

Second Thoughts and Short Reviews: Summer 2019/1
By Brian Wilson, Dan Morgan and Simon Thompson

Reviews are by Brian Wilson unless otherwise indicated.

Spring 2019/3 is [here](#).

Index:

BACH Violin Concertos_Hyperion
BRIDGE_Chandos collection and individual albums
BUSONI Piano Concerto_Hyperion
CHOPIN Piano Concertos_CFCClassic
de CROES Sonatas_Linn
DEBUSSY *Nocturnes, Printemps, etc.*_BIS
DVOŘÁK Piano Trios Nos. 1 And 2_Alpha
FALLA *El Amor Brujo; Maese Pedro*_Naxos_Mirare (with *Fantasia Baëtica*)
HANDEL Handel and Porpora in London_Aparté
- Handel's Queens_Signum
D'INDY *Médée, etc.*_Naxos
LISZT Piano Works_Orfeo
LUTOSŁAWSKI Cello and Piano Concertos, Symphony No.4_BeArTon
MAHLER Symphony No.1 (original version)_Harmonia Mundi
- *Das Lied von der Erde*_Audite
MOZART Piano Concertos Nos. 18 and 20_Nonesuch
PORPORA Handel and Porpora in London_Aparté
SCHUBERT Piano Sonata D960, etc._Hyperion
- **Recommended** *Die schöne Müllerin*_Beulah (with SCHUMANN *Dichterliebe*)
SCHUMANN *Dichterliebe*_Beulah (with **SCHUBERT** *Müllerin*)
Recommended **SHOSTAKOVICH** Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7_DG
SIBELIUS *Lemminkäinen Suite*_Chandos
- *Kullervo*_Hyperion
STAMITZ Oboe Concerto_Erasmus Musikprodukties (with BEER and FIALA)
STANFORD Organ Works 2_Priory
STRAUSS Richard EMI/Warner box set and individual releases.
TABAKOV Symphony No.1, Viola Concerto_Tocatta
WAGNER The Essence of Wagner_Beulah

Military Marches_Beulah

Teatro Spirituale: Penitential music in the Chiesa Nuova in Rome around 1610

Teatro Spirituale: Penitential music in the Chiesa Nuova in Rome around 1610

Anon. *De profundis clamavi* (Ps.129) [3:45]

Emilio de' CAVALIERI (1550-1602) Sinfonia [2:04]

Paolo QUAGLIATI (c.1555-1628) *Satiati huomo carnale* [2:50]

Anon. *Domine ne in furore tuo* (Ps.37) [8:20]

Giovanni Francesco ANERIO (1569-1630) *Ritorn'al tuo pastor smarrit'agnella* [3:09]

Francisco Soto de LANGA (1534-1619) *Come ti veggio* [2:33]

Giovanni de MACQUE (1550-1614) *Capriccio sopra Ré, Fa, Mi, Sol* [5:25]



Antonio CIFRA (c. 1584-1629) *Emendemus in melius* [2:54]

Anon. *Domine exaudi orationem meam* (Ps.142) [5:08]

Luca MARENZIO (1553-1599) *Crudele acerba* [2:46]

Anon. *Miserere mei Deus* (Ps.50 [51]) [9:07]

Paolo ANIMUCCIA (d. c.1563) *S'alhor che più sperai* [1:51]

Antonio FRESCOBALDI (1583-1643) *Toccata quarta per l'organo da sonarsi alla levatione* [5:08]

Anon. *Domine ne in furore tuo* (Ps.6) [4:49]

Antonio FRESCOBALDI *Canzon quinta a 4* [3:40]

Giovanni Francesco ANERIO Signor, Io T'ho Confitto [3:10]

Paolo QUAGLIATI *Recercata 19 a 4* [5:27]

InAlto [Alice Focroulle (soprano), Reinoud Van Mechelen (tenor), Stéphanie Leclercq (mezzo), Olivier Coiffet (tenor), Guillaume Olry (bass); Guy Hanssen, Susanna Defendi, Charlotte van Passen, Bart Vroomen (trombones), Rodney Prada, Noelia Reverte Reche (lirone), Simone Vallerotonda, Christoph Sommer (theorbo and archlute), Marc Meisel (organ & harpsichord)]/Lambert Colson (cornett, mute cornett)

rec. Trevi, Chiesa museale di San Francesco, 9-11 January 2018 and Bolland, Église Saint-Apollinaire, 18-20 September 2018. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

Reviewed as 24/96 press preview

RICERCAR RIC399 [72:14]

CD available from	
	
Stream from	Naxos Music Library

If you can't beat them, join them – or why should the Devil have all the best tunes? In the Oratory named after him (officially established in Rome in 1575) St. Philip Neri employed music in the secular style of the day, often with texts in more approachable Italian rather than Latin, to teach and encourage. Some of the music associated with

the Oratory, including the earliest oratorios, the musical form named after the institution, has already been available on record, but most of the music on this new Ricercar album has been newly mined from the archives – which makes it sound dull, but it isn't. Nor is the fact that, of the composers included, only half are represented in the catalogue an indication of the quality of the music. Or, indeed, of the performances and recording, especially as heard in 24-bit.

I believe that I've come across InAlto only once before, on a recording of the music of Johann Hermann Schein (Ramée **RAM1401** – [review](#) – [review](#)). I liked that album, as did Johan van Veen, with some reservations, and I like the current one.

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

[Violin Concerto](#) in a minor, BWV1041 [12:17]

Violin Concerto in E, BWV1042 [14:55]

Violin Concerto in A, BWV1055R [13:11]

Violin Concerto in g minor, BWV1056R [9:01]

Violin Concerto in d minor, BWV1052R [19:27]

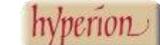
Alina Ibragimova (violin)

Arcangelo/Jonathan Cohen

rec. Henry Wood Hall, London, 8-10 August, 2014. DDD.

HYPERION CDA68068 [68:51] For CD purchase details please see [review](#).



Download from	
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I came to this disc after listening to [Isabelle Faust's superb recent set of the Bach violin concertos plus lots of extras](#).

Ibragimova's disc is very different but every bit as good.

For one thing, the orchestral texture is enlivened by a very busy theorbo, something missing from Faust's Berlin Academy of Ancient Music (or, if it was there, it was such a small part of the texture that I didn't notice it). Here Arcangelo place it at the forefront, and it makes a big difference, strumming along mischievously to the allegros, and swirling rhapsodically around the slow movements. I really liked it, not least for the bounce it gives to the finales and the odd unexpected flourish that catches you unawares.

Ibragimova herself is as masterful as you'd expect. She plays without vibrato but with a strong sense of legato, giving the music a silky allure that still sounds athletic and pacey. One characteristic of her playing is the sensitivity of the drama that she injects into the music. Repeatedly she will begin a phrase assertively then pull back towards its end, giving the music a sense of ebb and flow that's almost like an operatic aria. Again: it's rather different to Faust's approach, which is more directly poetic and every bit as valid, but the two albums stand alongside each other very convincingly and form appropriate contrasts.

The reconstructions are done sensitively, too, and I was completely convinced by the A major (BWV 1055) concerto, in particular, sporting lyrical sensibility that sounds perfect for the violin. The 24-bit FLAC sound is excellent, too, bringing the ear close to the music while also giving it a splendid sense of space. [*Simon Thompson*]

For slightly different interpretations of what is meant by 'Bach Violin Concertos', in equally recommendable performances, try Cecilia Bernardini and John Butt (Linn – [review](#)) or Giulio Carmignola with Concerto Köln (DG – [review](#)) or Rachel Podger with Brecon Baroque ([DL Roundup](#)). [BW]

Duel: Porpora and Handel in London

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Alcina, HWV34: *Sta nell'ircana pietrosa tana* [5:29]

Nicola Antonio PORPORA (1686-1768)

Arianna in Naxos: *Nume che reggi'l mare* [7:13]

David e Bersabea:

Dolce è su queste alte mie logge a sera [2:17]

Fu del braccio onnipotente [5:57]

Polifemo: ouverture [5:37]

Calcante e Achille: A questa man verrà [4:12]

George Frideric HANDEL

Ariodante, HWV33: *Scherza infida* [9:16]

Nicola Antonio PORPORA

Polifemo: Il gioir qualor s'aspetta [5:46]

George Frideric HANDEL

Ariodante, HWV33, *suite de ballet* [5:27]

Nicola Antonio PORPORA

Mitridate: Alza al soglio i guardi [4:13]

George Frideric HANDEL

Tolomeo, HWV25: *Inumano fratel, barbara madre* [1:49]

Stille amare, già vi sento [4:15]

Catone in Utica, HWV-A7: *Quando piomba improvvisa saetta* [4:12]

Giuseppina Bridelli (mezzo)

Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu/Franck-Emmanuel Comte (harpsichord)

rec. 27-30 June 2018, Temple Lanterne, Lyon, France. DDD.

