

Arvo PÄRT (b. 1935)

Arvo Pärt – Live

Collage über B-A-C-H for strings, oboe, harpsichord and piano (1964) [7:16]

Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen for mixed choir a cappella (1988/1991) [11:48]

Cecilia, vergine romana for mixed choir and orchestra (2000/2002) [20:23]

Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten for string orchestra and bell (1977/1980) [7:42]

Litany. Prayers of St John Chrysostom for Each Hour of the Day and Night for soloists, mixed choir and orchestra (1994/1996) [23:09]

The Hilliard Ensemble, Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Rundfunkorchester, Robert King, Peter Dijkstra, Ulf Schirmer, Marcello Viotti (directors)

rec. live 2000, 2005, 2011, Munich, Germany

No sung texts

Performance details at end of review

BR KLASSIK 900319 [70:08]

This new BR-Klassik release contains recordings of five works from the pen of Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, mainly mature examples of his highly distinctive style. Led by four different directors, over a period of eleven years, all the works were recorded live in Munich churches for radio broadcast.

Marking Pärt's 80th anniversary in 2015, the BR Klassik label has already had success with a [stunning release](#) featuring the *Te Deum* and *Berliner Messe* with Peter Dijkstra directing the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks and Münchner Rundfunkorchester. Also BR Klassik Dijkstra has recorded another [outstanding album](#) with the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks a collection of unaccompanied choral works featuring Schnittke's *Konzert für Chor* that also includes Pärt's little cantata *Dopo la vittoria*.

Emerging in the late 1960s, Pärt is renowned for composing accessible sacred music of a meditative character that can communicate episodes of deep spirituality. Prior to his emigration in 1980 from the Soviet Union, Pärt had already developed a compositional technique that he termed tintinnabuli (after tintinnabulum, the Latin for bell). It is both idiosyncratic and contemporary, yet looks back to early music such as Gregorian Chant.

The opening work *Collage über B-A-C-H* for strings, oboe, harpsichord and piano employs quotations from Baroque master J. S. Bach. Robert King directs the Münchner Rundfunkorchester with eloquence and a real sense of attention to detail, with oboe soloist Yeon-Hee Kwak playing admirably. To a German text the *Seven Magnificat Antiphons* scored for mixed choir a-cappella, a contemporary setting of the Vesper service from the Roman Catholic liturgy, the chorus provides plenty of weighty and dynamic contrast to these devotional pieces. Especially memorable, the second movement *O Adonai* with its deep bass voices evokes the atmosphere of Russian Orthodox choral tradition. The central movement *O Schlüssel Davids* with its gratifying climax is given a majestic performance by Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks under Peter Dijkstra's direction. Pärt's *Cecilia, vergine romana* for mixed choir and orchestra is a type of oratorio on the life and martyrdom of Saint Cecilia, a subject that inspired the composer. He discovered a suitable text in the Latin *Breviarium Romanum*, an old Italian translation at the Monastero di Bose in Northern Italy. The writing, based on material of tintinnabuli triads, contains some meltingly beautiful post-Romantic passages contrasted with starkly dramatic episodes. It is hard to fault the evocative performance of the impressive Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks and Münchner Rundfunkorchester under Ulf Schirmer.

A substantial work, Pärt's *Litany* for soloists, choir and orchestra is modelled on ancient monophonic music. The English text is a translation derived from the book of 24 *Prayers of St John Chrysostom for Each Hour of the Day and Night*. Here the supplications of the preacher are conveyed by the quartet of soloists. The responses of the chorus represent the congregation. At times it is as if the ethereal voices mysteriously evolve out of the orchestral writing. There is plenty of dramatic contrast in the

writing, with a notably thrilling and sustained climax close to the conclusion. In this memorable and powerfully spiritual work, I savour the immaculate singing from the Hilliard Ensemble and the compelling, unified voices of the Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks. Under the direction of Marcello Viotti, the Münchner Rundfunkorchester never put a foot wrong, playing with absolute dedication. A key example of Pärt's tintinnabuli style is his most famous work, *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*, scored for string orchestra and bell. Here the Münchner Rundfunkorchester under Ulf Schirmer excel, providing glorious waves of polyphonic string writing with the affecting precision of the tolling bell.

In live recordings at four Munich churches, the radio broadcast engineers provide consistently satisfying sound quality with agreeable, well balanced clarity between soloist, chorus and orchestra. There are helpful booklet notes. Nonetheless it is disappointing that the label do not provide any sung texts, nor are they made available online, which would have added to the overall desirability of the release.

This is a highly desirable collection on BR Klassik of Arvo Pärt works recorded live in Munich churches, including a trio of rarely heard choral works and the celebrated *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten*.

Michael Cookson

Performance details

1-3. *Collage über B-A-C-H* für Streicher, Oboe, Cembalo und Klavier

Yeon-Hee Kwak (oboe), Max Hanft (cembalo/klavier), Münchner Rundfunkorchester / Robert King (director)

rec. live 18 February 2005, Jesuitenkirche St. Michael, Munich

4-10. *Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen* für gemischten Chor a cappella

Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks / Peter Dijkstra (director)

rec. live 3 December 2005, Sankt Joseph Kirche, Munich

11. *Cecilia, vergine romana* für Chor und Orchester

Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Rundfunkorchester / Ulf Schirmer (director)

rec. live 21 January 2011, Herz-Jesu-Kirche, Munich

12. *Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten* für Streichorchester und Glocke

Münchner Rundfunkorchester / Ulf Schirmer (director)

rec. live 28 October 2011, Herz-Jesu-Kirche, Munich

13. *Litany. Prayers of St John Chrysostom for Each Hour of the Day and Night* für Soli, Chor und Orchester

The Hilliard Ensemble (David James (countertenor), Rogers Covey-Crump (tenor), John Potter (tenor), Gordon Jones (bass)), Chor des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Münchner Rundfunkorchester/Marcello Viotti (director)

rec. live 8 July 2000, St. Gabriel Kirche, Munich

Karol SZYMANOWSKI (1882-1937)

Nine Preludes, op.1 (1899-1900)

Four Études, op.4 (1901-02)

Masques, op.34 (1915-16)

Two Mazurkas, op.62 (1933-34)

Barbara Karaśkiewicz (piano)

rec. July 2016, Concert Hall of the Music School Complex, Sosnowiec, Poland

DIVINE ART DDA25151 [67:05]

There is much biographical detail about Karol Szymanowski available on-line and in good old-fashioned reference books. On the other hand, a few sentences will help contextualise this selection of piano music.

