

Second Thoughts and Short Reviews: Winter 2017/18 Part 1 and Christmas 2017
By Brian Wilson and Dan Morgan

Reviews are by Brian Wilson unless signed [DM]

Autumn 2017/3 is [here](#): it contains links to Autumn 2017/1 and 2017/2.

Index

ARNESEN Cradle Hymn_Naxos (and in *Celebration of Christmas* _Brigham Young)

BACH Organ Works 6 (Christmas Chorales)_Signum

- *Magnificat* (+ HANDEL)_Alpha

BERNSTEIN Chichester Psalms (+ VAUGHAN WILLIAMS)_King's

HANDEL *Dixit Dominus* (+ BACH)_Alpha

JACOB, LEIGHTON, PATTERSON British Violin Concertos_Naxos

MAYR *Miserere, Litanæ*_Naxos

PETERSON-BERGER Symphony No.1, etc; Symphony No.2, etc._CPO

- Four Pieces from *Frösöblomster* (with *Swedish Orchestral Favourites*)_Naxos

RAMÍREZ *Navidad, Missa Luba, Misa Criolla*_Naxos

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV Russian Easter Festival Overture (see Classic Overtures)

ROVIGO *Missa Dominicalis*, etc._Tactus

SAINT-SAËNS Symphonic Poems_Naxos

SCHUBERT Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7 (8) (Un)finished_Solo Musica

- Symphony No.8; String Quartet No.13; *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*_Beulah

SHOSTAKOVICH *The Gadfly* (complete)_Naxos

SOUSA Music for Wind Band Vol.17_Naxos

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS *Dona Nobis Pacem* (+ BERNSTEIN)_King's

WAGNER *Siegfried*_Naxos

- The Wagner Project (Matthias Goerne)_Harmonia Mundi

WEINBERG Symphony No.17, etc._Naxos

*Berlin Philharmoniker Christmas 2*_DG

*Celebration of Christmas*_Brigham Young

Christmas from Westminster Abbey_Eloquence

Christmas Presence (King's Singers)_Signum

Classic Overtures_Beulah

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming - Music for Christmas_Resonus

Lutheran Easter Music from Ribe Cathedral_DaCapo

LUX: Music for the Nativity_Atma

*O Holy Night: A Merton Christmas*_Delphian

Riemiitkaamme! (Let us rejoice) - A Finnish Christmas_BIS

St Louis Blues (Grapelli and Reinhardt)_Beulah

The Art of Moura Lympany_Beulah

*The Gate of Glory: Music from the Eton Choirbook Vol. 5*_Avie

*Thys Yool: Medieval Christmas Music*_Nimbus

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

The Gate of Glory: Music from the Eton Choirbook Vol. 5.

Hugo KELLYK: *Gaude Flore Virginali* a7 [19:10]

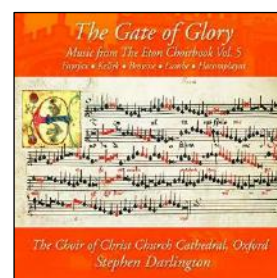
John BROWNE: *Regina Mundi Clara* a6 [15:58]

Robert FAYRFAX: *Magnificat 'Regali'* a5 [18:30]

Walter LAMBE: *Gaude Flore Virginali* a4 (world premiere recording) [11:20]

Robert HACOMPLAYNT: *Salve Regina* a5 [14:26]

The Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Oxford/Stephen Darlington



rec. 4–6 July 2017, Chapel of Merton College, Oxford. DDD
 Texts and translations included
AVIE AV2376 [79:26]

CD available from



Is it my imagination or is this series becoming even better as it progresses? This latest, fifth, release is very welcome, especially for the world premiere recording of the *Lambe*. Overall, the series offers a substantial challenge to the five *Coro* recordings from this rich source of early renaissance music, with *The Sixteen* (**COR16040** as a set and separately): ideally, you need both and the single-CD selections from Tallis Scholars' (*Gimell* **CDGIM036**), *Tonus Peregrinus* (Naxos **8.572840**) and *The Huelgas Ensemble* (Deutsche HM **88765408852**).

Claudio MERULO (1533-1604)

Toccata undecimo detto quinto tuono [6:01]

Francesco ROVIGO (c. 1541-1597)

Canzon I [2:44]

Missa Dominicalis à 5 voci, interspersed with *Laudem te* and Canzon VI [56:06]

Canzon IV [3:37]

Canzon III [4:47]

Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius, à 8 voci [4:58]

Capelli Musicale di Santa Barbara/Umberto Forni (organ)

rec. live Basilica Palatina di Sanata Barbara, Mantua, 4 December 2014. DDD

Mass text not included; texts of *Laudem te* and *Laudate Dominum* included.

TACTUS TC541801 [67:02] Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. For purchase details see [review](#) by Michael Wilkinson.



MW's review says it all: this is not just of interest to specialists in music of this period, though it certainly is that, too. The music may not be especially Christmas-orientated – it's composed for ordinary Sunday use – but, with its almost hauntingly fascinating qualities, you may well find yourself playing it over the holiday period.

Thomissøn's Easter

[Reconstruction of a Lutheran service in Ribe Cathedral, 1560, from the records of music director **Hans THOMISSØN (1532-73)**]

Conrad REIN (c.1475-c.1522) Introit: *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum* [2:55]

Jacobus CLEMENS Non Papa (c.1510/15-1555/56) *Kyrie: Missa Virtute magna* [3:49]

Gloria – Missa Virtute magna [6:44]

Lutheran sung liturgy – Collect, Epistle [1:46]

Conrad REIN Gradual: *Hæc dies quam fecit Dominus*; **Thomas STOLTZER (c.1475-1526)** *Confitemini Domino* [4:57]

Conrad REIN Alleluia; **Lucas LOSSIUS (1508-1582)** Alleluia. *Pascha nostrum* [3:15]

Lucas LOSSIUS, Johannes ALECTORIUS (c.1490-after 1520) Sequence: *Victimæ paschali laudes* [4:53]

Sung liturgy – Reading from the Gospel [2:17]

Jacobus CLEMENS Non Papa *Credo – Missa Virtute magna* [8:32]

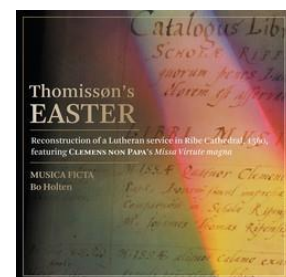
Hymn – *Christ lå i dødsens bånd* (Christ lay in Death's dark prison) (Ribe Cathedral, 1560) [1:29]

Sung liturgy – Preface [1:56]

Jacobus CLEMENS Non Papa *Sanctus and Benedictus – Missa Virtute magna* [6:10]

Sung liturgy – Collect, Lord's Prayer, Words of Institution [4:23]

Jacobus CLEMENS Non Papa *Agnus dei – Missa Virtute magna* [4:26]



Sung liturgy – Postcommunion, Blessing [1:03]

Hymn – *Forlæ oss med fred nådelig* (O Lord, in these times so perilous) (Ribe Cathedral, 1560) [1:10]

MusicaFicta [Ann-Christin Wesser Ingels, Christine Nonbo and Louise Odgaard (soprano); Eva Wöllinger-Bengtson, Hanne Marie le Fevre and Rebecca Forsberg Svendsen (alto); Tobias Aabye Dam, Paul Bentley-Angell and Palle Jensen (tenor); Lauritz Jakob Thomsen (monophonic intonations), Torsten Nielsen (Officiant) and Rasmus Kure Thomsen (Deacon) (bass)]/Bo Holten

rec. Ribe Cathedral, 15-17 March 2017 and St. Paul's Church, Copenhagen, 15 June 2017. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

DACAPO 8.226188 [59:45] Reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



December may seem to be an odd time of year to release a recording of Easter music, but when it offers a reconstruction of a Lutheran Mass from Ribe Cathedral, Denmark, c.1560, it was bound to catch my attention. Paul McCreech's reconstruction of a Lutheran Christmas Mass (DG – see *Thys Yool*, below) is part of my perpetual Christmas repertoire; can Bo Holten and his team do the same for Easter? The answer is generally 'yes'. I found the performance engrossing and strongly recommend it for next Easter if you don't choose to obtain it now.

It's possible to take issue with some aspects of the booklet, for example that 'in the new, Lutheran view [the Communion] was to be about actively commemorating the death and resurrection of Christ and at the same time acknowledging the consequent salvation of mankind.' In fact, Luther held firmly to a view of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; his failure to agree with other reformers on this point was most evident when he sat down to dispute with Zwingli, prefacing the discussion by chalking *Hoc est corpus meum* (This is my body) on the table. End of discussion. The Danish liturgy, always among the most conservative, stresses this in the words before the consecration, included on this recording: *Disse ord Christus sagde, det er mit legeme, som gives for jer, item det er mit blod som udgydes for jer til syndernes forladelse, skulle i fuldkommelige tro så at være i sandhed, at Jesus Christus er der selv til stede med sit legeme og blod i sakramentet efter ordens lydelse.* (These words which Christ said – this is my body, that is given for you; and this is my blood, which is shed for you for the remission of sins – you must so fully believe to be the truth, that **Jesus Christ is Himself present with his body and blood in the Sacrament** as stated by the words.) (My emphasis).

