

RETROSPECTIVE SUMMER 2020

By Brian Wilson

The decision to axe the 'Second Thoughts and Short Reviews' feature left me with a vast array of part-written reviews, left unfinished after a colleague had got their thoughts online first, with not enough hours in the day to recast a full review in each case. This is an attempt to catch up. Even if in almost every case I find myself largely in agreement with the original review, a brief reminder of something you may have missed, with a slightly different slant, may be useful – and, occasionally, I may be raising a dissenting voice.

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Recommended *Renaissance im Norden* (Music in the Courts of North Germany)_CPO [2]

RECOMMENDED

Renaissance im Norden

Music in the Courts of North Germany

Johann GRABBE (1585-1655)

Madrigals and Instrumental Works (from CPO 777 662-2 – [details and review](#)) [77:34]

Michael PRÆTORIUS (1571-1621)

Ostermesse (Easter Mass) (from CPO 999 953-2 – [details and review](#)) [68:20]

William BRADE (1560-1630)

Thomas SIMPSON (1582-1628?)

Taffel Consort (from CPO 999 952-2 – [details and review](#)) [72:00]

Moritz Landraf von HESSEN (1572-1632)

Sacred and Secular Works (from CPO 777 661-2 – [details and review](#)) [71:13]

Weser Renaissance Bremen/Manfred Cordes
 rec. 2010-2011. DDD.

CPO 555 265-2 [4 CDs: 289:07]



CD set available from



Strictly speaking, we haven't reviewed this set, but my colleagues have reviewed the four separate CDs of music composed for the courts of the Weser area of North Germany which have been boxed together in a slip case at an attractive price – around £40. The separate CDs in their original cases and with their booklets are retained. I'll safely leave you to follow the links above to the original reviews.

The Landgrave of Hessen stands out from the others on the list in that the court for which he composed the music was his own, at Kassel. He may have been an aristocratic amateur, but he was a talented musician who nurtured the talent of Heinrich Schütz and, briefly, John Dowland. At times his music, as presented here, almost seems to equal that of the pre-eminent North German composers of his day – and that rates him pretty highly in my book.

If you didn't go for any of these CDs ten years ago, make a bee-line for this set.

The Father, the Son & the Godfather - 2 x Bach & Telemann

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)

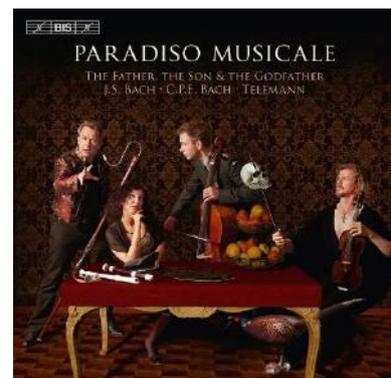
Trio sonata for recorder, viola da gamba [viola] and bc in d minor (TWV42, d7) [6:55]

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Sonata for harpsichord and transverse flute [recorder] in b minor (BWV1030) [17:00]

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714-1788)

Trio sonata for bass recorder, viola and bc in F (Wq163/H588) [10:28]



Georg Philipp TELEMANN

Sonata for cello and bc in D (TWV41, D6) [8:38]

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH

Sonata for keyboard and viola da gamba or viola in g minor (Wq88/H 510) [17:27]

Georg Philipp TELEMANN

Trio sonata for recorder, viola da gamba [viola] and bc in g minor (TWV42, g9) [7:41]

Paradiso Musicale (Dan Laurin (recorder), Henrik Frenidin (viola), Mats Olofsson (cello), Anna Paradiso (harpsichord))

rec. April 2010, Länna Church, Sweden. DDD

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

BIS CD-1895 [69:39]

[Review](#) and CD purchase details.

I referred to this recording when [reviewing](#) a similar collection from Signum, but never got round to writing about it in detail. That's partly because Johan van Veen's review says just about all that is necessary; my only difference is that I was less put off by the ornamentation that is a feature of the recordings in which Dan Laurin is involved. On disc this is CD only – no SACD – but the download comes in 16- and 24-bit flavours and, as always with BIS, with the booklet – not, sadly, a given for all labels. As enjoyable to hear as it seems to have been for the performers.

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)**[Concertos for Harpsichord and Strings – Volume 1](#)**

Concerto No.1 in d minor, BWV1052 (c.1730) [21:56]

Concerto No.5 in f minor, BWV1056 (c.1730) [9:12]

Concerto No.8 in d minor, BWV1059R (reconstructed) [15:40]

Concerto No.2 in E, BWV1053 (c.1730) [18:58]

Bach Collegium Japan/Masato Suzuki (harpsichord)

rec. July 2018, Yamaha Hall, Tokyo. DDD/DSD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. Also available on SACD and as 5.0 surround download.

BIS BIS-2401 SACD [66:34]

[Review](#) and SACD purchase details.



This is yet another new enterprise from Team Suzuki and, like everything that Masato and his father Masaaki have touched over the years – not least the splendid series of cantatas, sacred and secular, from Suzuki senior – it promises to be the start of a winning run. If you haven't yet encountered those cantata recordings, you may wish to download the sampler (BIS-9051 SACD, free from Presto), but better still would be to go for one of the CDs, SACDs, or downloads – almost any one of them would do.

There may be several very good recordings of these keyboard concertos, in a variety of permutations, but this new recording scores in offering a reconstructed eighth concerto, BWV1059R. We're used to these keyboard concertos being mined for putative originals for other instruments; Masato Suzuki's reconstruction of BWV1059 restores a work which exists only in fragmentary form, involving some reverse engineering from a cantata. It's not the first time that it's been done – Bob van Asperen included a shorter reconstruction, now part of his Erato Veritas complete set (5220012, download only, budget price) and Gustav Leonhardt's edition was recorded on a Somm album containing the *Musical Offering*, a lively foot-tapping performance which I found convincing (SOMMCD077 – [review](#)). It's also been reconstructed as an oboe concerto and recorded in that form by Gonzalo X Ruiz and Monica Huggett (Avie AV2324, with BWV1053R, 1056R, etc. – [review](#)).

The present Suzuki reconstruction is even more convincing, as are the performances all round. The 24-bit sound is excellent.

