. There were two runners up, in my case, the Eileen Joyce Complete Studio Recordings from Eloquence, and the *Rachmaninoff plays Symphonic Dances: Newly Discovered 1940 Recordings* from Marston.

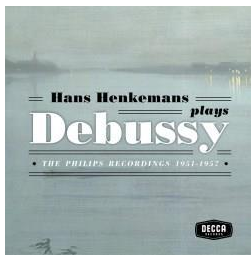


**Claude DEBUSSY** Images I & II, Children's Corner, Suite Bergamasque, L'isle joyeuse - Seong-Jin Cho (piano) rec. 2017 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 4798308**

The 23-year-old South Korean pianist, Seong-Jin Cho, winner of the 2015 International Chopin Piano Competition, is a natural Debussy player. His myriad pastel shades and artful musicianship are arresting. This is some of the finest Debussy playing I've ever encountered. [Full Review](#)

**Henriette RENIÉ** Cello sonata, Pièce symphonique, Piano trio - Trio Nuori rec. 2017 **LIGIA LIDI0302325**

My exploration and enthusiasm for obscure and unfamiliar byways occasionally pays dividends, as it did with this disc of chamber music by the unsung French composer Henriette Renié. The Piano Trio is particularly fine and could benefit from a few more outings by adventurous young chamber musicians. The Trio Nuori play with infectious ardour, and fully mine the music's attractive lyricism. Chamber music aficionados need look no further. [Full Review](#)

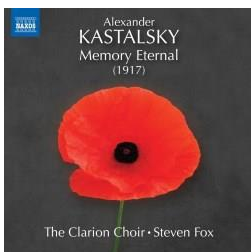
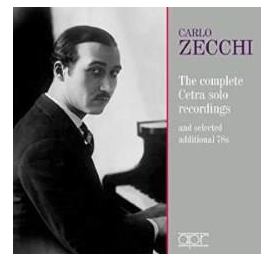


**Claude DEBUSSY** *The Philips Recordings* - Hans Henkemans (piano) rec. 1951-57 **DECCA 4829490**

Amongst the wealth of releases to mark the centenary of Debussy's death, this may not have had the high profile as some of the others. This is Debussy playing at its finest, and it would be the cycle I would favour above all the others for my desert island; yes, even the Gieseking! [Full Review](#)

**Carlo Zecchi** *The Complete Cetra Recordings & selected additional 78s* rec. 1930-42 **APR 6024**

This is one of the most compelling historical piano recordings that has ever come my way. Zecchi's phenomenal piano career was adversely affected by a road accident in 1939. Although he continued to perform outstandingly after that date, his career took new paths. He dedicated his remaining years to conducting, teaching and playing chamber music. Don't hesitate, this 2-CD set will offer you some exalted pianism. [Full Review](#)

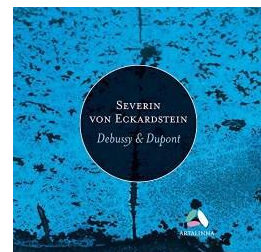


**Alexander KASTALSKY** *Memory Eternal to the Fallen Heroes* - The Clarion Ch/Steven Fox rec. 2018 **NAXOS 8.573889**

Occasionally, everything comes together with that magical formula. This is my first encounter with Alexander Kastalsky's music and it's been a revelation. Here we have generous, memorable lyricism, superbly sung and all captured in a first-class recording. Everything just works and the release constitutes a worthy centennial commemoration of the Armistice. [Full Review](#)

**Gabriel DUPONT** *La maison dans les dunes* **Claude DEBUSSY** Images I & II - Severin von Eckardstein (piano) rec. 2017 **ARTALINNA ATLA020**

I made a wonderful discovery here. Gabriel Dupont's *La maison dans les dunes* is a suite of ten pieces, evoking the sea, wind and bracing outdoors, imbued with luminous hues and haunting melodies. What better advocate than the German pianist Severin von Eckardstein, whose stunning technical prowess and wide ranging colouristic palette serves this music to perfection. Added to that, the recording quality is superb, as is the expertly voiced Steinway. [Full Review](#)



## MICHAEL GREENHALGH

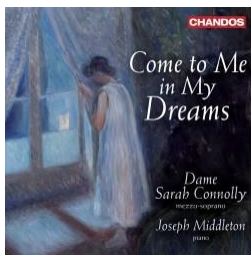
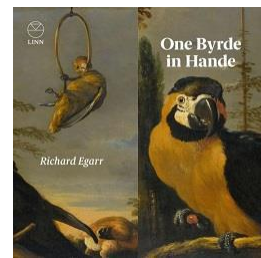


**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN** Piano Concertos 2 & 4 - Royal Northern Sinfonia/Lars Vogt (piano) rec. 2017 **ONDINE ODE1311-2**

Taking the first movement of Piano Concerto 2, freshness is the key to Lars Vogt's Beethoven. It combines clarity, urgency and flair. The piano solos are in turn jocular, athletic and then show touches of graceful refinement, or tellingly point significant changes of harmony. And you feel the pianist and orchestra's joint ownership of the proceedings. [Full Review](#)

**William BYRD** *One Byrde in Hande* - Richard Egarr (harpsichord) rec. 2017 **LINN CKD518**

*The bells* is a fine example of the care and clarity of Richard Egarr's presentation. Here only he adds a 20-second opening not by Byrd to present a single bell toll and ground bass of two bell tolls over which ultimately shower a carillon of semiquavers. It's patient, systematic yet glowing and in turn jolly, raunchy, excited, exultant and calmly fulfilled. [Full Review](#)

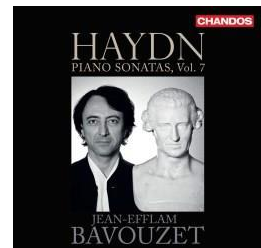


**Come to me in my dreams: 120 years of song from the Royal College of Music** Dame Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), Joseph Middleton (piano) rec. 2017/18 **CHANDOS CHAN10944**

Passionate and eloquent performances from Sarah Connolly and Joseph Middleton. Outstanding is the realization of Britten's composition draft of *A sweet lullaby*, as much a lament for, but also defence of an absent father. Child's innocence is poignantly contrasted with parents' guilt. Yet the mother also manages to be extraordinarily affirmative. [Full Review](#)

**Joseph HAYDN** Piano Sonatas Vol. 7 - Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano) rec. 2017 **CHANDOS CHAN10998**

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's Haydn isn't a comfortable ride but a vivid one. Take his stimulating approach to Sonata 58's first movement; it has warmth, athleticism and a feel of being improvised while missing nothing of Haydn's harmonic, rhythmic and dynamic twists. There's a certain quirkiness about it, but that is exactly Haydn's. [Full Review](#)

