

**Second Thoughts and Short Reviews: Autumn 2018/3**  
**By Brian Wilson and Dan Morgan**

Reviews are by Brian Wilson unless signed [DM]

Autumn 2018/2 is [here](#) and Autumn 2018/1 is [here](#).

My apologies that this edition is heavily weighted towards the baroque and earlier – it's just that so many early music recordings have caught my attention recently. At least Dan's reviews help to redress the balance.

**Emusic.com:** readers may recall that I have sometimes pointed to this as a reasonably priced source for downloads – mp3 only, but at the full 320kb/s and usually with pdf booklets. Their £0.42 per-track charging policy often means a Bruckner or Mahler symphony for £1.68 (actually less with some of their monthly tariffs); conversely, albums with many short tracks work out more – often very much more – than the CD.

I can no longer recommend taking out one of their monthly subscriptions because they have lost almost all their classical music practically at a stroke. As I write, only Audite, Berlin Classics, Linn (apparently nothing more recent than 2015), Naïve (some) and Supraphon offer anything that I find usable there; otherwise, there's a lot of old material transferred from LP on labels which I cannot vouch for. Some of these can't even spell the names of the composer or the music on the cover – stick with the likes of Beulah (eavb.com) and Naxos Historical for such material, neither label now available from emusic.com.

I received an email from emusic which seems to be promising jam tomorrow; I'll let you know if it materialises.

How often have you looked for a particular CD, only to find that it's tucked away at the back of the pile and covered in dust? It happens to me frequently when looking for an older recording for comparison with a new release, so I'm digging out some of my favourite CDs, potential benchmarks for future reviews, and ripping the contents so that they can be better indexed and more easily discovered – I hope – from one of my external hard drives.

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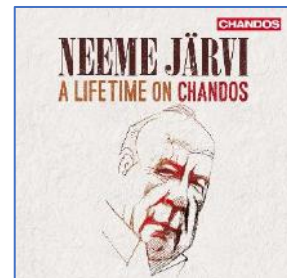
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### Neeme Järvi: A Lifetime on Chandos

Neeme Järvi having won a Lifetime Achievement award, Chandos have released a 25-CD box set of his recordings, complete with 124-page booklet, to celebrate the occasion ([CHAN20088](#)). It's available on disc and as a USB, both for £60 direct from Chandos, but not (yet?) for download, though individual albums can be downloaded, which is how I sampled this release. An 11-track sampler, offering 76 minutes, was available from [chandos.net](#). and there's an older 2-for-1 release on CD and download ([CHAN241-41](#)). Actually, I knew many of these component recordings already and had recommended several of them in one format or another.



Inevitably, Chandos are limited to their own recordings by Neeme Järvi, ruling out those which he has made for DG, who have assembled their own 8-CD tribute ([4835490](#), around £24 but on initial offer for £17.65), though they have deleted one of his most respected releases (**Steinberg** Symphony No.2, [4711982](#), still available as a Presto CD and as a download) and BIS.

My only serious reservation about the DG set is that some of the music is presented in excerpt form, tempting the listener to seek out Järvi's more complete recordings; the Alfvén *Midsummer Rhapsody*, for example, could lead the listener to his Alfvén Symphonies and Rhapsodies on BIS, on separate CDs or downloads, or complete at super-budget price on Brilliant Classics [8974](#) – [review](#): 5 CDs for less than £15.

Ditto the Halvorsen, when Chandos have included Järvi's complete CD of this the music of this composer on their 25-CD set, while the extract from *Cantus Arcticus* is crying out for one of the complete recordings of this work, such that from Osmo Vänskä ([BIS-CD-1038](#), with Symphony No.7, *Dances with the Winds* and Flute Concerto – [review](#)).

The several Sibelius contributions will make the DG set worthwhile for many: the only reason why Järvi's earlier Sibelius for BIS is overshadowed is explained by the even more substantial and later body of his music from Osmo Vänskä on that label, not by a lack of rapport. John Phillips was more than

impressed by the original release of the DG collection containing *Valse Triste* – [review](#) – but don't overlook Järvi's BIS collection containing *Pohjola's Daughter*, *Tapiola*, etc (**BIS-CD-312**, also part of 5-CD budget-price set **BIS-CD-1900/02** – [review](#)), or his contributions to Volume 8 of the BIS Sibelius Edition (Orchestral Works, **BIS-CD-1921/23**, 6 CDs for the price of 3 – [review](#)). (NB: If you choose to download any of the Sibelius Edition from [eclassical.com](#), be aware that there are two options for each volume, one competitive in price with the CDs, the other not so.)

Of Järvi's BIS recordings, I have yet to absorb his complete set of the **TUBIN Symphonies**, so I'll point you towards the reviews by [Rob Barnett](#) and [John Quinn](#) and Kirk McElhearn's contribution to [DL News 2014/7](#). (**BIS-CD-1402/1404**, 5 CDs for the price of 3, around £38, but currently on offer for £29.95, or download with booklet from [eclassical.com](#) for \$29.82). See also David Barker in [2013/10](#) on Symphony No.1 and Balalaika Concerto (**BIS-CD-351**).

His latest release on BIS takes us down one of the by-ways of Scandinavian music: **Wilhelm STENHAMMAR** *Sången* (The Song, Op.44); *Romeo och Julia* Suite, Op.45; *Reverenza* and *Two Sentimental Romances*, Op.28, with the Göteborg Orchestra which the composer founded. (**BIS-2350 SACD** available as 24/96 download from [eclassical.com](#); see review by DM below).

**Chandos** can still, however, muster a formidable roster, some represented on the sampler or the 2-CD set, but that still leaves plenty of others.

The earliest Chandos recording, on **CD1**, shows how Järvi got it right from the very start. **Sergei PROKOFIEV** *Symphony No.6* and *Waltz Suite*, Op.110 (Nos. 1, 3 and 4) with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO) was recorded in 1984 and released on CHAN8359. The CD is deleted but it remains available as a [download](#) in mp3 or lossless sound or, better value, on the complete Prokofiev Symphonies (**CHAN10500**, 4 CDs around £17, or download in mp3 or lossless sound for £19.98) That's one of those cases where even mp3 from Chandos costs more than the CDs, but you should be able to find the download for about £16 elsewhere.

Writing about Marin Alsop's Naxos recording of Symphony No.6 and *Waltz Suite*, which I didn't think got to the heart of the music, I called the Järvi recording in aid as preferable, both separately and on the 4-CD set as my preferred alternative – [review](#) – and I repeated that recommendation in expressing my disappointment with a Channel Classics recording in [Spring 2017/2](#).

Next up on **CD2** is **Igor STRAVINSKY** in neo-classical mode: *Jeu de Cartes*, *Orpheus* and *The Soldier's Tale* (suite), recorded in 1986 and 1991, with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and the RSNO, and now available at mid-price on **CHAN10193**, £7 on CD from [Chandos](#) or £7.99 as a lossless download – again, why the price hike for the download? – or £4.99 for mp3. This is still a strong recommendation on its own if the coupling appeals. The chief competition comes from Ilan Volkov with the BBC Scottish SO on Hyperion (**CDA67698**, *Jeu de Cartes* and *Orpheus*, with *Agon* – [review](#) – [DL Roundup](#)). I wrote about the Hyperion before their download site was fully operational: it's available [here](#), currently on offer on CD or download for £5.

Another Chandos Stravinsky bargain couples Järvi's *Le Baiser de la Fée* (The Fairy's Kiss) with Sir Alexander Gibson's *Symphony No.1*, *Symphony in C*, *Ode* and *Symphony in Three Movements*, all with the RSNO, and *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* (Nash Ensemble/Sir Simon Rattle) on two-for-one *The Essential Stravinsky*, **CHAN241-8**. The 'essential' bit is something of a misnomer but, as downloaded in lossless sound from [chandos.net](#), with pdf booklet, I enjoyed this recording. The Gibson items remain among the front runners: the *Symphony in C* and *Symphony in Three Movements* are available separately on Collect [CHAN6577](#), download only; that's been my go-to version for many years.

**CD3: Antonín DVOŘÁK Symphony No.9** (New World) and **My Home Overture**, made in 1986 with the RSNO and released on **CHAN8510**, was one of Järvi's complete recordings of Dvořák's symphonies, still available separately and in a 6-CD set, **CHAN9991**, currently on offer on CD for £40.87. Download in mp3 (£29.97) or lossless (£39.97) from [Chandos](#). Individually and collectively, these may not be the absolute front runners, but they are not far behind the likes of Kubelík, Mackerras, Ančerl and Kertész. At 13:03, as against the usual 11-minutes, the *largo* is very ... *largo*, but the chosen tempo works well, as a similar approach does, indeed, for Kubelík. You may find yourself liking Järvi's *New World* so much that you will wish to supplement it with the complete Dvořák set.

On **CD12** Järvi is less successful in the music of Dvořák's fellow Czech **Bedřich SMETANA**, whose ***Má Vlast*** he recorded in 1993 and 1994 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (**CHAN9366**). Competition is simply so fierce in this work – Sir Charles Mackerras (Supraphon) or even a surprisingly good account from Sir Malcolm Sargent (Classics for Pleasure, download only) – that I was even a little disappointed in Decca's posthumous release of Jirí Bělohlávek's recording, as was John Quinn – [review](#) – though Michael Cookson – [review](#) – thought otherwise.

**CD4: Richard STRAUSS Alpine Symphony** was recorded in 1987 with the RSNO and released on CHAN8557. Felicity 'Flo' Lott sings the **Four Last Songs** in the coupling, one of the best versions of these works and now available at mid-price on **CHAN10075**, with the same performers in other Strauss songs – [review](#). The *Alpine Symphony* is also available on a mid-price 2-CD set **CHAN10199**, with *Tod und Verklärung*, *Heldenleben* and *Don Juan*.

**CD5:** The 1991 recording with the LSO and Philharmonia of **Sergei RACHMANINOV Symphony No.3** and **Symphonic Dances** has been reissued at mid-price on **CHAN10234X**; my recommendation as 'quite a bargain' in [DL Roundup December 2011/1](#) sounds more lukewarm than I intended, though it doesn't efface memories of Eugene Ormandy's *Symphonic Dances* (Sony **G010001222653E**, with Smetana and Offenbach, download only, and more expensive now than when it was available on CD, but well worth having). With Mariss Jansons' excellent 3-CD set of all the Rachmaninov symphonies still available, however, at super-budget price, Chandos and Järvi are out-performed and out-sold here as a single release.

**CD6: Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH Symphony No.10** and **Ballet Suite No.4**, recorded in 1988 with the RSNO on **CHAN8630**, can still hold its head high despite recent competition in the symphony from Andris Nelsons in Boston (DG **4795059** – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)) and Vasily Petrenko in Liverpool (Naxos), the latter short value but the price compensates, hence its choice as [Bargain of the Month](#). I've enjoyed the Chandos ever since I bought it many years ago as licensed on Boots own label, an experiment which didn't last very long, but which offered Chandos and BIS recordings at attractive mid- and budget-prices.

**CD7: Johannes BRAHMS Hungarian Dances** from mid-price **CHAN10073** rec. 1988 and 1989 [56:48]. Not the most urgent recommendation for this music. One of the earliest Naxos CDs offers more sprightly playing at budget price (**8.550110**).

