

Second Thoughts and Short Reviews Spring 2018/3
By Brian Wilson and Dan Morgan

Reviews are by Brian Wilson except where signed [DM]

Spring 2018_1 is [here](#) and Spring 2018_2 [here](#).

Errata: Apologies for an incomplete link in Spring 2018_2: the link for the Bach keyboard music on Nimbus **NI5948/49** takes you only to the main Wyastone page. The correct link is [here](#). Remember to use the code MusicWeb10 for a 10% discount.

Index

BEETHOVEN String Quartet No.15_Sony
BORGSTRÖM Violin Concerto (+ SHOSTAKOVICH)_BIS
BRUCKNER Symphony No.7 (+ WAGNER Siegfried's Funeral March) _DG
DELIUS Piano Concerto (+ GRIEG)_Somm
DYSON *At the Tabard Inn* – Overture; Symphony in G, etc._Chandos
- *St Paul's Voyage to Melita*, etc._Somm_Naxos
FINZI Cello Concerto, **LEIGHTON** Suite *Veris Gratia*_Chandos
GLUCK Heroes in Love_Glossa
GRIEG Piano Concertos (+ DELIUS)_Somm
HANDEL/HARTY *Water Music* Suite; *Fireworks* Suite_Past Classics
LEIGHTON Suite *Veris Gratia* (+ FINZI)_Chandos
MAHLER Symphony No.4_Pentatone
MARTINŮ Double Concertos for Violin and Piano_Pentatone
MONTEVERDI *Vespro della Beata Vergine*_PHI_Linn
- Monteverdi in San Marco_Arcana
PÄRT The Symphonies_ECM
SAINT-SAËNS Piano Trios 1 and 2_Champs Hill
SCHUBERT Piano Sonata No.21, Impromptus_Hyperion
SHOSTAKOVICH Violin Concerto No.1 (+ BORGSTRÖM)_BIS
STRAUSS (R) *Also Sprach Zarathustra*_Past Classics
STROZZI Arias and Cantatas_Glossa
SUK *Asrael* Symphony_SWR
VASKS *Laudate Dominum*, etc._Ondine
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Piano Concerto, Oboe Concerto, Serenade to Music, *Flos Campi*_Chandos
WAGNER Siegfried's Funeral March – see Bruckner

British Orchestral Premieres_Lyrita
Gypsy Baroque_Alpha
La Virtuosissima Cantatrice: Virtuoso and Bel Canto Masterpieces for Female Voice_Amon Ra

Claudio MONTEVERDI (1567–1643)

Vespro della Beata Vergine (Vespers, 1610)
Dorothee Miels, Barbora Kabátková (soprano)
Benedict Hymas, William Knight, Reinoud Van Mechelen, Samuel Boden
(tenor)
Peter Kooij, Wolf Matthias Friedrich (bass)
Collegium Vocale Gent/Philippe Herreweghe
rec. 12–14 August 2017, Chiesa di San Francesco, Asciano, Italy. DDD



Texts and translations included.
 Reviewed from press preview.
PHI LPH029 [50:10 + 37:31]

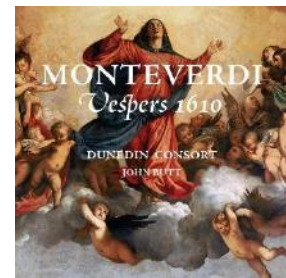


Herreweghe and his Collegium Vocale recorded the Monteverdi *Vespers* back in 1986 (Harmonia Mundi Gold **HMG501247/48**, download only). On disc that version has been superseded by a recording directed by René Jacobs (Harmonia Mundi Gold **HMG501566/67** – [review](#))¹.

The new recording has to compete in a very tough market, not least from a splendid super-budget set directed by Andrew Parrott which, with extra music by Monteverdi, clocks in at almost 2½ hours (Erato **5616622**). Robert King and his Consort also offer extra music, the *Magnificat* a6 and Mass *In illo tempore*, on their superb Hyperion recording (**CDA67531/2**). Herreweghe, at full price, comes devoid of coupling, as does a Linn recording directed by John Butt, though this comes at slightly less than the price of two CDs to compensate (**CKD569**).

So strong is the competition that a very fine DVD+CD recording which Gary Higginson praised is now download only – [review](#). At least it remains available as a download at a very attractive price, with pdf booklet, from [Presto](#): £4.81 (mp3) or £6.26 (lossless). If it's an exciting *Vespers* that you are looking for, fitting the whole work on one 74-minute album, this could be your choice.

Which brings me to a very large apology: having briefly reported on the Linn recording as under serious consideration in Autumn 2017 as a **Recording of the Month**, I never got around to a full review. In much briefer terms than I then promised: From the very beginning John Butt takes a more leisurely course through the music than Robert King, but that's more apparent on paper than in actuality. The first psalm, *Dixit Dominus*, offers a good example, with King taking 7:32 to Butt's 8:27, and Andrew Parrott halving the difference at 8:07. If I very marginally prefer King to both, here and elsewhere, with his knack of combining grandeur with excitement, there's very little in it. Butt and his Dunedin Consort offer a very fine alternative to my earlier top recommendations, as I had expected from their earlier Bach recordings, also for Linn.



Followers of Herreweghe's distinguished recordings of baroque music, for Harmonia Mundi and latterly for his own PHI label, will not be surprised that I enjoyed his new *Vespers*. The music is well paced and well sung, but the availability of extra Monteverdi on the King and Parrott recordings, especially when the latter is so inexpensive, and the fact that Butt's recording, though also uncoupled, comes at a slightly reduced price, make the new PHI a runner-up for me.

As is, sadly, usually the case with press previews from the Outhere group, my review download of the new release came as a miserly 192kbs mp3, totally inadequate for a judgement of the recording quality, certainly when the Hyperion and Linn come in 24-bit sound. Outhere seem to think that reviewers have cloth ears, which I devoutly hope is not generally the case.

The Hyperion, Linn and PHI booklets all discuss in detail the reasons for the chosen performing options. These are very valuable for scholars and very interesting for those who have listened to a plethora of recordings of this work over the years, but the general listener need not be too much troubled by them.

¹ Dominy Clements, who thinks this recording should have been fitted on one CD, seems to have failed to notice the inclusion of the alternative 6-part *Magnificat*, which is always worth including – as I could

wish had been the case with the new PHI – and, in any case, the two CDs sell for effectively budget price, at around £11, with downloads starting at around £6.50.