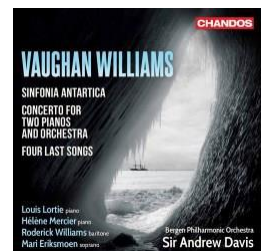


**Felix MENDELSSOHN** String Quartets 1, 5 & 6 - Doric String Qt rec. 2017 **CHANDOS CHAN20122**

Taking first movements, the Doric Quartet journey from the fluent yet generally homely warmth of the first quartet through the greater ingenuity of the fifth, more overtly dramatic and packed with incident, to the unleashed fury of the sixth's angry present, briefly relieved by affectionate recollection of the dead Fanny. Not a nuance is missed. [Full Review](#)

**Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS** *Sinfonia Antartica*, Four Last Songs, Concerto for two pianos - Mari Eriksmoen (soprano), Roderick Williams (baritone), Hélène Mercier, Louis Lortie (pianos), Bergen PO & Ch/Sir Andrew Davis rec. 2017 **CHANDOS CHSA5186 SACD**

At the opening of *Sinfonia Antartica* Andrew Davis achieves a calm, stately flow with a heroic sense of endurance, hardship matched by a determination to overcome it within an environment shown to be both severe and awe inspiring, the female solo and choral contributions decidedly spooky. Most striking is this account's fundamental granite nature. [Full Review](#)



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**RICHARD HANLON**


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I've probably listened to more recorded music this year than ever before – it became obvious that I'd need to keep a 'tally' to keep track of the best discs - even then it's taken me weeks to whittle the list down to ten, and then to six. However I have to admit that my 'No. 1' pretty well chose itself on first hearing, and while there are some extremely strong candidates on the final shortlist, none came close to toppling it. The following four discs just missed the cut but I'd like to mention them in dispatches: Alexander Melnikov's sublime Harmonia Mundi disc of the second book of *Preludes* and *La Mer* for four hands (with Olga Pashchenko) on a ripe 1885 Érard; Guild's three disc set of symphonies by the all-but-forgotten Swiss twentieth century master Caspar Diethelm – works of uncommon stature and quite unworthy of neglect; a clutch of delightfully approachable orchestral works by Ina Boyle, who studied with Vaughan Williams appeared on a Dutton Vocalion issue, while the revival of interest in the Pole Feliks Nowowiejski, a (very different) contemporary of Szymanowski, continued apace; his wartime Symphonies Nos 2 and 3 appeared on a Dux CD. And so to the final selection, in no particular order.



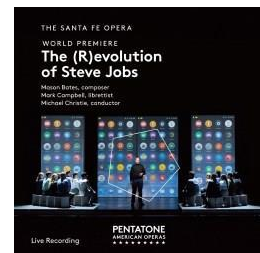
**Hans ABRAHAMSEN** String Quartets - Arditti String Qt rec. 2015/16 **WINTER & WINTER 910 242-2**

It is impossible to imagine the Arditti Quartet's performances of Hans AbrahamSEN's four string quartets - often airy, mercurial masterpieces - being bettered. [Full Review](#)

**Mason BATES** *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* - Edward Parks, Santa Fe Opera O/Michael Christie rec. 2017

**PENTATONE SACD PTC5186690**

While it received a mixed reception, I was deeply impressed (and unexpectedly moved) by Pentatone's live recording (and de-luxe presentation) of Mason Bates' opera. [Full Review](#)



**Gerald FINZI** Cello Concerto, Eclogue, Nocturne, Grand Fantasia and Toccata - Paul Watkins, Louis Lortie, BBC SO/Sir Andrew Davis rec. 2018 **CHANDOS SACD CHSA5214**

My favourite disc of English music this year saw Gerald Finzi's magnificent Cello Concerto finally get the performance and the recording it cried out for, courtesy of Paul Watkins and the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Andrew Davis on a disc which also featured fine accounts by Louis Lortie of Finzi's two contrasting

concertante piano works, the heartbreakingly beautiful Eclogue, and the acerbic Grand Fantasia and Toccata. [Full Review](#)

**Liepāja Concerti Vol. I** Liepāja SO/Atvars Lakstīgala rec 2013-16 **ODRADEK RECORDS ODRCD362**

More concertos, even less familiar than the Finzi, feature on a superb Odradek twofer. This issue presents five extended new works that form part of an initiative that celebrates the opening of a hi-tech concert hall in the coastal city of Liepāja in south-west Latvia. The splendid orchestra there supports a wide range of soloists in five 'Liepāja Concerti'. The two most notable examples are the colourful, tautly written Violin Concerto by Vilnis Šmīdbergs, and the remarkable Clarinet Concerto 'Visions of Arctic Night' by Ēriks Ešenvalds. Performances and recordings are outstanding. [Full Review](#)





**Igor STRAVINSKY** *Music for two pianos* - Marc-André Hamelin, Leif Ove Andsnes rec. 2017 **HYPERION CDA68189**

Two discs on Hyperion conclude my selections. An unmissable collaboration between two piano superstars led to a recording of Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring', in its composer's own two-piano arrangement that had my head shaking and my jaw dropping in disbelief. Hamelin and Andsnes' account of the Concerto for Two Pianos is scarcely less impressive. The precision and unanimity on this

disc are quite stunning. [Full Review](#)

**Louis COUPERIN** *Dances from the Bauyn Manuscript* - Pavel Kolesnikov rec. 2017 **HYPERION CDA68224**

But my choice of Recording of the Year involves an entirely different kind of pianism. I'm sure Pavel Kolesnikov's decision to record the music of Louis Couperin on piano for only his third commercial release must have raised eyebrows, even at the open-hearted broad church that is Hyperion Records. But the label's faith in this project, and in the singular abilities of one of their most prodigious assets was well-placed indeed. Kolesnikov's playing conveys a heavenly refinement, and provides the listener with an entirely new angle on the genius of Louis Couperin, enabling him once and for all to emerge from his more celebrated nephew's shadows. This disc has provided me with my most enduring and consoling listening experience in what has been a disturbing and disorientating year, and I suspect it will continue to haunt and move me for the rest of my days. [Full Review](#)




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## IAN LACE

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This year has been one of much change for me personally. I have changed homes a few times, and got married again (at the age of 82). My reviews, this year, have concentrated on live concerts, mainly by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, for *Seen and Heard*. Of the few recordings I have heard, I can only select four to include in my 2018 choice.



