

**Second Thoughts and Short Reviews: Spring 2017: Part 2**  
**by Dan Morgan and Brian Wilson**

Reviews are by Brian Wilson apart from those signed [DM]

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**Spring-themed music:**

**BACH (CPE)** *Der Frühling*  
**BEETHOVEN** 'Spring' Sonata  
**COPLAND** Appalachian Spring  
**DEBUSSY** *Printemps*  
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**VIVALDI** The Seasons

**Albert Ayler Quartet** Copenhagen Live 1964\_HatHut

Pride of place in a Spring round-up goes to evocations of the season, though it's more like Winter in South London as I write.

**Antonio VIVALDI** seems an obvious place to start – please see my [review](#) of a recent super-budget twofer of the whole of Op.8 performed by Il Cimento dell'Armonia on Brilliant Classics **95045**. Like **Igor STRAVINSKY's** *Rite of Spring*, however, that seems too obvious, except that the *Rite* has appeared recently in a vital recording from Les Siècles on period instruments – [review](#) – [DL News 2014/9](#).

I'm going to cop out on **Josef HAYDN's** *Seasons*, which I don't rate nearly as highly as his wonderful *Creation* and I still have to make up my mind about the latest recording of **Gustav MAHLER's** *Das Lied von der Erde* with Jonas Kaufmann singing all the songs (perhaps too reminiscent of a drunken Mr Cherry Owen singing "'Bread of Heaven' tenor and bass" in *Under Milk Wood*). Meanwhile Janet Baker and James King with the Concertgebouw and Bernard Haitink are hard to beat (Philips Duo, budget price twofer, download only, with other Mahler songs sung by Jessye Norman – [review](#) of former Eloquence reissue).

There are more than 130 recordings of **Ludwig van BEETHOVEN's** 'Spring' Sonata for violin and piano. Among recent recordings Renaud Capuçon and Frank Braley have been consistently highly rated (Complete sonatas 1-10, Erato **6420010**, 3 CDs around £18: [Recording of the Month](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)).

**Franz SCHUBERT's** song *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* (the shepherd on the rock), D965, is full of the joy of Spring. There's a fine performance from Ailish Tynan (soprano), Michael Martineau (piano) and Michael Collins (clarinet) on the Wigmore Hall label, coupled with an attractive account of the Octet (**CDWHL0017** [73:50] – [DL Roundup April 2012/2](#). I wouldn't, however, wish to be without the collection of Schubert songs, mostly well-known, on which Christa Ludwig performs it with Geoffrey Parsons and Gervase de Peyer – [review](#). That's download only now – [Presto](#) have it – or as part of a Warner 5-CD set at budget price (**5176082**).

Arleen Auger was not on top form when she recorded one of the volumes in the Hyperion series of Schubert Lieder, though her performance of *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* which ends the programme is much more amenable – [DL Roundup January 2010](#). She's well accompanied throughout by Graham Johnson, with Thea King additionally in *Der Hirt*. The Classics for Pleasure recording with Margaret Price which I liked seems to have vanished without trace, even as a download or for streaming.



**Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH's** (1714-1788) Cantata *Der Frühling* (Spring, H688, Wq237) is the first item on a recent Alpha release where it's coupled with other vocal and instrumental items: Trio Sonata for viola da gamba and continuo, Wq156; Three Arias for tenor, Wq211, H669; Trio Sonata in B-flat, Wq158, H584; *Fürsten sind am Lebensziele*, Wq214, H761; *Selma*, Wq236, H739; and Harpsichord Sonatina in d minor, Wq104, H463 performed by Rupert Charlesworth (tenor) and Café Zimmermann. (Alpha **257** [63:58] – reviewed as press preview and as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#)).



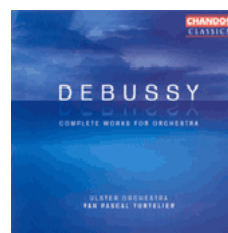
**Aaron COPLAND's** *Appalachian Spring* is a rather obvious choice, too, but let me recommend obtaining a recording of the whole ballet, not just the usual suite. Michael Tilson Thomas with the SFSO would do very nicely for that, even though both RCA releases, each with *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*, are now download only – [review](#). The appeal of Leonard Slatkin's fine Detroit recording on Naxos is diminished by its coupling with the less appealing *Hear Ye!* (But see Dan Morgan's [review](#) and John Quinn's [review](#)). For the Suite you might consider the Beulah reissue of Antal Doráti's 1961 recording (**3PDR1**, with Roy Harris Symphony No.3, etc. - [DL News 2015/2](#)).

Among the many (140+) recordings of **Robert SCHUMANN**'s Symphony No.1 ('Spring') my heart is still with Josef Krips' wonderful 1956 version with the LSO. I make no apologies for preferring this account, which I first owned on a 10" LP and then on a mid-price reissue with an equally first-rate version of No.4. Both are available now on an Australian Decca Eloquence 2-CD set with Brahms' Symphonies Nos.1 and 4 (**4804325**). Of course there's a danger in harking back to older recordings but they are sometimes still the best, as in the case of my Debussy recommendation. For alternative versions, including Robin Ticciati in all the Schumann symphonies (Linn, attractively priced) please see [Download News 2014/11](#).

**Claude DEBUSSY**'s *Printemps*, originally composed for two pianos, is usually heard in the orchestral arrangement by Henri Busser. Ernest Ansermet's mono 1950s recording on Naxos Classical Archives is simply too thin and dated and though Stéphane Denève's 2-SACD set of Debussy's orchestral music for Chandos is otherwise very good indeed: **Recording of the Month** – [review](#) – [review](#) – and a dissenting [review](#) – even his account of *Printemps* can't quite match the exuberance of the classic recording made by Charles Munch in Boston from which I got to know the work on RCA Victrola – now download only or in a 25-disc, 60-disc or 86-disc collection. Subscribers to [Naxos Music Library](#) can stream the coupling with *la Mer*, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, *Nuages*, *Fêtes* and *Escales* (Ports of call). The 1956 recording still sounds fine, hardly outclassed by the 24-bit Chandos.



Yan Pascal Tortelier on an earlier Chandos release is only very slightly let down by the playing of the Ulster Orchestra from challenging Munch. The single album, with *La Mer* and an orchestral arrangement of Ravel's Piano Trio is now download only – some hopeful person is asking £39.89 for the CD on Amazon UK – but the contents are included in a budget-price 4-CD set of the Debussy orchestral works for around £22 (**CHAN10144X** – [DL Roundup May 2011/2](#)).



My principal Spring choice, however, comes from a 2011 release:

### **English Spring**

**Arnold BAX (1883-1953)** Spring Fire [32:32]

**FREDERICK DELIUS (1862-1934)** *Idylle de Printemps* [10:45]

North Country Sketches: The March of Spring [10:08]

**FRANK BRIDGE (1879-1941)** Enter Spring [20:50]

Hallé/Sir Mark Elder – rec. 2010.

**HALLÉ CDHLL7528** [74:15] Reviewed as 24/44.1 download with pdf booklet from

[hyperion-records.co.uk](#). For full details see reviews by [John Quinn](#) and [Rob Barnett](#) (**Recording of the Month**) and [Download Roundup August 2011/1](#) (**Download of the Month**).



My main reason for returning to this recording is that whereas my previous review was of an mp3 download from classicsonline.com, who are no longer in business, at least *pro tem*, the whole Hallé catalogue is now available as lossless downloads, many of them, like this, in 24-bit as well as 16-bit, very reasonably priced at £7.99 and £9.00 respectively, from [Hyperion](#). MWI no longer sell Hallé CDs but you can obtain a discount by following this [link](#) and quoting the code MusicWeb10. I'm very pleased to return to this very fine recording in superior sound and complete with the booklet.