It's surprising how much old-style chant and polyphony was still in use in the Danish Lutheran liturgy when even the Communion service in the ultra-conservative English Prayer Book of 1549 and even more so the revision of 1552, essentially restored in 1590, would have sounded much more radical even in Tallis's settings. Fine performances and recording make this attractive.



Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750) The Complete Organ Works, Vol. 6

Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV550 [6:51]

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her, BWV700 [3:16]

Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her BWV738 [1:19]

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ BWV723 [2:32]

Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ BWV722 [1:23]

Wir Christenleut BWV710 [1:53]

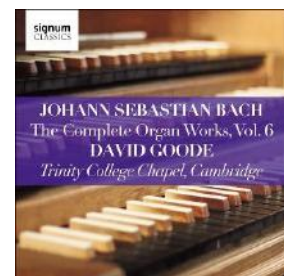
In dulci jubilo BWV729 [2:38]

Pastorale in F, BWV590 [13:01]

Gigue Fugue in G, BWV577 [3:28]

Meine Seele erhebt den Herrn (Magnificat) BWV733 [4:35]

Einige canonische Veränderungen über das Weynacht Lied ,Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her', BWV769 [12:32]



Christum wir sollen loben schon BWV696 [1:20]
Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ BWV697 [1:01]
Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn BWV698 [1:11]
Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland BWV699 [1:11]
Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her BWV701 [1:27]
Gottes Sohn ist kommen BWV703 [0:52]
Lob sei dem allmächtigen Gott BWV704 [1:05]
 Prelude and Fugue in A, BWV536 [7:19]
 David Goode (organ)

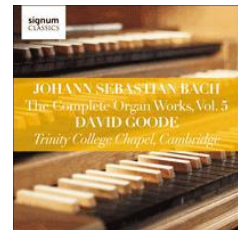
rec. January 2016, Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge. DDD.

SIGCD806 [68:54] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk.

CD available from



The latest release in this fine series is mostly devoted to music for the Christmas period. The originals of some of these works, such as *Vom Himmel hoch* and *In dulci jubilo*, will be fairly familiar, others less so, which makes this, like several other of my seasonal choices (below), ideal listening when you are tired of the same old. Those collecting the series will need no urging from me to grab this latest volume – and its predecessor, volume 5, which contains the ‘Schübler’ chorales on a [Presto 2-CD set](#) or a 99-minute download from hyperion-records.co.uk in 16- and 24-bit (**SIGCD805**). It’s a further sign of the times that neither volume is available as a regular CD but the 24-bit downloads are excellent.



Johann Sebastian BACH (1685-1750)

Magnificat in D, BWV243 [28:56]

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759)

Dixit Dominus, HWV232 [32:33]

Vox Luminis/Lionel Meunier

rec. January 2017, Begijnhofkerk Sint-Truiden, Belgium (*Dixit Dominus*) and July 2017, De Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (*Magnificat*)

Texts and translations included.

ALPHA370 [61:20] Reviewed from 320 kb/s mp3 press preview.



CD available from



Only recently I made John Eliot Gardner’s new account of Bach’s *Magnificat* in E-flat, BWV243a, (with the Christmas additions) a **Recording of the Month** – [Autumn 2017/2](#). For those who prefer the ‘penny-plain’ version, BWV243, this new recording from Vox Luminis will do very well indeed. It comes, moreover, with the unusual coupling of Handel’s *Dixit Dominus*, designed specifically to remind us that these contemporaries were by no means each other’s antipodes.

The exuberant performances are all that we have come to expect from the aptly named Vox Luminis – as recently as June 2017 Simon Thompson made their survey of Lutheran music (**RIC376**, 2 CDs) a **Recording of the Month**. The eclassical.com lossless download of that recording, which I anticipated in favourably reviewing the mp3 press preview in [February 2017](#) has still, oddly, not appeared. Even in the mp3 press preview, the recorded sound of the new release is very good.

Johann Simon MAYR (1763–1845)

Miserere in g minor for soloists, chorus and orchestra [46:44]

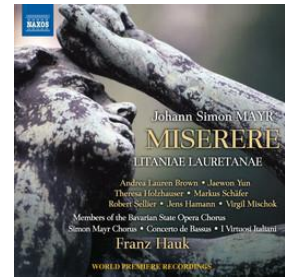
Litaniae Lauretanæ in g minor for soloists, chorus and orchestra [11:01]
world premiere recordings

Andrea Lauren Brown, Jaewon Yun (soprano); Theresa Holzhauser (alto);
Markus Schäfer, Robert Sellier (tenor); Jens Hamann, Virgil Mischok
(bass)

Simon Mayr Chorus; Members of the Bavarian State Opera Chorus;
Concerto de Bassus; I Virtuosi Italiani/Franz Hauk

rec. Asam Church Maria de Victoria, Ingolstadt, Germany, 7th-11th April and 26th April 2014. DDD.
Texts and translations included

NAXOS 8.573782 [57:45] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



CD available from



This world premiere recording follows fairly hard on the heels of another Naxos first: Mayr's *Requiem*, with some of the same team, including conductor Franz Hauk. Göran Forsling was so impressed by that 2-CD set that he not only made it a **Recording of the Month** but also wished he could give a bunch of roses to all concerned – [review](#). Other recordings in this series have also been well received – of these I can personally vouch for the oratorio *Joseph a Labano fugiens* – [review](#) – the *Te Deum* (with Mozart) – [review](#) – and *Il Sogno di Partenope* (with reservations) – [review](#).

Though the text of the *Miserere* is penitential – Mayr's setting, which lacks a concluding *Gloria* may well have been composed for Good Friday when the doxology was omitted – the music is far from dull. The short setting of the *Litaniae Lauretanæ* (Litanies of Loreto) makes an interesting contrast with Mozart's setting, K195 – a much more extended work even though composed in Salzburg where the Archbishop liked his music short and sweet. Both Mayr works receive fine performances, well recorded in 24-bit, and at a price which takes account of the slightly short playing time. I'm amazed to see one dealer charging over £11 for the CD.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Symphony No.4 in c minor, D417 ('Tragic' (1816) [32:06]

Symphony No.7 (8), D759 ('(Un)finished' completed by Mario Venzago) [44:53]

Münchner Symphoniker/Kevin John Edusei
rec. 23-27 May 2017, Bavaria Studio, Munich. DSD.

SOLO MUSICA SM273 [77:05] Reviewed as 24/192 download from eclassical.com (NO booklet) and as streamed from Naxos Music Library (with pdf booklet). **NB** download is 24/192, not 24/96, hence a rather large file around 2GB.



CD available from



I might well have passed this by had not the 'Symphony No.7' label caught my eye – was this merely a case of using the German numbering of what's more usually called No.8 or an attempt to reconstruct the 'lost' Gmünden-Gastein symphony, D849, which is now, in any case, not believed to be lost but to have been the 'Great' C major?¹

No.7 is, indeed, No.8, our old friend the 'Unfinished' symphony, which there is good reason may not have been unfinished at all, since the score contains the opening of a third movement. Various attempts have been made to offer a complete work², usually, as here, by borrowing from the incidental

music for *Rosamunde*. There's no question of conclusive proof, but the music fits well into place. The conventional two movements go well, too. The first is often taken far too slowly but Kevin Edusei paces it well, moving the music along without falling into the other extreme and rushing it. Overall, if the coupling – a very acceptable account of No.4 – appeals, this is a recording of a 'completed' version to enjoy, though I marginally prefer Sir Charles Mackerras – see footnote 2 – who also paces the opening movement well and with whom you also get very fine versions of No.5 and the 'Great' C major with a period orchestra which in no way comes with any of the disadvantages sometimes associated with such performances.

The 24-bit download – effectively DSD quality at 192kHz – is very good.

¹ Various No.7, 8 or 9: the numbering of Schubert's final symphonies is almost as chaotic as those of Dvořák used to be. For some time, the *Grand Duo* was thought to be a reduction of the 'lost' symphony. In 1992 Centaur released a CD of a reconstruction, by Gunter Elsholz, of a 'lost' Symphony in E, D729 (**CRC2139** – download in 16-bit lossless from eclassical.com, No booklet, or stream from Naxos Music Library, with pdf booklet).

² Notably fine performances by Sir Charles Mackerras with the OAE, using the Newbould completion (Erato **5618062**, budget price, with Symphonies Nos. 5 and 9, download only).