Texts and translations included

Reviewed as mp3 press preview

APARTÉ A461 [65:50] For CD see [review](#)



Stream from	Naxos Music Library
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Handel and Porpora are reported to have slogged it out in operatic rivalry in London between 1733 and 1737, but it was a rivalry more apparent, as the notes to this recording point out, from the standpoint of their supporters than from the composers, who seem to have admired each other's music. In any case, it was a short-lived affair, with Porpora returning to the continent when the Opera of the Nobility collapsed, so the cover is a little inappropriate. Forget about the 'duel' and enjoy the music in these fine performances.

There's a similarly-titled ASV recording, but it offers different material from the new album: rather oddly, the Handel works included come from his German arias, an Italian cantata fragment and a violin sonata (**CDAGAU192**, [Presto CD](#) or download). There are other recitals which pair the two composers' operatic music and some individual Porpora selections, but the new album is valuable mainly for the Porpora items, the vast majority of which are receiving their only (first?) outing on record. I'm not going to try to compare the performance of *Nume che reggi'l mare* with that of Max Cencic, except that we don't seem to have reviewed that 2018 album and to report that I found his singing less OTT than I had expected (Decca **4833235**). Giuseppina Bridelli may not have Cencic's range or sense of drama, but I very much enjoyed her singing, even of the better-known items such as *Scherza infida*.

The earlier and better-known rivalry between Handel and Bononcini (famously nick-named Tweedledum and Tweedledee, supposedly by contemporaries) has been celebrated in surprisingly few recordings, though a new 2-CD album from Signum seems set to put that right in some measure (*Handel's Queens, Cuzzoni and Faustina*, **SIGCD579** rec. February 2019 [127:55] – reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#)):



CD available from	amazon.co.uk
ArkivMusic	PRESTO CLASSICAL
Download from	hyperion

In drawing together music for Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordini, the new Signum recording casts its net wider than, for example, a Harmonia Mundi album from Lawrence Zazzo, La Nuova Musica and David Bates of Handel, Bononcini and Ariosti which I made *Recording of the Month* (**HMU807590** – [DL News 2014/14](#)). Or, indeed, Hyperion's Handel-only *Rival Queens* with Emma Kirkby and Catherine Bott, valuable as that is (**CDA66950**, or download, or as part of **CDS44271/3: Bargain of the Month** – [review](#)). Both as a single CD and as a set the Hyperion is now Archive Service only, so the 3-disc set is no longer a bargain but it remains available to download, with pdf booklet, for £15 – [here](#): unlike other labels, Hyperion don't bump up the prices of their downloads when the CD is deleted, and they always include the booklet.

Just to list the composers included on Signum looks like a roll-call of the great and the less famous. One can almost imagine them answering to their names in the musicians' Elysian fields: **ARIOSTI, Attilio Malachia (1666-c.1729), BONONCINI Giovanni Battista (1670-1747), GREENE Maurice (1695-1755), HANDEL George Frideric (1685-1759), HASSE Johann Adolph (1699-1783), LEO Leonardo (1694-1744), ORLANDINI Giovanni Maria (c.1675-1760), POLLAROLO Carlo Francesco (c.1653-1722), PORPORA Nicola Antonio (1686-1768), TORRI Pietro (1650-1737), VINCI Leonardo (1690-1730), VIVALDI Antonio (1678-1741).**

Lucy Crowe and Mary Bevan are the rival queens on Signum, with London Early Opera directed by Bridget Cunningham. There are some familiar items, such as Handel's *Da tempeste il legno infranto* from *Giulio Cesare*, and Lucy Crowe holds her own here against the competition, but there is much that cannot be found elsewhere; on the very next track Mary Bevan matches her in Hasse's *Se fosse il mio diletto* from *Dalisa*. Handel famously threatened to throw Cuzzoni out of the window, but the new recording left me with no desire to defenestrate Ms Crowe or Ms Bevan – quite the opposite.

Henri-Jacques de CROES (1705–1786)

La Sonate Égarée (The Lost Sonata)

Six Sonates en trio, Op.5 (pub. between 1735 and 1746) [62:19]

Barrocotout [Carlota Garcia (traverso), Izana Soria (violin), Edouard Catalan (cello), Ganaël Schneider (harpsichord)]

rec. National Centre for Early Music, York, UK, 16–19 July 2018. DDD.

Reviewed as mp3 press preview.

LINN CKD597 [62:19]



CD available from	

I had encountered some of the music of Henri-Joseph de Croes – there are occasional recordings of his concertos and partitas – but not that of his father Henri-Jacques, having somehow missed Dominy Clements’ review of some of his sacred music on the Et’cetera label (**KTC1605** – [review](#)). That includes one of his strings-only Op.4 Sonatas. Their successors, published as Op.5, exist only as a single copy in the University of Virginia music library, hence the title of this album. (I didn’t know the word *égaré*, either, but my A- and S-level French is long in the past and even the work on Montaigne for my MA almost as far off.)

The Op.5 trio sonatas feature the flute prominently, so those of a like mind with Mozart – who supposedly disliked it – had better steer clear. The rest of us will find some charming music in the *galant* style, somewhere between the late baroque and the early classical. The performances are accomplished and civilised, which sounds like damning with faint praise; it isn’t, since I foresee some late evening returns to this album. I find that an ideal time for the flute, perhaps because I first heard Bach’s second orchestral suite on the Third Programme, as it then was, at 11.15 p.m.

Classical Bohemian Concertos

Oboe Concerto in C [13:32]

Clarinet Concerto No.1 [23:47]

Concertante in B-flat for clarinet and cor anglais [22:15]

Joost Hekel (clarinet), Paul van der Linden (oboe)

Concerto ‘91/Ricardo Kanji

ERASMUS MUZIEKPRODUCTIES [59:33]



I’ve given you all the information offered to potential downloaders by emusic and Amazon. This kind of ‘magical mystery tour’ simply is not enough for either the beginner or the mature collector: we need to know the names of the composers and we just are not given them by either provider, nor are they provided in the codec for each track. New collectors who like any of the music will not know how to follow up any of the composers. I had to do quite a lot of research to confirm my guess that the Oboe Concerto is by **Johann STAMITZ (Jan STAMIC, 1717-1757)**. The Clarinet Concerto is by **Joseph BEER (1744-1812)** and the Concertante by **Joseph FIALA (1748-1816)**. The recording, on period instruments, seems to have been made in Utrecht in 1996.

To be fair to Qobuz, they do give some of this information if you look for it and their download price of £6.39 (lossless) is more attractive than Amazon’s £7.89 for mp3. Subscribers to emusic pay £3.78 or less depending on the chosen monthly tariff. There’s no booklet from any source.

There’s little enough available by Johann Stamitz*, father of the Bohemian musical dynasty – an Oboe Concerto in D on Alto seems to be a different work. There’s even less by the other two composers – the only recordings of Beer refer to a C20 composer of that name. So, while the music hardly amounts to neglected masterpieces, it’s all very agreeable and the performances do it justice, while the recording, as heard in 320kb/s mp3 from emusic, is good.

Regular readers will know that I have been concerned for some time now about the diminished and diminishing classical and jazz material available from emusic. I've kept up my monthly subscription in the hope that I could report that their promise of 'exciting material' coming along would materialise, but I'm on the point of giving up entirely. Even more annoyingly in this case, the webpage offers more music by Stamitz, presumably Carl, but when you follow the link 'Sorry, that album is not available' pops up. The last straw for me was the disappearance of Audite and Brilliant Classics recordings – among the very few important labels to have survived until recently. Gimell is hanging in there, but their Tallis Scholars recordings can be obtained in better quality and usually costing less from Hyperion.

The other problem with emusic is that their per-track charging policy; while it means that one can obtain a Bruckner or Mahler symphony for £1.68, Handel's Op.3 concertos from The Academy of St Martin in the Fields – no conductor named but, presumably, the Decca Marriner recordings – cost £9.24 when the complete Op.6 and Op.3 sets in these recordings, more than three times as much music, formerly on three Originals CDs, can be obtained in downloads from the master tapes for little more: £11.67 (mp3) or £14.58 (lossless) from [Presto](#). And who would want to pay £28.14 for the Gimell *The Tallis Scholars sing William Byrd* when it's available in better quality and with the booklet from [Hyperion](#) for £7.99?

* Naxos have just released a recording of his **Symphonies, Op.3/1, 3, 4, 5 and 6** from Musica Viva/Alexander Rudin on **8.573966**.

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.18 in B-flat, K456 [28:43]

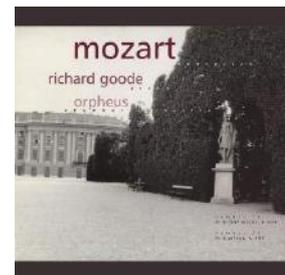
Piano Concerto No.20 in d minor, K466 [29:32]

Richard Goode (piano)

Orpheus Chamber Orchestra

rec. c. 1996. Released 2005.

NONESUCH 0349712836 [58:12] Download from Presto – link in review



Reviewing the recent Chandos release of concertos nos. 20 and 21 (Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Manchester Camerata/Gábor Takács-Nagy **CHAN20038** – [here](#)), I drew a number of comparisons with my favourite versions both on the fortepiano and the modern grand. I know that some readers find too many comparisons – and price comparisons – tedious, but I try to be as helpful as possible to the potential buyer. I did, however, miss one version of No.20 which has had a consistently good press since it was released – this one from Richard Goode as soloist and directing the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. My thanks to our webmaster for reminding me. It is, indeed, every bit as good as has been reported and, though deleted on CD, can be obtained very inexpensively as a download: [Presto](#) have it for just £5.66 in lossless sound, though without booklet. The quality of performance and price advantage amply compensate for the short playing time. No.18 is very good, too.