A natural follow-up might seem to be the same team in their evocation of **English Landscapes**, music taking us neatly from Spring to Summer: **Bax** (*Tintagel*), **Vaughan Williams** (*Lark Ascending*; *Norfolk Rhapsody 1*), **Finzi** (*Fall of the Leaf*), **Delius** (*Summer Night on the River*; *The first Cuckoo in Spring*), **Elgar** (*As Torrents in Summer*) and **Ireland** (*The Hills*). **CDHLL7512** – from [hyperion.records.co.uk](#) (16-bit only). I say 'might seem' because like Em Marshall – [review](#) – I found this to be a rare disappointment: for alternatives see [DL News 2016/2](#). At the time I thought the problem might lie

with the low-bit mp3 version from emusic.com, so I tried the lossless from Hyperion but was no more impressed.

The Hallé and Elder in **Delius** (*Irmelin* Prelude; Walk to the Paradise Garden, Brigg Fair), **Butterworth** (Shropshire Lad, Idylls, Banks of Green Willow) and **Grainger** (Brigg Fair) on *English Rhapsody* (CDHLL7503) are much more recommendable: I've already sung the praises of this recording in mp3 format from classicsonline.com, who are – let's hope temporarily – out of action: [DL Roundup March 2010](#). The Hyperion download comes in lossless sound (16-bit only) and with the pdf booklet for the same price as the COL mp3 seven years ago (£7.99). The difference in sound won't have you running out into the street shouting *eureka* – strictly that should be *heurēka*, the perfect of *heuriskō* – but it is a significant improvement.



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*Son of England* – music by **Henry PURCELL** and **Jeremiah CLARKE** (Alpha 285) which I reviewed in [Part 1](#) is now available as a download, 16- or 24-bit, with pdf booklet, from [eclassical.com](#) and can be streamed by subscribers from [Naxos Music Library](#).

*Tales of Sound and Fury* is a catch-all title for music by **Heinrich BIBER (1644-1704)** – his representation of War in *La Battalia*, C61 [10:50] and *Sonata representativa*, C146 [10:54] – and **Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)** – *Ouverture Burlesque de Don Quichotte*, TWV55:G10 [14:53] – plus some shorter pieces, including improvisations. Karin Dahlberg (soprano) and Camerata Nordica are directed by Terje Tønnesen (violin) on **BIS-SACD-2256** [60:33]. Reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



Biber was *the* avant-garde exponent of all time – forget John Cage and Luciano Berio – with weird *scordatura* tunings even in his sacred sonatas on the rosary. The *Sonata representativa* contains a variety of bird and animal sounds and *La Battalia* does what it says on the tin in reproducing the maddening sounds of war with drunkenness thrown in. The performances here of arrangements by Mikhel Kerem and Terje Tønnesen are even more unbuttoned than others, with two English songs about Bedlam thrown in and the programme rounded off with Telemann's burlesque ballet about Don Quixote. Purists who think that David Munrow was profligate in his use of instrumentation for music of this period should stay clear: they probably won't appreciate the use of the tárogató, the gardon or the nyckelharpa. I could have done without the narrator telling me what was being represented in the *Sonata representativa* – it's inherent in the music – but overall I enjoyed this.

Those seeking a rather more conventional but still very enjoyable performance of the Sonata and *Battalia* will prefer a recording made by the Ricercar Consort entitled *Imitatio* (Mirare **MIR302**) which I reviewed in [DL News 2016/2](#) and on which the Sonata is attributed not to Biber but to Schmelzer (*not* Kerll as stated there. The BIS booklet mentions the Schmelzer attribution but also gives valid reasons for Biber's possible authorship). Would-be Biber completists should turn to Romanesca's Harmonia Mundi 2-CD set of his secular and religious sonatas (**HMG507344/45**, download only but at super-budget price from [Amazon UK](#) or [Presto](#)).

There's another recording of the *Don Quichotte* ballet on a wonderful all-**TELEMANN** release from Alpha: *Le Théâtre Musical de Telemann* Overture (Suite) in A, TWV 55:A1 [14:57]  
Overture (Suite) in B flat for strings and continuo: 'Völker-Ouverture' (*Ouverture des Nations*), TWV 55:B5 [21:28]  
*Concerto polonois* in G for strings and continuo, TWV43:G7 [8:56]



Overture (Suite) in G for strings and continuo: 'Burlesque de Don Quixotte', TWV 55:G10 [21:29]

Ensemble Masques/Olivier Fortin

rec. Église De Suin, France, 25-27 June 2016. DDD.

**ALPHA 256** [66:54] Reviewed from press preview from Outhere Music and as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eClassical.com](http://eClassical.com). CD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) – [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic) – [Presto](http://Presto)

Telemann's music is hardly neglected, though some of the music here is among his least-known. The opening Suite in A *major*, for example, of which this seems to be the sole recording, must not be confused with the very familiar Suite in a *minor*. Nor should the *Concerto polonais* be confused with other Polish-influenced Telemann works, including the wonderful Concerto in e minor for flute, recorder, strings and continuo, TWV52:e3. (Chandos **CHAN0661** – [Download Roundup, May 2011/1](#). TCS links no longer applies: download in mp3, 16- and 24-bit format from [eClassical.com](http://eClassical.com), NO booklet).

## RECORDING OF THE MONTH

**Masaaki Suzuki plays Bach: Volume 2**

**Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)**

Prelude and Fugue in G major, BWV541 [7:15]

Chorale prelude 'Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier', BWV730 [2:13]

Concerto in D minor, BWV596, after Antonio Vivaldi (RV565) [10:39]

Chorale partita on 'Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig' or 'O Jesu, du edle Gabe', BWV768 [19:00]

Concerto in C major, BWV594, after Antonio Vivaldi (RV208) [17:38]

Chorale prelude 'Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier', BWV731 [2:40]

Prelude and Fugue in C major, BWV547 [10:10]

Masaaki Suzuki (organ)

rec. January 2016, Shoin Women's University Chapel, Kobe, Japan

Pdf booklet included

**BIS BIS-2241 SACD** [70:47] – from [eClassical](http://eClassical) (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless) For CD purchase details please see [review](#) by Des Hutchinson.



In the sign-off to my [review](#) of the first instalment in this series, I declared this 'the kind of musicianship that changes minds'. I suppose it was a perfect storm – that rare combination of a fine organist, a splendid instrument and a top-notch recording. Given such a precedent, and despite the fact that this isn't my normal fare, I wasted no time in downloading this well-filled follow-up. Suzuki plays the Marc Garnier organ of Shoin Chapel, Kobe, which is new to me.

Does this album live up to expectations? From the fleet-footed start to the Prelude of BWV541 it's clear that we're in the hands of a master. The fluidity of Suzuki's playing – not to mention its ebullience – is a joy to hear, and I marvelled anew at his ability to separate Bach's complex inner voices and deliver them with such ease and clarity. He's equally adept in the quieter pieces, such as the Chorale prelude 'Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier'. This really is most beautiful, the registrations perfectly chosen and the recording as crisp and clear as one could wish.

There's delicacy too – the first variation of BWV768 – and, as ever, Suzuki shapes and phrases the music in a way that adds real lift and life. What a revelation that is, after all the po-faced organ recitals I've had to endure in the past. And if it's detail you want, then the third variation of BWV768 will have you beaming from ear to ear. And all the remarkable qualities I've highlighted here come together in a spirit-renewing performance of the Concerto in C major, BWV548. What a lovely recording, too, but then I'd expect nothing less from Take5's Hans Kipfer, who must be one of the finest audio engineers around.