Although regarded as a Polish composer, Szymanowski was born in the Ukraine on 6 October 1882. After study at the Warsaw Conservatory, he completed his first piano sonata and an overture for orchestra. Moving to Berlin in 1906 he began to compose in a German-Romantic style. Soon he abandoned this, and turned his thoughts towards Russian music, including influence from Scriabin. An additional stimulus was French impressionism. After teaching duties in Warsaw, several European tours as a concert pianist, and a visit to the United States he discovered Polish folk-songs and dances. This was to be seminal in his becoming a Polish nationalist composer, inspired by the arts, music and folklore of that country. Between 1926 and 1929 he was director of music at the Warsaw Conservatory, his old 'alma mater', and president of the Warsaw Academy of Music. Karol Szymanowski died of tuberculosis on 28 March 1938.

It is 'conventional' to refer to Karol Szymanowski as the 'the greatest Polish composer since Chopin.' This can be qualified by suggesting that he is certainly more *voluminous* rather than *greater*: his considerable catalogue of music is testament to his industry in composing music in virtually every form: two operas, four symphonies, two violin concertos, symphonic poems, songs and piano music. Poland has produced many 'great' composers including Witold Lutosławski (1913-1994), Andrzej Panufnik (1914-1991), Henryk Górecki (1933-2010) and Krzysztof Penderecki (b.1933).

Stylistically, Szymanowski is diverse with specific influences from Max Reger, Johannes Brahms, Claude Debussy, Alexander Scriabin and even Arnold Schoenberg. Turning to the piano music, this is often characterised by huge technical demands and the need for considerable interpretative skills. The pianist needs to be able to address the 'sonorous fabric' of late romantic piano style as well as the 'effervescent, shimmering colours of impressionism', and the development of this style into chromaticism and dissonance.

Barbara Karaśkiewicz has selected four groups of pieces from across Szymanowski's career. It gives the listener an opportunity to appreciate the composer's development over a 35-year period.

The opening work is the Nine Preludes, op.1 which were completed between 1899 and 1900 when the composer was only seventeen years old. The listener will find that these pieces are a kind of half-way house between the romanticism of Chopin and the more chromatic style of Reger and with a few nods to Scriabin. The Preludes explore several moods including 'wistful' (No.7), 'reflective' (No.6) and feature several 'songs without words.' No. 5 pays homage to Chopin Etude in C minor, op.10, no.10 (Revolutionary). The set includes the composer's earliest surviving works (Preludes 7 and 8) which date to 1896. The most popular are No.1 and No.8, however, I think that these Nine Preludes deserve to be heard as an entire set, in order. They were dedicated to Artur Rubenstein (1887-1982).

The Four Études (Studies), op.4, like many such pieces are predicated on being 'exercises' for pianists, that major on a technical device woven into a demanding concert piece which are only in the gift of a virtuosic pianist. They severally explore romantic harmonies, complex double notes,

octaves and other pianistic figurations. Once again Scriabin and Chopin would appear to be the models for all these Études. They were composed between 1902 and 1904.

Some 12 years later, during the First World War, Szymanowski wrote his *Masques* op.34. These three pieces had 'programmatic' titles which included, 'Scheherazade', 'Tantris the Fool' and 'The Serenade of Don Juan.' These pieces have moved on from their roots in Chopin and Scriabin and now look to the 'descriptive' music of Liszt, Debussy and Ravel for their inspiration. They do not simply describe a literary tale, but attempt to get under the 'mask' of each character. Full details of the underlying programme are given in the liner notes. The three *Masques* are enormously complex, both harmonically and in their formal structure. It is my favourite work on this CD.

The final selection in this exploration of Karol Szymanowski's piano music are the expressionistic (Schoenberg rather than Chopin) Two Mazurkas, op.62, which were written only three years before the composer's death. It is understood that although the title refers to a national Polish dance, Szymanowski has remodelled this by a free development of the mazurka rhythm and introduced considerable decoration, which emphasises piano sonorities rather than the parodying the original dance.

Dr Anna Stachura has written a nine-page essay about Karol Szymanowski and this selection of piano music. Each piece is given a detailed, satisfying but not overly technical analysis. It has been translated from the Polish (also included) by Barbara Karaskiewicz. My only complaint is that the text of these notes is a wee bit wee: I had to use a magnifying glass, and I could find no 'on-line' .pdf file to download.

Polish-born pianist Barbara Karaśkiewicz plays these four works with great understanding, technical aplomb and interpretive skill. It makes a splendid introduction to the piano music of Karol Szymanowski.

John France

Detlev GLANERT (b. 1960)

Requiem for Hieronymus Bosch (version 2016)

David Wilson-Johnson (voice)

Aga Mikolaj (soprano)

Ursula Hesse von den Steinen (mezzo)

Gerhard Siegel (tenor)

Christof Fischesser (bass)

Netherlands Radio Choir/Edward Caswell (chorus master)

Leo van Doeselaar (organ)

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Markus Stenz

rec. live, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, 5 November 2016 (world premiere)

Reviewed as a stereo DSD128 download from [NativeDSD](#)

Pdf booklet includes sung texts in Latin, English, French and German

RCO LIVE RCO17005 SACD [83:09]

What an intriguing conceit, a requiem for an artist well known for his harrowing depiction of last things; the third panel of his triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, springs to mind. The German composer Detlev Glanert, who's also the Concertgebouw's composer in residence, was commissioned by the orchestra to write a piece to mark the 500th anniversary of the death of Hieronymus Bosch, the Brabantian artist who died in 1515. In his booklet essay, which includes conversations with the composer, Mark van de Voort points out that Glanert is always up for a challenge, as demonstrated by two of his most celebrated operas, *Joseph Süß* (1999) and *Caligula* (2006).

That said, there's mischief afoot, the liturgical setting spiced up with medieval texts devoted to the seven deadly sins; the latter are derived from the same source as the bawdy lyrics that Carl Orff used in his (in)famous cantata, *Carmina Burana*. This is a preliminary grilling, before the great judgement itself, in which the archangel Michael – played by the baritone David Wilson-Johnson – attempts to gauge just how tarnished the artist's soul really is. A strange hybrid, perhaps, but the composer is clear about one thing: this is *not* an opera by another name, but more of an oratorio, 'an inner spectacle, like the *St Matthew Passion*'. Then there's the burning question: does this soul make it into heaven? All in good time, dear reader, all in good time.

The piece is built on a large scale, a small choir and organ to one side, the main choir, soloists and orchestra centre stage. As the helm is Markus Stenz, whose well-received recordings of Mahler and Schoenberg show he's also not one to shirk a challenge. That said, I've been disappointed by his work to date, so this could be a chance for him to make amends. As for the Netherlands Radio Choir, they are a fine ensemble, and I fully expect them to shine here. I've also been less than complimentary about some of Polyhymnia's recent recordings, but I'm hoping that engineers Everett Porter and Anne Taegert will pull out all the stops with this one.