**Sir William WALTON** *Symphonies 1 & 2* - Bournemouth SO/Kirill Karabits rec. 2016 **ONYX 4168**

Until I heard this Karabits reading, André Previn's recording of Walton's First Symphony had always been for me the keystone recording. Now this Onyx recording can be set beside Previn's. It probably outshines it in sheer emotional charge and certainly in terms of outstanding recorded sound. Karabits account of Walton's Second Symphony impresses too. The central *Lento assai* movement captures the ear - Karabits weaves magic here. There is a plaintive poignancy and an agitated, questioning tartness but also a lyrical almost out-of-this-world mood of solace. [Full Review](#)

**Claude DEBUSSY** *Rêverie* - Lucy Parham (piano), Alex Jennings (narrator) rec. 2016 **DEUX-ELLES DXL1174**

A really guilty pleasure this one. Debussy, besides being a musical genius, was also a fine writer. Lucy Parham's concept selects telling passages from his correspondence and other writings to explain the concepts of his ground-breaking music and to chart his scandalous personal life. Actor Alex Jennings makes a perfect reader – detached yet at the same time, by his tone, coolly appraising. [Full Review](#)





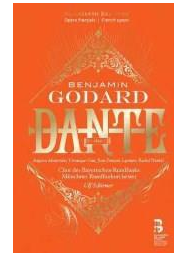
**The Gluepot Connection** Londinium Chamber Ch/Andrew Griffiths rec. 2017  
SOMM SOMMCD0180

I agree wholeheartedly with Nick Barnard's comment when he says that 'Over time I have got used to the very high quality of Somm's engineering, presentation, programming and performances. But even by those high standards, this is a very fine disc indeed, possibly one of their finest.' This is a wonderful collection of English music for voices, flawlessly performed by the

Londinium Chamber Choir conducted by Andrew Griffiths, including Bax's *Mater Ora Filium*, so highly regarded by Bax champion, the late Vernon Handley; plus works by Delius, Walton, Ireland, Moeran, Warlock, Rawsthorne, Alan Bush and Elisabeth Lutyens. [Full Review](#)

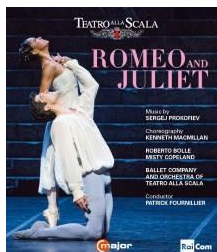
**Benjamin GODARD** *Dante* - Edgaras Montvidas, Véronique Gens, Bavarian Radio Ch, Munich Radio O/Ulf Schirmer rec. 2016 **EDICIONES SINGULARES ES1029**

Mention the name Benjamin Godard and more often than not just one composition comes to mind – the *Berceuse* from his best known opera *Jocelyn* - and little else. This is a shame as this recording of his opera, *Dante*, testifies. I will admit, it has, for me, been another guilty pleasure. It may not be a great operatic opus; nevertheless, it is eminently accessible and appealingly melodic. All involved in this production shine and on the strength of it we really should be treated to more Godard – *Jocelyn*, for instance, or his admired dramatic symphony, *Le Tasso*? [Full Review](#)



## ROB MAYNARD

Fewer outstanding releases have come my way in 2018. In particular, DVDs and CDs of classical ballets – in which I seem to have come to specialise – no longer come along in the numbers seen just a few years ago when older performances were being assiduously exhumed from the archives. It is notable, as a result, that two of my choices are repackaged re-releases. While all four of my recommendations are in the Blu-ray format - which, I would stress once again, is really worth investing in if you are a serious collector - each is also available as a conventional DVD.



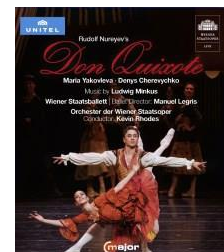
**Sergei PROKOFIEV** *Romeo and Juliet* - Ballet & O Teatro alla Scala/Patrick Fournillier rec. 2017 **C MAJOR Blu-ray 743604**

Even though Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* has been well served on Blu-ray and DVD, this newly-recorded performance from Milan will become the first choice for many. Misty Copeland and Roberto Bolle deliver outstanding and genuinely affecting performances and are well supported by the La Scala company. Outstanding video direction and top technical specifications complete a highly

attractive package. [Full Review](#)

**Ludwig MINKUS** *Don Quixote* Wiener Staatsoper O/Kevin Rhodes rec. 2016 **C MAJOR Blu-Ray 742504**

Nureyev's choreography for *Don Quixote* has never been my favourite, but for those who disagree this new release from Vienna is the performance to have. Denys Cherevychko makes a particularly strong impression as the cheeky town barber Basil, but his partner Maria Yakovleva makes a very positive impression too in this light-hearted romp. [Full Review](#)



**The Art of David Hallberg at The Bolshoi** O State Academic Bolshoi Theatre/Alexey Bogorad, Vassily Sinaisky rec. 2011/14 **BELAIR CLASSIQUES Blu-ray BAC618**

David Hallberg's career at the Bolshoi was sadly truncated by injury but, thankfully, *The Sleeping Beauty* and, more importantly, *Marco Spada* had already been filmed and are made available here in a bargain-priced package. Hallberg brings his distinctively engaging personality to both performances in a hugely



enjoyable fashion, while the Bolshoi predictably contributes both strength in depth and typically lavish settings. [Full Review](#)

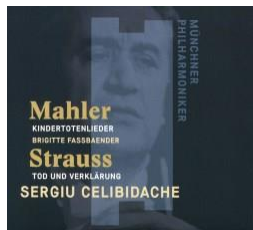
**The Art of Svetlana Zakharova at The Bolshoi** rec. 2003-15 **BEL AIR CLASSIQUES BAC616** Blu-ray

Many regard Svetlana Zakharova as today's finest female dancer in classical ballet and this bargain-priced set admirably showcases both her unquestioned technical skills and her occasionally rather cool and detached stage presence. The box contains four complete ballets, all presented in typically lavish and well-executed Bolshoi fashion – though you should note that this performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* is the same one that's been included in the David Hallberg box. [Full Review](#)



## RALPH MOORE

This has been a strong year for both re-issues and new recordings of three of my favourite composers, Bruckner, Mahler and Strauss, whereas the cupboard is decidedly bare in my other area of prime interest, opera and the voice. A glance at the roster for the Royal Opera's new season will tell you why: an extraordinary number of singers in the casts are in their 60's and even 70's; new voices capable of encompassing the demands of the standard operatic repertoire are increasingly in short supply. As it is, my sole operatic nomination is a recording from nearly sixty years ago. Otherwise, one new recording and one re-issue, each of works by both Bruckner and Mahler, and Murray Perahia's magisterial account of two great Beethoven sonatas go to make up my tally of six.