Better value still is Goode's recording of No.9 (*Jeunehomme*) and No.25 for £2.88, also from [Presto](#)?

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Piano Sonata in B-flat, D.960 [45:30]

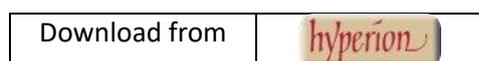
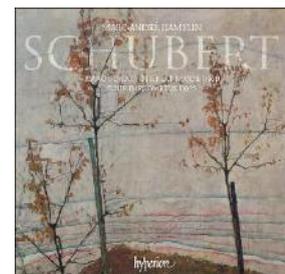
Four Impromptus, D. 935 [36:21]

Marc-André Hamelin (piano)

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

Reviewed as 24-bit alac download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#)

HYPERION CDA68213 [76:51] For CD purchase details please see [review by Robert Beattie](#) (*Recording of the Month*) and [Spring 2018/3](#).



This performance was an antidote to the sludgy dreck that Khatia Buniatishvili served up [in her \(similar\) recent Schubert disc](#). Where Buniatishvili is leaden and self-obsessed, Hamelin is poetic and humane. He is entirely at the service of the music, turning in an infinitely finer performance of the great final sonata which is, by turns, searching, introverted and dramatic. It's pretty much ideally balanced all the way through, with an ideal recorded sound, beautifully capturing the atmosphere of Wyastone Concert Hall in the studio master ALAC format I listened to.

The performance is superb, capturing mystery and transcendence in the great first movement (in which he observes the exposition repeat). The Scherzo is fleet and light-hearted, even in its central section, and the finale has a slightly cheeky edge to it that I liked. Only in the slow movement did I have one or two doubts, as it's a little faster than I'd have liked; but this is a personal preference only, and it grew on me by the end of the movement. Anyway, it's far preferable to Buniatishvili's marmoreal eulogy.

Hamelin performs the "other" set of impromptus, and does so very finely. He finds narrative depths in the first, particularly in the searching slower section, which touches the divine in places. There is blissful stillness in the second, while the Rosamunde variations of the third develop organically, and the last one has a dance-of-the-trolls sensibility that Hamelin embraces with a mischievous twinkle.

Leif Ove Andsnes remains my touchstone among recent recordings of the sonata, but this set of impromptus is, if anything, preferable to my much-played Brendel set on Philips. [**Simon Thompson**]

Recommended

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Die schöne Müllerin [59:56]

Robert SCHUMANN (1810-1856)

Dichterliebe [26:16]

Aksel Schiøtz (tenor)

Gerald Moore (piano)

rec. Abbey Wood Studios, London, 1945 and 1946. ADD/mono 78s.

BEULAH 1PS46 [86:13] Download from [Qobuz](#).



Aksel Schiøtz's *Schöne Müllerin* can be obtained on Volume 2 of the Danacord series devoted to him (**DACOCD452** – [review](#)), but it's less generously coupled there with Grieg. As Christopher Howells has said it all there, I need only add that I hadn't encountered either of these recordings before but enjoyed them very much in these clean transfers. I tend to avoid recordings prior to the advent of LP unless they are very special, which is exactly what this *Müllerin* is, an ideal adjunct to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's Schubert, also with Gerald Moore which, nonetheless, continues to be my benchmark in various forms. (For details please see my [review](#) of the Sheva recording with Georg Lehner. NB: MusicWeb no longer sells Sheva CDs.)

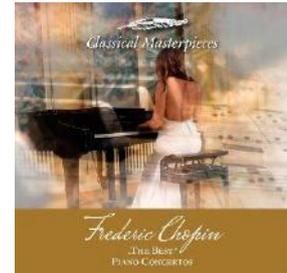
Dichterliebe can be found on another Danacord CD (**DACOCD453** – [review](#)) but, again, the Beulah transfer offers the music in very fine form and the two classic Schubert and Schumann recordings make for an ideal coupling and excellent value. I've seen it suggested that Schiøtz's *Dichterliebe* is even finer than his *Müllerin*. I'm not going to get into that debate; I'll merely say that this, too, rates alongside my favourite recordings.

It goes almost without saying that Gerald Moore provides the ideal accompaniment throughout. You would hardly mistake these for recordings made in the stereo era, but the sound quality would still have been creditable in the mono LP era and the transfer loses the surface noise without detriment to the recorded range. And just think how much more convenient it is to listen to this marvellous music than when these recordings were released in the 1940s, two 78s at a time. Each release lasting 15

minutes or so cost the equivalent of at least £20 in today's terms, so that's over £80 for *Müllerin*; you can have the whole thing for much less – the lossless Qobuz costs the same as other dealers' mp3.

Frédéric François CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Piano Concerto No.1 in e minor, Op. 11 [38:51]
 Maurizio Pollini (piano)
 Philharmonia Orchestra/Paul Kletzki – rec. 1959. ADD/stereo
 Piano Concerto No. 2 in f minor, Op. 21 [30:07]
 Arthur Rubinstein (piano)
 Symphony of the Air/Alfred Wallenstein – rec. 1958. ADD/stereo
CFCLASSIC [68:59]



These two classic performances, revamped in decent sound for the CFClassic label, can be obtained by subscribers to [emusic](#) for £2.52 or less. Very annoyingly, the album downloaded as a txt (text) file and couldn't be played, adding to my feeling that enough was enough for this site. Then, after much tinkering, I discovered that it can be downloaded track by track – annoying, but not damning. The Rubinstein sounds better than from the RCA LP which I used to own, too, but no amount of revamping can restore the small cut in the first movement. This will, however, be one of my last discoveries from this source – see my notes above for the reason (Classical Bohemian Concertos).

This recording is available from Qobuz in lossless sound for £7.19, still decent value.

Franz LISZT (1811-1886)

2 Légendes, S175/R17
 1 No. 1 St François d'Assise: La prédication aux oiseaux [10:32]
Années de pèlerinage: Deuxième année - Italie, S161/R10b
 No. 1 Sposalizio [7:21]
 No. 2 Il penseroso [4:54]
 No. 3 Canzonetta del Salvatore Rosa [3:04]
 No. 4 Sonetto 47 del Petrarca [6:00]
 No. 5 Sonetto 104 del Petrarca [6:17]
 No. 6 Sonetto 123 del Petrarca [7:16]
 No. 7 Après une lecture du Dante, fantasia quasi sonata [16:55]
 Francesco Piemontesi (piano)
 rec. 2017, Auditorio Stelio Molo, RSI, Lugano, Switzerland
ORFEO C982191 [CD + DVD: 50:00] Reviewed as a 16-bit press download. Pdf booklet included



CD + DVD available from	
Stream from	
	Naxos Music Library

The Swiss pianist Francesco Piemontesi (b. 1983) was one of my notable 'finds' in 2018. Indeed, I thought his account of Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage: Première année – Suisse* one of the finest I've ever heard ([Orfeo](#)). The authority of his playing and the abundance of insights suggest a much older, far more experienced Lisztian. Happily, there's also a vitality to his music-making that speaks of a (comparatively) young artist on the cusp of a great journey, with all the discoveries that entails. Hardly surprising, then, that I signed off my *Suisse* review with the words: 'Piemontesi is a pianist to watch'. Also, the sound of that release is considerably better than that I've come to expect from this label.

Piemontesi - who has a small yet fairly eclectic discography - has definitely raised the bar in this repertoire, so I was impatient to hear what he makes of Liszt's Italian sojourn. Appropriately enough, he prefaces the recital with the first of the *Deux Légendes*, a touching portrait of St Francis of Assisi with his feathered friends. The opening bird calls and the monk's simple piety - echoes of plainchant - are adroitly done. Again, the sound is pretty good, if perhaps a little closer than before.

After that, the seductive harmonies and rocking rhythms of 'Sposalizio' are even more delightful. As expected, there's nothing studied about Piemontesi's pianism, the dynamic shading as subtle/intuitive as it gets. Climaxes are sensibly scaled, too, the recording full and fearless. 'Il penseroso', suitably solemn, is nicely articulated, something that's especially welcome in the filigreed figures of 'Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa'. Really, this is playing of great variety and character, 'Sonetto 47 del Petrarca' as alert and supple as one could wish, its gentler passages simply gorgeous. What remarkable touch this man has, and what a keen ear for colour and the tiniest detail.

As for 'Sonetto 104 del Petrarca', I was struck by how the music seems to mirror the shape and cadences of the sonnet form to which Petrarch gives his name. To that must be added the personality of the poet himself, all of it so effortlessly pitched. The quiet introspection of the final sonnet is breathtaking, making it the ideal precursor to the turbulent 'Après une lecture du Dante'. However, I do have misgivings about Piemontesi's somewhat blustery approach to this most challenging movement. And to add to my disappointment, there's a very audible shift of perspective at 02:59; the piano tone seems to harden, too. A retake, perhaps; if so, it's hardly an improvement.