**CD8: CHAN9066** (1989) contains a series of overtures by **Carl Maria von WEBER**, recorded with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Järvi makes only a decent rather than an inspiring case for many of these works. Try *Beherrscher der Geister* (Ruler of the Spirits) from [Naxos Music Library](#), if you can, for an idea of what to expect.

**CD9: Zoltán KODÁLY Dances of Galánta, Hány János Suite** and **'Peacock' Variations** with the Chicago SO in 1990 (**CHAN8877**) comes with an eye-catching cover but against Hungarian-conducted recordings of Kodály (see [DL News 2014/11](#)) Järvi sounds enjoyable but a little unidiomatic.

**CD10: Samuel BARBER Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, Overture *The School for Scandal* and *Adagio for Strings***, with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra from **CHAN9684** rec.1991 [68:12] has always been well thought of – it was a Building a Library choice – so it’s a fine addition to the set, not superseded by Marin Alsop’s fine recording of the symphonies for Naxos, albeit that that is available in 24-bit sound.

As for **Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY**’s Incidental music for *The Snow Maiden*, Op.12 (**CD11**: Detroit SO, from **CHAN9324** [79:04]), recorded in 1994, Järvi senior has some serious competition from son Kristjan, recorded live in 2014, on Sony – [review](#) – and from himself in a 16-minute suite, coupled with Symphony No.1 – [review](#) – [DL News 2013/1](#) – also with the complete symphonies on **BIS-1897/98**, super-budget price. (The single release is available on SACD and in 24-bit format, the set is only on CD and in 16-bit format. **NB**: the download is far more expensive than the discs). Those alternatives would be my choice if buying separately, but the Chandos recording makes an attractive addition to the 25-CD set.

An ‘orchestral adventure’ of connected bleeding chunks from **Richard WAGNER**’s *Ring* cycle on **CD13** didn’t do much for me. (From **CHSA5060** – [review](#)).

**CD14: Johan HALVORSEN Orchestral Music** on **CHAN10584** with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra in 2009 fired the imagination of Arthur Barker who dubbed it a most enjoyable winner – [review](#) – while David Barker looked forward to the other volumes in the series – [review](#). There have been four volumes, in fact, conveniently assembled on **CHAN10834** – [review](#) – so the only problem about including Volume 1 on this 25-CD set is that you will also want the rest. I missed this at the time, but I’m very pleased to have caught up now, first from [Naxos Music Library](#) and subsequently in 24/96 download format from [chandos.net](#), the only way to obtain Volume 1 separately – the CD is deleted in favour of the 4-disc set. Having previously known only the *Entry of the Boyars*, offered on several light-music collections, I’m delighted that reviewing this gathering of Järvi’s recordings has led me to what some have described as Norway’s best-kept secret.

**CD15: CHSA5104** (2011) divided opinion, with accounts of the **Camille SAINT-SAËNS** *Danse macabre* and his other popular music from the RSNO. Brian Reinhart was disappointed – [review](#) – but Dan Morgan wondered ‘what’s not to like?’ – [DL Roundup May 2012/2](#) – and, even with memories of Jean Martinon in mind, I concurred – [DL News August 2012/1](#).

Rob Barnett was warm in praising a selection of Overtures and Marches by **Franz von SUPPÉ** (**CD16**, from **CHSA5110** – [review](#)). Gary Higginson recommended with caveats – [review](#) – and Dan Morgan had even more reservations – [DL News 2013/2](#).

Dan was also unenthusiastic about a selection of the music of **Emmanuel CHABRIER** [**CD19** from **CHSA5122** (2012)], much preferring Ansermet’s vintage recordings with the same players, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande<sup>1</sup> – [DL News 2013/8](#). Raymond J Walker was more enthusiastic – [review](#) – but Philip Borg-Wheeler, like me, thought it variable in quality – [review](#). Try the pleasant but slightly unexciting *España* from [Naxos Music Library](#) if you can.

Dan, who doesn’t mince his words when reviewing turkeys (pun unintended), was even more dismissive of Järvi’s account of **Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY** *The Nutcracker* [**CD21** from **CHSA5144** (Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, 2013)]: ‘Simply dreadful’. Paul Corfield Godfrey, however, was much more impressed – [review](#) – and it emerged as one of the top *Nutcracker* choices in a Gramophone survey. Like Järvi’s other recordings of Tchaikovsky ballets, this really divided opinion. Here again, I suggest sampling from [Naxos Music Library](#), or there’s an excerpt on the sampler.

Nor was Dan very pleased with a selection of music by **Johann STRAUSS II** and **Josef STRAUSS** [**CD25** from **CHAN10937**] entitled *Strauss in St Petersburg*, recorded with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra in 2012 and 2015: ‘Swift, almost cursory performances of second-rate Strauss; one to avoid’

– [review](#). Granted that the selection of music is not out of the top drawer – more suitable for those with a basic collection from the likes of Willi Boskovsky or several of the New Year concerts – and that the performances lack some of the *Gemütlichkeit* associated with Viennese performers, especially from Boskovsky’s own small-scale ensemble – [review](#) – [review](#) – I still enjoyed this collection rather more than Dan.

As proof that it’s not only the Viennese who can do Strauss, the Marco Polo editions of Johann I and II and Josef successfully cast their net to cover a number of orchestras east of Austria. Compare, for example, Järvi’s version of the little-performed *St Petersburg Quadrille* (Track 17) with Johannes Wildner conducting the Slovak State PO, Kosiče, on track 8 of Volume 14, **Marco Polo 8.223124**. As it happens both take 4:59 for this piece based on Russian themes and both are foot-tapping but the smaller-scale Slovak performance has a little extra light and shade and a touch more Viennese charm.

**CD17** contains Järvi’s very worthwhile contribution to the revival of interest in the music of **Sir Charles Hubert PARRY**: his *Te Deum, Jerusalem* (inevitably) and other music (**CHAN10740** – [review](#) – [review](#) – [DL Roundup September 2012/2](#)).

**CD18**: With five albums of the music of **Kurt ATTERBERG** available on Chandos, the contents of Volume 1, including Symphonies Nos. 4 and 6, (**CHSA5116** – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)) serves as an appetite-whetter for the whole set. Among our reviewers, only Brian Reinhart was less than impressed – [review](#). As someone who got to know this music largely from Järvi’s recordings, I can only hope that the set leads listeners to the other four albums.

**CD20**: **Joachim RAFF Symphony No.5** and **Overtures** from **CHSA5135** [80:02] – [review](#). The original is available on SACD and in 24-bit sound.

**CD22**: **Eugen SUCHOŇ Sinfonietta Rustica** and other music from **CHAN10849** [62:36] – [review](#) – [review](#). One reservation, as with the Raff: the [individual download](#) is available in 24-bit sound.



**CD23**: a selection of the music of **Julius Wilhem Ernst FUČÍK**, recorded with the RSNO in 2015 (**CHSA5158**) tickled the palate of Simon Thompson sufficiently to receive a **Recording of the Month** award – [review](#) – and Rob Barnett and I were almost as impressed – [review](#).

**CD24**: **Jacques IBERT Escales** and other music from **CHSA5168** [81:06] earned praise from Dan Morgan – [review](#) – and Curtis Rogers – [review](#). The original is available on SACD and in 24-bit sound – [DL News 2016/4](#).

I might have replaced some of these choices with, say, Järvi’s 1991 recording with the Danish National Radio Symphony Orchestra of three **Symphonies** by **Rued LANGGAARD**, Nos. 4, 5 and 6 (**CHAN9064** – [review](#)) but that can easily be obtained separately.

Ditto the two **Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH Violin Concertos**, with Lydia Mordkovitch as soloist, one of my benchmarks, especially for No.2, reissued at mid-price in the series dedicated to the violinist’s memory (**CHAN10864** – [DL News 2015/7](#)).

And how about Järvi’s two recordings with the Detroit Orchestra of music by the Afro-American musical pioneer **William Grant STILL**? **Symphony No.1** with **Duke Ellington Suite** from *The River* is on **CHAN9154** and **No.2** with *Song of a New Race* is on **CHAN9226** – [DL Roundup August 2009](#).

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| CDs from |   |  |  |
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<sup>1</sup> Sadly, too little of Ansermet's Chabrier is available on CD or download.

### Organum/Marcel Pérès

Conscious of the fact that the sound of this ensemble and the theories of its director are an acquired taste – one which I have never really developed<sup>1</sup> – I dipped into Harmonia Mundi's recent reissues of several of their recordings at upper mid-price, typically around £9. For those unaware of what to expect, I recommend streaming from Naxos Music Library first – for me, alas, the covers are the most attractive thing about most of these reissues.

The music of that great medieval polymath **HILDEGARD of Bingen** is a good place to start. Her *Laudes de Sainte Urule*, songs and hymns in praise of Saint Ursula, from 1997, are reissued on **HMO8901626** [78:50]. It's pretty well impossible to ruin Hildegard's music but the Pérès style is irksome from the opening intonation of the plainsong *Deus in adiutorium*. Matters improve as the recording continues, though you may find the sound of the female singers in their lower register very odd. One or two quirks of ornamentation apart, for which those more knowledgeable than I have found little evidence, this was not as off-putting as expected.



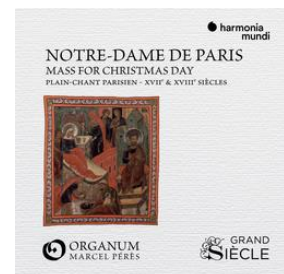
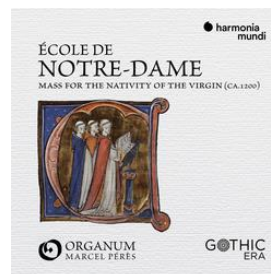
As this is the only recording of these hypnotically beautiful works in this combination, arranged as a celebration of the office of Lauds, I shall be returning to it, but not as often as to the all-time classic Hyperion *A Feather on the Breath of God* on which Emma Kirkby and Gothic Voices introduced us to Hildegard's music (CDA66039, CD, or download with pdf booklet for £5.99 from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk)) or to the various Hildegard recordings made by Sequentia.

<sup>1</sup> Derived largely from his work with Corsican singers, as recorded on Harmonia Mundi d'Abord **HMA1951495**, budget-price.

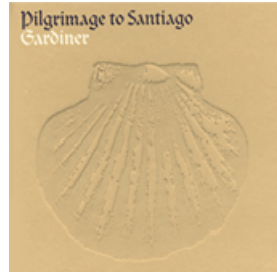
Other volumes include *Le Chant des Templiers*, music from the time of the Knights Templar from a manuscript found in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (**HMO8905302**). For once, the 'oriental' Pérès style seems not inappropriate, but you may prefer Tonus Peregrinus, Nuova Schola Gregoriana and Ensemble Oni Wytars and others on a 3-CD Naxos compilation, *Time of the Templars* (**8.503192** – [review](#) – [review](#)). Normally around £12, that's currently on offer from Presto for £8.97. Neither has much to do with the Knights Templar.



Two recordings of the music of the **École de Notre Dame de Paris** contain masses for the **Nativity of the Virgin Mary** c.1200, Parisian music performed with more than a hint of influence from the eastern Orthodox tradition, which seems a little unlikely and with performances veering between the fascinatingly slow and the simply off-putting (**HMO8901538**) and **Christmas** as performed in the 17th and 18th centuries (**HMO8901480**). The latter observes the Parisian plainsong of the period, with its attempts to revive the music's Gallican roots.