Classic Schubert

Der Hirt auf dem Felsen (The Shepherd on the Rock), D965 [10:38]

Susanne Danco (soprano); Gervase de Peyer (clarinet); Guido Agosti (piano) – rec. 1956. ADD

Impromptu No.2 in A-flat, D935 [5:18]

Impromptu No.3 in B-flat, D935 [10:23]

Alfred Brendel (piano) – rec. 1962. ADD

Symphony No.8 in b minor, D759 [20:20]

London Symphony Orchestra/Sir Henry Wood – rec. 1933. ADD

String Quartet No.13 in a minor (*Rosamunde*), D804 [30:30]

Végh Quartet – rec. 1952. ADD

BEULAH 1PS21 [77:11] Available from Qobuz.



There are many very fine more recent recordings of *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* but none to excel Suzanne Danco's classic account which has come up sounding very well in this transfer. Brendel, too, recorded the Impromptus again, but these early recordings are full of the youthful blend of enthusiasm and sensitivity which brought him to our attention in Mozart and Schubert on the likes of Vox and World Record Club before Philips snapped him up. No.3 is the beautiful *Rosamunde*-inspired Impromptu. The piano tone is a little harsh, which is typical of these early Brendel recordings, but it's not a serious problem. If the Beulah reissue leads you to Brendel's budget-price Philips twofer containing both sets of Impromptus, *Moments Musicaux* and other works, so much the better (**4560612**).

This typically well-filled Beulah album is well worth having for these three tracks alone but the classic Végh Quartet account of String Quartet No.13, not otherwise available except in multi-CD sets, is the cherry on top. Like Impromptu No.3, the slow movement is derived from *Rosamunde*. It's almost as sublimely wistful as that of Schubert's String Quintet and the Végh players bring out that quality eminently well.

The 1933 Henry Wood *Unfinished* is more of a curiosity, though sounding surprisingly well for its age, with just a little surface noise. The performance is interesting for the fact that Wood moves the first movement along faster and keeps the listener's interest better than many more recent recordings which sometimes end up sounding like two slow movements; he's faster, for example, than the very fine Norrington recording on period instruments (Erato) and much faster than Claudio Abbado (DG).

This is an attractive release, best downloaded or streamed from Qobuz – follow link – in lossless sound rather than in mp3 from other sites.

REISSUE OF THE MONTH

The Art of Moura Lympany (1916-2005)

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847) *Capriccio Brillant*, Op.22 [8:58]

National Symphony Orchestra/Boyd Neel – rec. 1945. ADD

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921) Piano Concerto No.2 in g minor, Op.22 [22:24]

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Jean Martinon – rec. 1951. ADD

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943) Preludes Nos. 1 in c-sharp minor, Op.3/2, 3 in B-flat, Op.23/2 and 6 in g minor, Op.23/5 [11:55] – rec. 1951. ADD

Aram KHACHATURIAN (1903-1978) Piano Concerto in D-flat [33:02]

London Philharmonic Orchestra/Anatole Fistoulari – rec. 1952. ADD

All with Moura Lympany (piano)

BEULAH 1PS20 [76:21] Available from iTunes but watch the [Beulah website](#) for availability in lossless sound for the same price from Qobuz.



More recent and better-recorded versions of these works there may be – for example, Howard Shelley with the London Mozart Players in the Mendelssohn (Chandos **CHAN9215**, with Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2) or Stephen Hough with CBSO and Lawrence Foster in the same coupling plus *Rondo Brillant* and *Serenade and Allegro* (Hyperion **CDA66969**) – but these Moura Lympany recordings were well worth reviving and not just out of a sense of nostalgia.

The automatic reaction is to say that Lympany is at her best in the gentler music but, though those more expert than me on the Rachmaninov Preludes have sometimes thought her playing a little lacking in muscularity, I found that she sheds light on all these works, not least the often-under-rated Saint-Saëns: LS thought the performance ‘fluent and sparkling’ back in 1951 and I couldn’t put it better. On a 10-inch LP then it cost 29/6 – at least £50 in today’s values. The Khachaturian took a whole 12-inch LP costing 39/6, at least £70 today – so £7.99 for these and all the other music is a snip. Lympany introduced the Khachaturian to the UK in 1940 and Anatole Fistoulari was also something of an expert in his music, so this has a special place in the catalogue.

The earliest recording, from 1945, is rather dry but acceptable and transferred with hardly a hint of 78 surface noise. The 1951-2 recordings have come up sounding very well, if a little over-bright and a trifle congested at times in the Khachaturian.

If the three Rachmaninov Preludes prompt you to explore Lympany’s complete 1951 recording, you can find that on an inexpensive Naxos Classical Archives download (**9.80922** [73:58] – from [Presto](#), mp3 or lossless). Alternatively, they are available on a 2-CD download-only Decca set, with Piano Concerto No.3 and the Khachaturian but the Beulah selection will be enough for many listeners, especially as this is the only way to obtain the Saint-Saëns short of one of two multi-box Decca sets.

Richard WAGNER (1813–1883)

Siegfried, WWV86c (1876)

Simon O’Neill (tenor) - Siegfried

Matthias Goerne (bass-baritone) - The Wanderer

David Cangelosi (tenor) - Mime

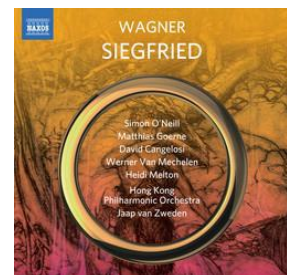
Werner Van Mechelen (bass-baritone) – Alberich

Falk Struckmann (bass-baritone) - Fafner

Valentina Farcas (soprano) - Forest Bird

Deborah Humble (mezzo) - Erda

Heidi Melton (soprano) - Brünnhilde



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra/Jaap van Zweden
rec. live: 6–25 January 2017, Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall. DSD.
Synopsis included: text and translation available online.

NAXOS NBD0069A BD-A [242:07]

Also available on 4 CDs as **8.660413-6** and as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

BD-A available from



For me the last two works in Wagner's *Ring* cycle are the crucial elements: even if *Rheingold* and *Walküre* have gone very well, as they have in this Naxos cycle, a diminution of standards in *Siegfried* can ruin the whole. That's especially the case with a video recording, as with the absurd Staatsoper/Zagrosek cycle on Euroarts **2052088** or as a complete *Ring* on **2057368** – [review](#). Since I reviewed the DVDs, the set has been released on blu-ray (**2057364**) but that only brings the *reductio ad absurdum* into sharper view – Siegfried forging the sword on the cooker in Mime's kitchen, for example. Though Göran Forsling found much to admire in the Naxos 4-CD set of the same performances – [review](#) – I can't even bear to hear it because it reminds me of the crass production.

As it happens, there is nothing to fear in this latest Naxos instalment: it is, if anything, even finer than its two predecessors and stands comparison with the classic Solti *Ring*, available complete as a splendid bargain on one blu-ray disc with hard-back book (Decca **478 6748** – [review](#))¹. That had the benefits of a studio recording, which allowed the special effects described in John Culshaw's *Ring Resounding*. Other recordings often disappoint when one recalls the Solti, especially when recorded live, but the forging of *Nothung* on the new recording leaves little to be desired sonically and Fafner comes over as truly aurally frightening here, to take just two examples.

Not only is it more convenient to have the single blu-ray disc, thus avoiding changes of CD; as with the earlier releases in the series, it's less expensive: one dealer is offering the blu-ray for £14 (normally £17.50) and the CDs for £21 (reduced from the normal £26.25). Also, as before, I must report that the 24-bit eclassical.com download is uncompetitively expensive at \$36.32, though the 16-bit at \$24.21 is better value than the CDs. I must, however, report that while the disc played on two of my three blu-ray players – the Philips coupled to my TV and the Pioneer linked to the audio system in the lounge – it refused to play on my best set-up, with the Cambridge Audio 650BD. Just to make sure that the player – now elderly but still going strong – was not at fault, I tried the *Walküre* disc, which was fine. I've asked Naxos to comment but have not yet received more than a promise to investigate.

¹ Rather more expensive now – the least expensive offer I could find was £62 or \$74.49 – but still very good value at around £4/\$5 per hour.

The Wagner Project

"Of Gods and Men"

Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg (1868)

Vorspiel (Act III)

Sachs: *Was duftet doch der Flieder so mild* (Act II, "Fliedermonolog")

Tristan und Isolde (1865)

Vorspiel

Marke: *Tatest du's wirklich?* (Act II, 3)

Isoldes *Liebestod* (Act III)

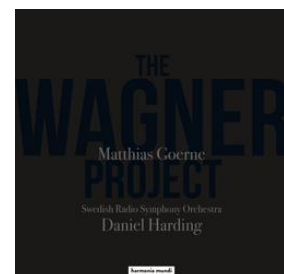
Das Rheingold (1869)

Wotan: *Abendlich strahlt der Sonne Auge* (Scene 4)

Die Walküre (1870)

Wotan: *Leb' wohl, du kühnes herrliches Kind!* (Act III, 3)

"Redemption"



Der fliegende Holländer (1843)

Ouvertüre

Holländer: *Die Frist ist um, und abermals verstrichen* (Act I, 2 "Monolog")

Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg (1845)

Wolfram: *Lied an den Abendstern, Wie Todesahnung, Dämm' rung deckt die Lande*

Parsifal (1882)

Vorspiel (Act I)

Amfortas: *Ja - Wehe! Wehe! Weh' über mich!* (Act III)

Karfreitagszauber (Good Friday Spell, Act III)

Matthias Goerne (baritone) with Tove Nilsson (mezzo) and Mats Carlsson (tenor)

The Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra/Daniel Harding

rec. 21-24 March 2016, 26-31 May 2016, Stockholm, Berwaldhallen. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902250/51 [62:51 + 59:08] Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



This 2-CD set makes two resounding successes for Matthias Goerne in Wagner in one month! Please excuse the brevity – I wanted to fit this in before the deadline – but really that's all that need be said. You should be able to find this 2-CD set for around £14 – not much more than a single CD.