A fine recital, although not in the same league as Piemontesi's previous Liszt album; that technical glitch is unforgivable, though. [DM]

Richard WAGNER (1813-1883) The Essence of Wagner

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg: Overture [10:52]

Philharmonia Orchestra/Otto Klemperer – rec. 1960. ADD/stereo

Die Walküre: Act 3 – Leb' wohl, du kühnes, herrliches Kind (Wotan's Farewell) [17:34]

George London (bass baritone); VPO/Hans Knappertsbusch – rec. June 1958. ADD/stereo

Der fliegende Holländer: Act 2 – Versank ich jetzt in wunderbares Träumen? [3:26]

Marianne Schech (soprano), Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (baritone); German State Opera Orchestra/Franz Konwitschny – rec. 1960. ADD/stereo

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg: Act 3 – Selig wie die Sonne [4:16]

Elisabeth Grümmer (soprano), Ferdinand Frantz (bass), Rudolf Schock (tenor), Gerhard Unger (tenor), Marga Höffgen (soprano); Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Rudolf Kempe – rec. 1955. ADD/mono

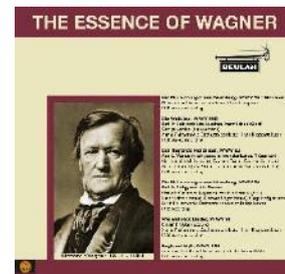
Wesendonck Lieder [20:24]

Kirsten Flagstad (soprano); VPO/Hans Knappertsbusch – rec. 1956. ADD/stereo

Siegfried Idyll [18:16]

Columbia Symphony Orchestra/Bruno Walter – rec. 1961. ADD/stereo

BEULAH 1PS47 [74:45] Download in lossless sound from [Qobuz](#).



How do you choose just one album of essential Wagner? For starters, I wouldn't like to have to try – like the Irish joke; if I were going there, I wouldn't start from here. Granted, however, that I did try, these selections would all have offered themselves as possibilities, perhaps with the substitution for Wotan's Farewell of Georg Solti, either his first recording of the *Todesverkündigung* and Act 3, or his complete recording (both Decca).

I'm especially pleased to see an extract from Rudolf Kempe's *Meistersinger* which, if only it had just made it to stereo, would have been an abiding classic. (I remember owning an LP of highlights on EMI Electrola in *Breitklang*, a form of synthetic stereo which memory suggests was better than the Decca engineers produced for the Eclipse label.)

The recordings have been well transferred, though the opening *Meistersinger* Overture has come out sounding a little shriller and coarser than I remember. As usual, the lossless version from Qobuz is

more recommendable than the mp3 alternatives at the same price of £7.99. By contrast, the *Wesendonck Lieder* sound better than I remember them on the Decca Ace of Diamonds reissue. Flagstad's voice was then well past its best, but these recordings get to the heart of the music. The Decca Legends album containing these performances, together with Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* and *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* is now download only and more expensive than the Beulah in lossless sound.

Antonín DVOŘÁK (1841-1904)

Piano Trio No.1 in B flat, Op.21 (B51, 1875) [34:43]

Piano Trio No.2 in g minor, Op.26 (B56, 1876) [32:01]

Busch Trio [Mathieu van Bellen (violin G.B. Guadagnini, Turin, 1783, 'Ex-Adolf Busch'), Ori Epstein (cello G.B. Ceruti, Cremona, 1815), Omri Epstein (piano)]

rec. August 2018, The Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 wav press preview

ALPHA ALPHA466 [66:47]



CD available from	
Stream from	Naxos Music Library

This completes the Busch Trio's traversal of the Dvořák Piano Trios: the better-known Nos. 3 and 4 were released in 2016 on **Alpha238** – [review](#). In her detailed analysis of that recording, Claire Seymour had reservations only about the engineers' inability to make the violin prominent, where such was required. Perhaps it's the fact that I listened in

24/96 sound – flac for the earlier recording, wav for the new one – or the engineers have taken those comments to heart, but I noticed the imbalance less on the earlier release and there's no lack of violin presence here, with the warmth of Mathieu van Bellen's Guadagnini violin coming through beautifully. As you should be able to find 24-bit on offer for £12.00 from Presto, which is actually slightly less than the CD, I recommend that. Don't pay more – some charge £14.99 for the same thing.

The earlier recording may be the place to start, but there's plenty of typically Dvořák warmth in B51 and lots of depth, but warmth too in B56, written when he had lost his baby daughter. Excellent notes by Jan Smaczny complete the deal.

The classic Borodin Trio recordings of all four Dvořák Piano Trios remain excellent value on two CDs for the price of one on disc or as a download from [chandos.net](#) (**CHAN241-24**). (NB: Some dealers charge more for the download than for the discs, so use the Chandos link.) For that and other recordings, please see [DL Roundup July 2012/1](#).

Vincent D'INDY (1851-1931)

Médée, Op. 47 (1898) [27:12]

Karadec, Op. 34 (1890) [9:57]

Saugefleurie, Op. 21 (1884) [15:58]

Malmö Symphony Orchestra/Darrell Ang

rec. 2017, Malmö Live, Malmö, Sweden

NAXOS 8.573858 [53:15] Reviewed as a 16-bit download. Pdf booklet included. Previous review: [Rob Barnett](#)



CD available from	
Stream from	Naxos Music Library

As first impressions go, the young Singaporean conductor Darrell Ang's collection of Meyerbeer overtures and entr'actes, with the New Zealand SO in cracking form, could scarcely have been more favourable ([Naxos](#)). Not surprisingly, that album was one of my top picks for 2014. Since then his Offenbach overtures with the Orchestre

National de Lille certainly lived up to expectations ([Naxos](#)). As for his Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto, with Alexandra Dariescu and the Royal Philharmonic, it was very successful, too ([Signum](#)). I see [John France](#) was most taken with Ang's Dutillieux, also recorded in Lille. Now we have this d'Indy release, which faces stiff competition from Rumon Gamba and the Iceland Symphony. I've reviewed several instalments of the latter's six-part cycle, Vol. 5 of which includes *Médée* and *Saugefleuri* ([Chandos](#)). Inexplicably, we don't appear to have assessed Vol. 2, which includes *Karadec* ([CHAN 10514](#)).

Ang and his Swedish team kick off with d'Indy's incidental music to Catulle Mendès' verse play *Médée*. What I most admired about the Gamba performance was its 'seamless line and sensuous detail'; not only that, the sensitively scaled and balanced recording is just right for this rep. Ang certainly has a flair for French music, and if his *Médée* isn't quite as alluring as Gamba's it's not too far behind. That said, the Malmö band, who seldom fail to impress, whether in Ives or Saint-Saëns, turn in a spirited performance. Ang shapes it all very well, too, and there are some lovely hushed moments. The Naxos recording, although good, can't really match Chandos's subtle, spacious and highly atmospheric one.

Ang's account of *Karadec*, the three-movement 'suite for orchestra', is most attractive indeed, the central *Chanson* especially pliant. His take on the finale, *Noce Bretonne* (Breton Wedding), is, as Rob Barnett suggests, 'surprisingly earnest'. Ideally, I'd have liked a little more *joie de vivre* here, but otherwise I was pleasantly surprised to find Ang's reading compares favourably with Gamba's. The second filler, *Saugefleurie*, is a typically Romantic tale of love between a huntsman and a fairy (cue gorgeous horn calls in both this version and the Chandos one). Yes, it's rather Wagnerian at times, but Ang opts for a taut, clear-eyed approach that's not without moments of real magic. (Splendid harp playing, too.) In fact, I'd say his *Saugefleurie* is the best thing here. Pity about the short measure, though.

Ang's d'Indy is very accomplished, with plenty to admire; for something a bit special, go for Gamba. **[DM]**

As usual, having also listened to the Naxos as a lossless (wav) press preview, I find myself completely in agreement both with Dan's assessment of the new recording and his preference for the Chandos, which includes *Médée*, *Saugefleurie* and D'Indy's most popular work, *Symphonie sur un chant montagnard*. I need only add that the link given in DL News 2013/6 should now be amended to [chandos.net](#). The 24/96 version is now a little less expensive at £13.99. **[BW]**

Sir Charles Villiers STANFORD (1852-1924)

The Complete Organ Works - Volume 2

Fantasia and Fugue in d minor, Op.103 (1907) [10:33]

Six Preludes and Postludes, Set 1, Op.101 (1907) [16:05]

Sonata No.3 'Brittanica' in d minor, Op.152 (1917) [27:42]

In Modo Dorico, Op.132 (1913) [4:40]

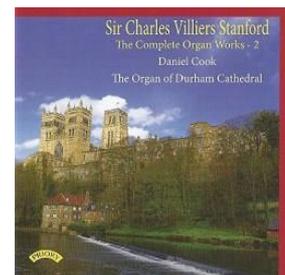
Prelude on 'Jesu dulcis memoria' (1879 - ed. Richard Barnes) [3:41]

Te Deum Laudamus – Fantasia Op.116/1 (c.1909) [7:46]

Daniel Cook (organ)

rec. Durham Cathedral, 7, 9, 10 April 2013. DDD.