If you like the zany things that Red Priest do to the music of Vivaldi and other baroque composers, you should also like *Gypsy Baroque* on which Il Suonar Parlante Orchestra are directed by Vittorio Ghielmi in folksy arrangements of music by Telemann – himself much influenced by Eastern European folk music – Benda, Vivaldi, Kirnberger, Tartini, Bihari and Mozart and genuine Eastern European folk music. Nearly everything works well here, and the overall effect should be very enjoyable even for classical purists. (ALPHA392, rec. May 2016 and June 2017 [58:58] reviewed as mp3 press preview).



Claudio MONTEVERDI

Monteverdi in San Marco

Messa a quattro voci da cappella (1650):

Kyrie [4:32]

Gloria [4:46]

Credo [6:35]

Sanctus [2:44]

Benedictus [1:40]

Agnus Dei [6:15]

Gloria a 7 voci concertato con due violini et [...] 4 tromboni [13:30]

Biagio MARINI (1594-1663)

Sinfonia [1:39]

Claudio MONTEVERDI

Pianto della Madonna a voce sola sopra al Lamento d'Arianna [7:40]

Lætaniæ della Beata Vergine a sei voci [11:11]

Odhecaton; La Pifaresca/Paolo Da Col

rec. 24-27 June 2017, Church of San Pietro, Belluno, Italy. DDD

Texts and translations included. Reviewed from press preview.

ARCANA A447 [60:38]



As it happens, The Sixteen have also just released the 4-part Mass on their own Coro label, a recording which I have not yet heard (COR16160). Both new recordings have to be very good indeed to challenge Robert King and his consort on Hyperion (CDA67438, with a few SACDs left on SACDA67438 currently for a very tempting £5 from hyperion-records.co.uk, or download in lossless sound – [here](#) – for the same attractive price). The Sixteen also made an older recording for Hyperion (CDH55145, with *Missa in Illo Tempore* – [review](#)).

In fact, Odhecaton offer a serious challenge those earlier recordings of the unaccompanied Mass and continue with a very fine performance of the accompanied *Gloria* where, again, the competition comes from The Sixteen (Coro COR16087) and the King's Consort (Hyperion CDA67487).

The penultimate work, *la Pianta della Madonna*, is Monteverdi's adaptation as a lament for the Virgin Mary of his own *Lamento d'Arianna*, the sole surviving and highly popular number from his opera of that name and sung here with vocal aplomb and emotional power by Alena Dantcheva. The concluding six-part Litany is potentially the least interesting work here but Odhecaton give that their best, too. Last Autumn I praised their recording of Loyset Compère (Arcana A446); this Monteverdi release is more attractive still, even in the face of the strong competition to which I have referred.

La Virtuosissima Cantatrice: Virtuoso and Bel Canto Masterpieces for Female Voice

- George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)** Let the Bright Seraphim¹ [6:46]
Luzzasco LUZZASCHI (1545-1607) *Occhi del pianto mio*² [3:07]
William CORNISH (1465-1523) Adieu My Heartes Lust³; **Anon.** *La Belle Fine* [3:14]
Luzzasco LUZZASCHI *I'mi son giovinetta*² [3:16]
John DOWLAND (1563-1626) Come, Heavy Sleep⁵ [4:34]
Alessandro SCARLATTI (1660-1725) *Si suoni la tromba*⁵ [3:46]
Luzzasco LUZZASCHI *O dolcezz' amarissime d'Amore*² [4:15]
*Ch'io non t'ami cor mio*² [3:12]
Pierre CERTON (c.1510/20-1572) *J'ay le rebours*³ [1:43]
Barbara STROZZI (1619-1677) *Mercede di voi*² [5:30]
*Amor dormiglione*² [2:15]
John DOWLAND Go Crisall Teares⁴ [3:26]
Barbara STROZZI *Mordeva un bianco lino*² [3:43]
Luzzasco LUZZASCHI *O primavera*² [2:58]
Claudin de SERMISY (c.1490-1562) *Dont vient cela*; **Tylmann SUSATO** *Basse Danse et Reprise*³ [3:19]
Henry PURCELL (1659-1695) To Arms, Heroic Prince⁵ [3:31]
Barbara STROZZI *Sete pur fastidioso*² [2:40]
Johannes BRAHMS Ye Now Are Sorrowful¹ [6:36]
 Lynne Hirst (soprano)¹
 Musica Secreta with Suzie Le Blanc, Deborah Roberts, Tessa Bonner (sopranos), Mary Nichols (alto)²
 Musica Antiqua of London with Jennie Cassidy (mezzo-soprano)³
 The Rose Consort of Viols with Caroline Trevor (alto)⁴
 Deborah Roberts (soprano)⁵
 rec. 1985-1992
 Texts and translations included
AMON RA CDSAR72 [68:29]



CD available from		
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Barbara STROZZI (1619-1677) Arias and cantatas Op.8 (1664)

- Cantata: E giungerà pur mai alla linea crudele* [8:59]
Aria: È pazzo il mio core [4:35]
Serenata con violini: Hor che Apollo è a Theti in seno [13:27]
Cantata: Aure già che non posso dall'idol mio [6:30]
Aria: Luci belle deh ditemi perché [10:18]
Cantata: L'Astratto. Voglio sì vò cantar [10:51]
Cantata: Che si può fare [7:58]
Cantata: Cieli, stelle, Deitàdi [9:23]
 Emanuela Galli (soprano)
 La Risonanza/Fabio Bonizzoni
 rec. Lugano, November 2000. DDD.
GLOSSA GCDC81503 [72:01]



CD available from		
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Amon Ra: This *omnium gatherum* of music for female voice(s) is taken from five earlier Amon Ra albums, one of which, still available, also bears the title *La Virtuosissima Cantatrice*, music by the

female composer and singer Barbara Strozzi, from which three items are included here ([CDSAR61 – review](#)).

Glossa: This is also a reissue, from GCD921503. It's still at (nearly) full price, but with music and performances of this quality that's not a problem. The fact that the CD is out of stock at present from some UK dealers and the downloads come without any booklet – even the streamed version from Naxos Music Library offers only the rear insert – is more problematical.

With no overlap of Strozzi's music between the two, devotees of the female voice in mainly baroque repertoire will need both of these reissues.

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Water Music Suite (arr. Hamilton Harty) [15:40]

Fireworks Suite (arr. Hamilton Harty) [14:29]

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/George Weldon
rec. c.1960. ADD.