Bach redux; not to be missed. [DM]

### Richard WAGNER (1812-1883)

*Der fliegende Holländer*: Overture (1841/1852) [11:49]

*Rienzi*: Overture (1840-1843) [13:02]

*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*: Prelude (1867) [11:20]

*Tannhäuser*: Overture (1845/1861) [15:20]

*Lohengrin*: Prelude to Act 3 (1847) [3:18]

*Tristan und Isolde* (1859) [20:14]

I. Prelude [13:07]

II. Liebestod [7:07]

Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra/Yakov Kreizberg

rec. details not given

Pdf booklet included

**PENTATONE PTC5186041 SACD** [75:15] – from [NativeDSD](#) (DSD64 stereo & multi-channel). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



I've only recently become acquainted with the work of Yakov Kreizberg, the Russian-born conductor who died in 2011 at the age of 51. It's been something of a revelation, his [Strauss Waltzes](#) and [Bruckner 7](#) uncommonly insightful and authoritative. The Pentatone downloads (DSD64) are top-notch, too. The orchestra in those two recordings is the Wiener Symphoniker, of which he was principal guest conductor from 2003 to 2009. This Wagner collection features the Netherlands Philharmonic, formed in 1985; Kreizberg was their chief conductor and artistic director from 2003 to 2011.

This album starts with an urgent, intensely dramatic account of the overture to *Der fliegende Holländer*; goodness, time and tide wait for no man, corporeal or otherwise. Equally impressive is the curtain-raiser to *Rienzi*, which gets a very robust outing here. Concentration seems to slip a little in the *Meistersinger* prelude – admittedly, [Georg Szell](#), in his legendary CBS-Sony set, is hard to beat – only to return in the mix of pomp and piety that is the overture to *Tannhäuser*. As always, these are thoughtful, well-crafted performances, with a real sense of theatre. And while this Dutch band are no match for their Austrian counterparts, they play with commendable passion throughout.

The Act 3 prelude from *Lohengrin* is attractive enough and the *Tristan* pieces seem more luminous than usual. Those game-changing harmonies sound as remarkable as ever, but for all the loveliness on show I'd have liked a little more of the erotic charge that others find here – Szell especially. Quibbles aside, this is a generally recommendable collection; it certainly appeals to me a lot more than the Pentatone set from [Marek Janowski](#). And if you're looking for some full-blooded *Ring* excerpts to add to the many you already own, do try [Gustavo Dudamel](#) and his grown-up Bolívars on Deutsche Grammophon. Skip their *Tristan*, tacked on at the end, as it's pretty dismal.

Not Kreizberg at his best, but still worth a try; good sound from the Polyhymnia team. [DM]

### Richard WAGNER (1813-1883)

*Die Walküre*, Opera in three acts, WWV86B

Stuart Skelton (tenor, Siegmund); Heidi Melton (soprano, Sieglinde); Falk Struckmann (bass-baritone, Hunding); Matthias Goerne (baritone, Wotan); Petra Lang (soprano, Brünnhilde); Michelle DeYoung (mezzo, Fricka); Sarah Castle (mezzo, Waltraute); Karen Foster (soprano, Gerhilde); Katherine Broderick (soprano, Helmwig); Anna Burford (mezzo, Schwertleite); Elaine McKrill (soprano, Ortlinde); Aurhelia Varak (mezzo, Siegrune); Okka von der Damerau (mezzo, Grimgerde); Laura Nykänen (mezzo, Rossweise)

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra/Jaap van Zweden

rec. live Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall, 21 and 23 January 2016. DTS-HD 24/96 stereo and 5.1 surround.



Libretto not included. German text available [online](#).

**NAXOS NBD0051 Blu-ray Audio** [3:56:18] - from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#). Also available on CD: **8.660394/7** (4 CDs)

This recording has already received its share of well-deserved praise on CD on MWI – [review](#) – [review](#) – and elsewhere.

Despite an initial hiatus in releasing the Blu-ray, thanks to Naxos founder Klaus Heyman and the UK distributor Select I was able to obtain it after a short wait. That's the version to have: not only is the sound quality on Blu-ray audio superior (24/96 stereo and 5.1 surround), it also costs considerably less than the CD set – around £17.50/\$25 as against around £26/\$51.

By chance I have recently been listening to a recording of Wagner 'arias' sung by **Evgeny Nikitin** (bass) with the Liege Philharmonic Orchestra and Christian Arming which concludes with Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire Music (Naive **V5413** or **V902754** – download from [eclassical.com](#), 16- or 24-bit lossless, NO booklet\*). The other items are from *Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin* (with Michaela Schuster), *Tannhäuser* and Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung*. Nikitin sings with wonderful clarity but there isn't much emotion in his performance or in the accompaniment: the latter is particularly disappointing throughout the programme.

Jaap van Zweden on the new Naxos recording tends to take a fairly leisurely approach to the work in general and he certainly doesn't hurry matters in Wotan's Farewell, allowing the full authority of Matthias Goerne's Wotan to shine. Where some Wotans stress the majestic aspects of the character and others his remorse at the fate he must impose on his beloved Brünnhilde, Goerne manages to combine both aspects of the role and he's very well supported and recorded.

Even past her best, not quite secure on the top notes, and rather drily recorded, Kirsten Flagstad remains my benchmark Sieglinde (Decca Eloquence) but Heidi Melton on the new Naxos recording is hardly far behind. She and Stuart Skelton as Siegmund, ably assisted by Falk Struckmann as Hunding bring Act I to life as well as any team that I have heard, including a very fine Act I, recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall in 1991 with René Kollo as Siegmund, Eva-Maria Bundschuh as Sieglinde, John Tomlinson as Hunding; London Philharmonic Orchestra/Klaus Tennstedt: LPO **LPO-0092** [69:41]. Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet containing English libretto but not the German original from [eclassical.com](#). Please see [review](#) and CD purchase details by Paul Steinson.

Though audio only, the Naxos Blu-ray disc can be played via a television, giving the opportunity to select act and track on screen. Played in this way, preferably with a sound-base or -bar, the recording sounds very good but the best results are obtained with the Blu-ray player linked to an audio system. Neither of the Blu-ray players which I have hooked up in this way will play separate tracks beyond track 9 – a nuisance if you want to compare sections of the opera as I did on this occasion – but normally one really shouldn't be playing bleeding chunks.

There's a very recommendable release of the Barenboim *Ring* in lossless sound and mp3 on USB (Warner **2564641265**: review in [DL News 2013/16](#)), but it's with the Solti Blu-ray that comparisons must be made. That still sounds outstandingly good for its age, though some audio enthusiasts have their reservations. The new Naxos recording is in many ways better still in aural terms.

At around £68 the Solti Blu-ray reissue presents a compact and inexpensive way to obtain a complete *Ring*, so compact, in fact, that it stands permanently next to the Blu-ray player in my study. On a single Blu-ray audio disc packaged inside a hardback book of notes and libretti, it remains my benchmark. (Decca **4786748: Recording of the Month** – [review](#). See also [review](#) of earlier *de luxe* presentation.) The purse-proud have the option of the cycle on 17 CDs for less – around £46.

\* The booklet, obtainable by subscribers to [Naxos Music Library](#), contains texts and translations.

**Giuseppe VERDI (1813-1901)**

*Requiem* (1874)

Erika Grimaldi (soprano); Daniela Barcellona (mezzo); Francesco Meli (tenor); Michele Pertusi (bass)

London Symphony Chorus

London Symphony Orchestra/Gianandrea Noseda

rec. live Barbican, London, 18 and 20 September 2016. DDD/DSD.

Texts and translations included.