Proceedings in this heavenly ante-chamber get off to a bowel-loosening start, with the archangel's terrifying summons to Bosch's waiting soul, the vocal quartet and main choir warning of the demons that lurk within us all. The style is Orffian, but the *ostinati* are not quite so blatant, the punctuating orchestral effects more refined. Indeed, the contrast between that and the *Requiem aeternam*, for small choir and organ, couldn't be greater; ethereal voices rise above sustained, sometimes floor-shaking pedals, the effect both simple and affecting. Goodness, this is splendid singing, and there's a marvellous sense of being there, of an attentive audience in thrall to the unfolding drama.

Wilson-Johnson does well to convey authority without sounding too much like a drill sergeant. Gluttony, with the characterful bass Christof Fischesser, has distinct echoes of Orff's overfed abbot but, as before, Glanert's colouristic touches are far subtler. That said, the *Absolve Domine* has real heft, the combined choirs weighty and passionate, the orchestra just as transported. Even here, one senses that the composer is being judicious, the spectacle all the more powerful for being so well

controlled. As for Stenz, he's very much in control, and the Concertgebouw – an orchestra that chooses when to play well – are clearly at their best. And I have no quarrels with the recording, which is one of the finest I've heard from this venue in ages.

All too often requiem settings are let down by uneven or indifferent soloists, but this well-matched quartet are firm and fearless from start to finish. (I'd love to hear them in the Verdi.) Glanert holds back in Wrath – after all, the main event is still to come – tenor Gerhard Siegel is both strong and steady at this point. One might expect a pate- and plaster-cracking *Dies irae* – Berlioz, Verdi and Britten come to mind – but Glanert, perhaps mindful of these mighty antecedents, seems determined to play down the potential vulgarity of these climactic moments. Indeed, good taste, agility and a telling use of vocal/orchestral resources are key to the work's success. Also, this music defies expectations, the *Dies irae* longer and more varied than one might expect.

Next up is Envy, soprano Aga Mikolaj lean and lissom throughout; then it's the turn of the full quartet, which excels in the hushed *Juste judex* that follows. Leo van Doeselaar's organ solo makes for a pleasing interlude, slipping quietly into Sloth, for soprano, mezzo and orchestra. (It seems the archangel has mellowed, for now at least.) The singing here is ravishing, Hesse von den Steinen soft velvet to Mikolaj's spun-silk. And those Mahlerian harp figures are certainly ear-pricking. Well, we're more than halfway through, and pace/inspiration show no sign of flagging. If anything, the sense of commitment, of fierce concentration, is stronger than ever,

The soloists take a well-deserved rest in the *Domine, Jesu Christe*, which has real bounce and brio, while Hesse von den Steinen satisfyingly secure in Pride. Spare the orchestration may be at times, but there's always an underlying warmth – a harmonic richness – that will surely appeal to those for whom contemporary music is a step too far. There's shape and momentum too, a genuine ebb and flow, which contributes to a sense of development, of ongoing interest; that should please them even more. And contrary to expectations, the *Sanctus* is a speedy little number, the chorus and orchestra neat and nimble throughout.

Wilson-Johnson is back in stern voice at the start of Lust, in which is the male soloists – naturally – duet above a burbling orchestra base and emphatic men's choir. Yet another example of how Glanert appears to reanimate the score, even though it really doesn't need to be helped along. And, to my ears at least, the *Agnus Dei* has an Eastern cast, its rich tapestry glowing with threads of vocal gold. The subdued organ part is sensitive and beautifully balanced.

Avarice is both garish and gripping, the varied refrains of the *Libera me & Peccatum* [Sin] bundled and bounced about the stage. As for the finale, it defies easy description or categorisation; suffice to say, inspiration and commitment persist to the very end, these forces performing at their collective peak. The applause has been edited out, but I hope the audience brought the house down. Oh, and does the artist's waiting soul get past God's burly bouncer? Now *that* would be telling....

A garden of earthly – and heavenly - delights; superb singing, playing and sound.

Dan Morgan

Track-list

Demonibus [6:15]; Requiem aeternam [6:00]; Gula (Gluttony) [3:30]; Absolve Domine [3:29]; Ira (Wrath) [2:41]; Dies irae [7:35]; Invidia (Envy) [2:40]; Juste judex [5:20]; Organ solo [3:14]; Acedia (Sloth) [4:23]; Domine, Jesu Christe [3:34]; Superbia (Pride) [3:39]; Sanctus [3:14]; Luxuria (Lust) [2:13]; Agnus Dei [7:54]; Avaritia (Avarice) [1:57]; Libera me & Peccatum [6:24]; In Paradisum [8:58]

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No.23 in A major K488 [27:47]

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

Piano Concerto No.3 in D minor [43:56]

Grigory Sokolov (piano), Mahler Chamber Orchestra/Trevor Pinnock (Mozart), BBC Philharmonic/Yan Pascal Tortelier (Rachmaninov)

rec. live, Mozarteum, Salzburg, 30 January 2005 (Mozart); Royal Albert Hall, London, 27 July 1995 (Rachmaninov)

DVD: *Grigory Sokolov – A Conversation That Never Was*. A film by Nadia Zhdanova [58'52]

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 479 7015 [71:43 + DVD: 58:52]

This is the third album released by Deutsche Grammophon of live recordings by the Russian pianist Grigory Sokolov. I was fortunate to be able to review the previous two ([review](#) ~ [review](#)). They were both solo recitals, so it is gratifying that this time we are offered two concertos. This in itself has added value in that the pianist no longer collaborates with orchestras on the grounds that he isn't offered sufficient rehearsal time. Neither does he make studio recordings, preferring the spontaneity of the 'live' event. Ten years separates the two performances here. The Mozart Concerto is sourced from a concert given at the Mozarteum, Salzburg, 30 January 2005 with Trevor Pinnock and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, and the Rachmaninov dates from a decade earlier - recorded live at the Royal Albert Hall, London, at the Proms July 27, 1995, with the BBC Philharmonic under Yan-Pascal Tortelier. The contrast between the two works couldn't be more stark, the Mozart requiring subtlety, elegance and finesse, the Rachmaninov formidable technical prowess and broad romantic sweep.