Giovanni Battista SOMIS (1686-1763)

Sonate da Camera Opus II per violino e cembalo

Sonata in d minor, Op.2/1 [6:34]

Sonata in B flat, Op.2/2 [6:36]

Sonata in c minor, Op.2/3 [5:27]

Sonata in A, Op.2/4 [7:21]

Sonata in e minor, Op.2/5 [6:26]

Sonata in G, Op.2/6 [6:32]

Sonata in F, Op.2/7 [6:39]

Sonata in C, Op.2/8 [6:48]

Sonata in b minor, Op.2/9 [6:55]

Sonata in g minor, Op.2/10 [6:18]

Sonata in a minor, Op.2/11 [7:28]

Sonata in D, Op.2/12 [6:44]

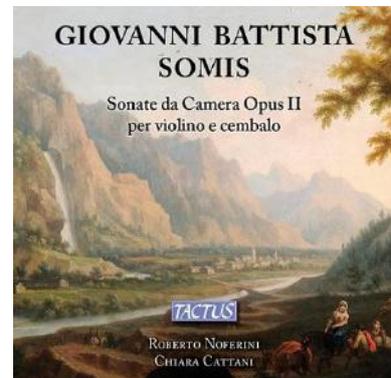
Roberto Noferini (violin), Chiara Cattani (harpsichord)

rec. December 2013, Chiesa di San Girolamo, Bagnacavallo (RA), Italy. DDD

Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from [Naxos Music Library](#).

TACTUS TC681908 [79:54]

[Review](#) and CD purchase details.



This isn't just retrospective material; it's deep back catalogue stuff, from 2015, which I mentioned in reviewing a Calliope recording of Somis' Op.4 sonatas (CAL1526, pending). Though I enjoyed that recording, I marginally prefer this earlier Tactus Op.2 set. Whichever you choose – or a Glossa recording of his Op.1 – this pupil of Corelli and teacher of Pugnani, Viotti and Leclair, an influential composer in his time, deserves to be better known. All three recordings will do that, but the Tactus is probably the one to go for first.

Johann Helmich ROMAN (1694-1758)

Golovinmusiken (Golovin Music, Music for a banquet held by the Russian envoy Count Golovin, 1728: complete performing version by Dan Laurin)

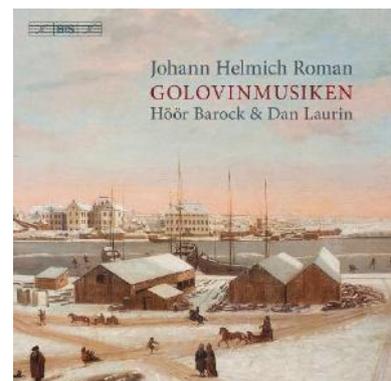
Höör Barock/Dan Laurin (recorders)

rec. Tjörnarps kyrka, Höör, Sweden, November 2017. DDD/DSD

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

BIS BIS-2355 SACD [81:53]

[Surround-sound review](#) and purchase details.



There is another recording of this music, on another Swedish label, Caprice, recorded by the Drottningholm Baroque Ensemble in 2002, but it's far less complete than Dan Laurin's reconstruction from the manuscript for BIS – just 49 minutes. Composed to a commission by the Russian ambassador, it was all in the very latest baroque style for 1728. With a preponderance of music for recorders and flutes of various kinds, it's right up the street for Dan Laurin and, though the music is of no great consequence, with most items lasting less than three minutes, it's entertaining background music for a dinner – or in the car, as I've seen suggested.

Pietro Domenico PARADISI (1706/07-1791)**Keyboard sonatas (1754)**

Sonata X in D [6:17]

Sonata I in G [5:59]

Sonata IV in g minor [10:58]

Sonata V in F [8:17]

Sonata VI in A [8:02]

Sonata III in E [8:19]

Sonata II in B flat [10:47]

Sonata VII in B flat [10:05]

Sonata VIII in e minor [7:55]

Sonata IX in a minor [9:27]

Anna Paradiso (harpsichord, clavichord, fortepiano)

rec. November 2018, Petruskyrkan, Danderyd, Sweden. DDD/DSD.

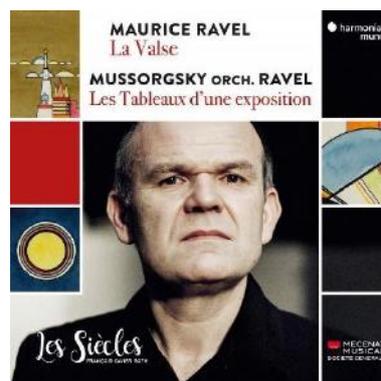
Reviewed as stereo 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com**BIS BIS-2415 SACD** [87:57][Recommended review](#); [Review](#) and SACD purchase details.

Two colleagues have already reviewed this in very positive terms. It's an amazing coincidence that Anna Paradiso should be such a fine exponent of the music of her near-namesake, but she has already shown her worth in music of this period, as in the keyboard sonatas of Johann Helmich Roman (1694-1748), also for BIS (BIS-2095 SACD, BIS-2135 SACD – [review](#)).

Modest MUSSORGSKY (1839-1881)[Pictures from an Exhibition](#) (1874, orch. Ravel, 1922) [26:58]**Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937)***La Valse* (1920) [17:17]

Les Siècles/François-Xavier Roth

rec. live, November, 2019, Philharmonie de Paris. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com**HARMONIA MUNDI HMM905282** [44:15][Review](#) and CD purchase details.

Way back, Decca Ace of Clubs used the same coupling for their reissue of the Ansermet recording of these works, but what was reasonable measure for an LP then seems extremely measly now for a full-price CD – which is where eclassical.com's per-second pricing comes into its own. With 24-bit initially the same price as 16-bit, that's good value. In all other respects, John Quinn's verdict – 'a highly stimulating album' – is spot on, and the recording sounds even better in 24-bit format.

Having mentioned Ansermet, I should add that the Eloquence reissue of his 1958 recording remains available; enjoyable, but hardly top choice and sounding a little dull by comparison with the perky new Roth – [review](#). Les Siècles even endeared me a little more than usual to *La Valse*.