Also from the twelfth century, *Compostela: Vesperas Sancti Iacobi* (Vespers for St James, whose tomb is reportedly located in the pilgrimage cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, from the Codex Calixtinus (HMO8905301) [78:22]), originally released by Ambroisie (AM9966). The Pères style is at work here, of course, but there's not much competition.



Two items from the Codex feature on the Monteverdi Choir's very fine *Pilgrimage to Santiago* (SDG701 – [DL News 2014/8](#)) and there's an album of *Miracles of Compostela* from the all-female Anonymous 4 (Harmonia Mundi Gold HMG507156, mid-price, download only, no booklet available [71:10]). Organum are dreary by comparison with both.

The very idiosyncratic performance of **Guillaume de MACHAUT** *Messe de notre Dame* from 1997 (HMO8901590 [56:34]) demands more patience than I suspect most of us possess, especially those with favourite recordings of this seminal work. Neither this recording nor that of Grindelavoix, an ensemble who have picked up some bad habits from Organum, would fall into my favourite category (Glossa GCDP32110 – [Retrospective Autumn 2016](#), along with earlier HMG reissue of the Pères). If either had been my introduction to the work, I don't think I would ever have returned to it.



Brilliant Classics offer a splendid 3-CD bargain, including the Machaut Mass and his other sacred and secular music performed by Ensemble Gilles Binchois on 94217, usually around £10 but currently on offer from [Presto](#) for £8.40.

For two earlier and more recommendable, budget-price releases from Organum, please see [DL News 2014/1](#).

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## Christmas



It's that time again, as Frankie Howerd used to say at the end of *Up Pompeii*, and the record companies are, of course, preparing to offer us their wares.

Advent used to be a time of abstinence, second only to Lent, but it's recently become so much an anticipation of Christmas that by the time the real thing arrives it's an anti-climax. For some time, St John's College Cambridge have held a special service of Advent readings and carols on Advent Sunday, the nearest Sunday to 30 November, when the undergraduates are still in residence. Inevitably, some preview of Christmas creeps in, but the programme usually sticks mainly to the theme of anticipation.



John Quinn recently welcomed a Signum recording *Advent Live* from St John's, a selection from the BBC broadcasts from 2014-2017, directed by Andrew Nethsingha (SIGCD535 – [review](#)), which leaves me simply to point out that the album is available in 16-bit sound from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk), complete with pdf booklet, for just £6.99. (There's no 24-bit equivalent for once). One small grumble: at 60 minutes, there would have been room on the CD to have included the Advent prose *Rorate cæli desuper*, which punctuates the service.

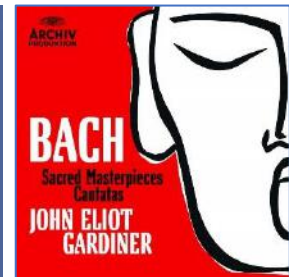
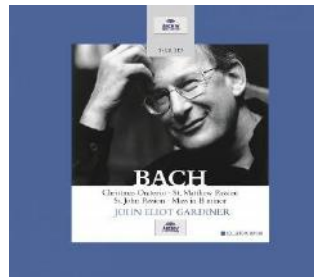


Don't forget the 2016 offering *Christmas with St John's* (SIGCD458 – [review](#) - [Retrospective](#)).

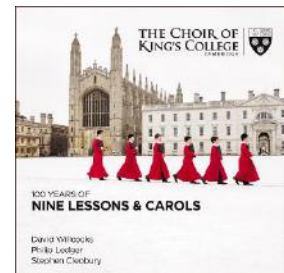
DG have a brightly-packaged catch-all budget-price compilation of **100 Christmas Masterpieces** (4836001, 5 CDs or downloads). It's all rather bitty, but many people who can't or won't listen to classical music in any other way will go for it – those who enjoy albums of disconnected arias but won't even try highlights from one opera, let alone the complete thing. The recordings, drawn from the catalogues of the Universal labels, are mostly very good: excerpts from Sir David Willocks' King's College carol recordings, Trevor Pinnock's *Messiah* and Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Christmas Oratorio*, for example.



But why not go for those complete recordings instead? Gardiner's DG Archiv box set of Bach Passions, Mass in b-minor and *Christmas Oratorio* (4697692) is especially good value on 9 CDs at budget price – normally around £52 but on offer from [Presto](#) for £36.92 until 14 January 2019. If you really wish to splash out, the same contents plus the *Magnificat* and a selection of cantatas in a 22-CD set for around £56 is reduced by [Presto](#) to £49.44, again until 14 January 2019 (4778735). The awful cover art for the 22-CD box is the only problem.



Equally popular, I trust, or even more so, will be a 2-CD compilation on King's Cambridge's own label entitled **100 Years of Nine Lessons and Carols**: just over a month after the Armistice which ended WWI, Eric Milner-White brought his modern version of a medieval tradition, originally introduced at Truro Cathedral by Bishop Benson in 1880, to Cambridge. It's also 90 years since the service was first broadcast and this year will be the last occasion on which Stephen Cleobury will conduct the music.



All the details of the programme, one disc of historical BBC broadcast recordings and one of new recordings, sold for the price of one, are in Marc Rochester's *Recording of the Month*, together with purchase links – [review](#). The 24/96 download from hyperion-records.co.uk to which I listened costs just a little more than the CDs and the 16-bit version rather less (£13.90/£9.25 respectively, both with pdf booklet).

I can't muster much enthusiasm for an Alpha recording entitled **Noël Éternel**; it tries too hard to be all things to all listeners, from those nostalgic for Christmas Past (opening with a version of *Stille Nacht* in French, which will hardly appeal to an international audience), via baroque favourites by French composers, Daquin et al., and Corelli's Christmas Concerto, Op.6/8, to Poulenc's *Quatre Motets pour le Temps de Noël*. The audience – these are live recordings from December 2017 – liked the programme and I'm sure that the performances, from Maîtrise de Radio France/Sofi Jeannin, Maîtrise Notre Dame de Paris/Henri Chalet and Yves Castagnet (organ) were enjoyable on the evening. This seems to exist in a short form, running for 27 minutes, and a longer 2-CD version (for Francophone countries?) My press preview and the streamed version from [Naxos Music Library](#) certainly consisted of the short version, with booklet notes in French only, and that seems to be the only version available in the UK, download only, albeit at the same price as a full 70-minute-plus album! (ALPHA422).



If you want the **Poulenc** Christmas Motets in a more rewarding context, you could do much worse than a 2008 release *A Christmas Caroll from Westminster Abbey* (**CDA67716** – [review](#) – [DL News 2015/11](#)).

***Verbum caro factum est: A Christmas Greeting*** from **Bach Collegium Japan**, directed by **Masaaki Suzuki**, with Masato Suzuki (organ), intersperses seasonal music ranging from our old friend **Anon.** (*Verbum caro factum est*, Let all mortal flesh, *In dulci jubilo*, The first Nowell, O come, o come, Emmanuel), via **Scheidt** (*O Jesulein süß*) and **Bach** (?) (*Ich steh an deiner Krippen*), **Mendelssohn** (*Festgesang*), **Wade** (*O come, all ye faithful*) and **Gruber** (*Stille Nacht*) to **Kirkpatrick** (Three carols) interwoven with **Daquin's** *Nouveau livre de noëls*, charming arrangements for organ of traditional French carols. Reviewed as 24/96 download, with pdf booklet (texts and translations included) from [eclassical.com](#). **BIS-2291 SACD** [68:21]

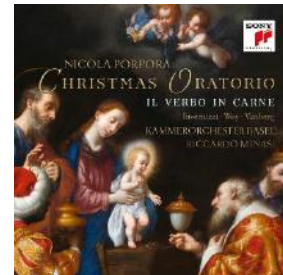


This team's **Bach Christmas Oratorio** (1998) may have been overtaken by more recent recordings from the likes of John Butt and his Dunedin Consort (Linn) but it's still well worth considering. Presto's reduced price of £19.50 will have been withdrawn by the time that you read this, but it can be downloaded from [eclassical.com](#) in lossless sound, with pdf booklet, for \$21.11.



John Eliot Gardiner on two DG Archiv CDs can be found for around £11.50 (**4791759**), or in the 9-CD or 22-CD boxes mentioned above.

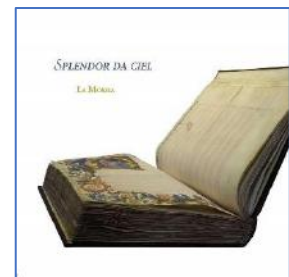
**Nicola PORPORA (1686-1768)** Christmas Oratorio *Il verbo in carne* (The Word made flesh, 1741) has been recorded by Riccardo Minasi and the Basel Chamber Orchestra, with Marc-Olivier Oetterli (bass, Truth), Terry Wey (counter-tenor, Peace), Martin Vanberg (tenor), Roberta Invernizzi (soprano, Justice) (**SONY 19075868452**) [66:55]. Until now, we've had only excerpts, as from Franco Fagioli on Naïve **V5369** – [review](#) – [review](#) – so the complete work is very welcome. The music was rediscovered in 1947, but this new recording effectively makes the discovery all over again by presenting it in an idiomatic performance. I can't pretend that this attractive music comes anywhere near matching Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* or Handel's *Messiah*, but that's like trying to compare a very reliable family car like a Golf with a Rolls Royce.



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***Splendor da ciel***

Rediscovered Music from a Florentine Trecento Manuscript:  
 Music from The San Lorenzo Palimpsest (c.1420)  
 La Morra/Corina Marti and Michał Gondko  
 rec. March 2018, Church of St. Leodegar, Möhlin, Switzerland. DDD.  
 Texts and translations included.  
 Reviewed as mp3 press preview.  
**RAMÉE RAM1803** [63:40]



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To adapt the publicity material: The Archivio del Capitolo di San Lorenzo in Florence conserves a manuscript entitled *Campione de' Beni 1504* which once served to record church properties. However, its parchment leaves originally belonged to a music manuscript compiled around 1420 in Florence. The

musical notation was scraped off in order to make room for the new content. For a long time, the remains of the musical notation were considered unreadable, but recently scholars and scientists from the University of Hamburg have been able to render the original manuscript legible again by using the latest multispectral imaging technology.

The San Lorenzo Palimpsest, as the collection is known today, is an invaluable source of mainly Italian secular polyphonic music composed in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It turned out to contain not only new readings of compositions known from other contemporary manuscripts, but also, and more importantly, completely unknown pieces by such Florentine composers as **Giovanni MAZZUOLI (1350/60-1426)**, his son **Piero (1386-1430)** and **Paulo da FIRENZE (1355-1436)**. The majority of the works – secular (mainly) and sacred – are receiving their first recordings. The manuscript contains much more than there is here, so there's scope for future recordings.

The music dates from an earlier period than La Morra's previous recording, *The Lion's Ear*, music for the musician-pope Leo X (**RAM1403: Recording of the Month** – [review](#)), and while the performances are equally fine, this is more for specialists than that earlier release.