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835–1921) Symphonic Poems

Phaëton – Symphonic Poem, No.2, Op.39 (1873) [8:20]

Marche héroïque, Op.34 (1870) [6:45]

La Jeunesse d'Hercule – Symphonic Poem, No.4, Op.50 (1877) [15:57]

Le Rouet d'Omphale – Symphonic Poem, No.1, Op.31 (1871) [8:05]

Sarabande, Op. 93/1 (1892) [6:24]

Rigaudon, Op 93/2 (1892) [2:51]

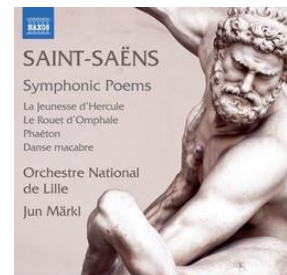
Danse macabre – Symphonic Poem, No. 3, Op. 40 (1874) [7:06]

Orchestre National de Lille/Jun Märkl

rec. 21–24 September 2016, Le Nouveau Siècle, Lille, France. DDD.

NAXOS 8.573745 [55:28] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



Having recently [reviewed](#) this splendid orchestra playing Offenbach, I was keen to hear them in these symphonic poems. Of course, a significant factor in the success of that first album – which I made a Recording of the Month – is the presence of Darrell Ang, a conductor who really galvanises his players. That was certainly the case with his Meyerbeer overtures and entr'actes, with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra ([Naxos](#)); indeed, that was one of my top picks for 2014. Now I see Leslie Wright has nominated Ang's Dutilleux – with this Lille band – as one of his Recordings of the Year for 2017 ([Naxos](#)).

My response to Jun Märkl is more equivocal. Yes, there are discs in his 9-CD Debussy set that are very good, but on the whole I find his music-making a little dull ([Naxos](#)). In short, he just doesn't communicate as readily as Ang does, nor does he give the impression of being a great orchestral motivator. Also, he faces stiff competition here, not least from Charles Dutoit and the Philharmonia/RPO, recorded in Kingsway Hall between 1977 and 1980 (Decca). Then there's the Neeme Järvi/RSNO collection, which has lost a little of its lustre since I first heard it in 2012 ([Chandos](#)).

Incidentally, anyone interested in similar fare should investigate *Overtures in Hi-Fi*, a mouthwatering box of *bon bons* conducted by the inimitable Albert Wolff ([Eloquence](#)).

So, how does Märkl do this time? He gives a suitably freewheeling account of *Phaéton*, but for sheer élan Dutoit is hard to beat. And while the orchestra play well enough, they're not nearly as inspired as they were in the Offenbach. As for the recording, it's bright and clear, but a tad uncouth at times. But it's Märkl's routine, foursquare approach to pieces such as the *Marche héroïque* that sells the music short. Once again, it's Dutoit who adds some sparkle to what, admittedly, isn't the composer at his best. The big, bold Decca recording certainly helps. True, Märkl's reading of *La Jeunesse d'Hercule* is more imaginative, but I still don't sense the engagement and affection needed to make these scores come alive.

Are there any highlights here? No, not really. I did warm to the nimble playing and phrasing in *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, although Dutoit and the RPO are even more suave here. By contrast, the *Sarabande* and *Rigaudon* are too heavy on their feet – these are dances, after all – and Märkl's *Danse macabre* is surprisingly po-faced. As you may have gathered, this collection – short measure, at 55 minutes – is something of a let-down. Oh, how I wish Ang had been chosen for this one!

Unremarkable performances and sound; if this rep floats your *bateau*, go for Dutoit. [DM]

A second opinion:

My *locus classicus* for *Danse Macabre* and *le Rouet d'Omphale*, recorded by Jean Martinon with the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra is now embedded in an 11-hour download-only collection *Jean Martinon – the Complete Decca Recordings (4757209)*. It contains mainly lighter French music but it also includes some insightful accounts of Borodin's Symphony No.2 and Prokofiev's Symphony Nos. 5 and 7. The Borodin is also available on an Eloquence album, with Symphony No.3 (Ansermet) and Polovtsian Dances (Solti) (4674822). The same programme is also available as part of a budget-price twofer (Double Decca 4556322). A download-only release of the contents of the original Decca LP, which contained the two Saint-Saens works plus first-rate accounts of Ibert's *Divertissement* and Bizet's *Jeux d'Enfants* has had the Borodin Second Symphony added. At £8.49 (mp3) or £10.99 (lossless) it's overpriced for all except those for whom, as for me, it was an introduction to *Divertissement*, but it's well worth streaming from [Naxos Music Library](#).

Memories of Martinon or, indeed, of Sir Thomas Beecham in *le Rouet d'Omphale*¹ are not effaced by the new recording, but it comes close and, good as those vintage Decca and EMI recordings are, the 24/96 version of the new Naxos is better still. Even with the shorter, less familiar items included, the CD is rather short value but the eclassical per-second eclassical.com charging policy amply compensates. [BW]

¹ *The French Collection* (Warner/EMI – [review](#) – [review](#) – now download only).

John Philip SOUSA (1854–1932)

Music for Wind Band, Vol. 17

The American Maid – Suite (1913) [10:33]

The Smugglers – Quintet (1882) [4:08]

The Salute of the Nations to the Columbian Exposition (1893) [12:37]

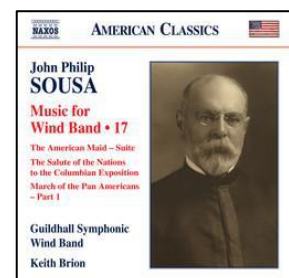
A Mingling of the Wets and the Drys – Humoresque (1922) [9:55]

March of the Pan Americans – Part 1 (1915)* [18:54]

Guildhall Symphonic Wind Band/Keith Brion

rec. 3–5 January 2016, Milton Court Concert Hall, The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London

* world premiere recording



NAXOS AMERICAN CLASSICS 8.559811 [56:06] Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



Naxos's series of recordings of the music of Sousa, with Keith Brion at the helm of a variety of wind bands, is now well-established. The first volume was recorded in 1999 with the Royal Artillery Band – [review](#) – and the most recent previous volume, No.16, was released in January 2017. Like the present album, it offers mainly unfamiliar repertoire, this time in performances by the Marine Band of the Royal Netherland Navy with, of course, Brion in command. (**8.559746** – available in 16- and 24-bit download from eclassical.com).

For the more familiar Sousa marches you need to turn to the earlier volumes or, perhaps better still, to the Beulah collection of the classic recordings made by Frederick Fennell with the Eastman Wind Ensemble (**3PD82** – [review](#)) but there's plenty to enjoy in these later volumes. If you don't decide to buy the CDs or downloads, subscribers to Naxos Music Library should at least stream them there – [Volume 16](#) – [Volume 17](#).

There's more martial music on a Beulah release: **Regimental Marches of the British Army**, recorded in 1957 by the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall, directed by Lt. Colonel David McBain (**1PS17** – details from [Beulah website](#)).

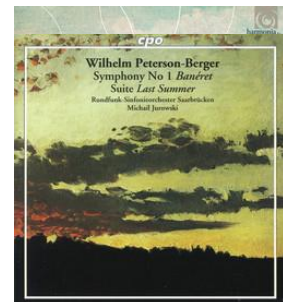
Wilhelm PETERSON-BERGER (1867-1942)

Symphony No.1 in B-flat, *Banéret* (The Banner) [38:20]

Suite *I Somras* (Last Summer) [31:22]

Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra/Michail Jurowski
rec. November 1997. DDD.

CPO 999561-2 [69:44] Reviewed as lossless download from eclassical.com (NO booklet) and as streamed from [Naxos Classical Library](#) (with pdf booklet)



CD available from



Symphony No. 2 *Sunnanfärd* (Journey to the South) (1910) [45:22]

Romance for violin and orchestra (1915) [12:52]

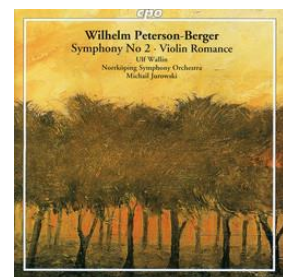
Orientalisk Dans (Oriental Dance) (1890) [5:13]

Prelude *Sveagaldrar* (1897) [7:04]

Ulf Wallin (violin)

Norrköping Symphony Orchestra/Michail Jurowski
rec. February 1998. DDD.