PAST CLASSICS [30:10] Download only.



Though normally a strong advocate of the Handel originals in authentic performances, such as those by the King's Consort (Hyperion **CDH55375**), I was very pleased to re-make the acquaintance of these recordings of the Harty suites which I once owned on an HMV Concert Classics LP (SXLP20033). The performances are very good of their kind, the recording has held up pretty well, and the download can be obtained inexpensively: just £0.84 or less from emusic.com. The RPO was Beecham's orchestra and they play as well here for George Weldon as if for the master himself.

Christoph Willibald GLUCK (1714-1787) Heroes in Love

Se in campo armato (*Sofonisba*, 1744) [4:44]

Sperai vicino il lido (*Demofonte*, 1743) [8:20]

Dal suo gentil sembiante (*Demetrio*, 1742) [7:17]

Sinfonia (*Semiramide riconosciuta*, 1748) [6:39]

Nobil onda (*Sofonisba*, 1744) [8:11]

Se fedele mi brama il regnante (*Ezio*, 1750) [7:04]

Se tu vedessi come vegg'io (*Ippolito*, 1745) [7:14]

Tradita, sprezzata (*Semiramide riconosciuta*, 1748) [3:49]

Sinfonia (*Ipermestra*, 1744) [5:05]

M'opprime, m'affanna (*Sofonisba*, 1744) [2:19]

Ah! non turbi il mio riposo (*Telemaco*, 1765) [6:07]

Se il fulmine sospendi (*Ezio*, 1763) [4:11]

Sonia Prina (contralto)

laBarocca/Ruben Jais

rec. Auditorio di Milano, Milan, June 2016. DDD.

includes seven world premiere recordings.

Texts and translations included.

GLOSSA GCD924101 [71:13]



CD available from			
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This is a recording of Gluck's virtuoso Italian arias to rival and supplement, but not supplant, favourite recordings by Janet Baker (Eloquence **4762617** – [Bargain of the Month](#)) and Cecilia Bartoli (Decca **4783389**). I can't offer higher praise than that and, with no overlap with those earlier recitals – indeed, half the items have never been recorded before – this is one to own in addition to its predecessors.

With the merest hint of contralto plumminess at times, Sonia Prina, who has already recorded the role of Ezio in that opera for Virgin/Erato (**0709292** – [Bargain of the Month](#)), joins Baker and Bartoli right at the top of my tree.

I'm completely baffled by the one 1-star review among the 5-star recommendations on the Amazon website which compares this release unfavourably with Florence Foster Jenkins. Amazon have been known to match reviews with the wrong recording – perhaps that's the case here.


Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

String Quartet No.15 in a minor, Op.132 [43:39]

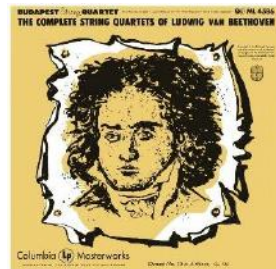
Budapest String Quartet

rec. 1950s. ADD/mono

SONY G0100038749379 [43:39]

Reviewed as streamed from Naxos Music Library	Download in mp3, 16- and 24-bit from	
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I got to know Beethoven's late string quartets from the Budapest Quartet's second, stereo, cycle of recordings – just reissued as a box set of Nos. 1-16 on Sony **88985497062** – and was bowled over by them. Though at the time I was regularly told that the first, mono, set was better still, I never got around to hearing it, so I was interested to see that they were all now available to stream or as downloads, albeit coupled uneconomically as on the original LPs and with the original American Columbia (CBS) sleeve images.



I streamed No.15 from [Naxos Music Library](#) and must confess to feeling more than a little disappointed. There's nothing specific that I can point to, except that the music feels a trifle underpowered by comparison with my recollection of the stereo recordings. Even the beautiful third movement in which Beethoven offers thanks for recovery from illness failed to impress as much as on other favourite recordings, though the ending is ethereal. Perhaps it's the mono recording, though that was always said to be good and has come up well for its age, or maybe distance lends enchantment in the case of the stereo, but this is one to stream rather than download. If you like it better than I did, you can always go for the download later.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

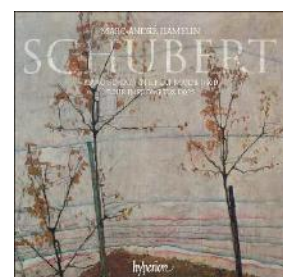
Piano Sonata in B-flat, D960 (1828) [45:28]

Four Impromptus, D935, Op.142 (1827) [36:20]

Marc-André Hamelin (piano)

rec. 12-14 May 2017, Concert Hall, Wyastone Estate, Monmouth. DDD.

HYPERION CDA68213 [81:52]



Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from			
CD available from			

The notes warn us against thinking of this sonata as Schubert's farewell from beyond the grave but any performance worth its salt must capture the ethereal, almost other-worldly qualities which it shares with the equally wonderful String Quintet. Both are among my Desert Island choices, the sonata in Clifford Curzon's classic recording. That's available now only as a download in a 23-disc set. It can be purchased separately but the set comes at super-budget price, for around £30 (mp3) or £40 (lossless),

and it contains Curzon's Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms and Grieg concertos (two versions of some) and the Dvořák and Franck Piano Quintets. (Decca **4784839**).

By comparison with Curzon, Hamelin takes the first movement very slowly – the difference between his 22:36 and Curzon's 13:15 by no means wholly accounted for by different attitudes to repeats¹ – but by the end of the movement I found myself enthralled by the new recording. I liked Barry Douglas, who opened his Schubert series for Chandos with D960 and the *Wanderer* Fantasia, no less, though with reservations about some fastish tempi – [DL News 2014/6](#) – but those in search of a single-CD recording would now be better advised to choose Hamelin. Do, however, try the excerpts of the first two movements from the Hyperion site first: even in the second movement he's a little deliberate where Douglas is a little too fast.

The second set of Impromptus adds to the value of the new recording though, as is so often the case, they should surely have preceded the wonderful D960: beautiful as the Impromptus are, nothing could follow that without creating an anti-climax.

¹ Barry Douglas, who also observes the repeats, takes 19:07

Richard WAGNER (1813-1883)

Götterdämmerung: Siegfried's Funeral March [9:12]

Anton BRUCKNER (1824-1896).