Sir Charles Villiers STANFORD (1852-1924)

Three Motets, Op.38 [8:55]

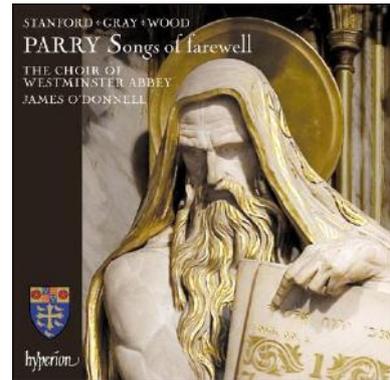
Alan GRAY (1855-1935)*Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* in f minor [8:05]**Sir Charles Villiers STANFORD***Magnificat* for eight-part chorus in B-flat, Op.164 [12:37]**Charles WOOD (1866-1926)***Nunc dimittis* in B-flat [3:17]**Sir Hubert PARRY (1848-1918)**

Songs of Farewell [31:49]

The Choir of Westminster Abbey/James O'Donnell

rec. 2019, All Hallows, Gospel Oak, London

Texts and English translations included

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.**HYPERION CDA68301** [64:45][CD review](#) – [review](#) – and purchase details

Although I have indexed this recording under 'Stanford', it's Parry's *Songs of Farewell* that appear on the CD cover. I'm surprised to see reservations from one reviewer. Like my two MusicWeb colleagues, I can't imagine the *Songs* – or the rest of the music – receiving a better performance from any cathedral or college choir; they form the splendid conclusion to a first-class recording, superbly captured by the recording in 24-bit sound. With SACDs no longer the order of the day from Hyperion, 24/96 comes into its own in a recording such as this; it's well worth paying a pound or so more than for the CD, and, like all Hyperion recordings and all those of other labels on offer from their site, it comes with the excellent booklet.

I suspect that the one dissident voice that I have read would prefer the more intimate style of *Tenebrae*, whose recording on Signum SIGCD267 – [review](#) – can also be downloaded, with booklet, from [Hyperion](#); the 24-bit download of that is even less expensive at £9.00.

Hyperion already had a very worthwhile all-Parry recording including *Songs of Farewell*, from St George's Windsor and Christopher Robinson (CDA66273 – [DL Roundup September 2012/2](#) – download or Archive CD from hyperion-records.co.uk).

Sir Edward ELGAR (1857-1934)

Sea Pictures, Op.37 (1899)* [23:39]

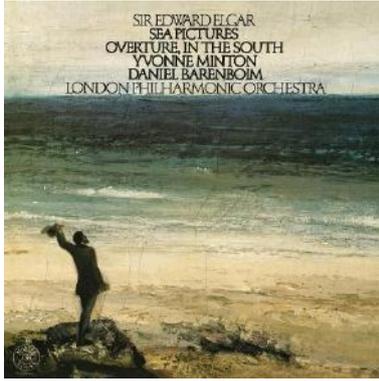
Falstaff – Symphonic Study in c minor, Op.68 (1913) [35:10]

Elīna Garanča (mezzo)*

Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim

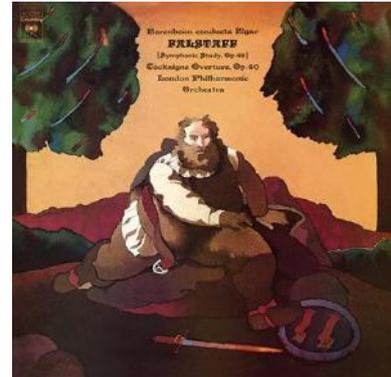
rec. live Staatsoper, Berlin, 14 and 15 October and 16 and 17 December 2019. DDD.

DECCA 4850968 [58:48][Review](#) and CD purchase details.



Sea Pictures, Op.37 [22:59]
 In the South (*Alassio*), Op.50 [21:46]
 Yvonne Minton (mezzo)
 London Philharmonic Orchestra/Daniel Barenboim
 First released in 1977.
 Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) (as part of Sony British Music Collection)
SONY G010003771027C [44:45]

Falstaff – Symphonic Study in c minor, Op.68 (1913) [35:30]
Cockaigne Overture, Op.40 ‘In London Town’ [15:31]
 London Philharmonic Orchestra/Daniel Barenboim
 First released in 1977.
 Reviewed as streamed from [Naxos Music Library](#) as 886446607573
SONY G010003770551P [51:02]



Symphony No. 2 in E-flat, Op. 63
 [56:01]
 Staatskapelle Berlin/Daniel Barenboim
 rec. 28 October 2013, Philharmonie, Berlin
DECCA 4786677 [56:01]

As so often happens, John Quinn got ahead of me with his [review](#) of the new Daniel Barenboim recording of *Sea Pictures* and *Falstaff*. I seem to be fated to emulate the page in JM Neale’s fanciful embellishment of the good deeds of King Wenceslas, walking in the steps where, not the saint but our editor has trod. The fact that we

are in general agreement is no consolation.

Not surprisingly, JQ refers to the Dame Janet Baker/Sir John Barbirolli recording of *Sea Pictures*; coupled with Jacqueline du Pré in the Cello Concerto; that’s one of the glories of the recent Warner bumper box set of Barbirolli’s EMI and Pye recordings (9029538608, 109 CDs) or on a single CD (2564607600) or vinyl LP (ASD655).

JQ’s review brought an appeal on the [MusicWeb Message Board](#) for recognition of Yvonne Minton’s recording of *Sea Pictures*, set down with Barenboim as part of his first wave of Elgar recordings. Unable to resist, I went back to the streamed version of that recording. It’s available only for streaming or as a download; as the download lasts just 45 minutes, costs over £11 in lossless form, and comes without a booklet, I have to say that’s a bit of a dampener. When last reissued on mid-price CD, the coupling was much more generous: *Sea Pictures* with Symphony No.1 (SMK58929) and *Alassio* with the Violin Concerto (SMK58927).

The [Naxos Music Library](#) version comes as part of a 13-hour Sony *British Music Collection* which can be found as a download for around £26 (88883737182). With some valuable Beecham recordings included, that may seem a better proposition.

When Barenboim’s *Sea Pictures* first appeared in 1977 (CBS 76579 in Europe, M35880 in the US), it received a generally lukewarm reception; even Minton’s contribution was hardly feted: Alan Blyth referred to her ‘rich-grained, warm tone [bringing] out much of [the] elegiac beauty’ but thought her

lacking 'the inner compulsion to match the surge and swell of Elgar's writing'. *Alassio*, too, got a drubbing for over-emphasising detail. A few months later, the cassette also came under fire from Max Harrison: 'more here than [Minton] and Barenboim apparently suspect', with *Alassio* 'too episodic ... largely because [Barenboim] fiddles with the tempo so'.

On that basis, no sane person should even investigate Minton's *Sea Pictures* ... so, I did. And I threw in his CBS *Falstaff* and *Cockaigne*, too. Again, that's an expensive download for a short programme, but well worth streaming.

Falstaff comes off well on both recordings – it's an episodic work and lends itself to an episodic treatment. I'd be happy with both recordings, but, as the Sony download costs as much as the new Decca, and the Barenboim *Cockaigne* is hardly competitive with the best, the choice would be clear ... were it not that Garanča is no match for Baker or Minton. You could purchase just *Falstaff* as a download, but, by the crazy rules that govern such things, that costs more than the complete album!