### Josquin des PREZ (c.1450/55-1521)

*Miserere mei Deus: Funeral Motets and Deplorations*

*Déploration sur la mort d'Ockeghem:*

*Nymphes des bois / Requiem æternam* [3:30]

*Nymphes, nappés / Circumdederunt me* [2:19]

*In principio erat Verbum: In principio erat Verbum* [2:41]; *Fuit homo missus a Deo* [4:35]; *Et verbum caro factum est* [1:46]

*Absolve quæsumus, Domine* [3:40]

*Absalon, fili mi* [3:30]

*Planxit autem David:*

*Planxit autem David* [3:54]

*Montes Gelboe* [2:17]

*Sagitta Jonathæ* [3:24]

*Doleo super te* [2:42]

*De Profundis / Requiem æternam* [4:33]

*Miserere mei, Deus: Miserere mei, Deus* [5:33]; *Auditui meo dabis gaudium* [4:13]

*Domine, labia mea aperies* [5:00]

*Pater noster / Ave Maria* [7:05]

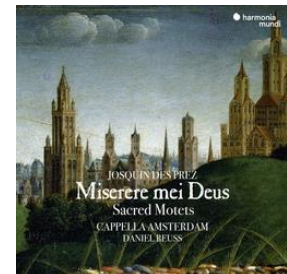
**Nicolas GOMBERT (c.1495-c.1560)** *Musæ Jovis* [5:20]

Cappella Amsterdam/Daniel Reuss

rec. de Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam, July 2018. DDD.

Texts included

**HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902620** [66:00] For purchase details please see review by [Gary Higginson](#).



Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from

eClassical  
High-quality classical download store

My colleague GH beat me to the draw with this recording.

This new release takes us full circle from Josquin's lament for the death of Ockeghem, the 'bon père' of the younger composers of his generation, to Gombert's for Josquin himself. This marks a return to territory for Cappella Amsterdam and Daniel Reuss, who have most recently recorded music from a much later period for Harmonia Mundi: Brahms – [review](#), Poulenc – [review](#), Martin and Pärt – [review](#). In 2009, however, they recorded a programme of French psalms and the Latin *De profundis*, *Magnificat* and *Te Deum* for the reformed church by Sweelinck for the label (HMC902033, download only, in

lossless sound, without booklet, from [eclassical.com](http://eclassical.com), stream from [Naxos Music Library](http://Naxos Music Library)). For Hyperion, with Red Byrd, they made a fine recording of music by the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Léonin (CDH55328 – [review](#)).

Despite receiving high praise, we seem to have missed it, and the Sweelinck recording has already disappeared on disc after a comparatively short period of availability. I hope that the new Josquin will not suffer the same fate, but only the classical buying public will decide that. At least the earlier album remains available to download or stream. Given that the group manage to inject a degree of colour into music which of necessity had to be fairly plain for Calvinist consumption, the omens seemed good that they would do the same for Josquin's more colourful output.

The chief work on the new release, Josquin's setting of the penitential psalm 50 (51) *Miserere*, Have mercy upon me, O God, one of the first ever settings of a complete psalm, has also recently been recorded by Magnificat and Philip Cave on Linn, the first piece in a programme of penitential music entitled *Scattered Ashes: Josquin's Miserere and the Savonarola Legacy*. Josquin was composer for the Duke of Ferrara, a follower of the controversial Florentine friar Savonarola, the instigator of the original Bonfire of the Vanities. Some of the other works on that album are settings of words by Savonarola and though the informed supposition that Josquin's *Miserere* was inspired by the friar must be just that, the album as a whole, itself inspired by Philip Macey's book *Bonfire Songs – Savonarola's Legacy* is very interesting. It's paradoxical that Savonarola, who dismissed the arts as vanity, should have inspired Josquin's music; it's also plausible that he influenced some of Botticelli's paintings, such as the *Mystical Nativity*.

The Linn performances are well up to the very high standard that we have come to expect over the years from Magnificat, which makes this a very hard act for the new recording to follow. (**CKD517** [84:05] 2 CDs or download from [linnrecords.com](http://linnrecords.com)). The download comes for the price of a single album, as befits a playing time only just over the 80-minute mark, but not so the CDs.

Above all, security of line and tonal beauty characterise Cappella Amsterdam's Sweelinck recording, and the same qualities are apparent from the opening lament for Ockeghem, which combines classical mythology in the form of the woodland nymphs with the Catholic *requiem æternam*, on the new recording. There's an even more typical renaissance combination of the classical and Christian in the next piece, where an appeal to various types of mythical beings, nymphs, *napææ* (nymphs of glens), *neridryads* (water sprites) and *dryads* (tree spirits), is combined with the penitential psalm *circumdederunt me*, the sorrows of death and the pains of hell have encompassed me.

My comparative recording for these two works comes on a Hyperion album where the chief work is Jean Richafort's *Requiem* for Josquin, sung by Cinquecento (CDA67959 – [review](#)). I found the singing there 'entrancing' and 'irresistible' – [DL Roundup August 2012/1](#). That recording also includes Josquin's *Miserere*, of which more anon, and Gombert's *Musæ Jovis*, so there's considerable overlap with the new Harmonia Mundi. I'd hate to have to choose between two such very fine recordings, but you may wish to note that there's a very good alternative for the Richafort and other works by him on a super-budget Harmonia Mundi album on which Paul van Nevel directs the Huelgas Ensemble (**HMA1951730** – [review](#)).

A third very fine recording of the Richafort from the King's Singers also contains Josquin's *Nymphes nappées* and Gombert's *Musæ Jovis* (Signum **SIGCD326** – [review](#) – [DL News 2015/5](#)). I thought this a very strong competitor alongside the Cinquecento and Huelgas recordings; though it offers rather less music, the attractive price of the download from [Hyperion](http://Hyperion) compensates. (16-bit £6.50, 24-bit £10.50).

It all boils down, then, to how well the three recordings which contain the *Miserere* handle that work. Comparisons are not a great deal of help: Cinquecento take 15:01, Cappella Amsterdam 14:46, La Chapelle Royale directed by Philippe Herreweghe on Harmonia Mundi d'Abord (**HMA1951243**, budget-price, with *Stabat Mater* and Motets) 15:25. Joshua Rifkin's Cappella Pratensis, takes it at a fast 14:19

(Challenge **CC72366**, *Vivat Leo! Music for a Renaissance Pope* – [review](#) – [DL Roundup December 2010](#)) and Paul Hillier's Hilliard Ensemble (*Franco-Flemish Masterworks*, Erato **6025322**, 8 CDs, super-budget-price) at 18:51 stand outside the general consensus, though even these are recordings which I liked. The Erato, currently on offer from [Presto](#) for £14.30, is an essential purchase – my Bargain of the Month in [DL News 2014/10](#). The CDs currently cost much less than the download which I recommended there, even in mp3.

Magnificat, like the Hilliards, give plenty of weight to the *Miserere*, at 17:33, and this inclines me to make them my top choice, even if that means recommending the purchase of at least two recordings; Magnificat's Linn CD with its fascinating programme will reward repeated listening alongside either Cinquecento or the new Cappella Amsterdam, while the very inexpensive Hilliard collection offers a wonderful survey of the music of Josquin and his contemporaries.

Perhaps the Hilliards give the music just a little too much weight, as also in the *Déploration* [5:51] and *Abasalon, fili mi* [4:28], confirming Magnificat as my 'Building a Library' choice. I hope the recent budget has left your bank balance in a good state, however, because the new Cappella Amsterdam recording has so much going for it as to make it equally recommendable. Don't worry that it's predominantly the music of mourning; not all the items fit that category, and these works are expressive but not exactly down-grindingly sackcloth and ashes depressive when they are as well sung as this. Then you ought to go for one of the recordings of the Richafort *Requiem*, and grab the Hilliards' 8-CD set while it's on offer at give-away prices ...

The good news for the purse-proud is that the new Harmonia Mundi is on offer initially from [eclassical.com](#) in 24-bit format for the same price as 16-bit, \$13.20: even with the current parlous state of the £, that's slightly less than the typical cost of the CD. The Harmonia Mundi Richafort can be obtained from Qobuz as a download for £4.29 (around £6 on CD) and the Signum costs £6.99 (16-bit) or £10.50 (24-bit) from [hyperion-records.com](#). Hyperion's Richafort costs £8 (16-bit, or CD by post) or £12 (12-bit) from [hyperion-records.com](#).

Linn's downloads of *Scattered Ashes* are much less expensive than the 2-CD set: £8 (mp3), £12 (16-bit lossless) or £15 (24/96 or 24/192), all with pdf booklet, from [linnrecords.com](#).

In summary, other recordings of Josquin's *Miserere* may be slightly preferable in detail, but this recording overall is certainly recommendable.

### Josquin des PRÉS (c. 1440-1521)

Plainchant – *Gaudeamus omnes* [1:13]

*Missa Gaudeamus* [35:57]

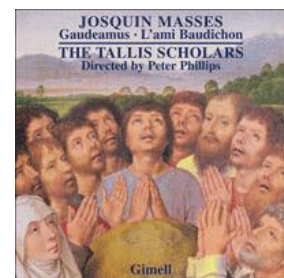
*Missa l'Ami Baudichon* [29:37]

The Tallis Scholars/Peter Phillips

rec. Chapel of Merton College, Oxford

Texts and translations included.

**GIMELL CDGIM050** [66:48] For purchase details please see review by [John Quinn](#).



Reviewed as a 24/96 download, with pdf booklet, from

hyperion

Having alerted my colleague John Quinn (JQ) to the imminent release of this recording several weeks ago, my tardiness allowed him to pip me to the post – not that it's a competition. For full details, including the catalogue numbers of the earlier releases, I refer you to his review, merely adding that all those earlier releases – indeed, the whole Gimell catalogue – can be downloaded from Hyperion, all in 16-bit and many in 24-bit sound and all with pdf booklet.

I expected this to be a very special release, and so it is; JQ is far from alone in praising it highly. I also expected it to be a candidate for Recording of the Month but, in the event, I didn't think it quite special enough, though I certainly recommend this recording of two very different works from opposite ends of Josquin's career, and shall be returning to it frequently. Maybe the whole series so far has been so superb that I've become somewhat blasé.

### Sylvestro GANASSI (1492-1565)

#### *La Fontegara*

Le Concert Brisé [Timea Nagy (recorder), Tiago Simas Freire (recorder, cornet & mute cornet), François Lazarevitch (recorder & flute), Sarah Walder (viola da gamba), Isabelle Brouzes (viola da gamba), Bor Zuljan (lute & percussions), Hadrien Jourdan (harpichord), Stefan Legée (trombone), Romain Bockler (baritone), William Dongois (cornet, mute cornet & recorder)]

rec. Église de Longchaumois, 4-8 September 2017. DDD

Texts included – no translations.

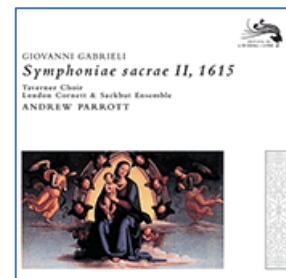
Reviewed as mp3 press preview.

**RICERCAR RIC395** [65:51]



Can a recording of music assembled from late-medieval and early renaissance composers by one of their contemporaries for an academic purpose be enjoyable? Well, this one can be and is, though the purpose of Ganassi's collection was to illustrate the practice of diminution (ornamentation) in the vocal and instrumental music of Josquin, Busnois, Gombert and Attaignant, to name only the best known. The result is as attractive as later and better-known collections such as those of Prætorius, made famous by David Munrow and his Early Music Consort, and Arbeau. As a result, I found myself greatly enjoying what I feared might have been a dry-as-dust collection.