Symphony No.7 in E, WAB197 (1885, ed Haas, with triangles, timpani and cymbals in *Adagio*) [67:32]

Gewandhausorchester Leipzig/Andris Nelsons

rec. live March 2018, Grosser Saal, Gewandhaus Leipzig. DDD

DG 4798494 [76:44]



I came across this recording in [Naxos Music Library](#), with pdf booklet, just as I was finalising this review, so I have had only one chance to listen right through, without making detailed comparisons, but I shall be very surprised if it doesn't bear much repeated hearing – perhaps even as my version of first choice. None of which will surprise those who have read John Quinn's very positive reviews of [No.3](#) and [No.4](#).

As with the earlier recordings in the series, the Wagner makes an excellent introduction – thankfully placed first.

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

Piano Trio No.1 in F, Op.18 [29:16]

Piano Trio No.2 in e minor, Op.92 [34:35]

La Muse et le Poète, Op.132 [15:50]

Gould Piano Trio [Lucy Gould (violin), Alice Neary (cello), Benjamin Frith (piano)]

rec. 23–25 November 2016, Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex,

CHAMPS HILL RECORDS CHRCD140 [79:42]



Comparative version: **Hyperion CDA67538** Florestan Trio [59:30] – reviewed as 24/44.1 download with pdf booklet from [Hyperion](#). **Recording of the Month** – [review](#) – [review](#).

The Florestan Trio offer only the two trios, which makes their CD short value, but the price compensates: £8 for the CD, £8.50 for 20-bit download. The Trio



Wanderer recording, reviewed alongside the Hyperion in the second link above, is now on the budget-price Harmonia Mundi Musique D'Abord label **HMA1951862**, around £6.50 or download for a little over £4.

I can't claim that these trios are among the greatest works of chamber music, but both the older recordings of this very approachable music make strong cases for it. Can the Gould Piano Trio, who have built a distinguished discography for Naxos, Somm and Champs Hill, rival them? Certainly their Dvořák – [review](#) – and Beethoven – [review](#) – [review](#) – [DL News](#)) encouraged me to expect as much. They didn't disappoint, offering strong competition to those earlier recordings, if not quite displacing the Hyperion from top spot. *La Muse et le Poète* may not be the equal of the two Piano Trios, but it's a not insubstantial work, not hugely over-represented in the catalogue and certainly very logically coupled here with the two trios. Its inclusion may well sway you in favour of the new recording.

Edvard GRIEG (1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in a minor, Op.16 [32:53]

Frederick DELIUS (1862-1934)

Piano Concerto in c minor (1907) [24:21]

Edvard GRIEG

Piano Concerto No.2 in b minor [3:48 + 3:58]

(Premiere recording of sketches arranged and orchestrated and sketches arranged for solo piano by Robert Matthew-Walker)

Frederick DELIUS

Three Preludes for piano (1921) [2:09 + 1:12 + 1:25]

On hearing the first cuckoo in Spring (1913)* [5:11]

(transcribed for piano duet by Peter Warlock)

Mark Bebbington (piano);

with Irene Loh (piano)*;

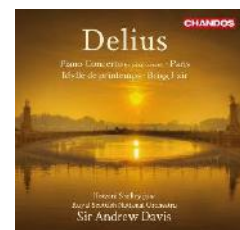
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Jan Latham-Koenig

rec. St John's Smith Square, London, August 1-2, 2017 and Wyastone Concert Hall, October 22, 2017. DDD.

SOMM SOMMCD269 [74:59] See also reviews by [Nick Barnard](#) and [Ian Lace](#) with purchase links.



I wouldn't choose this as my first recommendation for *the* Grieg concerto, but it comes as part of the deal and it certainly won't disappoint. Nor were we short of fine recordings of the Delius concerto at all prices, including a super-budget Classics for Pleasure with Piers Lane as soloist with the RLPO and Vernon Handley (**5759832**, with Finzi and Vaughan Williams) and a more recent account from Howard Shelley, the RSO and Sir Andrew Davis (Chandos **CHAN10742**, with *Paris, Idylle de Printemps* and *Brigg Fair* – [review](#): available on CD and as mp3, 16- and 24-bit downloads with pdf booklet from [chandos.net](#)).



The Chandos, like the rival version on Hyperion (**CDA67296**, with Ireland Piano Concerto), offers the original three-movement version of the Delius whereas Mark Bebbington and Jan Latham-Koenig choose the more usual 1907 revised one-movement edition, which prunes around six minutes from the score. I tend towards the opinion that those six minutes are no great loss and I certainly enjoyed the new recording.

Gustav MAHLER (1860-1911)

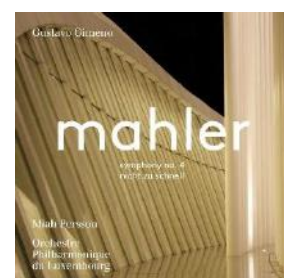
Symphony No. 4 in G major (1899-1900) [54:02]

Piano Quartet in A minor: 1. Nicht zu schnell (1876-1878, orch. Colin Matthews) [12:55]

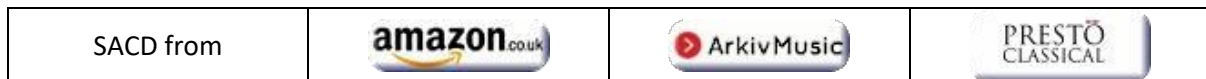
Miah Persson (soprano)

Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg/Gustavo Gimeno

rec. 2017, Philharmonie Luxembourg



PENTATONE PTC5186651 SACD [67:12] Reviewed as a 16-bit press download. Pdf booklet included. Previous review: [Dominy Clements](#)



I first [reviewed](#) Gustavo Gimeno and the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg in an all-Shostakovich programme that impressed in parts and disappointed in others. Caveats aside, I did suggest in my sign-off that this could be the start of a ‘most rewarding partnership’, so Dominy’s positive response to their Mahler Fourth prompted me to put that statement to the test. As always, there’s fierce competition, not least from Iván Fischer ([Channel Classics](#) and [RCO Live](#)) and his brother, Ádám ([C-Avi](#)). Soprano Miah Persson really seems to have made Mahler’s child-heaven finale her own – she sings it in both of Iván’s recordings – so her presence here bodes well.