One final thought about all the recordings of *Falstaff* that I know: Elgar himself, whose recording remains available, took the Death of Falstaff significantly faster than his successors. Perhaps he didn't want to sentimentalise the episode, as Walton did in his *Henry V* film score; maybe the Walton has influenced later conductors of the Elgar.

As for Yvonne Minton's contribution to *Sea Pictures*, it deserves much more credit than it received in 1977 – I shall be listening to this version in future, perhaps even more than the Baker recording, coupled as it is with the Cello Concerto, a work and recording so intense that it has become almost too much to bear. But – a large but – another recording has recently appeared, featuring Kathryn Rudge, the RLPO and Vasily Petrenko in *Sea Pictures*, with *The Music Makers* (Onyx ONYX4206).

Listening to that after the new Decca, it was as if an extra row of lights came on; the music simply comes more to life here – and Rudge sounds uncannily like Janet Baker. Alice Coote and Sir Mark Elder are also very good (Hallé CDHLL7536 – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)), though the music doesn't quite come alive as it does on the new Onyx. On the other hand, the Hallé 24/44.1 download is especially good value at £9 from hyperion-records.co.uk, with 16-bit lossless at £7.99. It comes with the booklet, too, which, shamefully, is not the case if you download the new Decca.

I thought that I had added my two penn'orth on Barenboim's Symphony No.1 (4789353) and No.2 (4786677) a while ago. In fact, I did so only in passing in [DL News 2016/5](#), reviewing Steven Isserlis' Hyperion recording of the Cello Concerto. Revisiting both now, I find myself on the side of those who were most impressed. If for nothing else, I'm pleased that the new recording has taken me back to these two predecessors. It's a bit mean, however, to give us just the first symphony – Hallé add Elder's *In the South* as a considerable filler on their house label (CDHLL7500 – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#)). That's a good reason to prefer the Hallé; another is its availability as a lossless download with pdf booklet for £7.99 from hyperion-records.co.uk. Best of all, it's one of the finest recorded accounts of this wonderful work.

Sir Edward ELGAR (1857-1934)

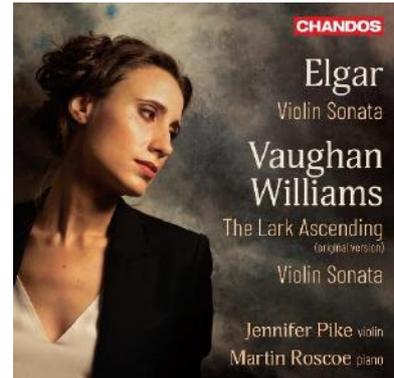
Violin Sonata in e minor, Op.82 (1918) [25:36]

Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)[Violin Sonata in a minor](#) (1954) [26:50]*The Lark Ascending*, Romance for violin and piano (original version, 1914) [14:18]

Jennifer Pike (violin); Martin Roscoe (piano)

rec. 27–29 October 2019, Potton Hall, Dunwich, Suffolk. DDD.

Reviewed as 16/44.1 (wav) lossless press preview

CHANDOS CHAN20156 [67:05][Review](#) and CD purchase details

If the coupling of these two violin sonatas is right for you, I see nothing to prevent you, especially if the original violin and piano version of *The Lark Ascending* captures your curiosity. My preference would be to have the Elgar in an all-Elgar setting, and Chandos already had a very fine recording from Lydia Mordkovich and Julian Milford, with *Sospiri* and other Elgar music for violin and piano (CHAN9624). That's still full-price on CD, but currently on offer from Presto, who also offer mp3, 16- and 24-bit downloads very reasonably priced. (See [Spring 2018/2](#)). My best recommendation remains the Nash Ensemble in the Elgar Violin Sonata and Piano Quintet at budget price (CDH55301: CD or download £6.50 from hyperion-records.co.uk).

There are fewer choices for the VW, but Rupert Marshall-Luck and Matthew Richard tick a lot of boxes (EMRCD006, with Holst and Walford Davies – [review](#) – [review](#) – [Spring 2020/1B](#)).

RECOMMENDED**Amy BEACH (1867-1944)**

Piano Quintet in f-sharp minor Op.67 (1907) [27:50]

Sir Edward ELGAR (1857-1934)

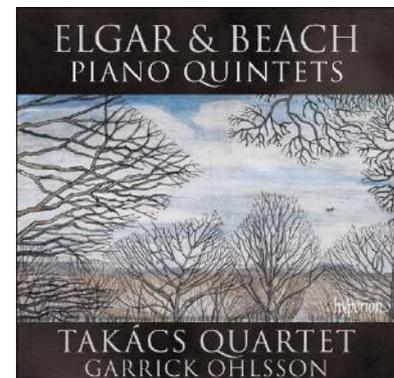
Piano Quintet in a minor Op.84 (1918/19) [35:46]

Garrick Ohlsson (piano)

Takács Quartet

rec. May 2019, The Concert Hall, Wyastone Estate, Monmouth, UK.

DDD.

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.**HYPERION CDA68295** [63:38][Recommended review](#) and CD purchase details.

This is the second recent first-rate recording of the resurgent chamber music which Elgar composed at his Sussex retreat, Brinkwells, at the end of World War I. If you can afford only one of these two recordings, it should be this rather than the Chandos Violin Sonata, if only for the Amy Beach coupling. That's certainly not to downplay the Elgar, which receives a passionate performance, including a slow movement evocative of the 'bare ruin'd choirs' depicted on the cover.

RECOMMENDED**Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)**[Symphony No.5](#) in D (1938-43) [39:45]**Gerald FINZI** (1901-1956)[Concerto for Clarinet and Strings](#), Op.31 (1948-49) [28:41]

Philharmonia Orchestra/Michael Collins (clarinet)

rec. 2019, Watford Colosseum, Watford, UK

Reviewed as 24/96 stereo download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). (Also available in 5.0 surround and on SACD).**BIS BIS-2367 SACD** [68:30][Recommended review](#) and SACD purchase details

Michael Collins has 'form' in the Finzi concerto, having recorded it twice before – the second time, as now, as soloist and conductor, for Chandos (CHAN10739, with Stanford and Arnold: Recording of the Month – [review](#) – [review](#)). In [DL News 2012/20](#), I found myself torn between Collins and some very distinguished rivals; the very fine new release complicates any decision even more.