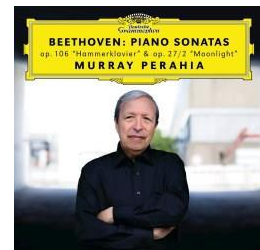
**Gustav MAHLER** *Kindertotenlieder* **Richard STRAUSS** *Tod und Verklärung* - Brigitte Fassbaender, Münchner Philharmoniker/Sergiu Celibidache rec. 1979/83 **MÜNCHNER PHILHARMONIKER 9305211296**

A typically individual and arresting account of Mahler's darkest song cycle, plus an intense, brooding performance of a Strauss' tone poem from the maverick Celibidache, caught live and on the wing in the Herkulesaal in splendid analogue

sound. [Full Review](#)

**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN** Piano Sonatas 14 & 29 - Murray Perahia rec. 2016/17 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 8353**

The summation of a lifetime's devotion and experience from Murray Perahia, delivering fleet, profound and technically flawless accounts of two favourite Beethoven sonatas recorded in sound which beautifully captures the piano's resonance. [Full Review](#)



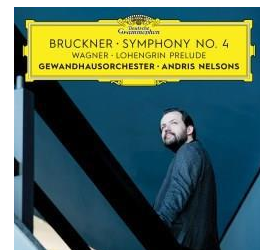
**Béla BARTÓK** *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* - Jerome Hines, Rosalind Elias, Philadelphia O/Eugene Ormandy rec. 1960 **SONY CLASSICAL 19075810782**

Finally issued on CD, a seminal twentieth-century opera in a classic recording featuring two great, American singers under a conductor in complete command of the idiom. Being performed in an English translation makes it more accessible to Anglophone listeners without diminishing its haunting power. [Full](#)

[Review](#)

**Anton BRUCKNER** Symphony No. 4 **Richard WAGNER** *Lohengrin* Prelude – Gewandhaus O Leipzig/Andris Nelsons rec. 2017 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 4797577**

Nelsons' Bruckner, both recorded and in concert, continues to divide opinion as witnessed by diverse reviews on this website, but for me he is a breath of fresh air, utilising one of the world's great orchestras to realise his vibrant vision of one of Bruckner's most popular and accessible symphonies. [Full Review](#)





**Anton BRUCKNER** Complete Symphonies - Hamburg PO/Simone Young rec. 2006-15 **OEHMS CLASSICS OC026**

A superb, modern cycle of the Bruckner symphonies: wise, balanced but still thrilling accounts presented in excellent digital sound and offering the original versions as an alternative to those still usually performed. [Full Review](#)

**Gustav MAHLER** *Das klagende Lied* - Wiener Singakademie, ORF Vienna RSO/Cornelius Meister rec. 2016 **CAPRICCIO C5316**

A new, live-composite recording in ideal sound from a young conductor which breathes new life into a work still somewhat disregarded, performed by first-rate artists in a score which combines the best of the original and revised versions. [Full Review](#)



## DAN MORGAN

Not a vintage year, perhaps, but still plenty to admire and enjoy. Highlights that didn't make the final cut included Sergiu Celibidache and Brigitte Fassbaender in Mahler and Strass (Münchner Philharmoniker); a Mahler Seventh from Mariss Jansons (RCO Live); Sakari Oramo's Schmitt, with the BBC SO (Chandos); a Bernstein celebration from Christian Lindberg and the RLPO (BIS); three new concertos by Michael Daugherty (Naxos); Francesco Piemontesi's Liszt (Orfeo); Jean-Luc Tingaud and the RTÉ NSO in Poulenc ballet suites (Naxos); three American symphonies each from David Alan Miller (Naxos) and Lance Friedel (BIS); Jerry Junkin and the Dallas Winds in John Williams (Reference); and a trio of Kalevi Aho recordings (BIS). My top six are:

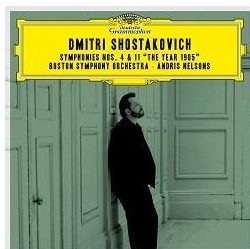


**Igor STRAVINSKY** *Music for two pianos* - Marc-André Hamelin, Leif Ove Andsnes rec. 2017 **HYPERION CDA68189**

Marc-André Hamelin and Leif Ove Andsnes were born to play these demanding pieces. To unrivalled technique and unbridled energy must be added subtlety and insight. Factor in a top-notch recording – one expects nothing less of Hyperion these days – and you have a truly stellar release. [Full Review](#)

**Pavel CHESNOKOV** *Teach Me Thy Statutes* - PaTRAM Institute Male Choir/Vladimir Gorbik rec. 2016 **REFERENCE RECORDINGS FR-727 SACD**

'Intensely beautiful singing and sound; quite simply, choral albums don't come much better than this.' Indeed, if I had to choose just one album for 2018, it would have to be this one. Recorded in Mother Russia by Soundmirror, this augurs well for future releases in the series. Can't wait! [Full Review](#)



**Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH** Symphonies 4 & 11 - Boston SO/Andris Nelsons rec. 2017/18 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 483 5220**

This, the third instalment of Andris Nelsons' Boston cycle, is also the finest. He sheds new and startling light on the Fourth and delivers an Eleventh of deceptive power and purpose. I'd even say this album, superbly recorded, deserves to be filed with the greats. Yes, it's *that* good. [Full Review](#)

**Franz LISZT** *Études d'exécution transcendante* - Kirill Gerstein rec. 2015 **MYRIOS CLASSICS MYR019 SACD**

I'd not come across Myrios before, but I knew Kirill Gerstein was getting lots of good notices. Thanks to a DSD128 download from NativeDSD, I was able to find out what all the fuss is about. Frankly, this is one of the most life-like piano recordings I've ever heard. Transcendental indeed. [Full Review](#)



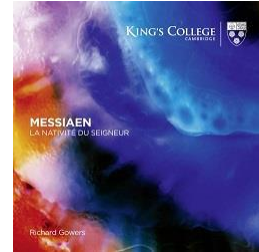


**Rued LANGGAARD** *Symphonies 2 & 6, Upaaagtede Morgenstjerner* - Anu Komsj, Vienna PO/Sakari Oramo rec. 2017/18 **DACAPO 6.220653 SACD**

Among my Recordings of the Year in 2014 was a pair of Per Nørgård symphonies from Sakari Oramo and the Wiener Philharmoniker. They've done it again, with splendid performances of three works by this very individual Dane. As expected, Dacapo's engineering is first-class, too. [Full Review](#)

**Olivier MESSIAEN** *La Nativité du Seigneur* - Richard Gowers rec. 2017 **KINGS COLLEGE KGS0025**

And with Christmas just around the corner, what better way to celebrate than with *La Nativité du Seigneur*? Richard Gowers gives a 'perceptive and profoundly moving' account of this great work. Also, the glories of this restored organ, as captured by Benjamin Sheen, are a wonder to behold. [Full Review](#)



## JOHN QUINN

I've heard many recordings this year that I would describe as good or very good but the Recordings of the Year feature demands *la crème de la crème*, so filtering is required. This meant that some fine recordings which I've admired and greatly enjoyed during the year have just been edged out of the final reckoning. These include Robin Ticciati's excellent Brahms symphony cycle with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Linn) and the fourth and final Schubert song recital by Ian Bostridge and Julius Drake (Wigmore Hall Live). Though not a new recording, the superb remastering to BD-A of William Steinberg's very fine recordings of Holst's *Planets* and Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* should not be overlooked (DG). Nor should Jean-Rodolphe Kars' awe-inspiring 1976 live traversal of Messiaen's *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant Jésus* (Piano Classics). Agonisingly close to the final list came the latest instalment of John Neschling's Respighi series, not least for the spectacular account of *Vetrata di chiesa* (BIS). My six choices all seem to me to be, in their very different ways, outstanding releases.