I wasn’t quite sure what to make of Gimeno’s account of the first movement, which, although nimbly done, seems a little too muted for such a sunny intro. Not a hanging offence, of course, but his precipitous phrasing is much more problematic. Also, there’s some of the doggedness that I sensed in his Shostakovich, the second movement less buoyant than most. Then it struck me that Gimeno seems determined to underplay the lightness of this music and emphasise its incipient strangeness. Cue wall-eyed timps and a spooky tam-tam: ‘In Callots Manier’, so to speak. Not a hanging offence, either, but be warned.

The penultimate movement is undeniably beautiful – there’s a HIP-like transparency and precision to the playing that’s most attractive – but it’s oddly static, too. I just find the pulse too weak here, and I really don’t like Gimeno’s wilful, shape-distorting phrases. Mahler doesn’t need to be nudged in this way, although, to be scrupulously fair, other conductors are just as culpable in this respect. Not surprisingly, the crowning climax sits awkwardly on this sagging frame. As for Persson’s keenly awaited contribution – and, my goodness, it’s been a very long wait – it may not be as secure as before, but her singing is as apt and imaginative as ever. What a pity, then, that orchestral progress is so fitful, especially in this seamless finale.

So, not a front-rank Fourth, although some may find Gimeno’s off-kilter approach rather more appealing than I did. On the plus side, this is clearly a fine band, albeit one in need of more inspired direction than it gets here. Then there’s the Colin Matthews orchestration of the first movement from the Piano Quintet; frankly, it’s more Mantovani than Mahler, with some angst-upping bass-drum thuds chucked in for good measure. A lamentable end to a lacklustre release. Even the recording isn’t up to Pentatone’s usual standards.

Proceed with caution; the Fischer Fourths are in another league entirely. **[DM]**

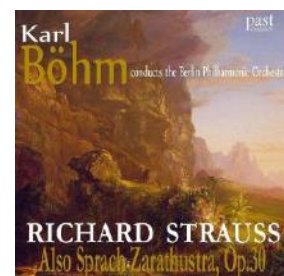
Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Also Sprach Zarathustra, Op.30

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Karl Böhm
rec. c.1958. ADD.

PAST CLASSICS [34:10] Download only.

Karl Böhm had a special relationship with the music of Richard Strauss and this recording of *Zarathustra* has almost as strong a claim to classic status as that of Fritz Reiner (RCA). The recording may not have worn as well, especially in this Past Classics transfer, but emusic subscribers at a loss on how to spend their last few pence or cents before the end of the membership month can download it – [here](#) – for the price of one track, £0.42 or less. Alternatively, Amazon UK and US have it for £0.99/\$0.99



The LP cost over £2 in 1958 – at least £50 in today’s values. As such, it’s a worthwhile bargain, especially as the DG CD now comes as part of a multi-disc set, but it’s not comparable with the kind of transfers of material of this age that Beulah achieves.

Hjalmar BORGSTRÖM (1864-1925)

Violin Concerto in G, Op.25 (1914) [36:12]

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Violin Concerto No.1 in a minor, Op.99 (1947-48, rev. 1955) [37:58]

Eldbjørg Hemsing (violin)

Wiener Symphoniker/Olari Elts

rec. September 2015, MuTh Concert Hall, Vienna. DSD

BIS BIS-2366 SACD [74:12]



Reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet from			
SACD from			

A double first here: Eldbjørg Hemsing’s CD *début* playing an unjustly neglected concerto and one which offers a considerable contrast in style with the Shostakovich¹. If you want the Borgström enough to obtain this recording, the performance of the Shostakovich, though not quite good enough to rival existing recommendations, wan’t make you feel let down. If, on the other hand, you don’t want another recording of the Shostakovich, downloading means that the Borgström can be purchased separately for about half the price of the complete album.

¹ It’s the coupling that’s unique: there have been earlier recordings of the Borgström concerto, coupled with other works by him on Simax **PSC1311**.

Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

Serenade to Music (1938) [14:29]

Concerto in a minor for Oboe and Strings (1944) [20:06]

Flos Campi (1924-25) [21:01]

Piano Concerto in C (1926-31) [26:42]

Carla Huhtanen (soprano), Emily D’Angelo (mezzo), Lawrence Wiliford (tenor), Tyler Duncan (baritone);

Louis Lortie (piano); Teng Li (viola); Sarah Jeffrey (oboe);

Elmer Iseler Singers;

Toronto Symphony Orchestra/Peter Oundjian

rec. Roy Thomson Hall, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 15 and 16 November 2017. DSD.

Text of *Serenade to Music* and *Flos campi* included.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from chandos.net.

CHANDOS CHSA5201 SACD [82:14]



SACD from		
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Flos campi is one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever penned; it’s ethereal and mystic. For me it ranks alongside the *Tallis Fantasia* and *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus* and ahead of the ubiquitous *The Lark Ascending*. One benchmark version comes from Lawrence Power and Martyn Brabbins on Hyperion **CDA67839**, with VW’s Suite for viola and small orchestra and McEwen’s rarely performed Viola Concerto – [review](#) – [DL News November 2011/2](#) and [January 2012/2](#).

On the new recording soloist Teng Li is the principal violist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. I hadn't associated this orchestra or Peter Oundjian with English music, though their recording of *The Planets* for their own label was praised for its pacing of the music and for bringing out its felicities of colour and mood (TSO Live TSO1208, budget price, no longer available in the UK).

Those same qualities emerge in this performance of *Flos campi*. At 19:43, Power and Brabbins make what might seem a dangerously fast speed sound natural, while Li and Oundjian achieve their effect with judiciously chosen timings, consistently a little slower than on Hyperion, and run them such a very close second that there remains all to play for in the remaining works. Listen to both recordings in the third section and you may even think that the Toronto team capture a little more of the mystical essence of the music: Vaughan Williams once again belying the agnostic label which he hung upon himself and his denial of any religious meaning in *Flos campi*.

There are two older Chandos recordings of *Flos campi*, one from Richard Hickox, coupled with *Riders to the Sea*, a work with which I have never managed to like, and another from Frederick Riddle and Norman Del Mar on a recording which includes the *Serenade to Music*, the *Viola Suite*, *Greensleeves Fantasia*, and several shorter works (**CHAN241-9** – [review](#)). Aptly described by Rob Barnett as 'resplendent if rather idiosyncratic', this remains very good value.

I ought to love the *Serenade to Music*. The poetry itself is magical but somehow, I have never quite found that the music does it justice. On the older Chandos twofer the *Serenade* is performed in its purely orchestral format as convincingly as I have ever heard it by the LPO and Vernon Handley.