Add an equally fine account of Vaughan Williams' idyllic Fifth Symphony, with its music intended for *Pilgrim's Progress* – a work which VW despaired of ever having performed – and choice becomes even more complicated. There's a plethora of choices for the symphony, from the mono Boult complete VW symphonies – still the most reliable touchstone on Decca 4732412, download only – to modern versions: the RLPO and Andrew Manze (ONYX4184, with No.6 – [review](#) – [review](#) – [2018/2](#)), the Hallé with Sir Mark Elder (CDHLL7533, with No.8 – [review](#): Recording of the Month – [review](#) – especially good value as a download with pdf booklet from [Hyperion](#) – [DL News 2013/6](#)), and, slightly older, the LSO with Richard Hickox (CHAN9666, with *Valiant for Truth*, etc. – [review](#) – [review](#)) and the Bournemouth SO and Kees Bakels (Naxos 8.550738, with No.9 – [review](#)).

When Hyperion get round to No.5 in their continuing series with Martyn Brabbins, the choice will be even harder, so I'm not quite as convinced as [Robert Cummings](#) that this is THE version to have. It is, however, very easy to recommend, especially if you want the Finzi coupling. The 24/96 download, heard in stereo, from [eclassical.com](#), is excellent; for fans of surround sound, the 5.0 comes at no extra cost.

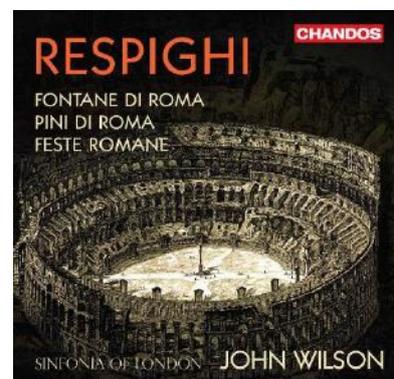
Very fine recordings of music by two of my Desert Island composers.

Ottorino RESPIGHI (1879-1936)*Feste Romane* (Roman Festivals, P157, 1928) [23:55]*Fontane di Roma* (Fountains of Rome, P106, 1913-16) [15:00]*Pini di Roma* (Pines of Rome, P141, 1923-24) [21:16]

Sinfonia of London/John Wilson

rec. Church of St. Augustine, Kilburn, London; 2–7 September 2019. DDD/DSD.

Reviewed as lossless (wav) press preview.

CHANDOS CHSA5261 SACD [60:12]Recommended [SACD review](#) and purchase details.

John Wilson has recently given us revelatory recordings of Korngold which have met with praise all round – I was one of the first to like his account of the Symphony, which eventually was Recommended so many times that it ended as Recording of the Month – [review](#). Can he do the same for Respighi who, though his reputation is now higher than it used to be, is still criticised as a 'technicolor' composer.

Of the many recordings of Respighi's Roman Trilogy, Chandos' own earlier recordings with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Yan Pascal Tortelier are still well worth considering, especially as they are offered as part of a 2-for-1 set, with *Vetrare da chiesa*, *Metamorphoseon*, and *Impressioni brasiliane* (CHAN241-45 – [review](#)). Recorded between 1984 and 1991, this album still sounds well, though it's not available on SACD or in 24-bit sound like the new Chandos. The Roman Trilogy, the second CD of the twofer, is also available separately at mid-price (CHAN10035X). Some dealers still have that as a single CD for around £7.50, but charge more for the lossless download!

Comparing like with like – my preview of the new album was only in 16-bit lossless – there's little to choose between the old and new Chandos recordings. I had to turn the wick down a notch or two to listen in comfort to the Tortelier *Feste Romane* – not my favourite piece of music at all.

One rival recording also available on SACD and in 24-bit sound also contains performances that are well worthwhile, from the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and John Neschling (BIS-1720 SACD). In a joint [review](#), Dominy Clements and I nominated the BIS as Recording of the Month and Download of the Month respectively.

Top marks to Chandos for opening both their recordings with *Feste Romane*; after *Fontane* and *Pini di Roma*, it sounds too raucous. The tramping of the soldier's hobnailed sandals along the Via Appia in the final tableau of *Pini di Roma* makes the best conclusion to the trilogy, and to do that with the BIS recording involves re-programming. (I've changed my mind since I wrote that I preferred to end with *Fontane di Roma*, but either is preferable to ending with *Feste*; that leaves a bad taste at the end.

All three sets of performances are persuasive. John Wilson tends to adopt slightly faster tempi than the other two and Neschling tends to give the music more time to expand. Mostly we are talking about small differences which hardly matter in the general scheme, but the third section of *Pini di Roma*, depicting the Pines of the Janiculum, comes out at a fast-paced 6:43 from Wilson, but almost a minute longer, at 7:40 from Neschling, with Tortelier in-between at 7:10. Yet Wilson is not the fastest here – on a recent live recording, coupled with Schedin's *Carmen* Suite, Mariss Jansons is speedier still – indeed, a fast tempo is the general consensus.

I'm particularly attached to one of the recordings which István Kertész made during his golden years with the LSO, now available on Decca Eloquence (4501102: *Fountains, Pines and The Birds*) or on a 12-CD set *István Kertész The London Years* (4786420). I'm not a fan of multi-sets, but this contains some very valuable recordings, of which I'm very grateful to be reminded, including Dvořák (Symphonies Nos. 7 and 8), Mozart (with Clifford Curzon and Vladimir Ashkenazy) and Kodály (*Háry Janos* and *The Peacock*).

Janus, to whom the Janiculum was sacred, was a two-faced God, so it may be that different tempi can be appropriate; indeed Kertész at 6:41, and JoAnn Falletta, on a Naxos recording which I reviewed in Spring 2019, at 7:12, both capture the magic of the moonlight on the pines, with no sense of hurry. Yet there is no sense that Wilson is pushing the tempo too hard on the new recording. Much as I like Kertész and Tortelier here, with Falletta a very fine budget single-CD choice for the trilogy, it's Wilson and the Sinfonia of London who best get into the atmosphere; the result is as magic as from Neschling, who makes a case for taking almost a minute longer. Janus really is playing his two-faced game; both tempi work very well.

The boot – or, rather the military sandal – is on the other foot in the Pines of the Appian Way. Here Neschling really puts a sense of purpose into the march as it develops without running the cohort off their feet. That's one reason why I would have liked the BIS recording to have ended with *Pini di*

Roma. Wilson takes the longer journey this time, more in line with the general consensus: Kertész, Falletta and Tortelier also take the slightly slower time. Neschling concludes with a bang, which I like, but there's no sense of Wilson going out with a whisper – more like 'wow'.