CPO 999564-2 [69:41] Reviewed as lossless download from eclassical.com (NO booklet) and as streamed from [Naxos Classical Library](#) (with pdf booklet)



CD available from



Swedish Orchestral Favourites, Vol. 1

August SODERMAN Swedish Festival Music [6:34]

Wilhelm STENHAMMAR Interlude from the Cantata, 'The Song' [5:53]

Lars-Erik LARSSON Pastoral Suite [12:30]

Epilogue from 'A Winter's Tale' [3:36]

Wilhelm PETERSON-BERGER Four Pieces from *Frösöblomster* [14:02]

Hugo ALFVEN Polka from *Roslagen* [2:13]

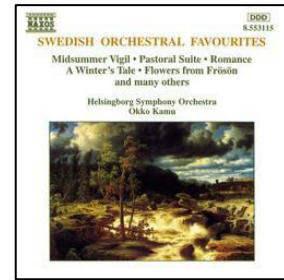
Dag WIREN *Marcia* from Serenade for Strings [4:38]

Hugo ALFVEN Elegy from *Gustavus Adolphus II* Suite [5:21]

Midsommarvaka (Midsummer Vigil) (Swedish Rhapsody No.1), Op.19 [13:29]

Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra/Okko Kamu

NAXOS 8.553115 [68:16] Reviewed as lossless download from eclassical.com (NO booklet) and as streamed from Naxos Classical Library (with pdf booklet)



CD available from



If you live in the Northern Hemisphere, you may be feeling in need of some Summer warmth. I can't offer that, but here are three recordings of Swedish music to recapture the feeling. Perhaps because the Scandinavian winters are long and bleak, the Swedes seem especially adept at bottling the summer in music.

You probably already know Hugo Alfven's *Midsummer Vigil*, on an attractive and inexpensive Naxos CD, which also contains the March from Dag Wiren's *Serenade* and some other appealing works, but you will be less likely to know the music of Peterson-Berger. His *Frösömsblomster*, a series of orchestrations of piano music, adds to the appeal of the Naxos, but his suite *Last Summer* and his Second Symphony on CPO offer a more extended dose of summeriness. I can't claim him as a neglected genius, but his music is well worth discovering in these fine performances. Rob Barnett thought the complete 5-CD set from which these two albums are taken 'resoundingly successful' – [review](#) – and I'm not about to argue with that assessment, except to note that the set is currently out of stock from some dealers in the UK.

Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)

*Dona Nobis Pacem*¹ (with reduced orchestration by **Jonathan RATHBONE b.1957**) [32:45]

Leonard BERNSTEIN (1918-1990)

*Chichester Psalms*² [18:30]

Stephen PAULUS (1949-2014)

The Road Home [3:31]

Ailish Tynan (soprano), Roderick Williams (baritone), Henry Websdale (organ)¹

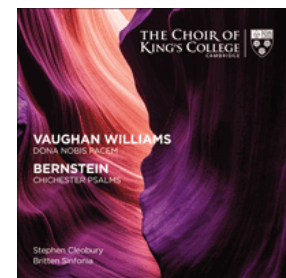
George Hill (treble), Helen Sharp (harp), Joby Burgess (percussion), Richard Gowers (organ)²

The Choir of King's College Cambridge

Britten Sinfonia/Stephen Cleobury

rec. January, April and June 2017. DSD. Texts and translations included

KINGS COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE KGS0021 SACD [54:46] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. Also available in 16-bit and 24/192 formats.



SACD available from



Although the Bernstein *Chichester Psalms* recording is the prime *raison d'être* of this recording, foreshadowing the Bernstein 100 celebrations in 2018, *Dona nobis pacem*, which opens the

proceedings, takes up more than half the space. The King's performance doesn't totally efface the classic Richard Hickox, with Bryn Terfel, Yvonne Kenney and Philip Langridge. Not only is that performance first-class, the coupling (more VW – *Sancta Civitas*) is more logical and the CD is available at super-budget price: you should find it for under £6. (**7477882**).

That said, however, and though I approached with some trepidation the reduced orchestration on the King's release – better matching the size of the choir – I very much enjoyed the new recording. Good as the Warner is for Hickox, too, the new recording comes on SACD and in download formats up to 24/192. Even the latter is very competitively priced at £11.40, amply compensating for the rather short playing time. (16-bit and 24/96 at £6.50 and £9.75).

In the *Chichester Psalms*, too, competition comes on a budget-price release, from Bernstein-mentored Marin Alsop, on Naxos **8.559177** (with *On the Waterfront* and *On the Town*). Bernstein's own DG recording is also available at mid-price, coupled with authoritative performances of Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 (Originals **4577572**). Once again, however, King's offer a very competitive and powerful performance, very well recorded. If you like the coupling, don't hesitate. The short *Road Home* offers an interesting bonus, which may be available on the download only.

DISCOVERY OF THE MONTH

British Violin Concertos

Paul PATTERSON (b.1947) Violin Concerto No.2 ('Serenade') (2013)* [21:57]

Kenneth LEIGHTON (1929–1988) Concerto for violin and small orchestra, Op.12 (1952) [24:10]

Gordon JACOB (1895–1984) Concerto for violin and string orchestra (1953) [21:37]

Clare Howick (violin) (* dedicatee)

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Grant Llewellyn

World premiere recordings © BBC and Clare Howick.

rec. 5–7 June 2017, City Halls, Glasgow. DDD.

NAXOS 8.573791 [67:44] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.



CD available from



For once, there's no need for detailed comparisons: these are all premiere recordings, © BBC and dedicatee Clare Howick and licensed to Naxos. It's a very successful combination and I hope to see more such in future releases.

Lovers of the British violin concerto repertoire would not be advised to start here – there's a superb bargain 4-CD set from Lyrita of *British String Concertos* (**SRCD2346** – [review](#) – [review](#) – [review](#): **Bargain of the Month DL News 2014/15**)¹ – but more established collectors should snap up this new Naxos release. Only recently Stuart Sillitoe was praising Clare Howick in an album of British Violin Sonatas, with John Paul Elkins – [review](#). I haven't yet heard that, but I can echo SS's words of praise for the new release.

¹ Normally around £18 but on offer from one dealer as I write for £13.50

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Ovod (The Gadfly), Op. 97 (1955 score reconstructed by Mark Fitz-Gerald) [47:11]

Vstrechniy (Counterplan), Op. 33 (excerpts) (1932) [9:18]

Bachchor Mainz/Ralf Otto

Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz/Mark Fitz-Gerald

rec. 2017, Philharmonie, Ludwigshafen

Premiere complete recording

NAXOS FILM MUSIC CLASSICS 8.573747 [61:47] Reviewed as a 24/48 download, with pdf booklet, from [eClassical](#)



CD available from



This is the latest instalment in the Naxos/Fitz-Gerald series devoted to complete Shostakovich film scores. Bob Briggs signed off his review of [Odná](#) (Alone) as follows: ‘This is the real thing, and it was worth the wait. Recording and notes are superb.’ William Kreindler was just as complimentary about [Podruqi](#) (The Girlfriends), and Nick Barnard declared [Novyy Vavilon](#) (The New Babylon) ‘one of Naxos’s finest all-round achievements’. Having heard and admired all three albums, I’m happy to endorse those sentiments and applaud Mark Fitz-Gerald for his invaluable scholarship in this field.

The 1955 film of *The Gadfly*, based on Ethel Lilian Voynich’s novel of the same name, did very well at the Soviet box office. Not surprising, perhaps, as its theme of Italian resistance to Austrian invaders is not without historical resonance. The subtext concerns a young idealist who becomes a hard-bitten revolutionary (the eponymous Gadfly). Until Fitz-Gerald’s reconstruction of the full score we’ve had to make do with the Op. 97a suite. There are many fine versions of the latter, not least a most refreshing one on a CuGate collection called [From the Movies](#).

As always with these film scores, one has to be prepared for a degree of ‘bittiness’, for extended highs – cue the suite – and some fleeting lows. This *Gadfly* is no exception, the familiar excerpts positively leaping out of the mix. Compared with *Alone*, which I know reasonably well, this score seems less punchy and propulsive, a feeling reinforced by rather average sound and, perhaps, the occasional sense of an orchestra not entirely comfortable with the material. Don’t get me wrong, this is an assured and entertaining pastiche, that includes a rather fetching little interlude called ‘Guitars’ and the *Dona nobis pacem* from Bach’s *Mass in B minor*. Ever the scholar, Fitz-Gerald appends two items that were excluded from the final soundtrack.