Most listeners, however, will be looking for the vocals, as on another Hyperion recording, directed by Matthew Best, which also includes *Flos campi* (**CDA30025**, with *Five Mystical Songs*, etc., super-budget CD or download from [Hyperion](#) or as part of 4-CD budget-price set **CDS44321/4** – [review](#) – [review](#)). That's very well worth its modest price for the sake of Sir Thomas Allen's contribution to *Serenade* and *Mystical Songs* but the new Chandos does the music justice, too.

We weren't lacking in fine performances of the Oboe Concerto, most recently heard in an inventive coupling which I enjoyed from Harmonia Mundi – [DL News 2015/4](#). My preference for the Piano Concerto is for the revised 2-piano version, as from Louis Lortie and Hélène Mercier (Chandos **CHSA5186** – *Recording of the Month* – [review](#))¹, though Howard Shelley's performance of the single-piano version, as on the new Chandos, comes as part of a very tempting super-budget 4-CD set of British Piano Concertos (Lyrita **SRCD.2345** – [review](#) – [review](#)).

¹ My own reservations were limited purely to the dynamic range of the *Sinfonia Antartica* – [Autumn 2017/2](#).

Josef SUK (1874-1935)

Asrael Symphony in C minor. Op. 27 (1905-1906) [57:34]

Iša KREJČI (1904-1968)

Serenata für Orchester (1950) [16:49]

Südwestfunk-Orchester Baden-Baden/Karel Ančerl

rec. 19 May 1967, Hans-Rosbaud-Studio, Baden-Baden. ADD

SWR CLASSIC SWR19055CD [74:54] Reviewed as a 16-bit press download.

Pdf booklet included. Previous review: [John Quinn](#)



CD available from			
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In the spirit of my recent [review](#) of Martin Haselböck's recording of Liszt's *Faust Symphony* – a work I've struggled with in the past – I decided to revisit Suk's *Asrael*, another piece that, despite multiple

attempts, has failed to engage me. Admittedly, I was nudged a little by John Quinn's very enthusiastic review of this newly released version from Karel Ančerl and the Baden-Baden orchestra. Not only was the disc well received in the [MusicWeb International Listening Studio](#) – Len Mullenger found it 'really involving' – John also made it a Recording of the Month.

Originally intended as a tribute to the death of his father-in-law, Dvořák, *Asrael* also became a requiem for Suk's wife, Otilie, who died before the symphony was completed. It has always struck me as a protracted and rather dreary work, so Len's comment was certainly encouraging. Of the several recordings I've owned, among them Libor Pešek and the RLPO ([Warner](#)) and Claus Peter Flor and the Malaysian PO ([BIS](#)), the latter seems less impenetrable than most. That said, I still cringed at Suk's empurpled passages, not to mention his mawkish moments. Perhaps, just perhaps, Ančerl, who invariably impresses in Czech music, will dismount me with the blinding light of revelation.

For once, the dolorous opening seems less self-indulgent than usual, and that's a very good sign. It helps that the playing is disciplined, the remastered sound focused and fairly open. Also, Ančerl brings a transparency to those hitherto problematic textures that's most welcome. More important, progress is brisk, with no expressive overload, and there's a discernible narrative. All of this works in the symphony's favour. I've not sensed Dvořák's presence so strongly before, those fleeting, rather folkish fragments especially evocative. There's real *frisson*, too, notably in that 'knocking' bass drum. Finally, I felt more *involved* in the music, and that was the best surprise of all.

Happily, the good vibes don't stop there. The Czech composer, Iša Krejčí, is new to me, but his *Serenata* is a delight. Conductor and players really let their hair down, and the result is a fizzing filler that's a perfect foil for the angst of *Asrael*. Any caveats? The studio sound is pretty good, but it's very forthright and the upper strings are a tad wiry at times. And that's it. In short, a most rewarding release.

Not a Damascene conversion, perhaps, but near enough; go for it. **[DM]**

George DYSON (1883-1964)

At the Tabard Inn – Overture * (1943-46) [11:40]

Symphony in G⁺ (1937) [44:16]

In Honour of the City‡ (1928) [15:09]

London Symphony Chorus‡

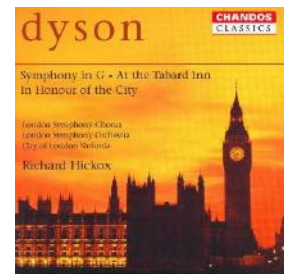
London Symphony Orchestra/Richard Hickox*‡

City of London Sinfonia/Richard Hickox†

rec. All Saints' Church, Tooting, London, 5-6 March 1993 (Symphony in G);

Blackheath Halls, London 30 September, 1, 4, 5 October 1996 (other works)

CHANDOS CHAN10308X [71:28] See [review by Rob Barnett](#).



Reviewed in 16-bit sound with pdf booklet from

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

Choral Symphony (Psalm CVIL, for solo, chorus and orchestra) (1910)* [44:05]

St Paul's Voyage to Melita (1933) [31:22]

* world premiere recording (from recently discovered MS in Bodleian Library)

Elizabeth Watts (soprano), Caitlin Hulcup (mezzo), Joshua Ellicott (tenor),
Roderick Williams (baritone)

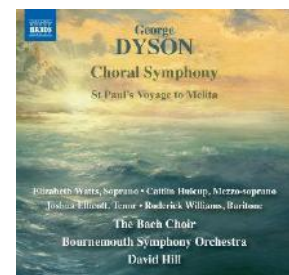
The Bach Choir Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/David Hill

rec. 11–12 February 2017, Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts, Dorset.

DDD.

Texts included

NAXOS 8.573770 [75:20] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). For CD purchase links see [review by John Quinn](#).