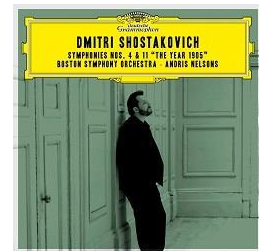


**Pavel CHESNOKOV** *Teach Me Thy Statutes* - PaTRAM Institute Male Choir/Vladimir Gorbik rec. 2016 **REFERENCE RECORDINGS FR-727 SACD**

This disc was a revelation. This survey of some of Chesnokov's liturgical compositions for the Russian Orthodox Church contains music of great beauty and no little profundity. The performances by this Russian-American choir are superb in every way and the engineering matches the quality of the singing. In my original review I described this disc as "quite simply a stunner" and I haven't changed that view. [Full Review](#)

**Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH** *Symphonies 4 & 11* - Boston SO/Andris Nelsons rec. 2017/18 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 4835220**

Nelsons' Shostakovich cycle is evolving as a considerable achievement and this latest instalment is, in many ways, the best to date. The Fourth is a magnificent work, though not easy to grasp. This Boston recording, superbly played and engineered, is in a class of its own. The often-maligned Eleventh fares equally well. Nelsons unfolds the drama in a gripping fashion and the BSO deliver the music with fervour and finesse. [Full Review](#)



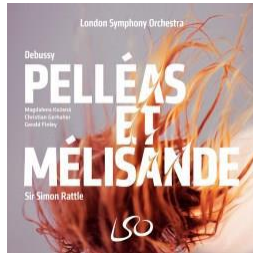
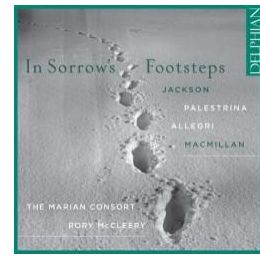
**Josef SUK** *Asrael* Iša KREJČI Serenata – Südwestfunk O Baden-Baden/Karel Ančerl rec. 1967 **SWR CLASSIC SWR19055CD**

*Asrael* is one of the great Czech symphonies and it's something of a mystery that Karel Ančerl was never invited to make a commercial recording of it. That makes this 1967 performance, recorded by a German radio station, all the more valuable. Ančerl conducts compellingly and the orchestra, who I bet were playing the work for the first time, respond with splendid and committed

playing. The sound is impressive for its age. This magnificent performance joins the pantheon of the outstanding versions of this great Czech symphony. [Full Review](#)

**In Sorrow's Footsteps** The Marian Consort/Rory McCleery rec. 2018  
**DELPHIAN DCD34215**

This disc celebrates The Marian Consort's tenth anniversary. The programme mixes Italian Renaissance polyphony and two contemporary British works, including the first recording of Gabriel Jackson's eloquent and challenging *Stabat Mater*, written for the Consort. The singing is flawless throughout the programme and the engineering is exemplary. This is an outstanding disc in every way. [Full Review](#)



**Claude DEBUSSY** *Pelléas et Mélisande* - Gerald Finley, Christian Gerhaher, Magdalena Kožená, London SO & Ch/Sir Simon Rattle rec. 2016 **LSO LIVE LSO0790 SACD/BD-A**

Several factors make this a compelling account of Debussy's opera. One is the towering performance of Gerald Finley as Golaud. He seems to encompass every facet of the character and his singing *per se* is outstanding. Another is the magnificent realisation of the orchestral canvass by the LSO who produce playing of the utmost sensitivity and sophistication. The score is conducted with perception and understanding by Simon Rattle. This superb set is a major addition to the discography of Debussy's great opera. [Full Review](#)

**John ADAMS** *The John Adams Edition* Berliner Philharmoniker/John Adams, Alan Gilbert, Gustavo Dudamel, Kirill Petrenko, Sir Simon Rattle rec. 2016/17  
**BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER RECORDINGS BPHR170141 CD/BD-A**

This lavish set from the Berliner Philharmoniker's own label contains performances of several major Adams scores directed by several conductors, including Sir Simon Rattle and the composer himself. All the performances were given when Adams was the orchestra's composer in residence during the 2016/17 season, during the course of which his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday occurred. It's a sumptuous tribute to Adams. The performances are uniformly out of the top drawer and the presentation of the set is up to the label's usual exceptional standard. [Full Review](#)



## MARC ROCHESTER

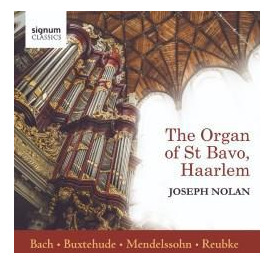


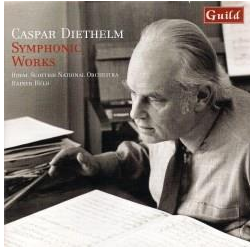
**Johann Sebastian BACH, Johann Christian BACH & Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH** Magnificats - Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen rec. 2015 **HYPERION CDA68157**

Bach comes at the top of my list for 2018. And not just JS, but JC and CPE as well, all of whom wrote settings of the *Magnificat* which Jonathan Cohen cleverly put together on this vivid CD from Hyperion with his excellent choral group Arcangelo, and a choice selection of superlative soloists. [Full Review](#)

**The Organ of St Bavo, Haarlem** Works by Bach, Buxtehude, Mendelssohn & Reubke - Joseph Nolan (organ) rec. 2017 **SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD546**

If for nothing else, 2018 will lodge in my memory as a year of exceptional organ recordings. I could have filled this space several times over with organ discs, but one stood out head and shoulders above the others. I described Joseph Nolan's Bach-themed recital on the famous organ of St Bavo, Haarlem in the Netherlands as the Organ Disc of the Decade – and I suspect I will be proved right. [Full Review](#)



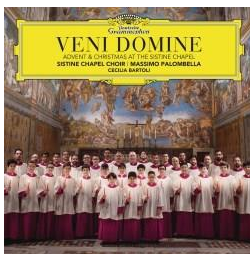


**Caspar DIETHELM** Symphonies 1 & 3-5, Symphonic Suite & Prologue - Royal Scottish Ntl O/Rainer Held rec. 2016 **GUILD GM3CD7808**