I recently winkled out an HMV Classics CD of Music for St Mark's Venice – **Giovanni GABRIELI, MONTEVERDI, LOTTI, VIVALDI** and others, purchased in 2000 for a series of lectures on the Renaissance that I was giving. That whole series, once on sale in HMV shops, is long defunct but the contents of that album form the second part of a valuable Erato budget twofer, now download only, recordings made by The Taverner Choir and Consort and Andrew Parrott in 1990 (**5619342**). Monteverdi's *Exulta, filia Sion* steals the show, but the whole programme is well worth searching out.



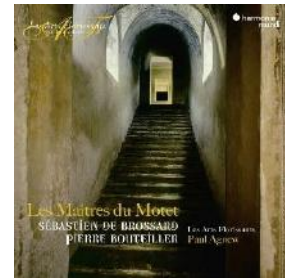
Somewhere at the back of the same cabinet there's a CD of **Giovanni GABRIELI's Sacrae Symphoniae II**, also from the Taverner Choir directed by Andrew Parrott and with Emma Kirkby as one of the soloists (**4368602**, [Presto special CD or download](#)). What happens if I need that for comparison and can't find it? Fortunately, it can be streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#), albeit without the booklet and texts.

**Les Maîtres du Motet****André RAISON (c.1650-1719)** *Kyrie de la Messe du Premier Ton* [1:28]**Sébastien de BROSSARD (1655-1730)** *Miserere mei Deus* SdB.53 *pour une voix de dessus et basse continue avec versets alternés en faux-bourdon* [13:15]**André RAISON** *Kyrie de la Messe du Deuxième Ton* [1:31]**Sébastien de BROSSARD** *Stabat Mater* SdB.8 [17:45]**Pierre BOUTEILLER (c.1655-c.1717)** *Missa pro Defunctis cum quinque voc[ibus]* IPB1 [30:16]**Sébastien de BROSSARD** *Ave verum corpus* SdB.10 *à 5 voix* [2:32]

Les Arts Florissants/Paul Agnew

rec. July 2016, Abbaye de Lessay, France. DDD.

Texts and translations included

**HARMONIA MUNDI HAF8905300 (HMM8905300)** [67:03]

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I must admit to not having been too aware of the music of these composers before, though there are a few other recordings in the catalogue, including one which couples the two major works on this new release from Les Arts Florissants (Brossard *Stabat Mater*, Bouteillier *Requiem*, *Le Concert Spirituel*/Hervé Niquet, Glossa **GCD921621**).

I can't pretend that the music rises too far above the ordinary by comparison with the great French composers of sacred music of this period, M-A Charpentier and the like; the cover shot is more adventurous than the music, but this performance makes a very good case for it. I haven't heard the Glossa, which was well received performance-wise, but I doubt if it's preferable to this Harmonia Mundi release.

**Arcangelo CORELLI (1653-1713)**Sinfonia to *Santa Beatrice d'Este* in d minor, Wo01 [9:01]

Concerto grosso in D, Op.6/1 [12:38]

Concerto grosso in F, Op.6/2 [9:26]

Concerto grosso in c minor, Op.6/3 [10:59]

Concerto grosso in D, Op.6/4 [9:17]

Concerto grosso in B-flat, Op.6/5 [9:54]

Concerto grosso in D, Op.6/7 [9:04]

Freiburger Barockorchester/Gottfried von der Goltz (violin)

rec. Ensemblehaus Freiburg, 21-25 November 2017. DDD.

**APARTÉ AP190** [70:19]

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| CD from                      |  |  |
| Stream with pdf booklet from |  |  |

As Corelli is widely and properly regarded as the father of the baroque concerto form, later developed by the likes of Vivaldi, Handel and Bach, it's understandable that there should be so many recordings of his Op.6 concertos. So many, indeed, that any new release has to be very special to compete with recordings of the complete set of twelve from The English Concert/Trevor Pinnock (DG Archiv **4749072**, 2 CDs, super-budget price), The Brandenburg Consort/Roy Goodman (Hyperion **CDD22011**, 2 CDs, super-budget price), the Avison Ensemble/Pavlo Beznosiuk (Linn **CKR411**, 2 CDs mid-price) or, for those preferring modern instruments, ASMF/Neville Marriner (Double Decca **4438622**, super-budget price,

download only). I'm disappointed that the Linn is no longer available on SACD, as it was when I [reviewed](#) it as **CKD411**, but it remains a strong recommendation and it can be obtained in 24-96 and 24-192 sound from [linnrecords.com](http://linnrecords.com).

The *raison d'être* of the new release is the inclusion of the *Sinfonia to Santa Beatrice d'Este*, offered here as a substitute for the Op.6/6 concerto, which borrowed its slow movement from the *Sinfonia*. Otherwise, we have the complete set of *concerti da camera* from Op.6; Nos. 8-12, which include the very well-known 'Christmas' Concerto, Op.6/8, are of the *concerto da chiesa* type. I enjoyed these performances and was especially pleased to hear the opening *Sinfonia*, of which there are not too many other recordings. Now, perhaps, we may have Nos. 8-12, possibly with some more of Corelli's music.

Alternative recordings of the *Sinfonia to Beatrice d'Este* include: *The Italian Job* (La Serenissima/Adrian Chandler, Avie **AV2371** – [Summer 2017/1](#)) and a complete recording of Op.6 which vies with the Linn for my top recommendation (Gli Incogniti/Amandine Beyer, Zig-Zag Territoires **ZZT327** – [review](#)).

### Alessandro SCARLATTI (1660-1725)

#### **O Penosa Lontananza: Cantate da Camera**

*Imagini d'orrore* [8:18]

*O penosa lontananza*, H479 [13:42]

*Sovra carro stellata*, H680 [17:20]

*Sotto l'ombra d'un faggio*, H678 [8:52]

*Fiero, acerbo destin*, H262 [10:29]

*Tu resti, o mio bel nume*, H742 [12:18]

Deborah Cachet (soprano)

Scherzi Musicali/Nicolas Achten (baritone, theorbo, triple harp, organ)

rec. Provinciaal Museum Begijnhofkerk Sint-Truiden, 21-24 January 2018. DDD.

Texts and translations included

Reviewed as mp3 press preview

**RICERCAR RIC396** [71:00]



Scherzi Musicali, Nicolas Achten and Ricercar offer a selection of pastoral cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti which, to the best of my knowledge, contains the only available versions of most (all?) of these works. Certainly, they supplement those from Concerto de' Cavalieri on CPO **7777482**, Ensemble Aurora on Tactus **TC661905**, Tempesta di Mare on Chandos **CHAN0768** – [review](#) – and the Alessandro Stradella Consort on Bongiovanni **GB2327**.

The music may not be of the same high quality as that which the young Handel was writing in Rome at about the same time<sup>1</sup>, but it is all charming and the performances make the best case for it. The pastoral verse form may not be much to modern taste, with conventions which were already old when Virgil opened his first *Eclogue* with Tityrus relaxing beneath the shade of a beech tree (*sub tegmine fagi*), the very place where Thyrsis was lamenting the absence of his beloved in *Sotto l'ombra d'un faggio*, but the music has much more lasting appeal.

Johan van Veen thought these same performers 'vivid and highly expressive' in Bertali's *La Maddalena: Recording of the Month* – [review](#) – and those words apply no less to their contribution here. And, incidentally, to Nicolas Achten and Scherzi Musicali – without Deborah Cachet this time – in Caccini's *L'Euridice* – [DL Roundup February 2012/2](#).

<sup>1</sup> See my [review](#) of Carolyn Sampson's recent recording of Handel Italian cantatas (Vivat).



**Antonio VIVALDI (1678-1741)**

It's 30 years since **Cecilia Bartoli** first recorded for Decca and almost 20 years since *The Vivaldi Album*. Her new recital of arias by Vivaldi with **Ensemble Matheus** and **Jean-Christophe Spinosi** appeared just as I was closing this edition, but I couldn't resist a sneak listen. (**4834475** rec. 2018 [58:29]).



It's a real tour de force which won't disappoint her many admirers and it should make new friends for her among those not yet converted – if there are any. There's plenty of variety, as exemplified by the first two items: a storming aria from *Agrippa* and a tender contrast from *Orlando Furioso*.

**Antonio SOLER (1729-1783)**

*Obra vocal en latín* (Latin vocal settings)

*Dixit Dominus, a4 y ripieno* (Rubio No.18)\* (1754) [12:30]

*Magnificat, a8* (Rubio No.259)\* [9:27]

*Incipit Lamentatio. Aleph. Quomodo sedet, Lamentación I del Jueves Santo a8* (First Lamentation for Maundy Thursday, Rubio No.94-1-2) (1762) [15:35]

[*Verso para el Alzar*]. *Largo* (Rubio No. 471) [7:03]

*Salve, Regina, a 5* (Rubio No.9) (1753) [9:38]

*Miserere, a 8* (Rubio No.295) [22:11]

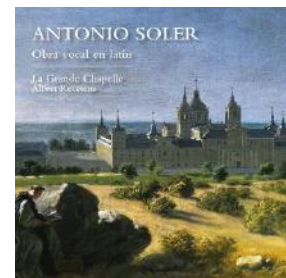
La Grande Chapelle/Albert Recasen

\* world premiere recordings.

rec. 19 October 2017, Iglesia de San Jerónimo el Real de Madrid. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

**LAUDA LAU018** [76:24]



I had to include a brief note on this, though it delayed the process of pulling these reviews together – having heard snippets on Radio 3, I simply had to download it from Qobuz. There are several recordings of Soler's keyboard music, for harpsichord, fortepiano and organ, and concertos, but very little of his vocal music for the great monastery of El Escorial. This new release, offering fine performances and recording, demonstrates that there is no reason at all for such neglect.

The notes in the booklet are scholarly, but you need to read Spanish for some of the most detailed, including the Bibliography. No matter: those in English should be sufficient for most of us.

**Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)**

String Quartet No.14 in d minor, D810, 'Death and the Maiden' (1824) [40:21]

String Quartet No.9 in G minor, D173 (1815) [22:21]

Chiaroscuro Quartet [Alina Ibragimova, Pablo Hernán Benedí (violins), Emilie Hörnlund (viola), Claire Thirion (cello)]

rec. March 2017, Deutschlandfunk Kammermusiksaal, Cologne. DSD/DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](http://eclassical.com).

**BIS-2268 SACD** [62:47]





Fresh from convincing performances of Haydn's 'Sun' quartets – [Spring 2018/1](#) – these period-instrument players turn in equally compelling accounts of early and late Schubert – but why on earth did BIS choose to present them in reverse chronological order? After such a powerful performance of *Death and the Maiden*, the earlier quartet sounds too much like a *bonne bouche*; it's not that I'm not partial to such goodies, but not straight after D810. Otherwise, I have nothing but praise all round for this release.

If the Pavel Haas Quartet (Supraphon **SU41102: *Recording of the Month*** – [review](#) – [DL News 2013/14](#)) go one better still, it's because they coupled D810 with the wonderful String Quintet in C.

### Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

#### Piano Concertos

*Rondo brillant* in E-flat, Op.29, MWV O 10 (1833) [10:44]

Piano Concerto No.1 in g minor, Op.25, MWV O 7 (1831) [18:34]

*Capriccio brillant* in b minor, Op.22, MWV O 8 (1831) [10:41]

Piano Concerto No.2 in d minor, Op.40, MWV O 11 (1837) [21:28]

Serenade and *Allegro giojoso*, Op.43, MWV O 12 (1838) [12:35]

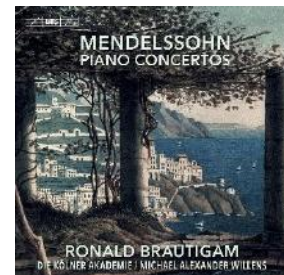
Ronald Brautigam (piano, after 1830 Pleyel)

Die Kölner Akademie/Michael Alexander Willens

rec. July 2016 and July 2017, Deutschlandfunk Kammermusiksaal, Cologne. DSD/DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#).

**BIS-2264 SACD** [74:08]



[Available now to download: on SACD from December 2018]

Fresh from their series of Mozart Piano Concertos on the fortepiano – a controversial set for one reviewer, enlightening for the rest of us – this team now turns to Mendelssohn's concertos. Ronald Brautigam recorded the two numbered piano concertos plus the youthful concerto in a minor for piano and strings, with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta and Lev Markiz, on an earlier (1995) and highly regarded BIS recording (**BIS-CD-718**). The obvious comparisons, however, are with Stephen Hough with the CBSO and Lawrence Foster in an identical programme from Hyperion (**CDA66969** – [review](#)) or Howard Shelley with the London Mozart Players in the two concertos and *Capriccio brilliant* (Chandos **CHAN9215**).

The Hyperion is available as a lossless download from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#) for £8 and the Chandos from [chandos.net](#) for £7.99 (mp3) or £9.99 (lossless). Both come with pdf booklet and both are very well worth considering if you want a recording with a modern piano. If you go for either the Hough or one of the Brautigam recordings, the Shelley versions of Concerto No.1 and *Capriccio brilliant* are also available at budget-price, with Symphony No.4 (LPO/Walter Weller) and the *Hebrides Overture* (SNO/Alexander Gibson) on **CHAN2025** - [review](#).

Those averse to the sound of an 1830 Pleyel piano – much dryer than the modern pianoforte and in many ways more akin to Brautigam's fortepiano in Mozart – should stay with either the Hyperion or the Chandos. In fact, I wouldn't wish to be without one of those – or both, since choice between two such very fine recordings is invidious – but I did enjoy the new Brautigam. Those unsure of what they might make of the 1830 sound would be best advised to wait until the new recording can be streamed from Naxos Music Library or such. The CD isn't available until late December but the 24-bit download is available now and those who enjoyed Brautigam and Willens in Mozart should snap it up while it's available for the same price as the 16-bit.

We reviewers tend to over-use the expression ‘free-wheeling’ but that’s an apt description of the outer movements of the concertos and the *brilliant* works in all three recordings. On paper there’s quite a degree of difference over the tempo of the *andante* second movement of Concerto No.1: at 6:39 Shelley might seem to be taking undue time, but he makes the slower tempo fully convincing. At 4:56 Brautigam is at the other extreme, but he manages to sound anything but perfunctory. Hough’s 5:37 is right in the middle, but sounds far from a compromise. All three – Brautigam not the least – make the *adagio* second movement of the second concerto, usually regarded as the less attractive work, sound just as delectable as its predecessor.

I’ve just changed my DAC from a Dragonfly to the Cyrus Soundkey. This was the first recording with which I ‘ran in’ the Cyrus and I expected to have to make some allowances *pro tem*, but it allowed the BIS recording of the piano and orchestra to shine through. But, then, it allowed the 16-bit Chandos and Hyperion to sound pretty good, too.

**Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)**

Ballade No.4 in f minor, Op.52 [11:47]

Piano Sonata No.2 in b-flat minor, Op. 35 ‘Marche funèbre’ [27:40]

**Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)**

Piano Concerto No.4 in G, Op.58 [34:35]

Eric Lu (piano)

Hallé Orchestra/Edward Gardner

rec. live 8, 11 and 15 September 2018, Great Hall, University of Leeds and Leeds Town Hall. DDD.

**WARNER CLASSICS 902955215** [62:31]



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I’m sure that this is not the ultra-talented Eric Lu’s last word on Beethoven or Chopin, but these live recordings from the 2018 Leeds Piano Competition certainly show why he won the first prize. It’s possible to pick the odd spot off the Beethoven but the performance as a whole can hold its head up even in the company of my favourite recordings<sup>1</sup>; the performance even augurs well for a future where he challenges those luminaries, and the accompaniment from the Hallé and Edward Gardner is most sympathetic.

<sup>1</sup> Far too many to list but including Wilhelm Kempff and Ferdinand Leitner with the BPO (DG Originals **4474022**, with No.5, mid-price), Stephen Kovacevich with Colin Davis and the LPO (Decca Virtuoso **4783350**, with No.5, budget-price, or Pentatone **PTC5186101**, SACD, with No.2) and Paul Lewis with Jiří Bělohlávek and the BBC SO (Harmonia Mundi **HMC902053/55**, Nos. 1-5, 3 CDs, mid-price).

**BARGAIN OF THE MONTH**

**Louis Moreau GOTTSCHALK (1829-1869)**

**The Complete Solo Piano Music**

Philip Martin (piano)

rec. various dates and venues

**HYPERION CDS44451/8** [8 CDs: 578:13]



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Yes, I *did* [review](#) these CDs in 2011, but with Hyperion offering the download for just £35 I thought it a good idea to revisit the set. I'm a great admirer of the Irish pianist Philip Martin, who I last heard in a delectable programme of miniatures, [The Maiden's Prayer](#). Such collections are a Hyperion speciality – [Piers Lane Goes to Town](#) and [Stephen Hough's Dream Album](#) spring to mind – but then piano recordings are what this label does best.

There are some fine Gottschalk albums out there, but Martin's is the only complete survey of the composer's works for solo piano. Not only that, he has a unique affinity for this music that shines through in every bar. Rhythm, touch, dynamics and phrasing are exemplary, and he gauges the eclectic mood and manner of each piece to perfection. And while one might expect inspiration to wax and wane, Martin reminds us just how consistently assured and interesting Gottschalk's keyboard writing really is. Indeed, that's why I found it so easy to listen to all 109 tracks in a single day.

Sensitively planned and lovingly played, this set contains some of the most varied and enchanting piano sounds imaginable. And even though the individual albums were recorded at different times and in several venues, they sound remarkably consistent in terms of balance and character. The tracks that have me reaching for the repeat button include: *Le banjo* (tr. 1), *Le bananier* (tr. 13), *Pasquinade* (tr. 31), the *Andante* from *La nuit des tropiques* (tr. 40) and the miraculous *Tremolo* (tr. 65).

Sure to keep my spirits up on that lonely strand; a must-buy for pianophiles and LMG fans alike. **[DM]**

Another Gottschalk piano album to consider is the 2-CD set of music for two and four hands, with Alan Marks and Nerine Barrett ([Nimbus](#)). **[BW]**

### Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

*Les Trois Sonates: The Final Sonatas* (1915-1917)

Violin Sonata in g minor, L140 [14:12]

*Berceuse héroïque* for piano, L132 [4:35]

*Pièce pour le vêtement du blessé*, L133 [0:54]

Sonata for flute, viola and harp in F, L137 (1916) [17:33]

*Élégie* for piano, L138 [2:23]

Cello Sonata in d minor, L135 (1915) [12:03]

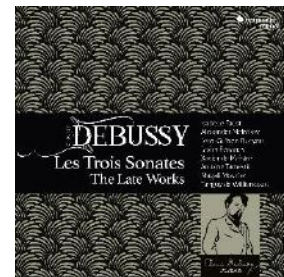
*Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon* in A-flat, for piano [2:16]

Isabelle Faust (Stradivarius violin "Belle au bois dormant"); Alexander Melnikov (piano); Jean-Guihen Queyras (cello); Javier Perianes (piano); Xavier de Maistre (harp, Érard style Louis XVI, late C19); Antoine Tamestit (Stradivarius viola "Mahler"); Magali Mosnier (Louis Lot flute); Tanguy de Williencourt (piano, solo pieces)

rec. December 2016, June 2017 and January-February 2018, Teldex Studio Berlin; June 2017, Amphithéâtre de la Cité de la Musique, Paris. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#).

**HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902303** [53:56]



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This release brings us to the end of Debussy's life and his composing career in the latter days of WWI. It forms a fitting conclusion to Harmonia Mundi's series of *hommages* which have been released for the centenary of his death. Though individual performances of these sonatas have a strong claim on us, this collection serves the composer very well indeed. The performance of the Violin Sonata even

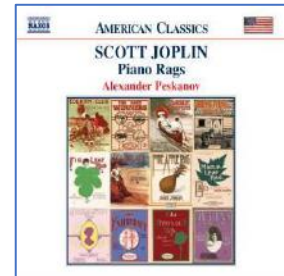
challenges the classic recording from Arthur Grumiaux and Istvan Hajdu (Eloquence **44428299**, 2 CDs, with Ravel, Fauré and Franck Violin Sonatas, etc., or **4683062**, with Cello Sonata and Ravel Violin Sonata and Piano Trio), though I'm not about to throw out my earlier Philips CD of that.

The most serious rival is a distinguished Erato recording released a year ago containing the three sonatas plus *Syrinx* and the Piano Trio (**9029577396**). Choose the Erato if you prefer the coupling; Harmonia Mundi intersperses the sonatas with short piano pieces from the same period, ending the album with a work dedicated to his coal merchant, a desperate appeal for the means to keep warm.

**Scott JOPLIN (1868-1917)**

**Piano Rags – Vol. 1**

- Maple Leaf Rag (1899) [3:11]
- Heliotrope Bouquet: A Slow Drag Two-Step (1907) [4:30]
- Pine Apple Rag (1908) [3:42]
- Solace: A Mexican Serenade (1909) [6:55]
- Paragon Rag (1909) [3:59]
- Pleasant Moments: Ragtime Waltz (1909) [4:05]
- Elite Syncopations (1902) [3:59]
- Original Rag (1899) [4:32]
- Fig Leaf: A High-Class Rag (1908) [4:34]
- The Entertainer: A Ragtime Two-Step (1902) [4:42]
- The Easy Winners (1901) [4:12]
- Country Club Rag (1909) [3:59]
- The Strenuous Life (1903) [5:16]
- Bethena: A Concert Waltz (1905) [7:53]
- Alexander Peskanov (piano)
- rec. 2002, Performing Arts Centre, The Country Day School, King City, Ontario, Canada
- NAXOS AMERICAN CLASSICS 8.559114** [65:29] Reviewed as a 16-bit download, with pdf booklet.
- Previous review: [Patrick Gary](#)



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I came to the music of Scott Joplin, as I suspect many did, via George Roy Hill's 1973 film, *The Sting*. I wore out the Marvin Hamlisch cassette, before graduating to Dick Hyman and Joshua Rifkin. My enthusiasm for this repertoire all but vanished until I [reviewed](#) Volume 2 in this Naxos series, with Benjamin Loeb. As I remarked at the time: 'All in all, a winning compilation, sympathetically played ... The engineers have done a pretty good job, too.' Would this initial instalment, with Alexander Peskanov, be just as rewarding?