**LSO LIVE LSO0800 SACD** [77:45] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk). SACD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) – [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic) – [Presto](http://Presto)

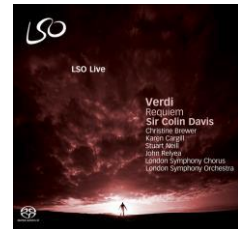


Christine Brewer (soprano), Karen Cargill (mezzo), Stuart Neill (tenor), John Relyea (bass);

London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra/Sir Colin Davis

rec. live Barbican, London, January 2009. DDD/DSD

**LSO LIVE LSO0683 2SACDS** [82:03] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk). SACD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) – [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic) – [Presto](http://Presto)



This recording was made at **Gianandrea Noseda's** first two concerts as the LSO's principal guest conductor, reportedly an auspicious beginning to the relationship. On record, however, there is formidable competition: Carlo Maria Giulini's HMV Angel recording (now Warner **0852192**) still very much holds its place for me, even against newer competition from Antonio Pappano (Warner **6989362**). I compared these and other recordings in [DL News 2013/14](http://DL News 2013/14). Both of those run to two CDs, albeit with *Quattro Pezzi Sacri* as coupling from Giulini at mid-price, while the Pappano is offered at little more than the cost of one full-price CD. The new recording comes complete on one album, in SACD or 24-bit download, for less than either. Those happy with 16-bit CD quality downloads will find that on offer from Hyperion for £6.75, while their 24-bit download costs £9.75, around the same price as the SACD.

Judging from the reviews of the concert I had expected to write that Noseda's approach would suit those who like Verdi's music fast and furious and that he's very well supported by his all-Italian team of soloists and the LSO Chorus and Orchestra. In the event I found myself unable to concentrate on the performance owing to the uneven quality of the recording: the opening of the Introit so quiet as to be inaudible while turning up the wick makes you jump out of your seat at the beginning of the *Dies irae*, which follows all too hard upon its heels.

As I was trying and failing to come to terms with this recording I received Dan Morgan's [review](#) to edit and convert to html and found that he had reacted almost identically after listening to the Native DSD download, so it's not just the 24/96 version which perpetuates the problem.

**Sir Colin Davis's** performance spreads to two SACDs and there's no filler, but it costs only slightly more than a single disc. I hadn't heard this recording until Dan Morgan's review of the Noseda directed me towards it, one reason being that at least one reviewer had complained of the very same problem with dynamics that put me off the Noseda and another of 'boxy sound'.

As if to demonstrate how subjective such matters can be, yet another review speaks of 'a carefully layered recording of clarity and, surprisingly, spaciousness, and the work's vast dynamic range comes across without distortion' and that's Dan Morgan's opinion too, not to mention his very high regard for the performance. How could I not investigate?

It's still not quite my ideal Verdi *Requiem* – if such a thing could ever exist – but the recording is much easier to live with than its newer sibling, preferably with a slight boost to the volume, and while the performance doesn't try so hard it achieves a very powerful effect. Well worth considering.



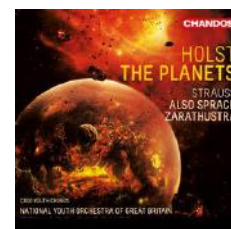
Toscanini fans will find his classic 1951 recording at budget price on Regis (download only) or even better value in a 10-CD set available for less than £30. No problems there with recording levels: if anything it's all a bit too much on an even keel and inevitably dated in quality.

**Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949)** *Also Sprach Zarathustra* [31:35]

**Gustav HOLST (1874-1934)** *The Planets* [48:01]

CBSO Youth Choir, National Youth Orchestra of GB/Edward Gardner  
rec. Symphony Hall, Birmingham, 8-9 August 2016. DDD/DSD

**CHANDOS CHSA5179 SACD** [79:53] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eClassical.com](http://eClassical.com). Subscribers stream from Naxos Music Library. SACD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) – [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic) – [Presto](http://Presto). Also available on vinyl.



Simon Thomson – [Recording of the Month](#) – and Dan Morgan – [review](#) – took very different approaches to this recording. My own view is more in line with that of John Quinn – [review](#) – in that I liked both performances but not in preference to my old favourites. I always return to Sir Adrian Boult for *The Planets* and like Bob Briggs – [review](#) – think his final recording one of the very best. The budget twofer on which that was available is download only and no longer obtainable from the link which I gave in [DL News 2013/6](#) but well worth having. [Presto](#) have it in mp3 and lossless sound. Karajan's early digital DG recording now sounds very ordinary after the gloriously inelegant organ *glissando* which featured on the LP has been removed.

Fritz Reiner's *Zarathustra* with his Chicago SO offers splendid value for less than £6 on RCA, with *Don Juan* and the music for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (RCA/Sony Masters **88697712632**). The CD is likely to be cheaper than any download. On its first appearance Reiner was hailed for his forthright approach and the new recording is equally brisk, though the opening *Sunrise* takes slightly longer to manifest itself. If anything Gardner and his young team are closer to Strauss's direction: *Sehr breit – immer breiter*, though I miss a little of the excitement of the Reiner. On the other hand, though the RCA recording has held up very well, there's a trace of wow on the final organ notes.

What is not in doubt is the sheer professionalism of the NYO players on Chandos – as impressive as an older generation of this orchestra who gave a superb performance of the *Symphonie Fantastique* for Sir Colin Davis at the Proms several years ago. The recording is very wide-ranging; I found that annoying first time round but repeated listening seemed to make it more palatable.

### *à la russe*

**Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)**

Piano Sonata No. 1 in D minor, Op. 28 (1907-1908) [38:48]

**Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)**

*18 Morceaux*, Op. 72 (1893)

V. Méditation [5:09]

XVII. Passé lointain [4:20]

**Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)**

*L'Oiseau de feu*, trans. for piano by Guido Agosti (1928)

I. Danse infernale [4:44]

II. Berceuse [4:03]

III. Finale [3:24]

**Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY**

*Scherzo à la russe*, Op. 1 No. 1 (1867) [6:38]

**Mily BALAKIREV (1837-1910)**

*Islamey*, Op. 18 (1869, rev. 1902) [8:16]

Alexandre Kantorow (piano)

Rec, April 2016, Studio 4'33", Ivry-sur-Seine, France

Pdf booklet included

**BIS BIS-2150 SACD** [76:29] – from [eClassical](http://eClassical) (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless) CD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) –



I first encountered Alexandre Kantorow in remarkably mature performances of the [Liszt concertos](#), with the Tapiola Sinfonietta conducted by his father, Jean-Jacques. In my sign-off I described this young man as a ‘pianist of rare sensitivity and good taste’, qualities that should stand him in good stead here. An added bonus is the presence of Take5’s Jens Braun, who engineered both the Liszt and Folke Gräsbeck’s [Sibelius](#) album. Indeed, the latter was one of my top picks for 2015.

Kantorow’s Rachmaninov is beautifully shaped and shaded, the central movement especially so, and the piano tone is simply ravishing. He’s just as assured in the more extrovert finale, in which dynamics are well judged and inner detail is never less than crystal clear. Some listeners may prefer a more impetuous – even forceful – manner, but that’s not Kantorow’s way. Such thoughtful and imaginative playing is rare in a pianist still at the start of his career. Then again, I felt the same about his Liszt.

Tchaikovsky’s Op. 1 and two *morceaux* are just as cossetting, so the maniacal rhythms and dissonances of the three *Firebird* transcriptions – *Danse infernale*, *Berceuse* and *Finale* – come as something of a punch in the solar plexus. That said, the second of these finds Kantorow at his exquisite best, building to a thrillingly percussive close. Again, this pianist’s technique is astounding, his ear for colour and sonority especially so. That’s true of the coruscating ‘oriental fantasy’ *Islamey*, which skitters and glitters with the best of them. As good as [Freddy Kempf](#) is here, Kantorow is even better.