The opening movement of the Mozart Concerto is nicely paced and has an unruffled ease. Pinnock and Sokolov are perfectly in tune as regards rhythmic flexibility, with the conductor quite remarkable in the delicacy of his light and buoyant accompaniment. The piano solos are expressive and elegantly phrased. Sokolov uses Mozart's own cadenza. I don't recall ever having heard the slow movement played so well. Conductor and soloist have striven for intimacy and pensiveness, and this is what they've achieved with potent effect. This must be some of the most poignant music the composer ever penned, and the underlying pathos comes over with startling effect. Effervescent and vivacious, the finale is rendered with blithe insouciance. A common practice in Mozart's time was for the soloist to participate during the tuttis, offering some discreet reinforcement of the musical material. Later, this fashion tended to become obsolete. Sokolov skillfully etches some of the lines in the tuttis of all three movements in this performance, so unobtrusively that you have to listen carefully.

I've heard that there are about five extant live airings of Sokolov performing the Rachmaninov Third; I'm only familiar with two of them - this one which I've known for several years, and another with the Leningrad Symphony Orchestra under Victor Dubrovsky (?1998), courtesy of Radio Petersburg. The sound quality of the latter is inferior, but the performance is another spellbinder. DG have worked a miracle on this 1995 Proms performance, and it emerges bright, vivid and fresh. The main plus of this performance is that it is not just a barnstorming event. Sokolov has the ability to scale things down when necessary, playing with supreme responsiveness and finesse. Impassioned, ardent and intensely fervid are adjectives that immediately spring to mind. In the first movement he plays the original longer chordal cadenza, which I prefer. He invests the slow movement with poetry and passion. The finale has generous helpings of vigour and rhythmic drive. I love the way he takes a broad, spacious view of the 'big tune' when it reappears in all its glory at the end. Yan Pascal Tortelier and the BBC Philharmonic are with him all the way. Needless to say, the audience response at the end is ecstatic.

The pianist no longer gives interviews, so hasn't collaborated directly with Nadia Zhdanova in her accompanying film *Grigory Sokolov: A Conversation That Never Was*. This fascinating biopic is dedicated to Inna Sokolova, his late wife, and her poems, appearing in public for the first time, provide a thread running throughout (texts in French, German, Russian and English are provided). As well as

detailing a biographical account of the pianist, colleagues share their thoughts and reminiscences. What emerges is a thoughtful, warm and generous character who eschews the world of glitzy celebrity, preferring to let his music-making speak for itself. I was interested to discover that his success at the 1966 International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition caused a bit of a stir. He was 16 at the time, the youngest musician ever to win the Gold Medal. The jury, headed by Emil Gilels, submitted a unanimous verdict, which didn't go down too well with the public or the pundits, who reacted with indignation, to put it mildly. Since then, he has gone from strength to strength, with some even considering him the world's greatest living pianist. There are one or two film clips of him performing in his early days, including a thrilling excerpt of him playing the cadenza of the Rachmaninov Third in concert.

I'm certain that all, like myself, who follow Sokolov's career with interest, will find much to admire in this absorbing release.

Stephen Greenbank

Previous review: [Marc Bridle](#) (Recording of the Month)

Orlando GOUGH (b. 1953)

The World Encompassed - Sir Francis Drake's Circumnavigation of the Globe 1577-1580

Fretwork

Simon Callow (narrator)

rec. Britten Studio, Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh, July 2016

SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD453 [41:19 + 41:56]

The starting point for this new work comes from the (rather startling) fact that, during his great circumnavigation of the world, Sir Francis Drake brought with him a consort of four viols. Their purpose was partly for entertainment and partly to assist in worship, but Drake would also have used them to play their music to the peoples that they met.

Taking this as their inspiration, Fretwork commissioned Orlando Gough to write a piece that would not only present the music of Drake's time, but also freshly imagine the cross-cultural encounters that 16th century English music would have had with the music of the people Drake encountered, be that through combination or isolation. It's a fascinating idea, which mostly works, and in itself it's a fairly interesting concept to write a new piece of music for viol consort, an instrument that is supposed to have been superseded by those that have come after it.

The title, incidentally, comes from a book written by Drake's nephew – also, confusingly, called Sir Francis Drake – based on the diary of Fletcher, the ship's chaplain. On this recording, extracts from the narrative are interspersed with and bleed into the music, read with character by Simon Callow. Having it definitely helps, even if, like Brahms' *Schöne Magelone*, the narrative mostly fills in gaps between the music. Time will tell whether the piece could survive without the narrative or whether, like Peter and the Wolf, this is a work where the narrative is a critical part of its make-up.

But what of the music? Well, in the music of Drake's time we hear some of Fretwork's staple repertoire, such as Parsons, Taverner and White, which is performed with typical sensitivity and insight. However, it's the melange and the cross-cultural exploration that I found the most interesting, testing the interconnections of what one side has to say about the other. These are necessarily speculative, but they're always done very intelligently. The opening, *Leaving Plymouth*, for example, contains snatches of sea songs as well as the tune of the Old Hundredth, and I liked the sub-plot of Drake's animosity against the Spanish, not least because of their Catholicism; something explored by juxtaposing a Fantasia by the 16th century Spanish composer Luis de Milán with a domineering Protestant tune that eventually bludgeons it into submission.

Gough's reimaginings of 16th Century World Music are fascinating, and best taken on their own terms rather than judged in their accuracy or closeness to the original. Anyway, as he says himself, it's impossible for a viol consort even to attempt to reproduce the sounds of, say, a gamelan orchestra, so it's wise of Gough not to even try. Instead he creates something new and intriguing on its own merits. I really liked the way the sounds of West Africa float through the viols in the evocation of the music of the Berbers. Moorish music meets Gamelan for their encounter with the Indonesian Maluku Islands, and I actually really liked his evocation of actual gamelan music on the island of Java.

Sometimes the music is more openly programmatic, such as in *Maio Santiago Fogo*, which depicts both the volcanic island and the shoals of fish that so impressed the sailors. *Berimbau* goes furthest by presenting a Samba ("a heroic failure", in Gough's own words) alongside *The Portsmouth Hornpipe*, the two coexisting but not interacting, just like the English with the Native Americans. *Terra incognita* is abstract and inhuman, evoking the sense of loss and despair when Drake's ship was blown badly off course south during a 52-day long storm.

I confess it didn't hold me gripped throughout, and there were moments on the second disc where the inspiration seemed a little thinner than elsewhere. However, this remains a fascinating project

and a very noble endeavour. Gough has met his brief handsomely, and full marks go to Fretwork for seeing the initial inspiration and following it through to its realisation.