Anyone familiar with earlier albums in the series will know there’s room for some additional fragments/curiosities. In this case, it’s excerpts from the score for *Vstrechniy* (Counterplan), a 1932 propaganda flick about industrial sabotage. As ever, Shostakovich transcends the banalities of plot with some pretty decent music; there’s a pleasing little *Presto* – swoony harp included – and the *Andante* is wistfully done. The final item, the so-called ‘Song of the Counterplan’, was not only a hit at the time but also found its way into a French Socialist song of the period. John Leman Riley’s notes and cued synopses complete the package.

Not the best in the series, perhaps, but still worth hearing; a tad lo-fi for hi-res, though. [DM]

BW is preparing to review this in the next edition.

Mieczysław WEINBERG (1919-1996)

Suite for Orchestra (1950) (world premiere recording) [19:08]
 Symphony No. 17 'Memory', Op.137 (1982-84) [45:41]
 Siberian State Symphony Orchestra (Krasnoyarsk)/Vladimir Lande
 rec. Krasnoyarsk Philharmonic Great Hall, Krasnoyarsk City, Russia, 7-14 July
 2015. DDD

NAXOS 8.573565 [64:49] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. See [review](#) with CD purchase links by Rob Barnett.



I was fooled by hearing the third movement of the Suite on the radio into thinking it an undiscovered addition to one of Shostakovich's Jazz Suites. Of course, Weinberg and Shostakovich were friends and admired each other's music, so the similarity is easily explained. The work as a whole makes an easy-going introduction to the recording of the first of Weinberg's powerful trilogy of 'war' symphonies: I've already reviewed the other two, No.18 (Naxos **8.573190**, with Trumpet Concerto – [DL News 2014/8](#)) and No.19 (**8.572752**, with *The Banners of Peace* – [DL News 2012/23](#)).

Ignore the defunct classicsonline links in those reviews: both albums are now available in lossless sound from eclassical.com. They also offer – [here](#) – Symphony No.12, *In Memoriam Dmitri Shostakovich* (1976) and *The Golden Key* ballet suite No.4 (1954-55) (**8.573085**), Lande conducting again but with the St Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra – [reviews](#) – [reviews](#).

Those who mourn the disappearance of Vladimir Fedoseyev's Weinberg recordings along with much other valuable material on the Olympia label, will find his later Vienna Symphony recordings on the NEOS label at Naxos Music Library: Symphony No.17, dedicated to conductor Fedoseyev is on **NEOS11126** – [here](#), with pdf booklet.

Classic Overtures

Carl Maria von WEBER (1786-1826)

Der Freischütz Overture, Op.77 [9:01]
 Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/Ernest Ansermet – rec. c.1958. ADD stereo

Nikolai RIMSKY-KORSAKOV (1844-1908)

Russian Easter Festival Overture, Op.36 [14:38]
 Orchestre de la Suisse Romande/Ernest Ansermet – rec.c.1957. ADD

Hector BERLIOZ (1803-1869)

Benvenuto Cellini Overture, Op. 25 [10:08]
 Berlin Philharmonic/Paul van Kempen – rec. c.1951. ADD

Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-1847)

Ruy Blas Overture, Op.95 [7:42]
 Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/Ferdinand Leitner – rec. c.1954 ADD

Gioachino ROSSINI (1792-1868)

William Tell Overture [11:32]
 London Symphony Orchestra/Piero Gamba – rec. c.1956. ADD.

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Fidelio Overture, Op.72b [7:08]
 Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra/André Cluytens – rec. 1961. ADD

Pyotr Il'yich TCHAKOVSKY (1840-1893)

1812 Overture, Op.49
 London Symphony Orchestra, Band of the Grenadier Guards/Kenneth Alwyn – rec. c.1957. ADD stereo.
BEULAH 3PDR5 [75:08] Available from iTunes but watch the [Beulah website](#) for availability in lossless sound for the same price from Qobuz.



The Ansermet items are particularly recommendable. My only reservation is their availability elsewhere: everything on the Eloquence 2-CD set of his Rimsky-Korsakov is so desirable, with the

possible exception of *Antar*, something of an acquired taste, that it's well worth having at mid-price (**4800827**). If you are not tempted by that, however, the Beulah is more than a very good second-best, especially as the *Russian Easter Festival Overture* is my favourite Rimsky work.

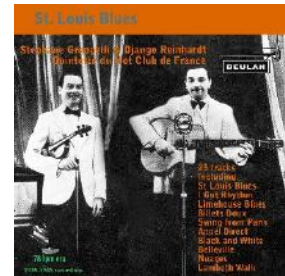
Piero Gamba's Rossini Overtures were also a classic of their time and they too can be found complete on a mid-price Eloquence twofer, with other Romantic Overtures (**4803899**). Once again, however, Beulah's offering of this lively account *William Tell* is very enjoyable in its own right.

Several of these were Decca demonstration-quality in their day and they still sound well in these transfers. Only the Mercury Antal Doráti *1812* brings out bigger guns than this Kenneth Alwyn recording – shades of those Sunday evening concerts with live cannon blackening the Albert Hall.

Cluytens' Beethoven is always worth hearing, too. That's five strong recommendations, then, with some other attractive recordings thrown in. All the transfers sound good or very good for their age.

JAZZ REISSUE OF THE MONTH

Stéphane Grappelli (violin) and **Django Reinhardt** (guitar) made a number of recordings with the Quintet of the Hot Club de France between 1935 and 1946 and some of these have been gathered with the title *St Louis Blues* on a **BEULAH** release, **1PS22** [69:49]. It's available in mp3 but the best download is in lossless sound, as reviewed from a press preview, from [Qobuz](#) for the same price (£7.99). The contents of this self-recommending and highly enjoyable album are:



St. Louis Blues [3:31]; I Got Rhythm [2:59]; I Found a New Baby [3:06]; It Was So Beautiful [2:53]; China Boy [3:04]; Moonglow [3:04]; Limehouse Blues [3:14]; It Don't Mean a Thing [3:06]; *Billets Doux* [2:57]; Swing from Paris [2:34]; Them There Eyes [3:04]; Three Little Words [2:55]; Appel Direct [3:01]; Swing 39 [3:20]; Honeysuckle Rose [2:56]; Night and Day [2:44]

Only the classic parody of Nazi stormtroopers marching on a doctored film to the *Lambeth Walk* is more enjoyable than the performance of that work on the final track. The 78s transfers have come up sounding very well.

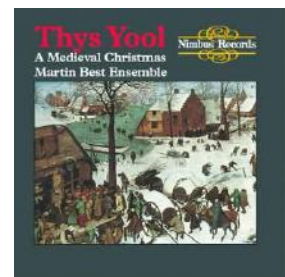
Having enjoyed this selection, why not move on to Stéphane Grappelli's equally enjoyable later recordings with Yehudi Menuhin, available in various formats, including a budget-price twofer on Warner **5862302** and a 4-CD set **6985302**.



CHRISTMAS REISSUE OF THE MONTH

Thys Yool: A Medieval Christmas

Personent Hodie [2:02]
 Judas and Wenceslas [1:31]
Hyer Matin [5:07]
 Miri it is while sumer ilast [1:52]
 Man mei longe lives weene [5:26]
 Thys Yool [1:03]



Tapster, drynker [1:15]
Ja pour hyver [4:27]
 Gabriel from Heven-King [2:26]
 Song of the Nuns of Chester [3:11]
 Hail Mary full of grace [4:11]
 As I lay on Yoolis Night [3:39]
 Edi be thu [2:09]

Perperit Virgo [2:49]
O Virgo Splendens [2:20]
Loor de Santa Maria [1:56]
Polorum Regina [2:57]
Mariam Matrem [2:02]
 I pray you all [2:09]
 Ther is no rose [4:42]
Caligo Terræ scinditur [2:01]
Princeps Pacis [3:13]
Mors vitæ propitia [1:17]

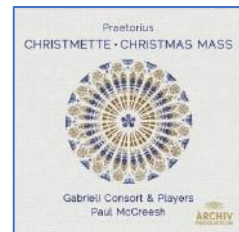
Martin Best Ensemble [Martin Best (voice, lute, psaltery), Lucie Skeaping (voice, rebecs, fidele), David Corkhill (dulcimer, drums, bells), Jeremy Barlow (pipes, recorders, transverse flute), Donna Deam (soprano), Kristine Szulik (alto), Angus Smith (tenor)]

rec. Wyastone Leys, May 1988. DDD

Translations included but not original texts

NIMBUS NI7103 [64:07] First released as **NI5137**. Reviewed as lossless press preview. For CD purchase details with 10% discount, please see [review](#).

I have owned this CD for some time and [reviewed](#) it nine years ago. It remains available with the original catalogue number as well as the reboot. Of a large pile of Christmas CDs, not everything gets played every year, but this always makes the cut, along with Prætorius' Christmas Mass performed by Paul McCreesh and his Gabrieli Consort in Roskilde Cathedral on DG **4791757** – mid-price – or **4399312**, download only, budget price, no booklet. ([Review](#) of earlier release.)