Zephyrs and whirlwinds aplenty; this collection has it all. [DM]

### Vítězslav NOVÁK (1870-1949)

*V Tatrách* (In the Tatra Mountains) – Symphonic Poem, Op.26 (1902) [16:30]

*Lady Godiva* – Overture, Op.41 (1907) [15:40]

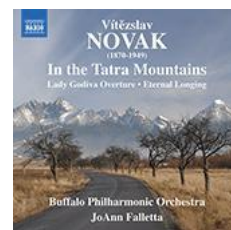
*O věčné touze* (Eternal Longing), Op.33 (1905) [20:37]

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra/JoAnn Falletta

rec. Kleinhans Music Hall, Buffalo, New York, 6 June, 2016 and 18th March, 2016.

DDD.

**NAXOS 8.573683** [52:47] Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from [Naxos Music Library](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



Novák deserves to be much better known. At present the atmospheric *V Tatrách* has only two other generally available recordings, one from Douglas Bostock and the Carlsbad Orchestra formerly on ClassicO and now less expensive and better presented on budget-price Alto – [review](#) – and a dated recording from the early 1950s directed by Karel Ančerl, a Naxos Classical Archives download, coupled with Václav Talich’s account of the *Moravian-Slovak Suite* (**9.80935**). Some download and streaming sources also have another (later?) Ančerl recording but still sounding thin, coupled with two works by Klement Slavický (Supraphon **SU3688-2**).

The danger with such music is that the atmosphere dominates and the music seems not to be developing. For all that the new Naxos sounds much better than those earlier recordings, I didn’t think that the performance quite overcame that difficulty, so my preference remains with Ančerl who makes me feel that the music is going somewhere while the Naxos restoration of the recording and of the Talich coupling is very creditable for its age – download from [eclassical.com](#).

I’m surprised to see some dealers asking £9 for the new Naxos CD: granted that the days when they sold for £3.99 in Woolworths are long gone, you should still be able to find Naxos for less than £7.

### Ralph VAUGHAN WILIAMS (1872-1968)

*Job – A Masque for Dancing* (1927-30) [43:43]

*Symphony No. 9* in e minor (1956-57) [33:33]

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Andrew Davis

rec. May 2016, Grieghallen, Bergen, Norway; Domkirken, Bergen

**CHANDOS CHSA5180 SACD** [77:29] - reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](http://eclassical.com) and as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library). For CD purchase see [review](#) by John Quinn (*Recording of the Month*).



There's very little to add to John Quinn's detailed review except to note that the devalued £ now means that for UK purchasers the SACD – typically less than £13 – is less expensive than the \$20.80 24-bit download, which needs something of a volume boost to sound its (very good) best. Those happy with 16-bit will find that more competitive as a download. I shan't be getting rid of my Vernon Handley recording of *Job* (EMI Eminence) but the Classics for Pleasure reissue of that seems to be no longer available, even as a download, other than in a 50-CD blockbuster – and the generous Chandos coupling with *Symphony No.9* makes the new release irresistible. The stereo recording of *Job* which Sir Adrian Boult made for EMI is available only for streaming, with the 2-piano concerto, from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library).

**Gustav HOLST (1874-1934)**. It's become almost fashionable to record organ transcriptions of well-known orchestral music, with recent recordings of Mahler symphonies arranged and performed by David Briggs: No.2 on Chestnut **CD012**; No.8 on Pro Organo **CD7276**. Now, hard on the heels of Chandos's recent recording of *The Planets*, Op.32 (above) comes an organ transcription of that work and the *St Paul's Suite*, Op.29 from Simon Johnson (organ) and the St Paul's Cathedral Choristers (Priority **PRCD1144** – reviewed as 24/44.1 download from [eclassical.com](http://eclassical.com)). There's NO booklet, either there or with the streamed version from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library).



With the organ version I feel that a good deal more is lost than gained: paradoxically it's the quieter passages that I found most impressive rather than when the box of the St Paul's organ is fully open. With no booklet I cannot be certain when the recording was made, but I believe that the CD was released as long ago as 2015. The recording is good but needs to be played at a higher volume than usual.

**Maurice RAVEL (1875–1937)** Piano Concerto in G [21:37]

**Manuel de FALLA (1876-1946)** Nights in the Gardens of Spain, G49 [23:11]

**Maurice RAVEL** Piano Concerto for the left hand in D [18:13]

Steven Osborne (piano)

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Ludovic Morlot

rec. City Halls, Candleriggs, Glasgow, May 2016. DDD

**HYPERION CDA68148** [63:01] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk). CD from [Amazon UK](http://Amazon UK) – [ArkivMusic](http://ArkivMusic) – [Presto](http://Presto)



Strictly speaking this recording, scheduled for release on 2 June 2017, is slightly outside the remit of a 'Spring' review but I couldn't resist juxtaposing Hyperion's two pianistic big guns, Steven Osborne here and Marc-André Hamelin in Medtner and Rachmaninov (below).

The Ravel/Falla coupling is unusual – last seen, I believe, in Technicolor from Philippe Entremont and Eugene Ormandy in 1965 (CBS SBRG72239) – but it works well. That CBS LP featured just the Ravel Concerto in G and there are more recordings of that than of the left-hand concerto; in fact the two are not often coupled among the top recommendations. Among those that are we seem not to have reviewed Yuja Wang with the Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra and Lionel Bringuier (DG **4794954**, with Fauré *Ballade* [50:10]). That recording has been reissued as part of an attractive and good value 4-CD set of

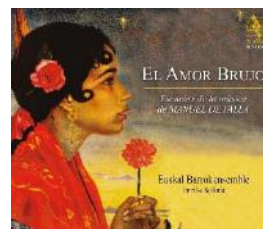
all Ravel's orchestral music (**4795524**) to which I listened from [Naxos Music Library](#). Anyone looking for a starter collection could do much worse; it's especially good value as a download.

Tempi for the second movement of the Concerto in G vary widely, from just over eight minutes to almost ten. Wang and Bringuier adopt one of the fastest tempi yet without disturbing the ethereal magic. The marking *adagio assai* would seem to support the slower tempo on Hyperion, which makes the feeling more dreamlike but loses a little of the magic in the process. Otherwise if you want the two Ravel concertos together this could well be your version of choice.

Top recommendations for *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* come in all-Falla recordings: from Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (Chandos – [review](#) – [review](#) and slightly less enthusiastically [DL Roundup](#)), Javier Perianes (Harmonia Mundi – [DL News 2014/2](#)) and perhaps still best of all Alicia de Larrocha with Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos on a budget-price Double Decca (**4661282** – [review](#)), now download only or on a single Decca Eloquence (**4807844**). Another first-class 2-CD bargain of Falla's music is also now download only: Gonzalo Soriano in *Nights* (**2375952: Recording of the Month** – [review](#)). It's with another budget-price version, however, from Margaret Fingerhut and Geoffrey Simon (Chandos **CHAN10232X**, with *El Amor Brujo*) that I've made my comparisons; I prefer this atmospheric account even to the later Chandos/Bavouzet. Sarah Walker is excellent in the coupling and the brightly-lit 1985 DDD recording still sounds very fine.

Osborne and Morlot are less dramatic in the opening evocation of the beautiful Generalife gardens: a night visit with the heady scent of the flowers rather than the bright daytime colours which visitors usually see, as on Chandos. Surprisingly they achieve this laid-back effect even though adopting a marginally faster tempo overall than Fingerhut or Larrocha – a shade faster even than the latter's earlier ADD recording with Ansermet, though without the over-urgency of Entremont. There's plenty of life in the *Danza lejana* (dance in the distance) – slightly more distant than on Chandos. Regretfully, though I've visited Córdoba, I've never seen the gardens of the Sierra de Córdoba featured in the finale. Both the Chandos and the new Hyperion make up for the omission.