My discovery of the year was the symphonies of Caspar Diethelm. As I wrote in my original review, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra's "superlative playing", Rainer Held's "perceptive, compelling" conducting and Michael Ponder's "sumptuous recording" should all be enough to convince anyone that Diethelm was a major figure in late 20<sup>th</sup> century Swiss music. [Full Review](#)

**Sergei PROKOFIEV** Cantata for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the October Revolution - Ernst Senff Ch Berlin, Staatskapelle Weimar/Kirill Karabits rec. 2017 **AUDITE 97.754**

The disc which made the biggest impact on me (and, I regret to say, my near neighbours) was a shattering recording of Prokofiev's rarely-heard *Cantata for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the October Revolution*. Dramatic doesn't go close to describing this astonishing musical depiction of one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most terrible revolutions. [Full Review](#)



**Veni Domine** Cecilia Bartoli, Sistine Chapel Ch/Massimo Palombella rec. 2017 **DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 7524**

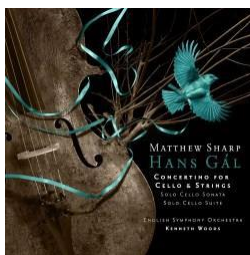
After all that violence, horror and despair, what better than to think of Christmas in the company of Cecilia Bartoli and the Sistine Chapel Choir. The choir may have been in the headlines this year for less savoury reasons, but in their magical recording from the chapel itself, they exude nothing but peace and beauty. [Full Review](#)

**100 Years of Nine Lessons & Carols** King's College Chapel Ch, Cambridge/David Willcocks, Philip Ledger, Stephen Cleobury rec. 1958-2018 **KING'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE KGS0033**

And what is Christmas without the Choir of King's College Chapel, Cambridge? 2018 is the centenary of the annual service of Nine Lessons and Carols, and to mark the event, King's own label has recorded a disc of carols and packaged it along with recordings mined from the BBC archives of recordings of the service dating back to the 1950s. For me and many others like me, this is a Christmas gift of truly historic value. [Full Review](#)



## BOB STEVENSON



**Hans GÁL** Concertino for cello, Sonata for solo cello, Suite for solo cello - Matthew Sharp, English SO/ Kenneth Woods rec. 2017 **AVIE AV2380**

Strikingly successful performances of some unjustly neglected but very approachable music in vivid and immediate recordings. The present CD provides us with two solo cello works that are already available on Toccata Classics. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that this duplication of recordings of some of Gál's works marks the beginning of a "bandwagon effect" that will

help to stimulate further interest in his music. If nothing else I should like to see the generosity and significant effort expended to make this disc suitably rewarded. [Full Review](#)

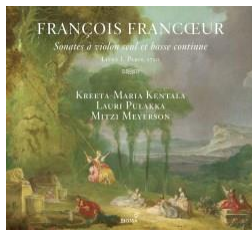
**Paul PATTERSON, Kenneth LEIGHTON & Gordon JACOB** Violin concertos - Clare Howick, BBC Scottish SO/Grant Llewellyn rec. 2017 **NAXOS 8.573791**

Clare Howick seems to have carved out something of a niche for herself as being a go-to violinist for neglected British violin music and this very well received disc is something of a showcase for her. It has the virtues of excellent and well-judged performances, a decent recording and budget price and it usefully plugs



gaps in the catalogue with three world premiere commercial recordings of concertos by English composers that deserve to be better known. What's not to like? [Full Review](#)

## JOHAN VAN VEEN

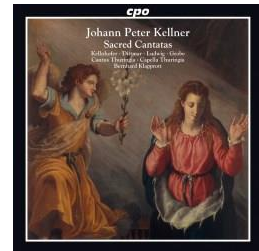


**François FRANCOEUR** *Sonates à violon seul et basse continue, Livre I* - Kreetamaria Kentala, Lauri Pulakka, Mitzi Meyerson rec. 2018 **GLOSSA GCD921809**

Francoeur has become best known for his activities in the field of opera. These ten sonatas are brilliant pieces which show the influence of the Italian style. The three artists deliver outstanding performances which make a lasting impression. [Full Review](#)

**Johann Peter KELLNER** *Sacred Cantatas - Cantus & Capella Thuringia/Bernhard Klapprott* rec. 2015 **CPO 555 159-2**

This disc reveals the remarkable qualities of the cantatas by a little-known composer from 18th-century Germany. The fact that the concertante organ parts are performed at the organ the composer himself had played for many years, lends this disc a good deal of authenticity. [Full Review](#)

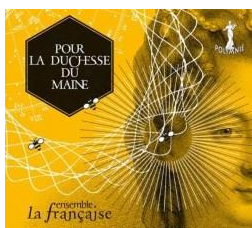
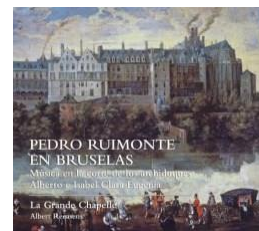


**Tobias MICHAEL** *Musicalische Seelenlust - Weser-Renaissance Bremen*/Manfred Cordes rec. 2014 **CPO 777 935-2**

Michael is a little-known contemporary of Heinrich Schütz who nowadays receives the attention he deserves. The motets from the collection *Musicalische Seelenlust* are of fine quality and receive the best possible performance in this recording of Weser-Renaissance Bremen. [Full Review](#)

**Pedro Ruimonte en Bruselas** La Grande Chapelle/Albert Recasens rec. 2017 **LAUDA LAU017**

I have heard quite a number of recordings by La Grande Chapelle, and without exception they were of the highest quality. That is the case here as well. This is a pretty much ideal combination: little-known music of fine quality, put into its historical perspective, which receives outstanding performances. The production is exemplary. [Full Review](#)

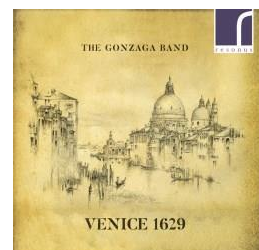


**Pour la Duchesse du Maine** Works by Bernier, Bourgeois & Mouret - Ensemble La Française rec. 2017 **POLYMNIE POL503134**

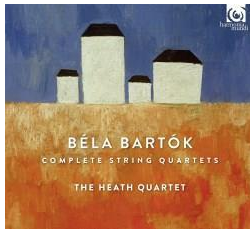
This is by far the best disc with French cantatas that I have heard in recent years. Marie Remandet is simply brilliant in her portraying of the two tragic characters in the respective cantatas. The fact that the composers are little known is a further argument for this disc. [Full Review](#)