If you're tired of the same old same old, *Thys Yool* will certainly take you away from the familiar: only a few of the works, such as the opening *Personent Hodie*, are at all well known. Several of the tracks offer lyrics likely to be known only to those who have dug deep into anthologies such as Carleton Brown's three Middle English lyric collections. Normally I object to attempts to pronounce late 15th and 16th-century English texts – it usually comes out sounding like Mummerset and it's only a guess – but the words here precede the Great Vowel Shift, so it's safe to reproduce the original pronunciation.

One *caveat*: translations are included, but not the Middle English, Latin and French texts – some of these can be found online. Otherwise, with the Brueghel cover the icing on the Christmas cake – not that there was any such thing in the middle ages – this is strongly recommended.



The King's Singers Christmas Presence

Anonymous – liturgical: *Hodie Christus natus est* [2:19]
Orlande de LASSUS (1530/32-1594) *Resonet in laudibus* [3:43]
Michael PRAETORIUS (1571-1621) *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*, SWV163 [2:35]
William BYRD (1539/40-1623) *Beata viscera* [2:08]
Jan Pieterszoon SWEELINCK (1562-1621) *Hodie Christus*

natus est [3:39]

Francis POULENC (1899-1963) No.1: *Quatre motets pour le temps de Noël*, FP152: *O magnum mysterium* [3:10]

No.2: *Quem vidistis pastores dicite* [2:48]

No.4 *Hodie Christus natus est* [2:16]

Herbert HOWELLS (1892-1983) Three Carol-Anthems No.2: *A Spotless Rose* [3:00]

No.1: *Here is the little door* [3:21]

No.3: *Sing lullaby* [3:08]



Clive SMITH (b.1950) I saw three ships [3:15]

Anonymous - traditional, arr. **Geoffrey KEATING (b?)** God rest you merry, gentlemen [2:53]

Ariel RAMÍREZ (1921-2010), arr. **Peter KNIGHT (1917-1985)** *La peregrinación: A la huella, a la huella, José y María* [3:14]

Melvin Howard TORMÉ (1925-1999) and **Robert WELLS (1922-1998)**, arr. **Peter KNIGHT** The Christmas song: All the folk we love and me ... Chestnuts roasting on an open fire [3:24]

Anonymous - traditional, arr. **Alexander L'ESTRANGE (b.1974)** Still, still, still [3:23]

James Lord PIERPONT (1822-1893), arr. **Gordon LANGFORD (1930-2017)** Jingle bells [1:39]

Bob CHILCOTT (b.1955) A Thanksgiving: Thanks be to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ [2:54]

with The National Youth Choir of Great Britain

The King's Singers

rec. live Chapel of King's College, Cambridge, 4 December 2015. DDD.

Texts and translations included

SIGNUM SIGCD497 [52:50] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. Stream from Naxos Music Library.

CD available from



Most of you will know by now what to expect from the King's Singers and here it is specially gift-wrapped for Christmas, with the more serious stuff first and the fun items towards the end. It's all done with their usual panache and the download comes at a very reasonable price (£5.99/£9.00 in 16- and 24-bit). Please see also [review](#) by Simon Thompson.

If you like the short Ramírez work on the King's Singers' album, there's more on a worthwhile Naxos release, featuring his Christmas music alongside his better-known Mass settings:



Ariel RAMÍREZ (1921-2010)

Navidad Nuestra (1964) [18:58]

Missa Luba (1958, arr. **Guido HAAZEN**) [15:33]

Misa Criolla (1964) [22:15]

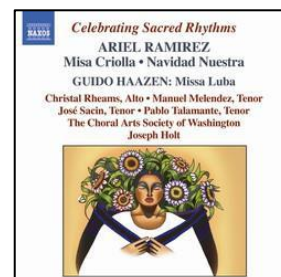
Christal Rheams (alto), Manuel Melendez (tenor), José Sacin (tenor), Pablo Talamante (tenor),

The Choral Arts Society of Washington Instrumental and Percussion/Joseph Holt

rec. July 2004. DDD.

Texts not included – available online.

NAXOS 8.557542 [56:47] Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com and as streamed from Naxos Music Library



CD available from



I'm surprised to see prices being asked for Naxos CDs vary so much now: in this case from just over £6 to £8.20 and \$9.99. Elsewhere I note one on offer for £11. O for the days when they were £3.99 in Woolworths! The download at \$5.68 brings us almost back to those balmy times.



O Holy Night: A Merton Christmas

John RUTTER: All bells in Paradise; Shepherd's pipe carol

Elizabeth POSTON: Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

Felix MENDELSSOHN arr. **David Willocks:** Hark! the herald angels sing

Hector BERLIOZ The Shepherds' Farewell

traditional arr. **David Willocks:** Unto us is born a son

Harold DARKE: In the Bleak Midwinter

Bob CHILCOTT: Shepherd's Carol

Patrick HADLEY: I sing of a maiden

Franz Xaver GRUBER arr. **David Willocks:** Silent Night

Adolphe ADAM arr. **David Willocks:** O Holy Night

traditional English, arr **Arthur Sullivan:** It came upon the midnight clear

Bob CHILCOTT: The Bird of Dawning (premiere recording)

W.J. KIRKPATRICK arr. **David Willocks:** Away in a Manger

traditional German arr. **Robert Lucas de Pearsall:** *In dulci jubilo*

Thomas Hewitt JONES: What child is this?

J F WADE arr. **David Willocks:** O come, all ye faithful

Morten LAURIDSEN: *O magnum mysterium*

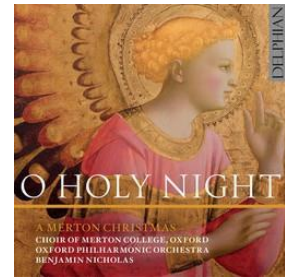
Choir of Merton College Oxford

Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra/Benjamin Nicholas

rec. 27-29 June 2016, Chapel of Merton College, Oxford. DDD.

Texts and translations included

DELPHIAN DCD34192 [68:19] Reviewed as 24-bit download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com



CD available from



Like myself, John Quinn [reviewed](#) this in November – early in the month in his case, two weeks on for me. That's not quite as weird as it must be for choirs to sing Christmas music in mid-summer, late June in this case, especially as the shops have been bedecked with Christmas trees since late September. It won't be long before the whole year is swallowed up by Christmas apart, of course, from the traditional twelve days by which time people have had enough of it.

Having got that grouse off my chest, I must say that, even in early November, like JQ I found myself enjoying the experience from these excellent performances. I know that many 'serious' musicologists turn up their noses at John Rutter's Christmas music, but I'm pleased to see two of his pieces included here. I only recently discovered that he was just 17 when he wrote the words and music of the justly ubiquitous *Shepherd's pipe Carol*. Don't forget the 2012 release *Advent at Merton* (**DCD34122** – [review](#)) and *Christmas with the Shepherds*, recorded by the Marian Consort in Merton chapel (**DCD34145** – [review](#)).



LUX: Music for the Nativity

Arr. **David WILLCOCKS:** Once in Royal David's City

Felix MENDELSSOHN: *Weihnachten*, Op.79/1

Adrian PEACOCK: *Venite, Gaudete!*

Herbert HOWELLS: A Spotless Rose

Arr. **Paul HALLEY:** What Child is This?

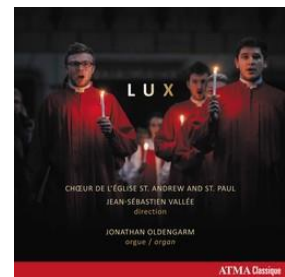
Paul MEALOR: In the Bleak Midwinter

Leo SOWERBY: *Carillon*

Jonathan DOVE: Seek Him that maketh the Seven Stars

Eric WHITACRE: *Lux aurumque*

Arr. **David WILLCOCKS:** Hark! The Herald Angels Sing



Clarence LUCAS: *Pastorale*

Arr. **Donald PATRIQUIN:** *Venez mes enfants*

Will TODD: *My Lord Has Come*

Morten LAURIDSEN: *O magnum mysterium*

Arr. **David WILLCOCKS:** *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Charles QUEF: *Noel parisien, Op.26/4*

Sigfrid KARG-ELERT: *Choral-Improvisation on 'In dulci jubilo'*

Choir of the St. Andrew and St. Paul Church/ Jean-Sébastien Vallée

Jonathan Oldengarm (organ)

rec. 28-30 April, St. Andrew and St. Paul Church, Montreal, Québec, Canada. DDD.

Texts not included

ATMA CLASSIQUE ACD22771 [77:07] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



A mixture of the familiar and less familiar, including some works completely unknown to me: The performances are accomplished and enjoyable – they are all that you would expect from a good Anglican/Episcopal choir, as I presume this Canadian group to be. The 24-bit recording very good, but the lack of texts, where not all of these are well known, is a serious penny-pinching omission.