A new recording entitled **Manuel de FALLA *El Amor Brujo*** should come with something of a warning. It contains performances on baroque instruments of some of the music which may have inspired Falla or been inspired by him but it's all rather bitty with the movements of *El Amor Brujo* interspersed with two movements of Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* – why not the whole? – and music by Domenico Scarlatti and Tarrega. Euskal Barrokensemble are directed by Enrike Solinis (guitar and laouto) in performances alternately jazzed-up and smoochy on Alia Vox **AV9921** [51:16]. Interesting rather than essential – one to stream, perhaps. CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [Presto](#)



**Maurice RAVEL (1875–1937) *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) [54:49]**

Marion Ralincourt (flute)

Les Siècles; Ensemble Aedes/François-Xavier Roth

rec. live Philharmonie de Paris, la Cité de la Musique de Soissons, le Théâtre Impérial de Compiègne, le Théâtre-Sénart, la Maison de la Culture d'Amiens, Laeishalle Hambourg and Snape Maltings Aldeburgh. 2016. DDD

**HARMONIA MUNDI HMM905280** [54:49] reviewed a 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). For CD purchase details please see [review](#) by Dan Morgan. Now also available from [ArkivMusic](#).



With superb recordings by Pierre Monteux and Dutoit (both Decca), albeit that the complete Dutoit comes only in multi-CD sets, with only Suite No.2 on a budget Decca twofer, did we really need another *Daphnis*? The question is especially relevant in the light of Paul Corfield Godfrey's generally enthusiastic recent welcome for a budget-price Naxos from the Lyon Orchestra and Leonard Slatkin – [review](#) – and John Quinn's only slightly less muted welcome – [review](#). There's also a recent Erato

recording directed by Philippe Jordan which Brian Reinhart liked – [review](#). Subscribers to Naxos Music Library can compare these and other versions [there](#), though the new Roth version was not yet available when I checked.

Dan Morgan made a detailed comparison of the Naxos and the new Harmonia Mundi together with a Praga Digital reissue of the Monteux in which he came down firmly in favour of Roth against Slatkin, with Monteux still the version to beat – [review](#) – and that’s my position, too, with Roth coming surprisingly close to rivalling Monteux.

A recording of *Daphnis* without a coupling now seems miserly but the per-second charging policy of eclassical.com keeps the cost down proportionately: \$9.87 in all formats initially, though the 24-bit is likely to cost around 50% more after the offer expires.

**Nikolai MEDTNER (1880-1951)** Piano Concerto No.2 in c minor Op.50 [38:58]  
**Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)** Piano Concerto No. 3 in d minor Op.30 [43:11]

Marc-André Hamelin (piano)

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Vladimir Jurowski

rec. Henry Wood Hall, London, 7 and 10 March 2016. DDD.

**HYPERION CDA68145** [82:09] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



I imagine that most potential purchasers of the Hyperion will be primarily interested in the Rachmaninov. As it happens, two recordings of his piano concertos by young performers have appeared recently, so I’ll deal with them first.

Having listened to the streamed versions of **Vanessa Benelli Mosell’s** first two albums from [Naxos Music Library](#), I approached her third Decca recording with high expectations. She boldly competes on mainstream territory: **RACHMANINOV Piano Concerto No.2 in c minor, Op18** with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and **Kirill Karabits** [34:32] and his solo **Variations on a theme of Corelli** [19:23]. (Decca **4814393** [54:08]) Streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) – CD from [Amazon UK](#) or [Presto](#).



The concerto is impressive, thanks as much to the mature hand of Karabits at the tiller of the LPO – no chance of this becoming a mere virtuoso showpiece, though there is virtuosity a-plenty. Among so many very fine recordings of the Rachmaninov concertos my benchmark remains Vladimir Ashkenazy in all four, with the LSO and André Previn, still a very strong recommendation, especially as it’s available very inexpensively on a Double Decca (**4448392**). I suspect that Mosell and Karabits may have been listening to that, too, because their approach in all three movements is very similar both to that and to Ashkenazy’s earlier recording with Kirill Kondrashin (Decca Legends **4663752**, with Piano Concerto No.3, download only).

That Double Decca packs in a lot of music for the cost of a single full-price CD, as does another strong recommendation from **Stephen Hough**, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and **Andrew Litton** (Hyperion **CDA67501/2**, 2CDs, around £20: [Recording of the Month](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)). In sheer terms of value for money the Corelli Variations on the new CD don’t give it the appeal of another concerto. The Decca recording in both works is not ideal – sampling recommended – and I’ve seen another review which was less than impressed by the performances – but I’m sufficiently happy with this recording of No.2 that I hope Mosell and Karabits also give us No.3; better still that Decca will re-couple the two concertos if and when that happens.

It just so happens that another rising star has recorded both **No.2** [31:37] and **No.3** [38:50]: **Khatia Buniatishvili** (piano) with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and **Paavo Järvi** was recorded in the Dvořák Hall, Rudolfinum, Prague, on 11-12 November 2016 (Sony **88985402412** [70:27]). I missed Buniatishvili's earlier Sony recordings (4 CDs and one DVD/blu-ray) and they have met with some mixed reactions here – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#). The performances on the new album are attractive, with power and nimble finger-work where it's needed, as in the finale of No.2, and sensitivity where called for. In some respects this is a more powerful account of No.2 than Morell's but in the final analysis neither is quite special enough to stand out in such a strong field: over 250 recordings of No.2. I do recommend listening to the streamed version from [Naxos Music Library](#) if you can. The recording is very good; there's no SACD but [Presto](#) have a 24-bit download.



Nowadays we must have the rising stars photographed at their photogenic best on the cover: in a red dress or in sugar-pink with downcast eyes or gazing moodily through a misted car window. Does the cover really sell the contents now that so few of us get to browse CD covers in a shop? Time was that Decca thought it enough to use a picture of a single rose in a tall vase on the cover of an LP of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto (Julius Katchen with the LSO and Georg Solti, SXL2076). Incidentally that recording remains available and I'm still bowled over by Katchen's fiery performance, especially of the first movement and the sound, though somewhat over-bright, is perfectly acceptable (**4336272**, with Paganini Variations, download only, or *Decca Sound Volume 2: The Analogue Years*, **4785437**, 54 CDs). I'm not a great fan of huge box sets but there's some very fine material in this box and its more manageable 26-CD predecessor, which also includes Katchen's Rachmaninov (**4786110**), available as a download from around £36.

No fancy cover shots for the new **Hyperion** – yes I've finally got to it. The new release competes with two earlier recordings from this stable: the Stephen Hough Rachmaninov (above) and **Nikolai Demidenko** with the BBC Scottish SO and **Jerzy Maksymiuk** in Medtner's Concertos No.2 and No.3 (**CDA66580** – [review](#)). Both of those present formidable competition and though the coupling of two composers who were friends on the new album is sensible, the earlier couplings are slightly more logical. The BIS coupling of Medtner's No.2 and Rachmaninov's near-contemporary Concerto No.4 is also slightly more logical (**BIS-SACD-1728**: Yevgeny Sudbin and Grant Llewellyn – [review](#)).

Don't expect barn-storming performances from Marc-André Hamelin on the new recording: I enjoyed both but came away wishing that his and Jurowski's more mature and measured approach could have been melded with the youthful enthusiasm of Buniatishvili in Rachmaninov and Sudbin in Medtner. My benchmarks for the Rachmaninov concertos remain the earlier Hyperion and the Ashkenazy Decca twofer: with each you get all four concertos plus the *Paganini Rhapsody*: for the price of a single CD in the case of the Decca and for an attractive price in the case of the Hyperion (target price £20).