PRIORY PRCD1106 [71:37] For CD purchase details see [review by John Quinn](#).



As John Quinn noted in his review, the Stanford revival left his organ music a trifle out in the cold. This series of Priory recordings, five volumes on various organs, remedies that very effectively.

Gustav MAHLER (1860-1911)

Titan: Eine Tondichtung in Symphonieform in zwei Teilen und fünf Sätzen für großes Orchester (Tone poem in symphonic form in two parts and five movements for a large orchestra) (Hamburg/Weimar 1893-4 version)

Erster Theil (Part One) *Aus den Tagen der Jugend, Blumen-, Frucht- und Dornstücke* (From days of youth, flower-, fruit- and thorn-pieces)

I. *Frühling und kein Ende* (Springtime without end) [14:38]

II. *Blumine* (Flowers) [5:41]

III. *Mit vollen Segeln* (Full sail ahead) [6:42]

Zweiter Theil (Part Two) *Commedia humana* (Human Comedy)

IV. *Gestrandet!* (Failed!) (*Ein Todtenmarsch in „Callot’s Manier“*) (A Funeral March in ‘Callot’s manner’) [10:38]

V. *Dall’Inferno* (From Hell) [19:20]

Les Siècles/François-Xavier Roth

On period instruments

rec. March and October 2018, Philharmonie de Paris; February 2018, Théâtre de Nîmes; October 2018, Cité de la Musique et de la Danse de Soissons. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/44.1 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

Titles from the programme of the Hamburg performance, 27 October 1893.

HARMONIA MUNDI HMM905299 [57:04] For SACD details see **Recommended** [review by Dan Morgan](#).



We have had recordings of Mahler’s First Symphony with the *Blumine* movement, which he dropped for the final version, restored – but it’s often out of place as an appendix instead of as the second movement. Now François-Xavier Roth and his period-instrument band have restored the original symphonic poem *Titan*, as close as possible to what was heard under the baton of its young conductor, not at its first performance in Budapest in November 1889 – that’s lost apparently for ever – but subsequently in revised form in Hamburg in 1893.

Brothers Ádám and Iván Fischer have provided very fine recent recordings of the conventional version, for Avi Music **AVI8553390** and Channel Classics **CCSSA33112** (SACD) respectively, but my benchmark remains an older DG recording which still sounds very well, from Rafael Kubelík with the Bavarian RSO (**4495372**). Not only does the Kubelík come at mid-price, there’s a substantial bonus in the form of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau the first-rate soloist. Kubelík lets the music speak for itself, without the ‘meaningful’ *rubato* that some conductors feel that they have to include. One thing that I like very much indeed about Roth’s Mahler is that he plays it straight, too.

None of these include *Blumine*, though Iván Fischer did on an earlier (1989) Hungaroton CD. Hannu Lintu does (Ondine **1264-5**) but only as an appendix. Willem de Vriend with the Netherlands Symphony Orchestra (Challenge Classics **CC72355**) performs it as the second movement. I reviewed that in [DL Roundup June 2010](#) alongside a Coviello recording with *Blumine* in first place, as in the 1893 Hamburg version. I liked it, but not in preference to Kubelík. Ignore the links to emusic, classicsonline and passionato: the de Vriend can be downloaded or purchased on CD from [Presto](#).

Roth places *Blumine* second, too, and comes closer than any other recording to convincing me that it should never have been excluded. Although period instruments don’t make that much difference in Mahler, Les Siècles and François-Xavier Roth make the strongest justification not only for *Blumine* in its original place but for the validity of Mahler’s first thoughts, especially in the finale. He and his team even make more sense of the third movement (the fourth here) than I’ve ever heard. I’ve a feeling that I may be listening to this even more than to the Kubelík.

Gustav MAHLER*Das Lied von der Erde* [62:11]Janet Baker (contralto); Waldemar Kmennt (tenor);
Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra/Rafael Kubelík
rec. live Hurkulesaal, Munich, 27 Februray 1970. ADD.**AUDITE95.491** [62:11] See [review](#) by Tony Duggan: **Recording of the Month**

Mention of Rafael Kubelík's recording of Mahler's First Symphony reminds me that there's another work from the other end of the composer's career, in effect the Ninth Symphony that he was superstitiously afraid to number, *Das Lied von der Erde*. My favourite recording of that remains firmly the one that Bernard Haitink made with Janet Baker and the Concertgebouw, with the studio recording affording better sound than this live version. On the other hand, there's a strong case for regarding Waldemar Kmentt as superior to James King – ideally, you need both.

The Haitink recording comes in various guises: the budget-price Eloquence (**4681822**) is out of stock at present, but Presto have their own special CD, albeit at full price (**4322792**). Of download only versions, the ClassicFM is the least expensive (**4820449**, around £6 in lossless) and there are two 2-CD offerings, both around £10 in lossless sound: with Haitink's Ninth Symphony (**4622992**) and with Jessye Norman singing some of the orchestral songs (**4540142**).

Even more than Christa Ludwig and Fritz Wunderlich with Otto Klemperer (Warner **2564607598** – [Late Autumn 2016](#) – [review](#) of earlier reissue), one or both of Janet Baker's recordings of this work should form part of any collection.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918)*Printemps – Suite symphonique*, L 68/(61) (1887; orch. Henri Büsser, 1912) [16:32]*Rapsodie pour orchestre et saxophone*, L 104/(98) (1901-1911/1919?) [10:24]*Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire*, L 83/(77) (1890/c. 1908) [7:07]*Berceuse héroïque*, L 140/(132) (1914) [5:38]*Deux Danses pour harpe et orchestre à cordes*, L 113/(103) (1904) [10:07]

I. Danse sacrée [4:49]

II. Danse profane [5:19]

Nocturnes – Triptyque symphonique pour orchestre et chœur, L 98/(91) (1897–1899; ed. Denis Herlin) [24:35]

I. Nuages [7:20]

II. Fêtes [6:06]

III. Sirènes [11:07]

Claude Delangle (alto saxophone)

Gulnara Mashurova (harp)

The Philharmonic Chamber Choir of Europe

Singapore Symphony Orchestra/Lan Shui

rec. November 2015 (Rapsodie, Nocturnes) & May 2017 (other works), Esplanade Concert Hall, Singapore

Reviewed as a stereo 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#)**BIS BIS-2232 SACD** [75:37] For SACD purchase details see [review by Dan Morgan](#).

Dan Morgan made this a [Recommended recording](#). If I single out *Printemps*, it's because it doesn't get as many outings as it deserves and it receives a performance to match even the classic accounts.

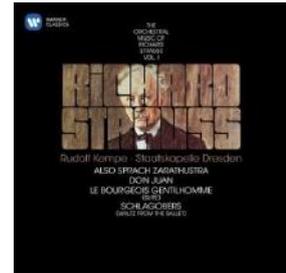
Although there are other recordings of the individual works to which I shall still turn, the BIS album overall is a considerable success. As usual, my benchmarks tend to be of some antiquity: Ansermet,

Monteux (both Decca) and Munch (especially) in *Printemps*, the latter best obtained on a Debussy and Ibert download (**88697689542**; on CD available now only in an 86-CD box set, costing almost £200). For a more modern recording, there's Jun Märkl on Naxos, which I liked – [DL Roundup June 2011/1](#).

For *Nocturnes*, John Quinn enjoyed the recent Harmonia Mundi recording headed by [François-Xavier Roth](#) a good deal more than [Dan Morgan](#). Pierre Monteux with the LSO was my first guide for the *Nocturnes*; though he recorded only *Nuages* and *Fêtes* his Decca Eloquence recording, with *Faune* and *Images* (**4768472** – review of deleted CD) is well worth its modest price of £4.96 in lossless sound from [Presto](#). With extra music, it's also available on CD on **4806567** – review.

Richard STRAUSS (1864-1949)

Warner's release of the EMI box set of Strauss' orchestra music from Rudolf Kempe needs no detailed justification – these are still widely regarded as among the best, if not *the* best, recordings of all this music and the 9-CD set is modestly priced at around £19 for almost 11 hours of music (**9029554251**). That supplants the more expensive 2013 release.



If you don't want the whole set, perhaps because, like me, you have some of the component CDs, individual releases are available for around £6.00 in lossless sound. Volume 1 contains *Also sprach Zarathustra*, *Don Juan*, the suite from *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* and the *Schlagobers* waltz, over 90 minutes of music – from [Presto](#), and there are two other very well-filled volumes and several shorter albums which all represent better value than any previous downloads.

Stream from [Naxos Music Library](#), but be prepared for the minute dropouts that still afflict streamed mp3 where the music is continuous over tracks in *Zarathustra*.