**Venice 1629** The Gonzaga Band/Jamie Savan rec. 2018 **RESONUS CLASSICS RES10218**

Soprano Faye Newton's performances are among the best I have heard in this kind of music recently. The playing of the instruments is quite impressive, both technically and stylistically. The members of The Gonzaga Band also deserve applause for their choice of music and the way they have put together the programme. [Full Review](#)



## MICHAEL WILKINSON

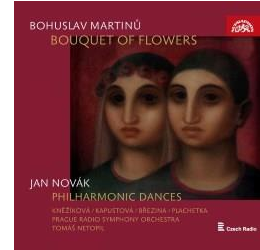


**Béla BARTÓK** Complete String Quartets - Heath Qt rec. 2016 **HARMONIA MUNDI HMM907661.62**

These performances stand with the very best; thoughtful, humane and - as great quartet playing should be - conversational, both warm and dramatic, capturing Bartók's extraordinary range of moods. Wonderful playing from the remarkable Heath Quartet. [Full Review](#)

**Bohuslav MARTINŮ** *Bouquet of Flowers* **Jan NOVÁK** Philharmonic Dances - Prague Philharmonic Ch, Prague RSO/Tomáš Netopil rec. 2016/17 **SUPRAPHON SU4220-2**

An outstanding release of beautiful and immediately attractive music – and something of a hidden gem. [Full Review](#)



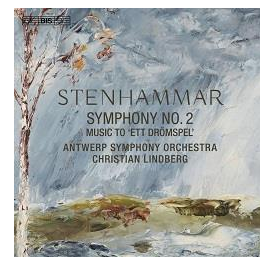
**Årstiderne** Danish National Vocal Ensemble rec. 2018 **OUR RECORDINGS 8.226911**

A wonderful example of the Danish tradition of small-group choral singing, wonderfully sung and certain to please through repeated hearings. [Full Review](#)

**SACD**

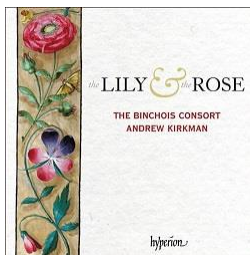
Stenhammar is too little played outside Sweden, and this magnificent recording – the best I have heard – of his finest symphony should go far to redress the balance. [Full Review](#)

**Wilhelm STENHAMMAR** Symphony 2, *Ett Drömspel* - Antwerp SO/Christian Lindberg rec. 2017 **BIS BIS2329**



**BRIAN WILSON**

My original impression was that I had reviewed a considerable number of very good recordings this year, but very few outstanding ones. Then I discovered how many choices I had and how many I needed to leave out: regrettably no room for any twentieth-century British music from Chandos, Hyperion, Onyx, Signum or Lyrita.

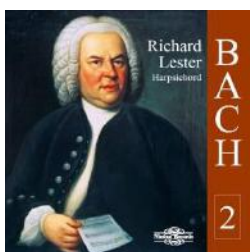
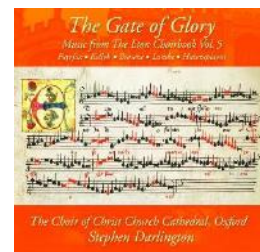


**The Lily and the Rose** The Binchois Consort/Andrew Kirkman rec. 2017 **HYPERION CDA68228**

Two recordings of early music are among the stand-outs: *The Lily and the Rose* offers a collection of Fifteenth Century music in honour of the Virgin Mary, splendidly sung by the Binchois Consort and Andrew Kirkman and beautifully presented by Hyperion. [Full Review](#)

**The Gate of Glory** Ch Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, Stephen Darlington rec. 2017 **AVIE AV2376**

*The Gate of Glory* is the fifth volume of recordings from the Eton Choirbook from Christ Church Choir, Oxford, directed by Stephen Darlington. It's the best in this very fine series from Avie. [Full Review](#)

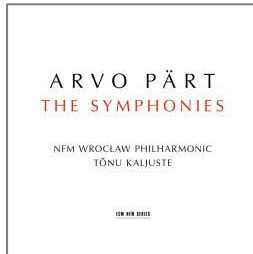


**Johann Sebastian BACH** Works for Harpsichord Vol. 2 - Richard Lester rec. 2017 **NIMBUS NI5948/9**

Lots of Bach goodies this year. I regrettably set aside a recording of his Dialogue Cantatas (Harmonia Mundi), the latest releases in David Goode's series of organ recordings (Signum) and a 3-CD set from rising Russian organist Konstantin Volostnov (Melodiya) in favour of the second volume of Richard Lester's keyboard recordings. [Full Review](#)

**Antonio VIVALDI** *Le Quattro Stagioni* - Brecon Baroque/Rachel Podger (violin)  
rec. 2017 **CHANNEL CLASSICS CCSSA40318 SACD**

However many recordings you have of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Rachel Podger with Brecon Baroque is essential. Only the failure to include the whole Op.8 disappoints and that's offered by my previous favourite from L'Arte dell'Arco on Brilliant Classics, a wonderful bargain. Buy them both. [Full Review](#)



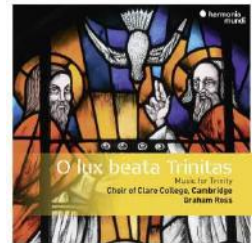
**Arvo PÄRT** Symphonies 1-4 - NFM Wrocław PO/Tõnu Kaljuste rec. 2015/16  
**ECM NEW SERIES 2600**

Arvo Pärt's four symphonies make their first appearance on one album in very fine performances from NFM Wrocław Philharmonic and Tõnu Kaljuste. Persevere with the challenging First for the sake of its ethereal successors. [Full Review](#)

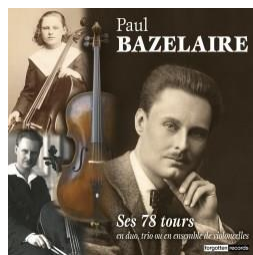
**O lux beata Trinitas** Ch Clare College

Cambridge/Graham Ross rec. 2017 **HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902270**

Clare College Cambridge and Graham Ross ended their series of recordings of music for the liturgical year with *Lux Beata Trinitas* for Trinity Sunday. My choice is actually for the whole series of nine CDs, so be prepared to max out on your credit cards. [Full Review](#)



## JONATHAN WOOLF



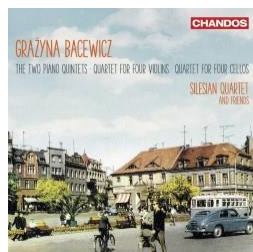
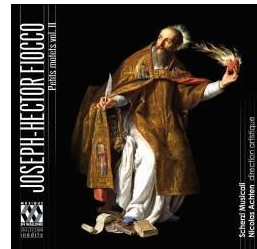
**Paul Bazelaire** *Ses 78 tours* rec. 1929-51 **FORGOTTEN RECORDS FR1202/3**