Simon Thompson

CD1:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Leaving Plymouth
- 3 *The Song Called Trumpets* Orlando Gough
- 4 *Preserve Us O Lord* John Taverner
- 5 Mogador
- 6 *Berbers* Francis Drake
- 7 *In Nomine* Orlando Gough
- 8 Nuno de Silva
- 9 *Cape Verde* Orlando Gough
- 10 *Maio Santiago Fogo* Francis Drake
- 11 *Crossing the Atlantic* Orlando Gough
- 12 Fortune my Foe
- 13 *Port Desire: Patagonian Indians* Robert White
- 14 *Berimbau* Orlando Gough
- 15 Port Julian
- 16 *In Nomine* Robert Parsons
- 17 *Terra Incognita*
- 18 *The Complaint of a Sinner*

CD2:

- 1 *De La Court* Orlando Gough
- 2 Preserve us Lord
- 3 *Cacafuego* Orlando Gough
- 4 *The Spanish Main* Orlando Gough
- 5 Albion
- 6 *Miwok Indians* Orlando Gough
- 7 Crossing the Pacific
- 8 *Ternate Innocentio* Alberti
- 9 Moors
- 10 *Musical Paradise*
- 11 *Pavin* Orlando Gough
- 12 *Java* Orlando Gough
- 13 In Nomine
- 14 Gamelan
- 15 *Rounding the Cape of Good Hope* Robert Parsons
- 16 *Reaching Plymouth*
- 17 *Psalm 100* Anonymous
- 18 *The Song Called Trumpets* Robert Parsons

Einojuhani RAUTAVAARA (1928-2016)

Rubáiyát - song-cycle for baritone and orchestra (2015) [18:10]

Into the Heart of Light (Canto V) for string orchestra (2012) [13:05]

Balada for tenor, mixed choir and orchestra (2014) [16:55]

Four Songs from the opera *Rasputin* (2012) [10:41]

Gerald Finley (bass-baritone); Mika Pohjonen (tenor); Helsinki Music Centre Choir

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra/John Storgårds

rec. Helsinki Music Centre, April, November 2015. DDD

ONDINE ODE12742 [59:29]

Here are four works composed by the late Einojuhani Rautavaara towards the end of his life.

In total he composed five works for string orchestra to which he gave the title Canto. The earlier pieces were written in 1960, 1961, 1972 and 1992. The composer explained the additional title of Canto V by alluding – and I paraphrase – to the process by which a work of art gradually emerges, during creation, as light dawns on the creative artist. Much of the music in this piece is dominated by slow-moving, richly melodic lines, mainly in the violins. The warmth and richness of the material grows gradually in a most impressive way. The piece seems to me, as a non-string player, to be well laid out for a string orchestra and Rautavaara exploits the medium very effectively. The conclusion is interesting: the last word is left to a single cello, whose solo seems to appear from nowhere as a pleasing surprise for the listener. This is a fine work.

Balada for tenor, mixed choir and orchestra grew out of an aborted operatic project. Rautavaara planned to write an opera on the subject of the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936). Poor health prevented Rautavaara from seeing the project through to completion but he recycled some of the material into a concert work, *Balada*. I understand from Kimmo Korhonen's useful notes that Rautavaara compiled his own selection of Lorca texts and I'm bound to say that I found the words rather difficult to follow in the sense that I didn't really 'get' what the composite text was about, where it was leading and how it all hung together. The tenor is held back until midway through the piece, beginning to sing at 8:38. Prior to that the words have been the sole responsibility of the choir. I found the music – and its interrelation with the text – easier to follow in the second half of the work, once the tenor had been added to the mix. I'll confess that my appreciation of the piece is restricted by my failure fully to comprehend the text. Perhaps eventually I'll grasp the significance of it and then I'll find much more in what is clearly a deeply-felt composition.

Because the Lorca opera was not completed *Rasputin* (2001-03) was Rautavaara's last opera. From it he later drew two sets of choral songs, one for unaccompanied male choir (2007) and, five years later, the present set for SATB and orchestra. I don't know where the individual songs fit into the opera but they seem to me to work as a concert piece. The second, 'The day of vengeance' is, as its title suggests, dark and threatening. Consequently, the contrast with 'I fear not', which follows, is very welcome. This is for female voices and the orchestration is light and delicate in texture. The most substantial song is the last one, 'Shine, Zion, shine!' Kimmo Korhonen draws attention to the "religious fervour" of the piece. The effect is akin to a revivalist processional, the music growing in volume and intensity. As the climax is reached the excitement is heightened by the use of deep tom-toms. At its height the sound of the huge ensemble seems to suggest a twenty-first century Boris Godunov. At that point, as the notes say, the music "dissolve[s] into near-chaos".

Impressive though the other three pieces on this programme are I feel they are distinctly shaded by *Rubáiyát*. This was the result of a commission from London's Wigmore Hall and it exists in two versions, one with piano accompaniment and the orchestral version here recorded. Whilst I should like to hear the piano version I fear that the magnificent orchestration may have spoiled me for life. Rautavaara has set five extracts from Omar Khayyam's great work, using the rather free nineteenth century English translation by Edward Fitzgerald – also used by Granville Bantock. Rautavaara launches straight into

his first setting but thereafter each of the poems is followed by a short orchestral interlude which paves the way for the next poem, both in terms of mood-setting and orchestral scoring.

Let me say at once that it is a very long time since I have been so taken with a piece of contemporary music. I was bowled over at the first hearing and subsequent listening has only increased my admiration. For one thing the orchestral scoring is miraculous. Though the vocal line consistently – and rightly – commands our attention, what is going on in the orchestra is no less fascinating, Rautavaara's palette of orchestral colouring is richly inventive and the vocal line is borne along on a carpet – a magic carpet? – of ear-tickling sonorities. Moreover, the orchestration constantly complements the words and the flow of the vocal line in a way that is nothing short of masterly. One or two examples will have to suffice. The orchestral interlude before the third poem, *Here with a Loaf of Bread*, is given over entirely, so far as I can tell, to flutes and strings and the effect is diaphanous. In the fourth poem, *We are no other than a moving row*, Kimmo Korhonen rightly draws attention in the notes to the "translucent" orchestral textures. I agree, but for me the icing on the cake is Rautavaara's inspired use hereabouts of the marimba .

To add to the delights of the orchestration Rautavaara's vocal part is magnificent. From start to finish the words of each poem are borne aloft on a seemingly endless flow of melody. In the first poem, *Awake!* the melodic line is elevated and urgently poetic. The next three poems are more pensive and meditative in nature and in each Rautavaara seems uncannily to find the right way in which to flex his vocal line to enhance Khayyam's words. One feature of the settings that should be mentioned is that, to the best of my recollection, Rautavaara never repeats so much as a word – unless, of course, the repetition was done by the poet himself. The final poem, *Oh, make haste!* is a meditation on eternity and here the music is particularly eloquent. It would be hard to imagine a better soloist than Gerald Finley. The entire score is a gift for his voice – was it written for him, I wonder? The line is often high-lying and time and again I was impressed by the marvellous quality of Finley's top register. Throughout the whole compass of his voice his tone is wonderfully firm and full. Ondine print the words but, frankly, that's almost necessary given the clarity of this singer's diction. From start to finish he gives a superb performance.