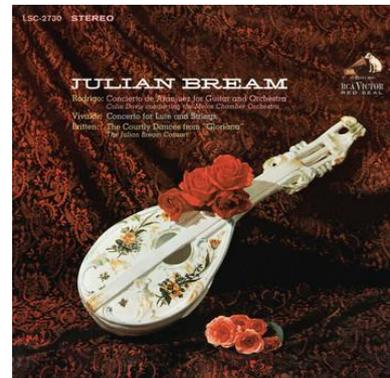
Though my press preview of the new Chandos was in 16-bit (CD-quality) sound and I listened to the BIS in 24-bit guise, equivalent to the SACD stereo track, there's very little if anything to choose between them in quality. Those intending to buy the physical product will find both available on hybrid SACD for around the same price. If it's 24-bit that you need, the BIS from eclassical.com costs \$13.16; even at current exchange rates that's less than £13.99 from chandos.net for 24-bit stereo and a very pricey £19.99 for 24-bit surround sound. BIS charge the same for 24-bit stereo and surround, usually about the same price as the SACD; I really don't understand why either should cost more than the physical SACD. Both the BIS and the Chandos come in excellent sound quality.

There has been some debate about this Chandos recording on the [MusicWeb Message Board](#), with a degree of harking back to old favourites. That's something that I often do – I wouldn't want to be without the Kertész – but there's no doubt in my mind that the choice among recent recordings lies between Neschling and Wilson.

Joaquín RODRIGO (1901-1999)

Concierto de Aranjuez: Julian Bream

The death of Julian Bream has sent me right back to some deep catalogue. There are many recordings to remember him by – alas, a considerable number of them no longer available, or available only as expensive downloads, mostly without booklet. I have recently been listening to two new recordings of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, for which I used Narciso Yepes as my benchmark. I could just as easily have used one of Bream's recordings:



- RCA Classic Library 82876608702: with Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Sir John Eliot Gardiner (with *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre*, with RCA Victor Chamber Orchestra/Leo Brouwer and solo guitar pieces)
- OR RCA Classic Masters 88697715022 for the same performances, coupling and price
- Dutton Epoch CDLX7333 SACD: with Monteverdi Orchestra/Sir John Eliot Gardiner (with Vivaldi, Kohaut Lute Concertos)
- Sony G010002996334T: Monteverdi Orchestra/Sir John Eliot Gardiner (with Lennox Berkeley Guitar Concerto). Download only – shorter value, but less expensive: lossless £8.63 from [Presto](#).

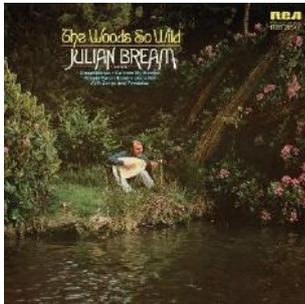
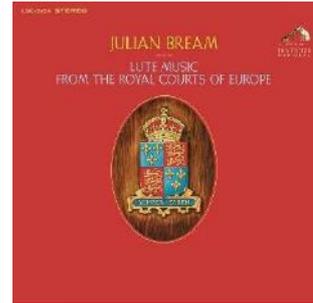
The recording with Sir John Eliot Gardiner is also available with the Berkeley concerto and Leo Brouwer's *Concierto Elegiaco* (RCA G010001393538C) OR with *Fantasia para un Gentilhombre* and Villa Lobos 5 Preludes (with Villa Lobos *Bachianas* No.5, Anna Moffo, American SO/Leopold Stokowski).

The Ultimate Guitar Collection includes *Aranjuez*, a Vivaldi Lute Concerto (both with the Monteverdi Orchestra and Gardiner) and music for solo guitar and lute – good value on two CDs for around £10 (RCA 74321337052). (Some dealers still have much the same 2-CD collection as *The Essential Julian Bream* – [review](#)).

Bream's final recording, with Simon Rattle, is available from ArkivMusic as a special CD – [review](#). NB: notified as low stock when I checked: for \$16.99 [here](#).

All of these are emphatically recommendable, especially the second Gardiner recording, with the CoE, but my favourite coupling contains the older (1963) analogue recording of *Aranjuez* with the Melos Ensemble and Sir Colin Davis (with Britten Courtly Dances from *Gloriana* and Vivaldi Concerto for lute and four violins, both with the Julian Bream Ensemble). That's download only on RCA G0100029919854, only 39 minutes and with a rather gaudy cover, but the price of £5.49 for the lossless download from uk.7digital.com compensates. The really inexpensive mp3 from sainsburysentertainment.co.uk, which I've mentioned in the past, is no longer available; the site is no longer in business.

Bream's even greater contribution lies in his making the lute once more the right instrument to play the music that was composed for it. If I must choose just one recording to illustrate that aspect of his music making, it would be ***Lute Music from the Royal Courts of Europe***: music by the Landgrave of Hesse – see p.2 for more of his music – Molinaro, Phillips, Ferrabosco, etc., and, above all, Dowland (G010002996117C, download only). I said just one recording, but that would inevitably lead to ***The Lute Music of John Dowland*** (G010002996339J, download only) and ***Dances of Dowland*** (G010002996120M).



All these lute recordings can be downloaded not too expensively, albeit without booklets, as can ***The Woods so Wild***, music by Byrd (the title track), Dowland and their contemporaries (G010002996237V). The least expensive CD selection of Bream on the lute is ***The Golden Age of Lute Music*** (Alto ALC1338 – [review](#)). For more on these and other Bream recordings, please see [Download News 2014/12](#).

The Romantic Piano Concerto 81

Edmund RUBBRA (1901-1986)

Piano Concerto in G, Op.85 (1955) [29:54]

Sir Arnold BAX (1883-1953)

Morning Song 'Maytime in Sussex' (1946) [7:58]

Sir Arthur BLISS (1891-1975)

Piano Concerto in B-flat (1939) [39:54]

Piers Lane (piano)

The Orchestra Now/Leon Botstein

rec. 16-20 January 2019, Richard B Fisher Center, Bard College, USA. DDD.

Reviewed as 24/88.2 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.

HYPERION CDA68297 [77:27]

[CD review](#) – [review](#) and [review](#) and purchase details



Once again, Hyperion place us in their debt with this latest release in their Romantic Piano Concerto series, even though there are some fine recordings all three works:

Rubbra: Denis Matthews (piano); BBCSO/Sir Malcolm Sargent (with BRITTEN Piano Concerto) – [review](#). Now available only as part of a 6-hour Warner Classics set (stream from [Naxos Music Library](#)). A download-only offering of the Rubbra and Britten concertos from Maestoso inspires little confidence: the performers are labelled as Billie Eckstine, Ronnie Hilton, Nat King Cole and Doris Day!

Bliss: Peter Donohoe (piano); Royal Scottish National Orchestra/David Lloyd-Jones (with Piano Sonata, Concerto for two pianos) Naxos 8.557146 – [review](#) – [review](#).