2018 got off to the best of starts for me with a twofer devoted to French cellist Paul Bazelaire, in many ways still the go-to man for any recording of Saint-Saëns's Cello Sonata, Op.32. All his 78s are here, including ones where he directed a cello ensemble. Accompanied by a beautifully produced booklet, this is a touching and artistically elevated restoration. [Full Review](#)

**Joseph-Hector FIOCCO** Petits Motets Vol. 2 - Scherzi

Musicali/Nicolas Achten rec. 2016 **MUSIQUE EN WALLONIE MEW1682**

Gone are the days when Fiocco meant 'Allegro', that zesty sonata movement dusted down by fiddlers of yore. Now Fiocco is represented by large-scale works such as the motets in MEW's second volume of a series that reveals how subtle and invigorating his music is, not least when played and sung as convincingly as here. Another outstanding presentation too. [Full Review](#)



**Grażyna BACEWICZ** Piano Quintets 1 & 2, Quartet for four violins, Quartet for four cellos - Silesian Qt, Polish Cello Qt, Wojciech Świtała, Szymon Krzeszowiec, Krzysztof Lasoń, Małgorzata Wasiucioneck, Arkadiusz Kubica rec. 2010-17 **CHANDOS CHAN10976**

It's about time I celebrated the Bacewicz series from Chandos. Here the focus falls on her Piano Quartets, meaty and complex works that deserve and demand repeated hearings. No.1 is the more obviously appealing but No.2 has an almost heroic independence that earns nothing but respect. All this and the quirky Quartets for violins and cellos. The Silesian Quartet are masters of this repertoire. [Full Review](#)



**Carlo Zecchi** *The Complete Cetra Recordings & selected additional 78s rec.* 1930-42 **APR 6024**

I knew about Zecchi but had not quite believed that he was as mesmerizing a performer as demonstrated on these well-filled discs. These celebrate Zecchi the pianist not the conductor and he emerges as a musician who conjoins panache and poetry in the most appealing – and virtuosic – way. APR's transfers and notes are customarily high-end and there are two very rare 1930 Russian recordings to be heard. [Full Review](#)




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**LESLIE WRIGHT**

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This year I have selected three recordings that were reviewed by others and three from my own reviews. The following worthy discs did not quite make the cut: Berio *Rendering* (accompanying the Schubert Ninth Symphony) (Rubicon), Kodály *Orchestral Works* with Buffalo Philharmonic/Falletta (Naxos), Debussy, Ravel, and Dutilleux string quartets performed by Quatuor Hermès (La Dolce Volta), and Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 5* with NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra/Urbański (Alpha). Surprisingly, all of the works I have included were composed in the twentieth century or later.

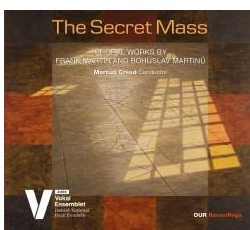
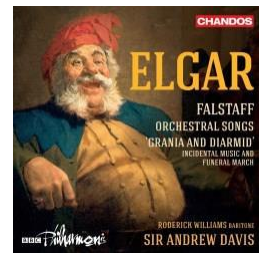


**John ADAMS** *The John Adams Edition* Berliner Philharmoniker/John Adams, Alan Gilbert, Gustavo Dudamel, Kirill Petrenko, Sir Simon Rattle rec. 2016/17 **BERLINER PHILHARMONIKER RECORDINGS BPHR170141 CD/BD-A**

To celebrate John Adams' year as composer-in-residence the Berlin Philharmonic's house label issued this magnificent set of CDs and video Blu-rays that include among other works *Harmonielehre* with the composer conducting and *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle. In every way this is a deluxe production and an important addition to the Adams discography. [Full Review](#)

**Sir Edward ELGAR** *Falstaff, Orchestral songs, Grania and Diarmid - Roderick Williams, BBC Philharmonic/Sir Andrew Davis rec.* 2017 **CHANDOS CHSA5188 SACD**

A winning performance of Elgar's orchestral masterpiece that more than ever displays the composer's creative genius in both vivid characterization and orchestral wizardry. As a bonus the disc includes a half dozen delightful songs for baritone and orchestra, splendidly sung by Roderick Williams. [Full Review](#)

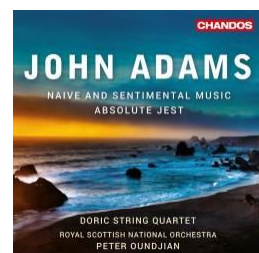


**Frank MARTIN** *Mass, Songs of Ariel Bohuslav MARTINŮ* *Ctyri pisne o Marii, Romance z pampelišek* - Danish National Vocal Ensemble/Marcus Creed rec. 2017 **OUR RECORDINGS SACD 6.220671**

It was more than a clever idea to combine choral works containing both sacred and secular texts of these two exact contemporaries. Highlighted by Martin's wonderful Mass, this music is given perfectly pitched and wonderfully blended performances, as one has come to expect from Marcus Creed and his Danish choir. [Full Review](#)

**John ADAMS** *Absolute Jest, Naive and Sentimental Music* - Sean Shibe, Doric String Qt, Royal Scottish Ntl O/Peter Oundjian rec. 2017 **CHANDOS SACD CHSA5199**

These are only the second recorded accounts of two of Adams' most characteristic works and ones that repay repeated listening. It is no small feat that they equal their illustrious predecessors as performances and exceed them in the stunning sound of the SACD recording. [Full Review](#)





**Leoš JANÁČEK** Glagolitic Mass, Sinfonietta, Taras Bulba, The Fiddler's Child - Prague Philharmonic Ch, Czech Philharmonic/Jiří Bělohlávek rec. 2013-17 **DECCA 4834080**

It would be hard to imagine a more fitting tribute to Jiří Bělohlávek conducting his beloved Czech Philharmonic in some of his last performances in music that is clearly in his blood. This is his first commercial recording of the great *Glagolitic Mass* and outstanding remakes of some of Janáček's best orchestral pieces that supplant the conductor's earlier accounts in every way. [Full Review](#)

**Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH** Piano Trio No. 2 **Lera AUERBACH** Piano Trios 1 & 2 - Delta Piano Trio rec. 2017 **ODRADEK ODRCD350**

An enterprising disc that introduced me to the music of Lera Auerbach whose piano trios are most impressive. In addition, the Delta Piano Trio contributes a performance of Shostakovich's famous Trio No. 2 that challenges the best of previous recordings. I shall be returning to this disc with some frequency for the pieces, but also just to enjoy the terrific playing of this young trio. [Full Review](#)



Compiled by David Barker