Throughout the disc the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra plays marvellously. They are, I think, well versed in this composer's music and it shows. The singing of the Helsinki Music Centre Choir is very fine while tenor Mika Pohjonen makes an excellent contribution in *Balada*. John Storgårds is an authoritative and sure-footed guide to these scores.

Ondine's engineering is top-notch and the documentation can't be faulted.

All four works on this CD are rewarding but the exceptional *Rubáiyát*, *magnificently performed by Gerald Finley*, is alone worth the price of the disc.

[John Quinn](#)

Previous review: [Rob Barnett](#) (Recording of the month)

Alberto CURCI (1886-1973)

Violin Concerto No.1 in D minor 'Concerto romantico', Op.21 (pub. 1944) [16:33]

Violin Concerto No.2 in D minor, Op.30 (1962) [20:42]

Violin Concerto No.3 in G minor, Op.33 (pub. 1966) [18:57]

Suite italiana in stile antico in A minor, Op.34 [15:52]

Franco Gulli (violin)

Studio Orchestra/Franco Capuana

rec. July 1963 (Concertos 1 and 2) and July 1964 (Concerto 3 and Suite italiana), Basilica of Sant'Eufemia, Milan

FIRST HAND RECORDS FHR53 [72:04]

Violinist Alberto Curci was born in Naples in 1886. He studied with Angelo Ferni, a pupil of Vieuxtemps and de Beriot, later taking lessons from Joachim in Berlin and Ševčík in Prague, by which time he had already embarked on a career. After the First World War he returned to Naples where he taught for four decades, instituted a biennial violin competition and composed a sequence of works. He also established Edizioni Curci, publishing and writing important monographs and books.

The recordings in this disc are all products of his Edizioni Curci LPs, made in 1963-64. Strangely the first two concertos were only issued in mono on that label but appeared in stereo on Musical Heritage Society on their American release whilst a similar fate befell the Third Concerto and Suite: mono only on first release and on stereo only in the form of an obscure Curci Records cassette.

The First Concerto was published in 1944 but Tully Potter, in his excellent booklet notes, suggests it was composed some time earlier. Its ripe romanticism discloses a genuine gift for songful lyricism cast in the most romantic context. Elements here may remind one of the Dvořák Concerto – not just the lyric writing but the deft wind interjections – though the sweetly peaceful *scena* of the slow movement is undoubtedly all Curci's own. It has a Mascagni-like warmth, and when played by that most expressive and sensitive of Italian players, Franco Gulli, it is especially piquant. His portamenti and finger position changes all bring out the evocative aroma of this bouquet-like music. The finale, by contrast, is a terpsichorean one full of Neapolitan dance rhythms; strong on charm, it's lightly orchestrated.

There's something slightly Slavic about Curci's muse, as the 1962 Second Concerto amplifies. Again, the ethos is late-romanticism predicated on the most vocalised and lyrical of devices. The second subject is especially rarefied in this respect, with a delicious richness to the melody lines. The finale has some muted Gypsy-style acrobatics and whilst there are plenty of incidents, they don't always hold together too persuasively. Again, the orchestration is not especially imaginative but it's more than merely functional. Published in 1966 the Third Concerto is lyric and busy, with more delightful tunes – Curci seems to have been saturated in lyricism and one wonders what kind of soloist he was – and a finale that reveals some Sarasate-like devices. The idiom was desperately old-fashioned by 1966 but it sounds as if Curci was happily writing in a compositional bubble, untroubled by advances, content simply to give of his lyric self. The *Suite italiana in stile antico* was also published in 1966. Its five movements are bright if occasionally formulaic. The Presto finale is the zestiest; a dance that perhaps shows the influence of Kreisler.

Throughout Gulli is an unflagging guide to Curci's undemanding muse. He paints with great warmth and skill. Conductor Franco Capuana sounds wholly attuned to the music. The 'studio orchestra' has been tentatively traced in the notes as being that of La Scala, Milan with possible additions from another orchestra and freelancers. Quite a lot of detective work was necessary to tease out the details for this release and the restorations are in really first-class sound. This disc restores a barely remembered composer to the catalogue in excellent fashion.

Jonathan Woolf

Niels W. GADE (1817-1890)

Chamber Works - Volume 3

Octet in F major, Op. 17 (1884) [32:07]

Unfinished String Quartet in F major (1840) [18:09]

String Quartet Movement in A minor (1836) [5:07]

Ensemble MidtVest

Danish String Quartet

rec. Hearing Museum of Contemporary Art, Denmark, December 2013 (quartets), Knudsens, Holstebro, Denmark. January 2015 (octet)

CPO 555 077-2 [55:58]

Niels Gade is regarded as the most important Danish composer before Nielsen, and this despite the less than auspicious reception of his music at home; after his Symphony No. 1 was rejected for performance in Copenhagen he sent it to Mendelssohn in Leipzig where it was received enthusiastically and performed. His music is romantic in nature with more than a hint of Mendelssohn's influence about it, especially after he moved to Leipzig to become a teacher in the conservatory and assistant conductor of the Gewandhaus Orchestra, as well as great friends with Mendelssohn.

His music has received many fine recordings over the years, especially the symphonies, with this disc representing volume three of a projected complete survey of his chamber music; sadly I only have the first volume (777 164-2) which offers an excellent performance of the String Sextet Op. 44 and the Piano Trio Op. 42, both of which date from the period of composition after 1848 which has become known as his 'romantic nationalism' period.

The F major Octet is cast in four movements and is a substantial work, which can be seen as homage to his great friend Mendelssohn, who had died the previous year. Its instrumentation and style is influenced by his friend, but this is unmistakably Gade's music, music that shows his own mature compositional fingerprints throughout. It is bold and bright, with no sign of this being an *in memoriam* piece in the true sense, with even the slow second movement not being funereal piece. Rather, this is a work in which Gade has paid homage to Mendelssohn in a sincere way by taking his friend's model for a string octet and making it his own.