OR Noel Mewton Wood (piano); Utrecht Symphony Orchestra/Walter Goehr (with STRAVINSKY, SHOSTAKOVICH) British Music Society Historic BMS101CDH: Recording of the Month – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#) (NB: This label is no longer sold by MusicWeb).

Bax: Ashley Wass (piano); Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra/James Judd (with *Winter Legends*, etc.) Naxos 8.572597 – [review](#) – [DL Roundup April 2011/2](#)

OR Margaret Fingerhut (piano); London Philharmonic Orchestra/Bryden Thomson (with Violin Concerto, Cello Concerto) Chandos CHAN10154X

Piers Lane is a stalwart of the Romantic Piano Concerto series and Leon Botstein has many fine recordings to his credit, but the orchestra will be less familiar to most, as it was to me. The Orchestra Now (TÖN), not to be confused with NOW, the National Orchestra of Wales, was founded by Botstein in 2015 as a graduate programme for young musicians at Bard College, where he is president and where this recording was made.

Lane, Botstein and TÖN have recorded concertos by Ferdinand Ries for Hyperion, Volume 75 of this series (CDA68217 – [review](#)). Terry Barfoot thought the performances splendid, but was less impressed by the music of this Beethoven pupil. My own reaction was rather more positive; I thought that Lane and Botstein made the music sound almost first-rate, and I chose it in preference to a CPO recording of Ries' string quartets in the same [review](#).

With the only other recording of the Rubbra now sounding decidedly elderly, the new Hyperion recording is essential, and, though I like the alternatives for Bliss and Bax, they too receive fine performances here. Though I'm happy to agree with Nick Barnard – [review](#) – that the Naxos is a fine recording, and at an attractive price, I don't share his reservations about the new Hyperion Bliss; nor do I share Jonathan Woolf's reservations – [review](#); like John Quinn – [review](#) – I am very impressed.

If this gets you in the mood for Rubbra, don't overlook his symphonies from Richard Hickox on Chandos (CHAN9944, 5 CDs, or separately – [DL Roundup January 2009](#)).

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

[Violin Concerto](#) No.1 in a minor, Op.77 (1947/48) [39:01]

Violin Concerto No.2 in c-sharp minor, Op.129 (1967) [32:25]

Alina Ibragimova (violin)

State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia 'Evgeny Svetlanov'/Vladimir Jurowski

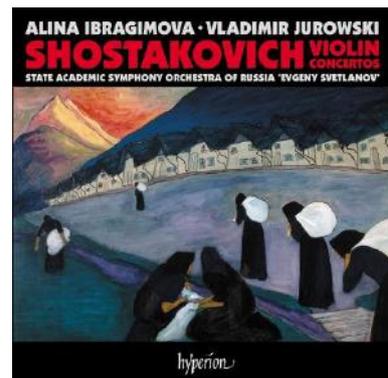
rec. 2019, Museum and Exhibition Complex 'New Jerusalem', Moscow (No.1), Tchaikovsky Concert Hall, Moscow (No. 2)

Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [hyperion-records.co.uk](#).

HYPERION CDA68313 [71:29]

Recording of the Month

CD [review](#) and purchase details.



I've been listening to several recordings of one or both of these concertos recently, but I had to go back to David Oistrakh to find anything preferable: Concerto No.1 with the Leningrad Philharmonic and Yevgeny Mravinsky (1956); No.2 with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra and Gennady Rozhdestvensky (1968). There used to be a ridiculously inexpensive Brilliant Classic triptych on which the two Oistrakh recordings sat alongside the two piano concertos (Cristina Ortiz, 1975) and the two cello concertos (Alexander Ivashkin, 1997). That's worth looking out for second-hand; otherwise,

Oistrakh's No.1 is paired with Cello Concerto No.1 (Rostropovich and Ormandy) on budget-price Regis RRC1385 – [review](#) – [DL Roundup May 2012/1](#). Other couplings are available.

Leslie Wright thought the new Hyperion recording 'a cause for celebration'; I couldn't agree more. The 24-bit download goes one better still for a little more than the CD; there's even a 24/192 version for a little more still. A well-deserved Recording of the Month, this could easily be one of my Recordings of the Year.

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

[Symphony No.13](#) in b minor, Op 13, 'Babi Yar' (1962)

Oleg Tsibulko (bass)

Popov Academy of Choral Arts Choir; Kozhevnikov Choir

Russian National Orchestra/Kirill Karabits

rec. 2017, DZZ Studio 5, Moscow, Russia. DSD

Transliterated text and English translation included

Reviewed as streamed with pdf booklet from [Naxos Music Library](#)

PENTATONE PTC5186618 SACD [58:13]

[Review](#) and CD purchase details.



Like John Quinn – [review](#) – I thought this performance started by being understated, and, though it soon warns up, I missed the sheer power of the best recordings. As I wrote of Ashkenazy's recording in the Decca box set – [review](#) – I still prefer Rozhdestvensky, but I realise that it's not very helpful when his Olympia recording is not currently available. Some of his Shostakovich has been reissued by Alto at budget price, but not (yet?) *Babi Yar*. Otherwise, the Naxos recording, the last in the series made by the RLPO and Petrenko, is well worth its budget price (8.57328 – [DL News 2014/13](#)) and the BIS recording with Mark Wigglesworth and the Netherlands Radio Orchestra was a [Recording of the Year](#) (BIS-1543 SACD). Listening again to the BIS in 24-bit sound – also on SACD and as a 5.0 surround download – brings the music more to life for me than the new Pentatone.

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976)

[Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings](#), Op.31 [24:58]

Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge, Op.10 [26:41]

The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra (Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell) Op.34 [18:27]

Soirées Musicales (selection, arr. Britten) [7:54]

Peter Pears (tenor), Dennis Brain (horn)

New Symphony Orchestra/Eugène Goossens

Philharmonia Orchestra/Herbert von Karajan

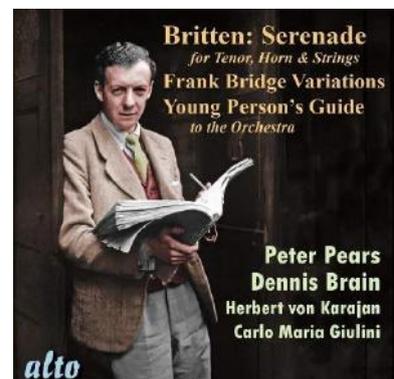
Philharmonia Orchestra/Carlo Maria Giulini

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Adrian Boult

rec. 1953 (Serenade), 1954 (Bridge Variations), 1962 (Young Person's Guide), 1957 (*Soirées Musicales*).