### **Béla BARTÓK (1881-1945) Piano Music – Volume 3**

Piano Sonata Sz80 [14:12]

Three Hungarian Folksongs from the Csík District Sz35a [3:47]

Sonatina Sz55 [4:24]

Three Rondos on Slovak folk tunes Sz84 [9:09]

Études Sz72 Op. 18 [8:40]

Sonata for two pianos and percussion Sz110 [25:24]

Cédric Tiberghien, François-Frédéric Guy (piano), Colin Currie, Sam Walton (percussion)

rec. November 2014, March/June 2015 & January 2016, Henry Wood Hall, London

Pdf booklet included

**HYPERION CDA68153** [65:36] – from [Hyperion](#) (mp3, 16- & 24-bit lossless). For CD purchase details please see [review](#) by Stephen Barber.



Now this promises to be fun, featuring as it does fine players in a stimulating programme of pieces by

a 20th-century titan. The French pianist Cédric Tiberghien first came to my notice in works by [Théodore Dubois](#), Vol. 60 in Hyperion's long-running Romantic Piano Concerto series. He has now given us three Bartók solo albums; Stephen Barber welcomed the [first](#) and this, the [third](#); Gary Higginson reviewed the [second](#).

As for François-Frédéric Guy, who partners Tiberghien in the *Sonata for two pianos and percussion*, he's also had good reviews on these pages, not least for the first instalment of his [Beethoven](#) sonata cycle. But it's the real draw for me is percussionist Colin Currie, whose astonishing account of Einojuhani Rautavaara's [Percussion Concerto](#) secured the disc a place among my top picks for 2012. Sam Walton, who is new to me, is Currie's regular duo partner.

The late Zoltán Kocsis made this repertoire his own, so his Philips box of the complete music for solo piano is a mandatory purchase for all Bartókians ([Qobuz](#) has it for just under 50 euros). The first thing I noticed about this new recording is that the soundstage is quite narrow, and the recording is a little dry. That said, there's no shortage of colour or percussive weight in the Piano Sonata. Not as tough as some, perhaps, but a credible reading nonetheless. Very different from the three folksongs, which seem rather more precise – jewelled, even – than one might expect. Still, they're engaging performances that show just how nuanced this composer can be.

The Sonatina is no less accomplished; Bartók's rhythms are delivered with panache and his colour palette is exploited to the full. Ditto the three rondos, which are tastefully dispatched. Indeed, anyone who thinks *Allegro barbaro* when Bartók's piano music is mentioned will be pleasantly surprised by the range and subtlety on offer here. That said, Tiberghien copes just as well with the sinewy *Études*.

I got to know the Sonata for two pianos and percussion via the classic Martha Argerich/Stephen Kovacevich recording for Philips. That has an energy, an air of risk taking, that's exhilarating. Alas, for all its ear-pricking detail this newcomer, very well played and recorded, is much too safe for my liking. Then again, the performance fits in with the general tone of this release, which seems determined to show that Bartók can charm *and* challenge.

Budapest by way of Paris; a refreshing recital. [DM]

### **Sergei PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)**

Symphony No.1, Op.25 ('Classical', 1917) [14:27]

Symphony No.5, Op.100 (1944) [44:01]

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra/James Gaffigan

rec. Studio 5, MCO, Hilversum, Netherlands, 8-11 June 2015 (Symphony No. 1),  
10-14 June 2014 (Symphony No. 5)

**CHALLENGE CLASSICS CC72732** [58:28] – reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [Presto](#)



This is the third and last of the recordings which this team made of the Prokofiev symphonies. Nos. 3 and 4 (first version) opened the batting (**CC72584**), closely followed by Nos. 6 and 7 (**CC72714**). As we seem not to have reviewed either of these I listened to the whole set.

In general terms the less impassioned symphonies and movements work best. The magic of the 'Classical' symphony wore off for me long ago and it takes a special performance, like the vintage Nicolai Malko (Classics for Pleasure: download only – [review](#)) to make me take notice. Gaffigan doesn't manage that but his is a very civilised and mainly perky performance which should appeal to any listeners less jaded with the work than myself. Malko's coupling includes a first-rate performance of No.7 whereas Gaffigan chooses No.5, the most often recorded with over 100 versions, several of them coupled as on Challenge Classics, including Herbert von Karajan, still widely regarded as the best recommendation (DG Galleria **4372532**, mid-price; also No.5 with Karajan's more problematic *Rite of Spring* on DG Originals). Gaffigan is not quite in that league but I did enjoy this account of No.5, not

least for the very fine recording which makes its point without dynamic exaggeration. Those in search of a bargain coupling of Nos. 1 and 5 should consider a 1989 Naxos release: Stephen Gunzenhauser with the Slovak PO (**8.550237**; also available less expensively on the Amadis label).

By accident or design the [eclassical.com](http://eclassical.com) 24-bit download of Nos. 6 and 7 comes at very high resolution: 352.8 Hz and takes up a huge 6.8GB. Of the options available to me only the MediaGo player which comes with the Sony Walkman and the Walkman itself will play such high-res files, so I've asked for a more 'normal' 24-bit version also to be made available.

Recent recordings of No.6 have left me feeling somewhat less than satisfied and I'm afraid that this Gaffigan performance joins Marin Alsop (Naxos) and Valery Gergiev (Mariinsky) in leaving me wanting something more fiery – [review](#). Stalin expected something more celebratory of 'his' victory in WWII but Prokofiev and Shostakovich (Symphony No.9) both failed to come up with the goods and were given the Soviet cold shoulder. My favourite performances offer a clearer indication of why the Sixth was condemned: from Neeme Järvi (Chandos **CHAN10500** budget-price set, complete symphonies) and Erich Leinsdorf (RCA **88697809452**, budget-price). The Chandos can also be obtained separately (**CHAN8359**, download only, with Dance Suite). Subscribers to Naxos Music Library can try the Alsop, Gergiev, Järvi and Leinsdorf recordings [there](#), together with the **Andrew Litton (BIS-SACD-1994)** which Dave Billinge [recommended](#). (But see [DL News 2013/7](#) for a less enthusiastic response from Dan Morgan and myself).

Nor is Gaffigan's No.7 quite as cheerful as it's usually made to sound; maybe earlier versions over-emphasised this quality but it's hardly apparent here. Gaffigan's Prokofiev is best sampled first.

#### **Kurt WEILL (1900-1950)**

Symphony No.1 in one movement, 'Berliner Symphony' (1921) [25:46]

*Kleine Dreigroschenmusik* (Suite from *Dreigroschenoper*) [21:37]

Symphony No.2, 'Symphonic Fantasy' (1933) [26:31]

Gulbenkian Orchestra/Michel Swierczewski

**NIMBUS NI5283** [74:13] Reviewed as download from [emusic.com](http://emusic.com) (mp3/320kb/s) and as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library) (NO booklet from either; CD insert only from NML)



It does say 'second thoughts' in the title: this one dates back to 1990 but was not available on CD until 20 years later. It remains the best – I believe the only – way to obtain the two symphonies with the suite from the *Threepenny Opera*.

For details please see [review](#) by Rob Barnett and [review](#) by Leslie Wright. Use the [MWI link](#) to obtain a 10% discount on the CD.