The next work on this disc is the Unfinished String Quartet in F major, sometimes known as "Willkommen und Abschied", and here I have problems with this recording. Since the booklet notes clearly state that "the fifth section of the Scherzo-Serenade is incomplete and cannot be reconstructed in such a way as to meet scholar standards," and for this reason it has not been included on this recording. I call it a sin of omission, as I came to enjoy this lovely work in the recording by the excellent Kontra Quartet for Bis (BIS-CD-545), and there an edited version by Richard Karpen is presented, which whilst not ideal, does present the extant music of the third movement in a performable fashion, something I missed when I first listened to this present disc.

Both the Unfinished String Quartet in F major and the String Quartet Movement in A minor, which may or may not have been intended as part of a complete quartet, give the listener, especially one who likes the string quartet as much as I do, a sense of 'what if'. Yes these are relatively early works that show the development of the mature style from the late classical to the romantic, but both are valuable and present some lovely music. This is music which shows great style and ability, music which should be enjoyed, and not just as a curio in a collection of complete chamber music.

The performances are first rate throughout; they are strong and well articulated, with the quartet of string players of the Ensemble MidtVest once again showing what an exceptional band they are, and not just in the Octet, as it is them and not the Danish String Quartet who perform both works for string quartet. The notes and recorded sound are both excellent. My only caveat being the performance of

the Kontra Quartet, which is equally as committed, and not only do they offer all the music recorded here, including the extant third movement of the String Quartet in F major, but also the Andante and Allegro in F minor for string quintet too.

Stuart Sillitoe

Johann Sebastian BACH (1685 - 1750)

Bach Mirrored - Parallel Preludes, Fantasias & Fugues

Prelude and fugue in D (BWV 532)** [11:07]

Prelude in C (BWV 545a)** [1:53]

Prelude and fugue in a minor (BWV 543)** [8:46]

Fantasia and fugue in g minor (BWV 542)** [11:01]

Chromatic fantasia and fugue in d minor (BWV 903)* [11:37]

Fantasia and fugue in a minor (BWV 944)* [7:36]

Prelude in C (BWV 870b)* [2:38]

Toccatà in D (BWV 912)* [11:23]

Maurizio Croci (harpsichord*, organ**)

rec. April 2016, Chapelle St-Ignace, Collège St-Michel, Fribourg*; Eglise paroissiale, Payerne**, Switzerland. DDD

FRA BERNARDO FB 1611911 [66:04]

There is no end to recordings of the keyboard works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Discs with his *Goldberg Variations*, the *Partitas* and the *French* and *English Suites* are released with great regularity. I doubt whether many of these provide us with substantial new approaches to these works. Does this mean that there is no room for recordings of Bach's keyboard works? No, that is not what I am saying. For a start, some parts of Bach's keyboard oeuvre receive less attention, such as the *Inventions* and *Sinfonias*. But there are probably more interesting ways to shed light on Bach's keyboard music than simply presenting them as cycles. The disc which Maurizio Croci recorded for Fra Bernardo is a good example of intelligent and creative programming.

The title of his disc is intriguing: what exactly does it mean? Croci explains that in his liner-notes. "The organ and harpsichord pieces presented in this recording mirror each other. Following the same musical inspiration, Bach explores the idioms and technical possibilities of both instruments, often evoking on one instrument the idiom of the other". The programme includes pairs of pieces which show strong similarity in their idiom and the way the musical material is treated. The connection between the *Prelude and fugue in D (BWV 532)* and the *Toccatà in D (BWV 912)*, for instance, is remarkable. They are written in the *stylus phantasticus*, which was a feature of the North German organ school. Both are early works and date from the time Bach was strongly influenced by what was written by the representatives of that famous school, and especially Johann Adam Reincken and Dieterich Buxtehude. Interestingly it has been suggested that the *Toccatas* BWV 910 to 916, which today are generally considered to be works for a strung keyboard instrument, may originally have been intended for organ as well. The comparison underlines that there is not that much difference in idiom between the prelude and the toccata as both have a strongly improvisatory character.

Equally striking - but here also thematically - is the similarity between the *Prelude in C (BWV 545a)* and the *Prelude in C (BWV 870b)*; the latter is the opening of the second part of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Croci points out that both pieces have been preserved in various versions; the two selected here are very close in character and content. The *Fantasias and fugues* BWV 543 and BWV 944 also are in the same key (a minor). The similarities cannot be overlooked, but there are also meaningful differences which shows that what two pieces have in common, can be worked out in various ways.

The *Fantasia and fugue in g minor (BWV 542)* is assumed to have been written between 1710 and 1725; the *Chromatic fantasia and fugue in d minor (BWV 903)* cannot be dated with any precision either, but was probably written at about the same time. This explains their similarities, especially in the bold treatment of chromaticism, which was highly unusual at the time. No wonder the latter circulated in more manuscripts than almost any other keyboard work from Bach's pen during the 18th century. These two pieces are played here in immediate succession which makes their similarity even more striking.

That is different with the other pieces, and that is the second explanation of this disc's title: the

programme is also structured as a mirror. The advantage is that we don't switch from organ to harpsichord and vice versa after every piece. This allows to get used to the different instruments and the respective acoustical circumstances. The disadvantage is that one doesn't hear similar pieces in their 'logical' order. But with the help of technology that can simply be 'corrected'. It is helpful that in almost every case prelude or fantasia and fugue are allocated to different tracks.

As I said, this is a model of creative programming. It is also quite instructive to bring together pieces which show strong similarities. It helps to increase one's understanding of the compositional process and the differences and similarities in Bach's treatment of the respective instruments. The differences cannot be overlooked, but I was especially struck by the similarities. It would be interesting to hear some of Bach's harpsichord works from relatively early in his career in performances on the organ.

I have greatly enjoyed not only Croci's programming, but also his performances. He plays two beautiful instruments: a harpsichord by Andrea Restelli, after Hieronymus Albrecht Hass (1723), and an organ, built in 1787 by Johann Melchior Grob, which was restored in 1993 by Jürgen Ahrend. Croci's interpretations are characterised by a rhetorical approach and his playing is gestural and speech-like. The contrasts between the various sections - a feature of the *stylus phantasticus* - are convincingly conveyed. Only in the organ pieces, I probably would have liked some more breathing spaces here and there. Croci's tempi are generally pretty fast, and musically I find them mostly convincing, but in the case of organ performances one has to take the acoustic into account. It is thanks to his clear articulation, that the musical discourse never becomes muddy, but even so I felt that sometimes certain phrases and figurations could have been singled out more strongly through short pauses, in order to emphasize the following statement. However, these are only minor issues in what is a most interesting and musically compelling recital.

Johan van Veen

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Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756-1791)

Symphony No.39 in E flat, K543 (1788) [29:37]

Symphony No.40 in g minor, K550 (1788) [27:42]

Symphony No.41 in C, K551 ('Jupiter') (1788) [31:30]

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Sir Simon Rattle

rec. live Philharmonie Berlin, 23 August 2013 in 24/48 sound.