First impressions were somewhat mixed. There are two aspects of Peskanov's playing that I found off-putting: his mannered phrasing and his wayward dynamics. It's the kind of pianism that draws attention to itself, which, in turn, takes it away from the scores at hand. That said, there are moments, in *The Easy Winners*, for instance, where his cool, rather jewelled delivery seems more apt than it is elsewhere. He does wistful and elegant quite well, though, notably in the beguiling *Bethena* waltz.

After a while, I warmed to Peskanov's highly individual response to this music, but he's just not as easeful or intuitive as Loeb overall. I much prefer the latter's robust, more *masculine* playing, not to mention his natural way with Joplin's syncopations. Ultimately, he gets closer to the inimitable character of these tunes than Peskanov does, and that makes for a much more varied and involving

listen. In terms of engineering – both volumes were recorded in the same venue, three years apart – Loeb’s collection benefits from greater weight and warmth.

More at home in the salon than the saloon; an acquired taste. [DM]

Lovers of the genre should also investigate *The Early Ragtime*, with pianist Marco Fumo ([OnClassical](#)).

### Wilhelm STENHAMMAR (1871-1927)

*Romeo och Julia* suite, Op. 45 (1922, arr. Hilding Rosenberg, 1944) [17:20]

*Reverenza* (1911-1913) [5:58]

*Two Sentimental Romances*, Op. 28 (1910) [13:36]

*Sången* (The Song), Op. 44 (1921) [29:15]

Sara Trobäck (violin) Charlotta Larsson (soprano); Martina Dike (alto); Lars

Cleveman (tenor); Fredrik Zetterström (baritone)

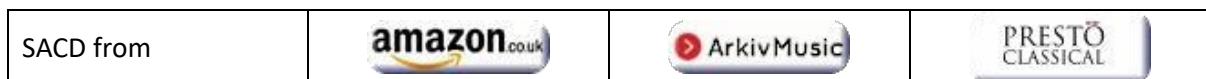
Children’s Choir of Norrköpings Musikklasser

Gothenburg Symphony Choir & Vocal Ensemble

Gothenburg Symphony/Neeme Järvi

rec. 2018, Gothenburg Concert Hall, Sweden

**BIS BIS-2359 SACD** [67:08] Reviewed as a 24/96 download from [eClassical](#). Pdf booklet includes sung texts (Swedish and English). Previous review: [John Quinn](#)



BIS’s most recent Stenhammar release, Christian Lindberg and the Antwerp SO in [Symphony No. 2](#), was an unexpected disappointment. The upside is that review led me to Stig Westerberg’s classic recording of the piece, which I enjoyed immensely ([Caprice CAP21151](#)). Even then, my loyalty to Neeme Järvi’s Gothenburg version, recorded live in 1983, remained largely intact ([BIS-251](#)). Indeed, it’s clear the esteemed Estonian – now 81 – has a real affinity for Stenhammar’s music, which is why I was especially keen to hear this new album.

Like John Quinn, my point of departure for the symphonic cantata *Sången* (The Song) is Herbert Blomstedt’s Stockholm performance, set down in 1982 ([Caprice CAP21358](#)). Coupled with the *Two Sentimental Romances* for violin and orchestra and *Ithaka*, it’s attractive enough, even if it’s a little distant and soft edged. As expected, Järvi is far more incisive, dramatic thrust enhanced by Stephan Reh’s big, bold recording. And while the choirs are suitably animated, the soloists are somewhat variable, the men in particular. As for the women, none rivals Blomstedt’s Anne Sofie von Otter, who’s in full, firm voice throughout.

Blomstedt’s *Romances* are nicely done, although some may find the conductor’s approach a mite self-effacing at times. Järvi’s soloist, Sara Trobäck, seems rather cool after Blomstedt’s sweet-toned Arve Tellefsen, but the chamber-like lucidity and airiness of this new version is hard to resist. Ditto the *Reverenza*, originally the first movement to the Op. 31 [Serenade](#). As for the *Romeo and Juliet* suite, it’s delicate and diaphanous, Järvi unusually pliant and persuasive. Reh captures all this exquisite, ear pricking detail very well indeed.

Lovely music, superbly presented; a welcome addition to the Stenhammar discography. [DM]

I would have missed this had I not read Dan’s review and added some wonderful music to the sum of my knowledge. Having streamed this recording from [Naxos Music Library](#), with pdf booklet, it was a no-brainer to download the 24-bit [eClassical.com](#) version. [BW]

**Béla BARTÓK (1881-1945)***The Miraculous Mandarin*, Suite, Op.19, Sz.73, BB82 (198-24 [20:07]

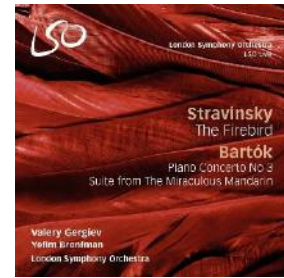
Piano Concerto No.3, BB 127, Sz.119 (1945) [23:48]

**Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)***The Firebird*, complete (1910) [48:00]**Sergei PROKOFIEV (1891-1953)***Romeo and Juliet*, Op.61ter (1936): Montagues and Capulets [4:55]

Yefim Bronfman (piano)

London Symphony Orchestra/Valéry Gergiev

rec. live 24 October 2015, New Jersey Performing Arts Center. DDD.

**LSO LIVE LSO5078** [43:57 + 53:00][NB: CD or 16-bit download only; no SACD or 24-bit version. Download available from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk)]

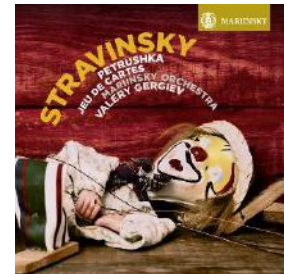
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**Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)***Petrushka* (original 1911 version) [35:26]*Jeu de Cartes* (1937) [22:17]

The Mariinsky Orchestra/Valéry Gergiev

rec.14 January 2014 (*Petrushka*) and 26-31 December 2009 (*Jeu*), Concert

Hall of the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, Russia. DSD

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](http://hyperion-records.co.uk).**MARIINSKY MAR0594 SACD** [57:51]

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I had intended this review for the main pages until I edited Dan Morgan's review of the new *Petrushka*, summarised as 'Riveting performances, very well played and recorded; Gergiev at his very best'.

I'm very late into the chase with the **LSO**. Having let it slip to the bottom of my to-do pile, I remembered it only when I came to review the Mariinsky. The 2-CD set was recorded from a broadcast, not in the LSO's home venue but on a tour of the USA towards the end of Valéry Gergiev's tenure at the helm. Thus, it's available on CD and in 16-bit download form only instead of the usual SACD and 24-bit and, as a memento of an occasion, the applause is retained.

Gergiev in Stravinsky can do no wrong for some – his Philips recordings of *Rite of Spring* (4680352, with Scriabin Symphony No.4 – [review](#)) and *Firebird* (**E4467152**, with Scriabin *Prometheus*, Presto CD or download, or Euroarts **2061088**, DVD – [review](#); blu-ray 2060184), especially the former, are revered in most quarters – but there are others who think he should never be let loose on this composer.

As on Philips, Gergiev performs *The Firebird* in full in its 1911 original form. Even allowing for the final applause, the timing with the LSO is a fraction faster – the *Introduction*, for example, now a shade less mysterious as a result, but that's apparent only by direct comparison, while *Katschei's Dance* comes over with almost exactly the same power on both recordings.

The LSO Live recording now joins a number of fine *Firebird* recordings. While Stravinsky's own recording remains my version of choice, the mid-price Sony reissue, with *Rite of Spring*, is now download only, and no longer so inexpensive (**SMK89875**). Or you may want to wait until Vasily

Petrenko's new RLPO recording emerges in December 2018 (Onyx **ONYX4175**, with Rimsky Korsakov *Golden Cockerel Suite*).

I'm less happy with the decision to perform only the Suite from *The Miraculous Mandarin*, but this is a typically raw Gergiev performance, more like what we expect of him than the over-restrained recordings he has produced with the LSO.

The Bartók Piano Concerto went down well in the concert, but there are more memorable accounts to be had in complete recordings of all three concertos: Bavouzet and Nosedá (Chandos **CHAN10610** – [review](#), but see my reservations in [DL Roundup October 2010](#)), for example, and, among older recordings, Anda and Fricšay (DG Originals **4473992**, mid-price) or Kovacevich and Davis (Philips Originals **4758690**, download only, budget price). The very inexpensive Schiff and Fischer reissue on Apex is no longer available ([DL Roundup August 2011/1](#)).

The obvious benchmark for the original (1911) *Petrushka* comes from its first conductor, Pierre Monteux. His 1956 Paris Conservatoire recording, with Julius Katchen (piano), is coupled with *The Rite of Spring* on Decca Eloquence 4808903 – [review](#) – [DL News 2016/5](#) – and his 1959 Boston Symphony recording is available, without coupling, so rather short value and rather expensively priced, on RCA **G010003259628D** (download only, or, with Franck Symphony **G010000416448R**, download only – [review](#) of earlier, more generous coupling). Better value is offered by RCA's Complete Monteux Stereo Recordings (**19075816342**, 8 CDs for around £26 but currently on offer for £18.55. **NB:** it's ridiculously more expensive as a download!)

For a more recent recording – on SACD or 24/44.1 download – of the 1911 original, my preferred edition, there's Andrew Litton with the Bergen Philharmonic, with the *Rite of Spring* (**BIS-SACD-1474** – [Recording of the Month](#) – [DL Roundup March 2012/1](#)).

For the 1947 revision, Yakov Kreizberg's recording with the Monte Carlo Philharmonic is, sadly, defunct – snap up a second-hand copy if you can or download, for splendid accounts of *Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *Rite of Spring* and *Pulcinella* (**OPMC001** – [Recording of the Month](#)). Bargain-hunters should enjoy Simon Rattle's CBSO recordings of the 1947 version, with *Rite of Spring*, *Firebird* (1910) and *Apollo* on super-budget Warner twofer **9677112** – [review](#).

For a recreation of the sound of 1911 and 1913 on instruments of the period, Les Siècles conducted by Xavier Roth in *Rite of Spring* and *Petrushka* (1911) is just the thing. (Actes Suds **ASM15** – [review](#) – [DL News 2014/9](#)).

My most recent encounter with *Jeu de Cartes* was from the Chandos 25-CD tribute to Neeme Järvi (**CHAN20088**, above); that recording is also available separately, with *Orpheus* and *Histoire du Soldat Suite* (**CHAN10193X**, mid-price).

Recent recordings from Valery Gergiev, on the LSO Live and Mariinsky labels, have not always lived up to his reputation for powerful performances. In *Petrushka*, both power and sensitivity are needed and the piano has to play a *concertant* part without the work developing into a pseudo concerto.

All the recordings listed above achieve that balance, though some place a greater emphasis on one aspect of the music or another. Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (1947 version) avoids any temptation to steal the limelight on a recording conducted by Yan Pascal Tortelier, even though the *raison d'être* of the album is to gather together Stravinsky's works for piano and orchestra on an SACD well worth considering (Chandos **CHSA5147** – [review](#)).

There's plenty of energy on the new Gergiev recording and plenty of sensitivity, too. There's very little that I disliked: perhaps the *Waltz of the Ballerina and the Moor* (track 8) is a little on the slow side, but



so is Kreizberg and that makes it sound all the more smoochy, with the return to the bustle of the Shrovetide Fair on the next track all the more marked.