#### **William ALWYN (1905-1985) Early String Quartets**

String Quartet No.10, *En Voyage* (1932) [18:49]

String Quartet No.11 in b minor (1933) [18:56]

*Fantasia* (String Quartet No.12) (1935) [12:57]

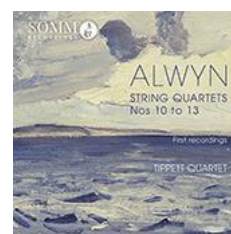
String Quartet No.13 (1936) [19:05]

Tippett Quartet

rec. St Nicholas Parish Church, Thames Ditton, 2-3 March 2016

First recordings

**SOMM SOMMCD0165** [69:48] Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library) (with pdf booklet).



As a confirmed Alwyn fan, I'm indebted to Rob Barnett for pointing me – and, I hope, many others – in the direction of this recording – [review](#) and CD purchase details. Early works these may be, but well worth reviving. For the very fine Naxos recording of the three mature quartets (Maggini Quartet), please see [review](#) by John France and my [review](#).



### **Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)**

Symphony No. 8 in C minor, Op. 65 (1943) [61:13]

Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra/Evgeni Mravinsky

rec. live, 27 or 28 March 1982, Grand Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic, Leningrad

Previously released on Philips Legendary Classics 422 442-2, Russian Disc RDCD 10917 and Regis RRC1250

No booklet

**MUSICAL CONCEPTS / ALTO ALC1150** [61:13] – from [Qobuz](#) (16-bit lossless) CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



Informed readers will know this performance has had a chequered history. It was first issued by Philips in 1989 (422 442-2), and I bought it shortly thereafter. It became my benchmark for this symphony, but those with perfect pitch – alas, I'm not one of them – soon realised the transfer had been made at the incorrect speed, so the recording was a semitone sharp. It wasn't until 1996 that Russian Disc issued a version at the correct pitch; [Regis](#) (2006) and [Alto](#) (2011) have since followed suit.

So what's the big deal? Can the differences really be that great? Well, for a start the faster speed lightens textures and smooths out wrinkles. Here are the timings:

Russian Disc/Regis/Alto	Philips
I: 25:15	24:33
II: 6:21	6:07
III: 6:25	5:17
IV: 10:31	9:37
V: 13:19	12:38

Listening to this pitch-corrected version was both a shock and a revelation. Whereas I always felt the original was more febrile than most – 'white hot' was the term I used to describe it – the actual performance is much, much darker. In the process, that brittle terror has been replaced by something more palpable. Also, there appears to be more inner tension, and the playing – which once seemed almost superhuman – now seems all too fallible.

This really *does* sound like another performance, but as I've intimated it's better for that. For example, the solo trumpet playing in the third movement – a highlight of the Philips recording – has now been tamed. Part of me regrets that, but then the timps have added weight/force, the woodwinds sound more equivocal and the fuller strings keen like never before. Even those flashes of jollity seem more forced. This may sound terribly subjective – fanciful, even – so do hear this Alto release for yourselves. For me, at least, there's no going back.

This already remarkable performance just got better; a mandatory purchase. [DM]

### **John ADAMS (b.1947) Meet the Composer**

On Chamber Symphony [17:19]

Chamber Symphony (1992) [21:38]

On Son of Chamber Symphony [15:46]

Son of Chamber Symphony (2007) [21:43]

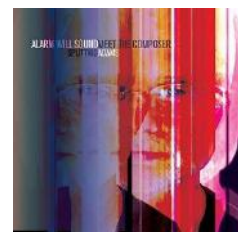
Nadia Sirota, Alan Pierson, John Adams, Walter Frisch (narrators)

Alarm Will Sound/Alan Pierson

rec. DiMenna Center for Classical Music and Missouri Theatre, University of Missouri-Columbia.

Dates not given.

**CANTALOUPE CA21128** [76:27] Reviewed from press preview download. CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



If you are just looking for performances of Adams' *Chamber Symphony* and *Son of Chamber Symphony*, this may not be for you; performances of both works by the ensemble Alarm Will Sound are combined with podcasts produced by Q2 Music's Meet the Composer which take up almost half of the album. Illuminating as these are, you may not wish to hear them repeatedly. On the other hand this seems to be the only recording to combine the two works, otherwise available only separately. There's only one other recording of *Son of Chamber Symphony*, conducted by the composer on Nonesuch and coupled with his String Quartet.

If, like me, you find the *Chamber Symphony* more demanding and disorientating than most of Adams' scores, the discussion of its origins in the music of Schoenberg and Loony Toons cartoon scores – the final movement is actually entitled *Roadrunner* – will at least help you to place the reason for your feelings. It may also explain why there are only a few recordings in the catalogue and why two of them, conducted by the composer on Nonesuch and from Ensemble Modern on RCA are now download only; even the Nonesuch 10-CD box set is no longer available on disc. This is no *Short Ride in a fast Machine* or *The Chairman Dances*; I'd venture to say that, though much of Schoenberg's output is impenetrable to me, I find his two Chamber Symphonies more approachable than Adams' – see [Download News 2016/3](#) for a live recording by Les Dissonances.

I'm not sure that the podcast helped me to enjoy the music much more, though I found that the discussion of the second movement, *Aria with walking bass*, and its affinity with the Lutheran chorale helped me to understand why I find this the most approachable movement of the work.

The performances are excellent: *Son of Chamber Symphony* was written for these players, so that receives what may be regarded as the definitive account. Both works are well recorded. With the inclusion of the podcasts liner notes are, of course, superfluous, so we have instead a rather whimsical note on liner notes.

I've only just caught up with Adams' Beethoven-derived *Absolute Jest* and his *Grand Pianola Music*, recorded by Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony on their in-house label: Michael Cookson's [Recording of the Month](#) and also well liked by John Quinn – [review](#). If, like me, you didn't heed their enthusiasm in 2015 it's not too late to do so now. It represents a much more approachable aspect of his music than the two Chamber Symphonies. I'm not quite sure that the 'jest' isn't at the expense of the listeners and that's part of the appeal, too.

The new recording provides a reminder that not all of Adams' music is easily assimilated and as such it's welcome, especially as it provides the only coupling of the two related works. Its appeal is, diminished, however, by the fact that almost half of the album may not be required for repeated hearing.

### **Toshio HOSOKAWA (b.1955)**

*The Raven* (2011-12): Monodrama for mezzo-soprano and 12 players [46:04]

Preceded by recitation of Edgar Allan Poe's poem (1845) [14:46]

Charlotte Hellekant (mezzo)

United Instruments of Lucilin

rec. Aster Plaza Hall, Hiroshima, Japan, 29 and 31 October, 2014, in the presence of the composer.

**NAXOS 8.573724** [60:50] Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from [Naxos Music Library](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



The first part of this recording, on which Charlotte Hellekant gives a fairly straight recitation of the Edgar Allan Poe poem *The Raven* is redundant, since the poem is printed in the booklet and the text, recited in a kind of *Sprechstimme*, features in its entirety in Hosokawa's music. That music is powerful, as befits Poe's typically spooky poem, so it's worth putting up with the redundant 14-minute track.

Those not greatly attracted to contemporary music are advised to sample first if possible: Naxos Music Library offers an ideal way to do so.

**Albert Ayler Quartet: Copenhagen Live 1964**

Spirits [8:45]; Vibrations [8:14]; Saints [8:59]; Mothers [7:41]; Children [8:38];  
Spirits [1:18]

Albert Ayler (tenor saxophone); Don Cherry (cornet); Gary Peacock (double bass);  
Sunny Murray (drums)

rec. live Club Montmartre, Copenhagen, Denmark, 3 September, 1964. ADD

**HAT HUT hatOLOGY665** [43:40] Reviewed from mp3 press preview. CD from  
[Amazon UK](#).



These live recordings have been available on CD before, on the eponymous Ayler Records label, coupled with three of these pieces recorded in the studio a few days later (**AYLCD033**). Supplies of that release seems to be low in the UK so the new HatHut album, released with the blessing of Albert Ayler's estate, will be welcome to fans of this rather neglected exponent of 'free jazz'. The tapes are not in the best condition and not everyone will take readily to Ayler's quirky style: I recommend sampling first if possible.