St Paul's Voyage to Melita for tenor, chorus and orchestra (1933) [30.03]
Agincourt for chorus and orchestra (1956) [25.03]
Nocturne from Quo Vadis for tenor, solo viola, strings, harp and organ
 (1939) [10.29]

Neil Mackie (ten), Osian Ellis (harp), Jane Watts (organ)

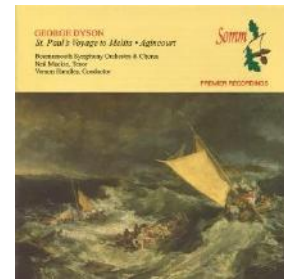
RCM Chamber Choir

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir David Willcocks

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus/Vernon Handley (*Agincourt*;
Melita)

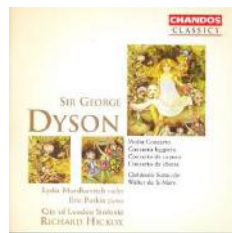
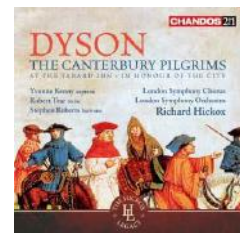
rec. 1985-87, London (*Nocturne*); 25-26 May 2002, Poole Arts Centre (*Agincourt*; *Melita*)

SOMM SOMMCD234 [65.58] See [review](#) by Rob Barnett.



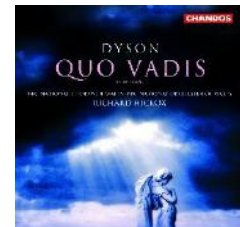
These three recordings have all received detailed reviews, so it remains for me only to endorse my colleagues' comments and add some other recommended recordings of music by this unduly neglected composer to consider:

- *The Canterbury Pilgrims*; *In Honour of the City*: Soloists, LSO and Chorus/Richard Hickox rec. 1996 **CHANDOS CHAN241-43** (2 CDs, mp3 or lossless download with pdf booklet, for price of one – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)). Duplicates performance of *In Honour of the City* from **CHAN10308X**.



- Violin Concerto; *Concerto leggero*; Children's Suite; *Concerto da camera*; *Concerto da Chiesa*: Lydia Mordkovich (violin), Eric Parkin (piano), City of London Sinfonia/Richard Hickox rec. 1991-1994 **CHANDOS CHAN10337X** (2 CDs, mp3 or lossless download with pdf booklet, mid-price – [review](#)). Violin Concerto also on **CHAN10154X**, with Bax, Bliss and Veale – [DL News 2015/7](#). The Violin Concerto and Children's Suite remain available on a single download album, but at full price.

- *Quo vadis* – a cycle of poems: Cheryl Barker (soprano), Jean Rigby (mezzo-soprano), Philip Langridge (tenor), Roderick Williams (baritone); BBC National Chorus and Orchestra of Wales, Chamber Choir of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama/Richard Hickox rec. 2002 **CHANDOS CHAN10061** (2 CDs, mp3, 16- or 24-bit download with pdf booklet – [Recording of the Month](#)).



Bohuslav MARTINŮ (1890-1959)

Double Concertos for Violin and Piano

Concerto in D for two violins and orchestra H.329 (1950) [18:16]

Rhapsody-Concerto for viola and orchestra H.337 (1952) [20:06]

Concerto for two pianos and orchestra H.292 (1943) [24:27]

Deborah and Sarah Nemtanu (violin),

Magali Demesse (viola),

Mari and Momo Kodama (piano),

Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille/Lawrence Foster

rec. Friche la Belle de Mai, Marseille, 20-30 June 2017. DSD.

PENTATONE CLASSICS PTC5186658 SACD [62:50]



CD available from			
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These attractive works are by no means over-represented in the catalogue and certainly not coupled as here, so, with the unique selling point of two pairs of sisters as soloists¹, this would seem a safe recommendation, especially for those who already have the Matoušek/Hogwood recording of the two

solo violin concertos on Hyperion **CDA67674** – [review](#). Alternatively, the Concerto for two violins is coupled with the *Duo concertante* and Concerto for flute and violin on Hyperion's sister recording (**CDA67671** – [review](#)).

¹ The Concerto for two violins was first performed by brothers.

Gerald FINZI (1901-1956) Cello Concerto, Op.40 [38:55]
Kenneth LEIGHTON (1929-1988) Suite *Veris Gratia*, Op.9 [26:05]

Raphael Wallfisch (cello)

George Caird (oboe)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Vernon Handley

rec. 1986. DDD.

CHANDOS CHAN8471 [66:05] Download from chandos.net only, with pdf booklet.



If you heard Leighton's beautiful tribute to Spring¹, inspired by medieval Latin poetry, on BBC Radio 3 recently and were frustrated to find that it's no longer available on CD or, from most dealers, as a download, the good news is that it can be obtained from chandos.net in mp3 or lossless sound, with pdf booklet. The bad news is that it's coupled with a performance of Finzi's Cello Concerto the same performance of which is also available coupled with Leighton's Cello Concerto on **CHAN9949** – another full-price download from Chandos – or as a mid-price CD or download with Finzi's Violin Concerto (**CHAN10425** – [DL News 2016/1](#)).

Despair ye not, however: in each case the two works can be downloaded separately, though the Chandos pricing policy still leaves me baffled, with CHAN9949 in 16-bit format more expensive as a download than the CD. Even the Cello Concerto alone costs more than the disc, whichever version of the download you choose. I can't even begin to see the logic of that! For a further complicated permutation involving the Finzi Cello Concerto, see [DL News 2016/6](#) – the final item *British Cello Concertos*.

¹ The comparison with Vaughan Williams' enchanting *Flos campi* in the booklet is very apt. For the VW, please see above.



RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Arvo PÄRT (b.1935) The Symphonies

Symphony No.1 (Polyphonic, 1964) [19:14]

Symphony No.2 (1966) [10:37]

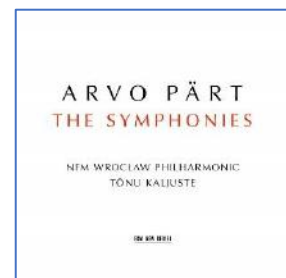
Symphony No.3 (1971) [20:22]

Symphony No.4 (Los Angeles, 2008) [29:09]

NFM Wrocław Philharmonic/Tõnu Kaljuste

rec. October 2015 (Symphony No.3) and August 2016, Main Hall of the National Forum of Music, Wrocław. DDD.

ECM ECM4816802 (UK) or **002813202** [79:22]



Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from Naxos Music Library	CD available from			
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Arvo Pärt specialist Tõnu Kaljuste and the NFM Wrocław Philharmonic bring us the first recording of all the symphonies on one album. Lovers of Pärt's more recent music may find his earlier compositions something of a challenge: the First Symphony, with its combination of neo-classicism and serialism is especially very hard going. The later symphonies, however, offer the ethereal Pärt that you were

probably expecting. I'm not sure about the idea that all four add up to one over-arching work, but I certainly felt that I had completed a significant journey.