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC BPHR17032 [88:57]

Reviewed as 24-bit press preview.

The previous Berlin Philharmonic recording with Sir Simon Rattle was a lavish all-LP affair, recorded direct to disc and costing an arm and a leg. In contrast the new release is digital-only, offered in 24-bit stereo or surround at a much more reasonable €24.90. Those happy with mp3 will find it for €9.49 from [German Amazon](#). UK purchasers will find it for £9.59 (16-bit) or £14.39 (24-bit) from Qobuz. All except the Amazon mp3 come complete with a pdf booklet.

There seem to be no Mozart symphony recordings from Rattle in the current UK catalogue so this release from the Berlin Phil on their own label is welcome on that score alone.

The obvious comparison among recent releases would be Sir Charles Mackerras' superb 2-CD set of these three works plus Symphony No.38 ('Prague') with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (Linn CKD308 – [Recording of the Month](#) – [Download Roundup January 2009](#)). That's my benchmark but I must admit that I also regularly dig out my 2-CD CBS set of Nos. 35, 36 and 38-41, with Bruno Walter conducting the Columbia Symphony Orchestra (M2YK45676, no longer available). If Mackerras represents smaller-scale performance guided by principles established by period performers, Walter is unreformed old-school, even to the extent of whole-scale first-movement cuts allowing six symphonies to be squeezed on two CDs. I ought not to like it but it's not just the fact that it was from these performances of Nos. 35 and 41 on LP that I got to know these works that makes me return to it.

The Walter set may no longer be available, though his earlier NYPO versions of 39-41 are, but Karl Böhm's 2-CD set of Nos. 35, 36 and 38-41 shares many of its virtues. Recorded around 1960 with an earlier incarnation of the Berlin Philharmonic, it remains available on DG Originals (4474162, 2 CDs around £10), with 39-41 also separately from Australian DG Eloquence (4632322) and Nos. 32, 35, 28 and 41 from Beulah – see below.

On the basis of his recording of Haydn (Symphonies 88-92 – [Recording of the Month](#) – [review](#) – 2 CDs at super-budget price), my expectation was that Rattle would be closer to Böhm and Walter than to Mackerras. Though highly regarded in many quarters, his Haydn is just too 'big-band' for me, even by comparison with other modern-instrument recordings, such as those from Adam Fischer ([Nimbus](#) – [review](#)) and Eugen Jochum (Nos. 88, 91, 93-104 DG E4743642 budget price, download only or 42-CD set).

A few months before these performances with the Berlin Phil, at the opening of their 2013/14 season, Rattle had conducted the three last Mozart symphonies with the period-instrument Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the London Royal Festival Hall. I assume that the experience with the OAE helped shape these Berlin performances. Certainly they come much closer to the ideal combination of modern-instrument playing with a sense of period style than I found the Haydn to be. Here and there I found myself a little irritated by oddities of phrasing or tempo and in individual movements I prefer Mackerras, Böhm or Walter, but mostly I'd be happy with these recordings on my desert island. I suspect that those odd idiosyncrasies might even prove endearing in the long run just as Beecham's Haydn and Mozart does.

I found Rattle's recording of the Haydnesque No.39 much more amenable than his earlier set of the Haydn symphonies. I don't believe that he has recorded Schubert's Fifth symphony; if he does I hope

it will be as attractive as his approach to Mozart's No.40, in many ways its progenitor. The approach to these two works brings out both their similarities and their differences.

I've already hinted that No.41, the *Jupiter*, comes off best of all on this Berlin Philharmonic set. That's as it should be: this is a remarkable work when one remembers that in 1788 Beethoven had yet to complete his Second Piano Concerto – actually his first – which still consisted of only two movements at that date and it would still be several years before Haydn's second set of 'London' symphonies produced anything of comparable stature with the *Jupiter*.

Some time ago I [reviewed](#) a Beulah reissue of Böhm's recording of No.41, an alternative to the DG reissue (1PDR14, with Nos. 32, 35 and 38). I enjoyed listening to that again and, in its very different way, to Otto Klemperer's account (Beulah 2PDR2, with Brahms, Gluck and Wagner – [review](#)). At 11:41, with repeats observed, Rattle's first movement has greater gravitas than Böhm, Walter or even the majestic Klemperer who all omit them. Yet this is a grandly benevolent rather than a stern chief deity, with the BPO giving Rattle both lightness and weight where each is needed and offering a serious challenge to Mackerras, who also observes the repeats.

The finale, too, comes with repeats but otherwise is as full of *joie de vivre* as Böhm who omits them. Klemperer, also *sans* repeats, dances in slightly heavier, though not impossibly clumpy boots, but it's Mackerras who, observing all repeats and resisting hectic tempi yet with plenty of lightness in his step carries the day for me in this movement.

With over 200 versions in the current catalogue no one recording of the *Jupiter* can do it all. Period-instrument enthusiasts will perhaps prefer Sir John Eliot Gardiner's live recording of Nos. 39 and 41 on his own SDG label (SDG711 – [review](#)) but a comparison for [DL News 2013/7](#) found me preferring Mackerras. Both make more of the second movement than Rattle; otherwise all three offer very similar and valid approaches to this symphony, reminding us why it ranks as one of the greatest of all time.

Sir Roger Norrington's live 2006 *Jupiter* with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra has its advocates. By comparison with Rattle and Mackerras, however, though enjoyably alert it sounds a little too sedate and the coupling with the immature No.1 and No.25, generally regarded as the first Mozart symphony to warrant serious attention, is somewhat bizarre. (Haenssler 93:211).

On my press preview of the Berlin Philharmonic recording the symphonies followed much too hard on each other's heels: I hope that has been corrected in the final release but it is far too common a problem with downloads and there's little that can be done about it. There's no applause; for once even those who dislike it might have welcomed it.

The 24-bit version sounds very well; I recommend paying extra for it, or at least for the 16-bit, rather than the inexpensive mp3, especially as the latter appears to come without the valuable pdf booklet.

If you can't run to more than a single set of these late Mozart symphonies, Mackerras on Linn would still be my recommendation, available on SACD for around £19 or as a download from [linnrecords.com](#) or [hyperion-records.co.uk](#) for £18 (16-bit) or £25 (24-bit). Good as Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic are, detailed comparison with Mackerras usually shows the latter to be better still. If, however, just one view of Mozart's final symphonic works won't do, Rattle or Böhm, the latter with an earlier incarnation of the same orchestra and not sounding unduly dated, would make a very fine addition.

Brian Wilson