Jean SIBELIUS (1865–1957)

Lemminkäinen Suite, (*Lemminkäis – sarja*) Four Legends for Orchestra, Op.22 (1893–96, revised 1897, 1900, and 1939)¹ [46:19]
 Spring Song, (*Vårsång*) 'La Tristesse du printemps' (The Sadness of Spring)
 Tone Poem for Orchestra Op.16 (1894, revised 1895) [9:03]
 Suite from *Belshazzar's Feast*, (*Belsazars gästabad*) Incidental music to the play by Hjalmar Johan Fredrik Procopé (1889–1954), Op.51 (1906–07)² [15:55]



Alison Teale (cor anglais)¹, Igor Yuzefovich (violin)¹, Michael Cox (flute)², James Burke (clarinet)², Norbert Blume (viola)^{1,2}, Susan Monks (cello)^{1,2}; BBC Symphony Orchestra/Sakari Oramo rec. Watford Colosseum, 22 and 23 May 2018. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from [chandos.net](#).

CHANDOS CHAN20136 [71:34] See also [Recommended review](#) (Dan Morgan)

A reader notes, with some justification, that I beat around the bush in [reviewing this recording](#), with too much time wasted on alternatives and the economics of the pricing of CDs and downloads. I do believe that potential purchasers deserve to have some guidance, when one dealer is charging more than another, or one format costs more than another. As one more positive responder to my observations noted, it's often surprisingly cheaper to buy a CD and rip it, to have music to play on the computer, than to download it.

What I wrote was unduly discursive, probably because I was surprised that a recent Radio 3 Building a Library recommendation for Leif Segerstam (Ondine), with which I agreed, down-played my own favourite recording from Osmo Vänskä (BIS). In recommending Vänskä, I tried to take readers through the many and perplexing formats and combinations in which his recording can be obtained.

Even then I didn't mention all of the strong competition – Ormandy's recording, for example, still has many admirers, though only his *Swan of Tuonela* is available on a single CD. I did say that Sakari Oramo's new recording stood up well against the competition and would be a good choice for those who liked the coupling and were looking for the extra quality of 24-bit sound. The BBC Symphony has a long history of Sibelius interpretation and they give idiomatic performances under the direction of a conductor who also has excellent Sibelius credentials.

After the energy of *Lemminkäinen and the Maidens of the Island*, the second section, *Lemminkäinen in Tuonela*, can sound unfocused but Oramo avoids that impression. That's partly because having taken the opening section expansively, he adopts a faster tempo than Vänskä – yet the latter never allows the movement to drag.

I do very much prefer placing *The Swan of Tuonela* second, as Vänskä does, rather than third, as Oramo does. Here, too, I marginally prefer the way in which Vänskä gives the music more time to weave its other-worldly magic, but Oramo is effective in achieving this, too. Beecham brought the house down with his LPO recording of *Lemminkäinen's Return*, a journey achieved in a little over six minutes. Oramo and the BBCSO take a little longer but they, too, like Vänskä and the Lahti Orchestra, at almost exactly the same speed, put on a pair of those seven-league boots which the heroes of fairy stories always manage to obtain.

It comes down, then, to a choice between Oramo and Vänskä if you want the extra quality of 24-bit sound and to Vänskä alone if you want that 24-bit sound on SACD. If you are happy with a good 16-bit recording or CD, I'm more than happy to endorse Leif Segerstam on Ondine. A fine performance of the *Belshazzar's Feast* music from Oramo tilts the advantage back in favour of the new Chandos.

Jean SIBELIUS (1865-1957)

Kullervo, Op.7 (1892) [73:13]

Introduction: *Allegro moderato* [13:07]

Kullervo's youth: *Kullervon nuoruus: Grave* [14:25]

Kullervo and his sister: *Kullervo ja hänen sisarensa: Allegro vivace* [23:08]

Kullervo goes to war: *Kullervon sotaanlähtö: Alla marcia – Vivace – Presto* [10:48]

Kullervo's death: *Kullervon kuolema: Andante* [11:46]

Benjamin Appl (baritone), Helena Juntunen (soprano)

Lunds Studentsångare (Male voice choir)

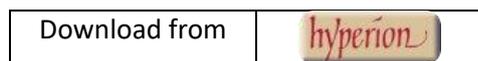
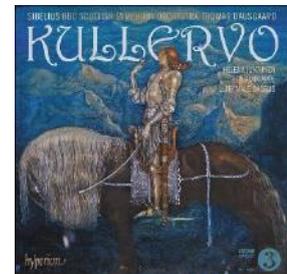
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Thomas Dausgaard

rec. City Halls, Castleriggs, Glasgow, 19-20 May 2018. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk

HYPERION CDA68248 [73:13] For CD purchase details see review by [John Quinn](#).



For a work which is so rarely performed, *Kullervo* has a surprisingly large number of recordings to its credit. One of the best of these, by general consent, from Sir Colin Davis with the LSO on their own label, is no longer available separately on disc, though it's still to be found as part of the LSO Live box set of five SACDs and one blu-ray disc, or as a 16- or 24-bit download from Hyperion – [review](#). Like me, John Quinn thought the complete set 'an attractive proposition' – [review](#).

The new Hyperion will do very well for those looking for a single CD. But there's Osmo Vänskä, who recorded *Kullervo* twice, with the Lahti and Minnesota orchestras. The Lahti recording of *Kullervo* can be obtained separately (**BIS-1215**, CD or 16- or 24-bit download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com) or as part of the Sibelius Edition, Volume 3: Voice and Orchestra (lossless download with pdf booklet,

equivalent to six CDs from eclassical.com, \$39.29. NB: follow this link – the set is also available much more expensively). Best of all, it's included in *the Sibelius bargain The Essential Sibelius*, 15 CDs, over 19 hours for around £59, currently on offer for £44.25 (**BIS-1697/1700** – [Bargain of the Month](#)). The price of that set as a download varies from £15.99 (16-bit from Qobuz, without booklet) to \$168.55 from the BIS home site eclassical.com, with booklet. That's an awful lot more for the booklet!

The Minnesota remake runs to two SACDs, with the choral version of *Finlandia* and Olli Kortekangas *Migrations* on the rather short second disc. (**BIS-9048** SACD: Recording of the Month – [review](#) – [review](#)). Both will serve very well as my benchmarks. The major selling point of the second comes from the participation of the YL Male Voice Choir, whose century-plus familiarity with singing Finnish cannot quite be matched by the Swedish singers of the Lunds choir on Hyperion; though Sweden and Finland are close neighbours and many Finns have Swedish as their first language, Sibelius included, the two languages are totally unrelated in structure.

In both recordings, Vänskä is careful not to make Kullervo too heroic; like Siegfried/Sigurð, he's a flawed hero, which is rather less apparent from Benjamin Appl on the Hyperion recording. Otherwise, there's little to choose between them. If you must have surround sound – by no means essential for me – it has to be the Minnesota BIS, on SACD or as a 24-bit download from eclassical.com, but it's yoked to the Kortekangas work, which may not be to all tastes. In 24-bit it costs \$27.36 and it's not much less expensive to buy just *Kullervo*. The SACDs work out around £26, so the purse-proud may prefer the Lahti CD or download (\$16.80 in 24-bit or \$12.00 in 16-bit). The Hyperion download costs a tempting £8.99 (16-bit) or £13.50 (24-bit).

I close with a reminder that if you're happy with mp3, at various bit-rates, Amazon UK have a selection of the Lahti/Vänskä recordings for £7.89 – [here](#) – though they keep it pretty well hidden. The seven-and-a-half programme includes all the regular symphonies, the Violin Concerto and several of the shorter works; not *Kullervo*, but you could obtain that separately from Hyperion or BIS and have money to spare.

Feruccio BUSONI (1866-1924)

Piano Concerto (1906)

Marc-André Hamelin (piano)

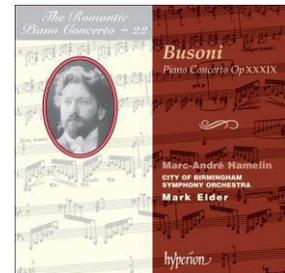
Men of the CBSO Chorus

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra/Mark Elder

rec. June 1999, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Reviewed as download with pdf booklet from [Hyperion](#)

HYPERION CDA67143 [71:44] See also 5-star [review](#) and [review](#).



CD available from	
Download from	

[Kirill Gerstein's CD of the Busoni concerto](#) has been my disc of 2019 (so far), and it sent me scurrying in search of comparisons. The sheer proportions of the Busoni concerto mean there aren't many, but the one I *hadn't* yet heard, and which got the most positive reviews, was this one from Marc-André Hamelin.

It's worthy of all the praise. For one thing, Hyperion's sound is excellent. Birmingham's Symphony Hall is a pretty ideal recording venue anyway, but it's captured brilliantly here, piano and orchestra in perfect balance in the ALAC format I was listening to.

Indeed, it's that very balance that makes the performance work. Hamelin's pianistic pyrotechnics are extraordinary, most especially in the central section of the slow movement when astounding sounds explode from the keyboard. However, he doesn't dominate overtly the texture or the sound picture, and the orchestra meets him in the middle to create an excellent synthesis of sound.

In fact, Mark Elder's contribution is every bit as important. He unleashes hedonistic abandon in the scherzo and tarantella, but he is even more impressive in the first and third movements, where he understands the work's unique structure and gives it a compelling sense of drama. For all that I love it, I'd be the first to admit that this concerto is overblown, absurd and impossible; but Elder comes closer than anyone to taming it and making it suit its proportions.