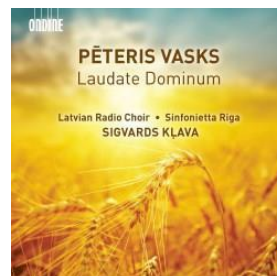
Dominy Clements praised an earlier ECM 2-CD recording of Pärt's music on which Kaljuste plays a key part – [review](#). That's one of a number of recordings he has made of Pärt for ECM, and he and his team again prove to be excellent guides to the music here, especially with the advantage of a detailed and helpful set of notes. For once, the three customers who gave 5-star ratings on Amazon are spot on. (Don't always rely on these comments: they often turn out to be for a completely different recording!)

This now displaces the short-value earlier recordings of No.4 on ECM and DG (live) from Esa-Pekka Salonen, though the latter is good value, but only if you are happy with mp3 (**4778607**, stream or download only, £2.97 from [7digital.com](#), no booklet). Lossless downloads of this are much more expensive and the lack of a booklet means that you don't get the religious texts which inspired each movement of the work, though not sung or spoken: these are contained in the ECM booklet.



Pēteris VASKS (b. 1946)

- Da pacem, Domine* (2016) [17:41]
- Mein Herr und mein Gott*, (2016) [9:29]
- Laudate Dominum*, (2016) [15:29]
- Prayer (Lord, Open Our Eyes), (2011) [17:08]
- The Fruit of Silence, (2013) [7:05]
- Ilze Reine (organ: *Laudate*)
- Latvian Radio Choir
- Sinfonietta Riga/Sigvards Kļava
- rec. 2017, St. John's Church, Riga, Latvia. DDD
- Texts and translations included.



ONDINE ODE1302-2 [66:56] Purchase links with [review](#).

I can only echo [Mark Sealey's high praise](#) for this release of the music of Pēteris Vasks. I picked up a CD of his music in a sale a long time ago and wondered then, as I still do, why it isn't much better known. Heartily recommended, especially to those already attracted to the music of Rautavaara, Górecki and Pärt.

Wergo have also been advocates for the music of Vasks. If you like this Ondine recording, try the purely orchestral *Sala* [20:34], *Musica appassionata* [18:00] and *Credo* [21:03], performed by the Liepāja Symphony Orchestra and Atvars Lakstīgala and recorded in 2014, on **WER7323-2** [59:38] – **Bargain of the Month**, [DL News 2015/9](#). Stream, with booklet, from [Naxos Music Library](#).




BARGAIN OF THE MONTH
British Orchestral Premieres
 Details after review

- Malta Philharmonic Orchestra/Michael Laus
- Karelia State Philharmonic Orchestra/Marius Stravinsky
- Orion Symphony Orchestra/Toby Purser
- rec. 2008-2011. DDD.

Reviewed as press preview from [Wyastone](#).

LYRITA REAM2139 [61:27 + 61:21 + 61:10 + 62:10]



To order CD with 10% discount use the Wyastone link & the code MusicWeb10	
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These are the first fruits of Lyrita's take-over of the Cameo Classics label, founded in 1973 to concentrate on the music of neglected composers. Lovers of British music will need no urging to buy this super-budget 4-CD release, especially as MusicWeb readers can obtain a 10% discount on the already very tempting price.

The chosen works neatly complement Lyrita's own very valuable contributions to the cause: the two Holbrooke pieces, for example, sit very well alongside his *Birds of Rhiannon* (Lyrita **SRCD.269**, with Bantock and Rootham – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)), while the new parent label is devoid of music by Somervell. The latter composer is better served by Hyperion but this is the only available recording of his Symphony *Thalassa* (The Sea), an enjoyable work even if it ultimately slightly outstays its welcome.

That's true of most of the music: none of it cries out for attention but it was all very worth resurrecting. The same is true of the performances – think of Naxos' early productions with little-known orchestras – and recording: none of them quite of the high standard of Lyrita's own products, but still making a good case for the music.

Detailed reviews by Rob Barnett of these recordings in their original Cameo Classics garb can be found [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). There are also reviews of some of the recordings by Paul Corfield Godfrey – [here](#) – and John Whitmore – [here](#).

Super-budget this release may be but the notes by Gareth Vaughan with an *addendum* by Cyril Scott's son, are fully worthy of any premium-price offering. The rest of the Cameo Classics output is due for release later in 2018, with symphonic music by Jadassohn in June (**CC9101**) and Brüll in July (**CC9103**).

CD1 [61:27]

Arthur SOMERVELL (1863-1937) *

Symphony in d minor *Thalassa* (1913) [36:58]

Cyril SCOTT (1879-1970) *

Harpichord Concerto (1937) [17:15]

Michael Laus (harpichord)

Maurice BLOWER (1894-1982) *

Eclogue for Horn and Strings (c.1950) [7:14]

José Garcia Gutiérrez (horn)

CD2 [61:21]

Frederick KELLY (1881-1916)

Serenade for Flute, Harp, Horn and Strings Op.7 (1911) * [20:07]

Rebecca Hall (flute)

Maurice BLOWER

Concerto for Horn and Strings (1951) * [13:55]

José Garcia Gutiérrez (horn)

Walter Gaze COOPER (1895-1981) *

Concertino for Oboe and Strings (1937) [15:28]

John McDonough (oboe)

Robin MILFORD (1903-1959) *

Suite for Oboe and Strings Op.8 (1924) [11:51]

John McDonough (oboe)

CD3 [61:10]

Alexander MACKENZIE (1847-1935)

La Belle Dame sans Merci Op.29 (1883) * [18:58]

Dorothy HOWELL (1898-1982)

Symphonic Poem *Lamia* (1919) † [15:15]

Dorothy HOWELL

Piano Concerto in d minor (1923) ** [19:42]

Valentina Seferinova (piano)

Lilian ELKINGTON (1900-1969)

Out of the Mist (1921) ** [7:21]

CD4 [62:10]

Josef HOLBROOKE (1878-1958)

Pantomime Suite Op. 16 (c.1900) * [13:42]

Variations on 'The Girl I Left Behind Me' † [12:39]

Maurice BLOWER

Symphony in C (1939) † [35:49]

* Malta Philharmonic Orchestra/Michael Laus

† Karelia State Philharmonic Orchestra/Marius Stravinsky

** Orion Symphony Orchestra/Toby Purser