By the stopwatch, some of the other movements are a tad slow, but, the *Waltz* apart, that's apparent only when one starts looking at the timings. Gergiev's entry of the peasant with a bear (tr.11) is a little slower than Stravinsky's own Columbia SO recording of the 1947 score (Sony **G010003468026K** download only, with *Rite of Spring*), but you wouldn't think so till you started comparing.

On the other hand, Gergiev's *Dance of the Mummers* (tr.14) is a shade faster than Stravinsky's but slower than Rattle, though all three capture the spirit of the music and provide a foreshadowing of the *Death of Petrushka* in the final movement (tr. 15). That's taken at almost exactly the same pace as by Stravinsky – Kreizberg again gives this section a little more space and I marginally prefer his approach, strengthening my recommendation of his recording overall. Rattle, too, despite fastish tempi earlier in the work, gives this section a little more time to make its point.

After hearing the new recording, I listened to Monteux's Paris Conservatoire recording all through. The Decca recording sounds its age in that it's a trifle thin and bright and the performance sounds a little tame in places by comparison with Gergiev – mainly, but not wholly, because of the recording. Overall I'm surprised to find myself preferring Gergiev, for the greater energy of his performance and the more accomplished playing of the Mariinsky Orchestra.

By all means at least listen to the Monteux – it can be streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#), as can the RCA Boston version in several guises – but if you go for one version only, I recommend the new Mariinsky SACD or the download in 24/96 format from [Hyperion](#) – at £10.50, that's a little less expensive than the disc.

With Stravinsky's own Columbia recording of the 1947 score now download only and not very attractively priced at that, or available on disc only in an off-puttingly large 56-CD-plus-DVD box set for around £150 (**88875026162**), the new Mariinsky is all the more recommendable.

*Jeu de Cartes* follows a little too hard on the heels of *Petrushka*, but that, too, receives an attractive performance, well recorded, especially as heard in 24-bit.

### **Requiem: The Pity of War**

**George BUTTERWORTH (1885–1916)** texts: A.E. Housman (1859–1936) *A Shropshire Lad*: six songs [12:15]

**Rudi STEPHAN (1887–1915)** texts: Gerda Von Robertus (a.k.a. Gertrud von Schlieben, 1873–1939) *Ich will dir singen ein Hohelied* [9:12]

**Kurt WEILL (1900–1950)** texts: Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Four Walt Whitman Songs [17:33]

**Gustav MAHLER (1860–1911)** texts: folk verses from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn: Alte deutsche Lieder* (ed. Achim von Arnim & Clemens Brentano, 1805–8)

Songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1833 version) [19:13]

Ian Bostridge (tenor)

Antonio Pappano (piano)

rec. 26–28 February 2018, Church of St Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London

Texts and translations included

**WARNER 9029566156** [58:24]



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I once had a student who, after what I thought had been a fruitful session on the metaphysical poets, wrote on the desk 'All these people are dead and I'm alive.' He probably became a professor of literature, but his point can be stood on its head: the fact that we *are* alive makes the horrors of the past all the more poignant.

Warner's contribution to the WWI Centenary, begins comparatively familiarly, though George Butterworth's settings of Housman are different in many ways from the more familiar Vaughan Williams and Ivor Gurney settings. It ends in even more familiar fashion with songs from Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, but the central works are less well-known.

The Butterworth proves to be a very fine supplement to the Hyperion album of Housman settings: VW's *On Wenlock Edge* and Gurney's *Ludlow and Teme* and *The Western Playland* (**CDH55187**, budget-price lossless download with pdf booklet or CD from [hyperion-recirds.co.uk](http://hyperion-recirds.co.uk); see my [review](#) of *A Walk with Ivor Gurney*). It's easy to forget that Housman's 'lads that will never grow old' were killed in battles well before WWI, so effectively does his poetry fit the three composers who set it and were in their different ways affected by the conflict.

Rudi Stephan's settings don't really fit the *requiem* theme, apart from the fact that the composer was killed in 1915. I didn't think that it contributed much when so many other works could have been chosen. Kurt Weill's settings of Walt Whitman's hard-hitting poems, on the other hand, relate the American Civil War to the later, even greater conflicts. This seems to be the only currently available recording, so all the more reason to welcome it.

The three songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* relate to war in general. Like everything else here, the performances are so cogent that I could wish that Ian Bostridge and Antonio Pappano had included more of them – there would have been plenty of room, even for those that don't relate to the theme of war. But that's my only reservation. I must, however, correct one point in ArkivMusic's biography of Ian Bostridge: he can't have a PhD – it's a DPhil from Oxford.

### Aaron COPLAND (1900-1990)

Connotations for Orchestra (1962) [18:42]

Third Symphony (1944-46) [39:16]

Letter from Home (1944 – rev. 1962) [5:40]

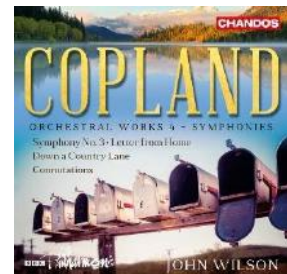
Down a Country Lane (1964) [2:17]

BBC Philharmonic/John Wilson

rec. Media City, Salford, UK, 2018

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [chandos.net](http://chandos.net)

**CHANDOS CHSA5222 SACD** [66:09] For purchase links please see [review by Jim Westhead](#).



It's a very long time since I bought Copland's own LSO recording of the Third Symphony from World Record Clubs – licensed from Everest, from whom it's still available at low-medium-price, with *Billy the Kid* (**EVERCD002**). It still sounds pretty well in the transfer, a tribute to the original Everest sound engineers, and I always return to it for my benchmark. Intending only to sample it for comparison with the new Chandos, I found myself unable to stop listening all the way through.

Then there are fine recordings from Leonard Slatkin (Naxos **8.559844**, with *Three Latin American Sketches*) and the classic NYPO/Leonard Bernstein (Sony **G010001082111A**, with *Organ Symphony*, an expensive download only, or **G010002678112L**, a very inexpensive download).

I listen regularly to all of these, but, with very good 24-bit sound to match the performance, I suspect that the new Chandos will become my version of choice even though, like Jim Westhead, I can't make much of *Connotations* – it doesn't connote much to me.

**John Luther ADAMS (b.1953)***Become Ocean* [42:13]

Seattle Symphony/Ludovic Morlot

rec. S. Mark Taper Foundation Auditorium, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, Washington, 12 November 2013. DDD.

**CANTALOUPE CA21101** [42:13] For purchase details please see [review](#) by Kirk McElhearn.

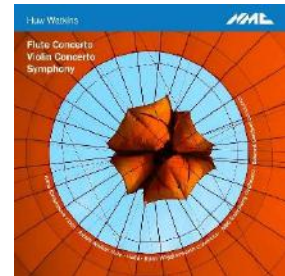
Stream from



The only notes that come with this recording contain the composer's own words: 'Life on this earth first emerged from the sea. As the polar ice melts and sea level rises, we humans find ourselves facing the prospect that once again we may quite literally become ocean'. You'll find more details in the [review](#) by Kirk McElhearn<sup>1</sup>, who was not much impressed by a 'fairly bland work'. As that opinion goes somewhat against the grain of other reviewers' reactions, I had to try for myself. In the event I thought it probably excellent for meditation – something which I'm no great shakes at, since I usually get distracted or fall asleep.

If you wish to try *Become Ocean* for yourself and you subscribe to Naxos Music Library, you can find it [there](#), with pdf booklet – such as it is.

<sup>1</sup> His review CD/DVD seems to have come with more detailed notes than the download version.

**Huw WATKINS (b.1976)**Flute Concerto (2013)<sup>1</sup> [22:25]Violin Concerto (2010, premiere recording)<sup>2</sup> [22:38]Symphony (2016/17)<sup>1</sup> [21:54]Adam Walker (flute)<sup>1</sup>, Alina Ibragimova (violin)<sup>2</sup>Hallé/Ryan Wigglesworth<sup>1</sup>BBC Symphony Orchestra/Edward Gardner<sup>2</sup>rec. 4-6 September 2017, Hallé St Peter's, Manchester<sup>1</sup>; live 17 August 201,BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London<sup>2</sup>. DDD**NMC NMCD224** [67:02]

CD from



I don't often listen to or review NMC recordings – as regular readers will know, I'm not big on contemporary music when, with so many wonderful works out there, well-known and unknown, I can't bother with composers who seem to go out of their way to make unpleasant noises. In the case of music like Huw Watkins' Flute Concerto, however, I make an exception; you'd hardly mistake it for anything other than contemporary, but it's approachably contemporary and the approachability is, I'm sure, due both to the quality of the writing – as fine in its way as Vivaldi's Op.10 flute concertos – and to the performers.

The Violin Concerto is a different matter – Bob Briggs in his Seen & Heard [review](#) of the Proms performance recorded here called it 'scratchy', 'unpleasant' and 'saying nothing whatsoever'. And I thought that I was curmudgeonly about contemporary music! In fact, though I admired Alina Ibragimova's solo, I have to admit that this did nothing for me.

The two-movement Symphony is uncompromising but more substantial; I found myself forgetting how recent it was and thinking more of the impact that Walton's First Symphony made on me when first I heard it. Committed performances – it's just a shame about the Violin Concerto.

***A Voice from Heaven - British Choral Masterpieces***

**Sir William HARRIS (1883-1973)** *Bring us, O Lord God* (1959) [4:28]

**Sir James MACMILLAN (b. 1959)** *Bring us, O Lord God* (2010) [5:04]

**Sir William HARRIS** *Faire is the Heaven* (1925) [5:16]

**Herbert HOWELLS (1892-1983)** *Take him, earth, for cherishing* (1964) [8:30]

**Sir John TAVENER (1944-2013)** *Take him, earth, for cherishing* (2008) [4:06]

**Sir Charles Villiers STANFORD (1852-1924)** *I heard a voice from Heaven* (1889) [4:36]

**Herbert HOWELLS** *I heard a voice from Heaven* (1932/33) [4:43]

**Kenneth LEIGHTON (1929-1988)** *Drop, drop, slow tears* (1961) [3:07]

**Sir Hubert PARRY (1848-1918)** *Lord, let me know mine end* (1916/18) [9:46]

**Sir Charles Villiers STANFORD** *Justorum animae* (1888) [3:08]

**Sir Lennox BERKELEY (1903-1989)** *Justorum animae* (1963) [3:36]

**Herbert MURRILL (1909-1952)** *The souls of the righteous* (1949) [2:11]

**Thomas HEWITT JONES (b. 1984)** *Drop, drop, slow tears* [3:21]

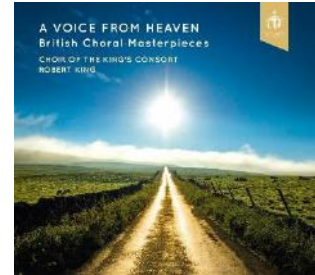
**Sir John TAVENER** *Song for Athene* [(1993) 6:29]

Choir of The King's Consort/Robert King

rec. 25-27 April 2016, St Jude's Church, Hampstead, London

Texts included

**VIVAT 113** [68:28]



This seems a good time, with the centenary of the Armistice which ended World War I just past, to remind ourselves of this anthology of British choral music, mainly on the theme of remembrance. John Quinn's ***Recording of the Month*** [review](#) of this 'compelling programme' says all that needs to be said. You'll find purchase links there, too, and subscribers can stream, with pdf booklet, from [Naxos Music Library](#).