There's a particularly potent sense of unfolding mystery in the finale's introduction, and the male chorus sound very compelling in their contribution, leading into a coda that finally seems to embrace the concerto's silliness (in a good way!). Recommended, alongside Gerstein, of course! [**Simon Thompson**]

Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

[Sinfonia Antartica](#) (Symphony No.7) [42:57]

[Symphony No 9](#) in e minor [40:40]

Timothy West (narrator); Rowan Pierce (soprano)

Graham Eccles (organ)

Ladies of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Choir

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Andrew Manze

rec. 2018, Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool. DDD.

Reviewed as 16-bit lossless download.

ONYX CLASSICS 4190 [83:33] For purchase details please see review by [John Quinn](#).



Though I find the spoken superscriptions less intolerable than John Quinn, I do wish that they had at least been separately tracked. I suppose I find them less irksome because I grew so used to them on the mono Boult Decca recording from which I got to know the *Antartica* and because they remind me of the poets from whom they are drawn – less fashionable today than when the work was composed and the poetry of Donne and the Metaphysicals was in vogue. (Word has just rejected the very word Metaphysicals.) Much as I now prefer Herbert's poetry to Donne's, that's still a pretty powerful line about the 'rags of time'.

I still hark back to those Boult recordings as my benchmarks – for the *Antartica* not least. There's no special *imprimatur* on them, of course, though I think No.7 one of the most special of the series. The only major disagreement comes in the form of the finale, where Manze, having kept close to Boult's tempi, is much faster. The movement sounds very effective at Manze's tempo, but I find myself still preferring Boult's rather more considered account or that of Andrew Davis (Chandos **CHSA5186**, with *Four Last Songs* and Piano Concerto) – it is marked *non troppo allegro* – though Bryden Thomson, whose accounts of the VW symphonies I'm not alone in liking, also adopts a fast tempo (Chandos **CHAN8796**, with *Toward the Unknown Region*, download only, or complete symphonies **CHAN9087** – [review](#)).

Where Manze adopted a much faster tempo for the finale of No.7, in No.9 the boot is very much on the other foot, with Manze significantly more deliberate than Boult, Davis or Thomson. The Boult can claim to be definitive in the sense that the composer sat in on the sessions.

Manuel de FALLA (1876-1946)

El Amor Brujo (1915 original version) [35:20]

El retablo de Maese Pedro (Master Pedro's Puppet Show, 1923) [26:24]

Esperanza Fernández (cantaora), Jennifer Zetlan (soprano), Jorge Garza (tenor), Alfredo Garcia (baritone), Sato Moughalian (flute)

Perspectives Ensemble/Angel Gil-Ordoñez

rec. 27-31 August 2018, Greenville Community Church, Scarsdale, NY, USA. DDD.



Text and translation included

Reviewed as lossless (wav) press preview.

NAXOS 8.573890 [61:58] See also **Recommended** [review](#).

El Amor Brujo (1915 original version) [34:28]

Fantasia Baetica [13:46]

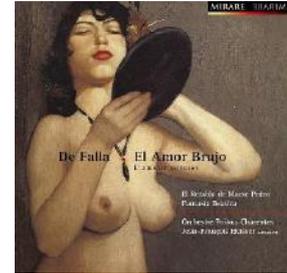
El retablo de Maese Pedro (Master Pedro's Puppet Show, 1923) [27:18]

Antonia Contreras (flamenco singer), Jérôme Corréas (bass-baritone),
Chantal Perraud (soprano), Eric Huchet (tenor)

Orchestre Poitou-Charentes/Jean-François Heisser (piano)

rec. Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud, November 2006. DDD.

MIRARE MIRO34 [75:32]



Naxos CD available from	

It's five years since Perspectives Ensemble and Angel Gil-Ordoñez recorded the music of Montalvatge for Naxos – [review](#). Their new recording has all the virtues of its predecessor, with convincing performances, very well recorded. *El retablo de Maese Pedro* is still not as well-known as it deserves to be; it's an odd work based on a puppet show, but quite different from *Petrushka*.

Mirare CD available from	

There's competition from Josep Pons on mid-price Harmonia Mundi, the same coupling of the original *El Amor*

Brujo with *El retablo de Maese Pedro* (**HMG505213**) and Naxos seem attracted to the coupling, with an earlier (1995) account directed by Diego Dini-Ciacci on **8.553499**. Both of those employ the 1915 original and make a good case for *El retablo*. Both have their merits, but they are outshone by the Mirare, which also adds a fine account of the none too familiar piano piece *Fantasia Baetica*, otherwise available only on a Hyperion recording (Garick Ohlsson) and an out-of-stock CD from Claves.

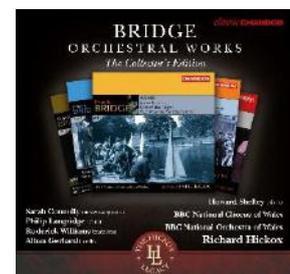
Antonia Contreras gives a powerful flamenco performance to match the X-rated cover and, all in all, while the Naxos is a very fine bargain, it's worth spending that little extra on the Mirare. This was the well-deserved first choice for *El Amor Brujo* on Radio 3's Building a Library.

For a coupling of *El Amor Brujo* (the 1925 Suite) with the better-known *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, the mid-price Chandos recording with Sarah Walker, Margaret Fingerhut, the LSO and Geoffrey Simon offers good value on CD but beware: some dealers are asking much more for the lossless download than for the disc (**CHAN10232X**). Even [chandos.net](#), who offer the CD for £7.00 plus p&p are asking £7.99 for the lossless download. Better still, however, if you want the Suite would be Victoria de los Angeles with Carlo Maria Giulini (with *La Vida breve*, etc., Warner Great Recordings of the Century **5675872**, 2 CDs – [review](#) – download only, or Warner C20 Classics **2375952**, 2 CDs, [Recording of the Month](#), with *Sombrero*, *Noches*, etc., download only).

On the thorny subject of price, I note that the Naxos CD varies from £7.50 to a new high for this label of £10.89, with mp3 around £4.50, 16-bit downloads around £4.80 and 24-bit around £7.20.

Frank BRIDGE (1879-1941)

This is a reminder of the quality of the six-volume Chandos recordings of Bridge's music (**CHAN10729** – [review](#) – [DL Roundup July 2012/2](#)) and a note that the individual volumes seem to have disappeared or about to disappear on individual CDs: most are now download only or burned on special CDR, but Volume 4 can be snapped up for £2.50 as I write, direct from Chandos. If you want the individual downloads, they are all on special offer, again as I write.



- **CHAN9950**, Volume 1 is now download only, currently reduced from £9.99 to £6.99, or available as a special CDR for £13.24 from chandos.net
- **CHAN10012**, Volume 2 likewise from chandos.net
- **CHAN10112**, Volume 3 likewise from chandos.net. The SACD is unavailable.
- **CHAN10188**, Volume 4 download reduced from £9.99 to £6.99, CD on offer for £2.50 from chandos.net
- **CHAN10246**, Volume 5 is now download only, currently reduced from £9.99 to £6.99, or available as a special CDR for £13.24 from chandos.net
- **CHAN10310**, Volume 6 is now download only, currently reduced from £7.49 to £5.24 (lossless) or £9.79 from £13.99 (24-bit) or a special CDR for £10.74 from chandos.net.

The complete set sells for around £22, currently reduced to £15.68 from chandos.net, but the download, even though currently reduced from £31.96 to £22.37 in lossless sound, is more expensive than the discs. Even that is better than the £35.96 being asked by one dealer or the £57.51 from another. I've given up asking why. (I don't know why I called £31.96 'excellent value' in DL Roundup June 2012/2.)

Recommended

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 54 (1939) [33:14]

Suite from the Incidental Music to *King Lear*, Op. 58a (1940) [14:09]

Festive Overture, Op. 96 (1954) [6:15]

Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 60 'Leningrad' (1941) [78:24]

Boston Symphony Orchestra/Andris Nelsons

rec. live, February 2017 (7); April-May 2017 (6, Overture); May 2017 (Lear)

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 483 6728 [53:38 + 78:24] Reviewed as a 24/96

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



CD available from	

I've reviewed the previous three volumes in this ongoing cycle: [Symphony No. 10](#); [Symphonies 5, 8 & 9](#); and [Symphonies 4 & 11](#). It began impressively enough, although the best was yet to come. Indeed, Nelsons' Fourth and

Eleventh must now be counted among the finest in the catalogue, which is why I made that set one of my Recordings of the Year in 2018. Prior to that, I was bowled over by his 'inspired' Concertgebouw Eighth, filmed at the Lucerne Festival in 2011 ([C Major/Unitel](#)). In stark contrast, Nelsons' CD of the Seventh, recorded with the CBSO that same year, is unpardonably crude ([Orfeo](#)).