ALTO ALC1413 [78:20]

[CD review](#) and purchase details.



Song Cycles

[Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings](#), Op.31 [24:56]

Winter Words, Op.52 (1953) [21:07]

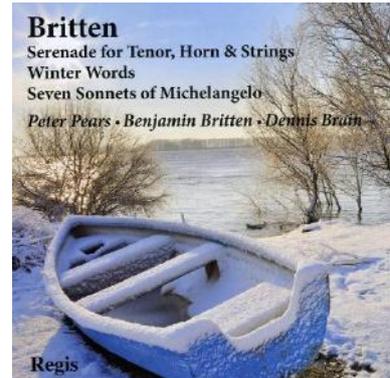
Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, Op.22 [17:17]

Peter Pears (tenor), Dennis Brain (horn), Benjamin Britten (piano)

New Symphony Orchestra of London/Eugène Goossens

rec. 1953 (*Serenade*), 1954 (*Sonnets*), 1956 (*Winter Words*)

REGIS RRC1365 [63:20]



To Gwyn Parry-Jones' review, I merely add that an earlier (2009) Regis release combines the *Serenade* with a rather less popular, but rewarding, aspect of Britten's music. I'm no great lover of Peter Pears' voice, but I make an exception for the music which Britten wrote with him in mind, especially as recorded, as here, in his heyday without the wobble that afflicts his later recordings. The Regis transfers are very good – that of the *Serenade* may even be identical with the Alto – the two budget labels tend to chop and change between them.

Lovers of Italian beware – Pear's pronunciation in the Michelangelo is creative, to put it mildly. In fact, Pears sounds oddly out of sorts here; it would have been better to have replaced it with *Les Illuminations*, released with the *Serenade* on Decca LXT2941, as reproduced on the very inexpensive Naxos Classical Archives download (9.80235) and on the Decca Eloquence CD and download (4768470, *Serenade, Illuminations and Nocturne* – [review](#)).

One small correction to the Alto review: having taken them to task for the incorrect date of 1959 for the *Serenade*, GP-J repeats it in his heading – the correct date is 1953; the LP was released the following year.

The Regis CD sells for £7.50 from [Presto](#) – beware of those who are asking over £13 – but the download, without booklet, costs more, except from Qobuz (£4.49).

Arthur BUTTERWORTH (1934-2014)

Symphony No.1 Op.15 [40:15]

Ruth GIPPS (1921-99)

Symphony No.2 Op.30 [24:00]

Malcolm ARNOLD (1921-2006)

Concerto for Organ and Orchestra Op.47 [13:10]

Ulrik Spang-Hanssen (organ)

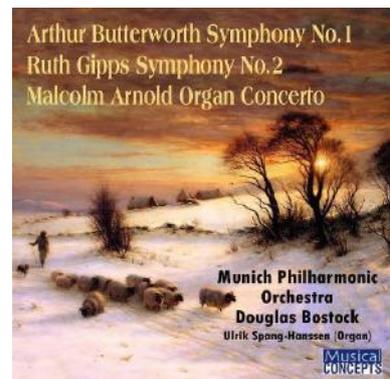
Münchner Symphoniker, Royal Aarhus Academy Symphony

Orchestra/Douglas Bostock

rec. 1998/2001, Arco Studios, München; Gellerup Church, Aarhus, Denmark. DDD.

MUSICAL CONCEPTS MC3105 [77:37]

CD [review](#) and purchase details.



Claire Seymour's review is so detailed and perceptive, that I almost need only to endorse her comments. Malcolm Arnold, of course, is well known, Ruth Gipps is beginning to be better represented in the catalogue, and three of the seven symphonies by Arthur Butterworth are available in off-air recordings from Lyrita (REAM1127, an inexpensive twofer – [review](#) – [review](#)), but this reissue of a ClassicO recording is very welcome. Rob Barnett gave the original 5 stars – [review](#) – and the reissue, at reduced price, is even more welcome.

Don't expect Arthur Butterworth's music to sound like the rural idyll which his namesake George may conjure up – this is tougher, post-Sibelius Symphony No.6 stuff than *The Banks of Green Willow*, but persevere.

Well-known he may be, but Arnold's Organ Concerto seems to be available only in this recording – also available more expensively on ClassicO CLASSCD424, with other music by Arnold. Gipps' symphony can also be found on an all-Gipps recording from Chandos (CHAN20078, Symphonies Nos. 2 and 4, etc. – [review](#) – [review](#) – [Winter 2018/19 1](#)). As with the Chandos, be prepared for this reissued recording to send you in search of other recordings of her music.

Paul CORFIELD GODFREY (b. 1950)

Beren and Lúthien: Epic Scenes from the Silmarillion - Part Two

Volante Opera Production

Soloists and Chorus from the Welsh National Opera

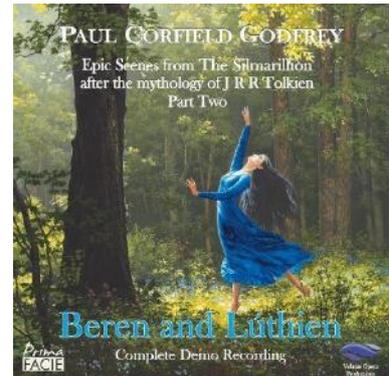
Orchestra created using Eastwest Software/Quantum Leap

"Symphony Orchestra"

rec: 2019

PRIMA FACIE PFC110/1 [2 CDs: 140:38]

[CD review](#), cast and purchase details.



A sincere apology is in order: having [reviewed](#) and recommended

Paul Corfield Godfrey's *The Children of Húrien*, I was privileged to receive this recording of another of his most convincing adaptations of the work of JRR Tolkien, as curated after his death by his son Christopher – sadly, also no longer with us. I also enjoyed this musical treatment of an episode from one of the Tolkien off-shoots that I have never quite come to love, despite having happy memories of having attended lectures by Tolkien father and son. As with so many of the other recordings in this Retrospective, I started to assemble my thoughts – and found Stuart Sillitoe ahead of me in almost every respect, including a shared distinct preference for the musical adaptation over the original.

I didn't share SSI's small reservations about the presentation of the music. Would that some wealthy patron had become as obsessed with PCG's music as King Ludwig of Bavaria was with Wagner's, so that we might have had a 'proper' recording. As it is, this virtual presentation works very well for me. It's a second-best – but so was Bach when the burghers of Leipzig appointed him Thomaskantor.

The notes in the booklet should be supplemented by a visit to PCG's [website](#). Next instalment, please.