He starts this new album with the Sixth, a piece I first heard on an André Previn/LSO LP, which also included Rachmaninov's Third (EMI-Warner, 1974/77). Alas, that Shostakovich never really 'worked' for me until I discovered Vladimir Jurowski and the Russian National Orchestra's 2004 account of it, along with No. 1 (Pentatone **PTC 5186 068**). That said, Mark Wigglesworth and the BBCNOW, recorded in the 1990s, mustn't be overlooked (**BIS-973**). Predictably, Nelsons and the BSO are sumptuously recorded, the lower strings powerfully projected. However, Wigglesworth and Jurowski, leaner sounding, are even more spectral in the first movement, and rightly so. The BSO are magnificent, though, and Nick Squire's recording has terrific presence. What a fabulous tam-tam, too. The middle movement is darkly eloquent, the big, loping finale as taut and sardonic as it gets. (Oh, and that bass drum is to die for.)

The Seventh is a resilient piece that yields easily to various approaches. Those who like the 'Leningrad' to be visceral and ultra-vivid - with a sound to match - should warm to Valery Gergiev's 2012 recording ([Mariinsky](#)). However, for something more thoughtful, look no further than Paavo Järvi and the RNO, recorded two years later ([Pentatone](#)). Happily, Nelsons' Boston Seventh is more subtly executed than

his Birmingham one, the first movement unusually refined and more transparent than his Birmingham one. However, this new reading, recorded at a different concert, feels slightly 'damped' compared with his Sixth. Nelsons ensures the first movement is suitably equivocal, its moods keenly felt. Even that infamous march is surprisingly nuanced at the start, individual instruments more audible than usual. It's superbly built, too, that extended peroration as thrilling as I've ever heard it, every timbre laid bare.

As with *Järvi fils*, Nelsons finds a strong, seamless narrative in this music that makes it feel genuinely symphonic. That's especially true of the Moderato (poco Allegretto), beautifully sprung and precisely pointed, and the Adagio, the latter anguished rather than overwrought. (How well the brass are blended here, how silken the strings.) Admittedly, the finale is a tad discursive, but when it's this disciplined and dynamic, who could possibly complain? The fillers, crisp and buoyant accounts of the brief *Festive Overture* - that heroic bass drum again - and the quite substantial *Lear* suite, are a real bonus. Once again, I was struck by what a premium-quality band this is, and how splendidly they play for Nelsons. Indeed, on present form I'm tempted to say they're the finest orchestra on the planet. Period.

Another unmissable instalment in this fine series; as before, the engineering is exemplary. **[DM]**

BW's growing ambivalence to the *Leningrad*, even as heard on this recording and reported in the last edition, evoked a predictably mixed batch of responses on the [Message Board](#).

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913-1994)

Concerto for cello and orchestra (1969-70) [26:21]

Concerto for piano and orchestra (1988) [16:47]

Symphony No.4 (1988-93) [29:26]

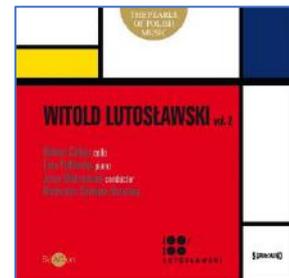
Robert Cohen (cello)

Ewa Pobłocka (piano)

Orchestra Sinfonia Varsova/Jerzy Maksymiuk

rec. January 2013, Polish Radio's Witold Lutosławski Recording Studio, Warsaw. DDD.

BEARTON CDB052 [72:37] SACD available from [BeArTon](#).



This is not music which renders itself up easily: don't expect a cello concerto, for example, that sounds anything like the Dvořák or the Elgar. Apart from Ewa Pobłocka's recording of the Piano Concerto with the composer himself in 1992 (CD Accord **ACD015** – [review](#)) there are no more authentic performances than these; the performance of the Piano Concerto is very similar to that on CD Accord and the recording is good. Another Polish release couples the Cello Concerto and Symphony No.4 (**Accentus ACC30388: Recording of the Month**); Leslie Wright's [review](#) of that suggests that René Capuçon's more lyrical approach to the solo part there may be more amenable than Robert Cohen's.

This is one of the last ever downloads that I shall be making from emusic – see page 6 for reasons. I couldn't give recording dates or even the catalogue number unless I had had access to Dominy Clements [review](#) because, like most of their offerings, it comes devoid of notes.

MusicWeb no longer sell CD Accord recordings, but subscribers can listen to **ACD015** from [Naxos Music Library](#).

Emil TABAKOV (b. 1947)

Complete Symphonies - Volume 2

Symphony No. 1 (1981-82) [34:56]

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (2007) [38:54]

Alexander Zemtsov (viola)

Bulgarian National Radio Symphony Orchestra/Emil Tabakov

rec. 2009/2014, Bulgarian National Radio, Sofia

First Recordings

Reviewed as 24/48 download from eclassical.com. NO booklet. Back cover only from Naxos Music Library. Booklet from Toccata.

TOCCATA CLASSICS TOCC0410 [73:50] For CD purchase details please see [review](#) by Stephen Greenbank.



It's some time since I [reviewed](#) and enjoyed Volume 1 of this series. Symphony No.1 is a tougher nut than No.8, which I described as approachable though not always an easy listen. Tough, but worth cracking, No.1 was clearly meant to announce the composer's arrival on the post-Shostakovich symphonic scene unmissably and it does so effectively.

The Viola Concerto is much more recent, but moves generally in the same thematic realms. The composer-led performances are *de facto* authoritative, the recording very good in 24-bit format and the notes as informative as we have come to expect from this most enterprising label.

Lovers of Military Band Music will need no urging to go for **Beulah's** latest release: **Military Marches** from the Band of the Coldstream Guards/Major Douglas Pope and the Band of HM Royal Marines/Lt. Colonel Sir Vivian Dunn (**2PS32** ADD/stereo [59:17] – from [Qobuz](#) in lossless sound). If you followed the review of Beulah's *Classic Marches* in [Spring 2019/2](#) and the other links there, this offers more of the same in the same high quality transfers.



The Marines, released by HMV in 1963, open the proceedings with:

Under the White Ensign [3:03]

L'entente cordiale [2:46]

Semper Fidelis [2:41]

On the Square [2:57]

No Hiding Place [2:42]

Army of the Nile [3:17]

Followed by The Guards, recorded by Decca in 1958, in:

Voice of the Guns [3:12]

With Sword and Lance [2:34]

Le père de la victoire [3:28]

Light of Foot [2:52]

Le régiment de Sambre et Meuse [2:52]

Under the Banner Victory [2:43]

Anchors Aweigh [3:09]

Entry of the Gladiators [2:35]

København March [2:26]

Radetzky March [2:39]

A Frangesa! [2:18]

El Abanico [3:31]

National Emblem [2:51]

The Consort [4:41]

Forthcoming from Beulah: Double and Triple Concertos

Johannes BRAHMS (1833-1897) Concerto violin and cello in a minor, Op.102 [32:00]

Alfredo Campoli, André Navarra (cello)

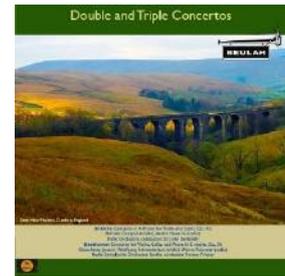
Halle Orchestra/Sir John Barbirolli – first released 1964. ADD/stereo

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827) Concerto for violin, cello and piano in C, Op.56 [36:53]

Géza Anda (piano), Wolfgang Schneiderhahn (violin), Pierre Fournier (cello)

RIAS Berlin/Ferenc Fricsay – rec. 1960 ADD/stereo

BEULAH 1PS49 [68:53] See eavb.co.uk



Two classic recordings and a cover shot of the Settle to Carlisle railway. This recording of the Beethoven is available on DG Originals, also coupled with the Brahms, but in a different version of the latter, from Schneiderhahn and Schneider, again with Fricsay and the RIAS Orchestra.

My preference would be for the DG coupling, but the Beulah transfer has improved the Brahms, originally a rather shrill Pye Golden Guinea offering. No amount of remastering, however, can disguise the slightly backward positioning of the soloists in the balance.

Late News

As I was preparing this edition to go online, BIS released an appropriate recording for this fiftieth anniversary of the Moon Landing:

Sir Edward ELGAR (1857—1934)

Variations on an Original Theme, Op.36 'Enigma Variations' (1898—99) [32:17]

Gustav HOLST (1874—1934)

The Planets, suite for large orchestra, Op.32 (1914—16) [49:38]

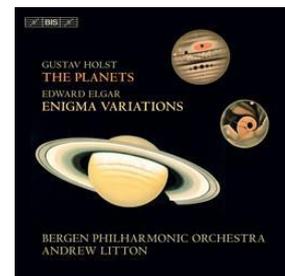
Female voices from Bergen Philharmonic Choir and Edvard Grieg Kor (Planets)

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra/Andrew Litton

rec. June 2013 (Elgar) and February 2017 (Holst), Grieghallen, Bergen, Norway.

Downloaded in 24/96 sound with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

BIS-2068 SACD [82:42]



DDD/DSD

24-bit sound is offered at the same price as 16-bit for an initial period (\$12.38).

Dipping into this release suggests that these are performances worthy of comparison with existing recommendations – expect a full review shortly or in the next edition of Second Thoughts ... Meanwhile subscribers to Naxos Music Library can do their own comparisons [there](#).