Riemuitkaamme! (Let us rejoice) - A Finnish Christmas

J. S. BACH / NICOLAI *Wachet auf - Synkkä yö maa npeitti aivan*

Jean SIBELIUS *En etsi valtaa, loistoa* (Give me no splendour) (arr. **Ossi ELOKAS**)

Leevi MADETOJA *Arkihuolesi kaikki heitä* (Throw off all your daily cares)

J. S. BACH (PRÆTORIUS / SCHEIDT / BUXTEHUDE / SCHEIN)

Puer natus in Bethlehem / Synnytti piltin Bethlehem (Piae Cantiones)

Taneli KUUSISTO *Pastorale for organ solo*

Hector BERLIOZ *Paimenten jäähyväiset pyhälle perheelle* (Shepherds' Farewell)

Armas MAASALO *Joulun kellot* (Christmas Bells)

Jean SIBELIUS *Ecce novum gaudium* (Piae Cantiones)

Jean SIBELIUS *Angelus emittitur / Enkel' alas liihottaa* (Piae Cantiones)

Jean SIBELIUS *On lapsosen syntynyt meille*

Matthew WHITTALL *Aattoilta* (Christmas Eve)

J. S. BACH (PRÆTORIUS / HASSLER / OTHMAYR / REGER) *Enkeli taivaan lausui näin (Vom Himmel hoch)*

Eionjuhani RAUTAVAARA *Christmas Carol*

Ahti SONNINEN *Jouluhymni* (Christmas Hymn)

Arvi KARVONEN *Pastorale for organ solo*

Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY *Jeesuslapsen tarhassa* (Christ, when a child, a garden made)

Traditional – Folk Song from Silesia *Maa on niin kaunis* (Glorious is the Earth)

Jan Lehtola (organ)

Helsinki Chamber Choir/Nils Schweckendiek

rec. November 2016, Paavalinkirkko (St Paul's Church), Helsinki, Finland. DSD.

Texts and translations included

BIS-2322 SACD [73:50] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com

CD available from



It may seem odd to be recommending a Christmas album almost entirely sung in Finnish – surely the hardest European language to master, apart from its cousin, Estonian, and their distant relative, Hungarian – when most of the texts are better known in other languages. Even those sung in the original Latin also have stanzas in Finnish. In the event, however, I found this to be a charming compilation and didn't notice the language transposition: after all, the Berlioz item is usually sung in English in the UK and US and the *Piæ Cantiones*, from which much seasonal music is derived, seems to have been collected in Sweden and Finland¹.

This is just the thing to relax to after a hectic day's Christmas shopping, though I must admit that when my better three-quarters dashes round our local shopping mall I usually spend the time spinning out a large cappuccino and inspecting the new books in Waterstones. The organ interludes add to the attraction of this release. Interesting notes, but I would have liked to have seen the organ specification included.

¹ Edited by a Finn, whose name was Latinised as Jacobus Finno, first published in Greifswald, then part of Sweden (1582) and translated into Finnish in 1616. English translations of some of the hymns by JM Neale are well known – not least *Good King Wenceslas*, a made-up legend about the saint set to what was originally a Spring song.



Lo, how a rose e'er blooming - Music for Christmas
J.F. WADE (c.1711-1786) arr. David WILLCOCKS O come, all ye faithful
William BYRD (c.1540-1623) *Hodie Christus natus est*
 From the *Pageant of the Shearman and Tailors* arr. **Martin SHAW (1875-1958)** Coventry Carol
King HENRY VIII (1491-1547) Pastime with good company
Thomas TALLIS (1505-85) *O nata lux*



From *Musae Sioniae* (1609) harm. **Michael PRÆTORIUS (1571-1621)** *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*
Christopher TYE (c.1505-1573) *Laudate nomen Domini*
 English traditional, adapted **Arthur SULLIVAN (1842-1900)** and **David WILLCOCKS** It came upon a midnight clear
Gustav HOLST (1874-1934) In the bleak mid-winter
 Normandy Traditional arr. **Reginald JACQUES (1894-1969)** Away in a manger
 Traditional Basque Carol arr. **Edgar PETTMAN (1866-1943)** Gabriel's Message
Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893) Crown of Roses
 English Traditional arr. **Ralph VAUGHAN WILLIAMS (1872-1958)** and **Thomas ARMSTRONG (1898-1994)** O little town of Bethlehem
Kenneth LEIGHTON (1929-88) The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap
Richard MADDEN (b. 1953) Balulalow
Thomas Hewitt JONES (b. 1984) Lullay, my liking
Richard Rodney BENNETT (1936-2012) Out of your sleep
Matthew COLERIDGE Corpus Christi Carol
Peter WARLOCK (1894-1930) arr. **Richard PINEL (b. 1984)** Adam lay ybounden
 From *Piæ Cantiones* (1582) arr. **David WILLCOCKS** Of the Father's heart begotten
 English Traditional arr. **Simon WHITELEY (b. 1983)** God rest you merry, gentlemen
Jule STYNE (1905-94) arr. **Jonathan DARBOURNE** Let it snow
James Lord PIERPOINT (1822-93) arr. **Keith ROBERTS** Jingle Bells
Franz GRUBER (1787-1863) arr. **Keith ROBERTS** Silent Night
Felix MENDELSSOHN (1809-47) arr. **David WILLCOCKS** Hark! the herald-angels sing
 The Queen's Six [Daniel Brittain, Timothy Carleston (countertenor); Nicholas Madden, Dominic Bland (tenor); Andrew Thompson (baritone); Simon Whiteley (bass)] with
 Richard Pinel (organ)

rec. Ascot Priory, 8-10 September 2015 and St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 10 September 2015. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

RESONUS RES10204 [72:01] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

CD available from



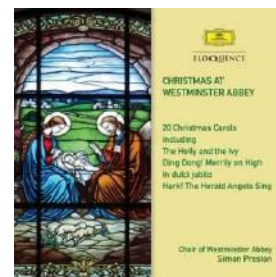
This is the third appearance of Queen's Six, lay clerks at St George's Windsor, on Resonus: the earlier albums *Music of the Realm: Tudor Music for Men's Voices* (**RES10146** – [DL News 2015/3](#)) and *Her Heavenly Harmony: Profane Music from the Royal Court* (**RES10164** [62:07]) were well received; though we seem to have missed the latter, it received appreciative reviews elsewhere. Fortunately, I was able to catch up with the omission via eclassical.com, with pdf booklet. It's a collection of music by **MORLEY, TOMKINS, WELKES, GIBBONS, TALLIS** and **BYRD**, combining the familiar and (mainly) the unfamiliar in fine performances.



On the new Christmas recording, too, though there's more familiar fare than not, a few less well-known items add to the appeal. On both albums, too, the singing is very accomplished. Don't expect fireworks or the more overt appeal of the King's Singers; just enjoy. The recording, too, is also undemonstratively excellent. Best of all it reminds me that every day during Advent 2017 eclassical.com are offering four albums from the BIS, Harmonia Mundi, Signum and Resonus stables at a 50% discount.



Christmas from Westminster Abbey, on which the Abbey choir was directed by Simon Preston in 1984, with Christopher Herrick (organ), has been available before on DG Masters. Now it reappears from Australian DG Eloquence **4828564**. The mix of familiar and unfamiliar in very fine performances is well worth having. Try track 11, **HAMMERSCHMIDT's Alleluja! Freuet euch, ihr Christen Alle!** for an example of unfamiliar repertoire and of the vitality of these performances.



these performances.

CD available from



The earlier DG release can be streamed from Naxos Music Library.



In January 2018 Naxos are due to release an album of music by contemporary Norwegian composer **Kim André ARNESEN** (**8.573788**). As a Christmas taster, one item from the programme, his beautiful *Cradle Hymn* [6:20] set to words by Isaac Watts, has been released as a single download by eclassical.com for just \$0.63 (**950182**). The singers are Kantorei, directed by Joel Rinsema, with Alicia Rigsby (piano).



If you prefer to hear *Cradle Hymn* in the context of a longer programme, try ***Celebration of Christmas – Holy Night*** from Brigham Young University Singers, Men's Chorus, Concert Choir, Women's Chorus and Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Crane, Jean Applonie, Rosalind Hall and Kory Katseanes, on their own BYU label, released in 2016 (**YCD0516HLN**). Stream from Naxos Music Library with pdf



booklet. It's a rather syrupy and mostly predictable collection, with some rather fruity singing, but, whereas Karajan and the BPO (below) swamp their baroque Christmas collection, the music on this album can take it, even *Joy to the World*, which American collections persist in ascribing to Handel: it's a stirring setting of uplifting words by Isaac Watts, but if Handel had any part in the tune, known as 'Antioch', it must have been to run through on stilts. The only source that I can find for the CD in the UK is asking an unfeasible £87, so it's streaming only.

Berlin Philharmoniker: The Christmas Album 2



This one comes with a dire warning: it's a reissue of an LP that I was once foolish enough to buy, with a shiny tinselly cover, looking very inviting and containing performances of Christmas concertos by baroque composers. There's **CORELLI's** Op.6/8, *fatto per una notte di Natale*, and similar works by **LOCATELLI**, **TORELLI** and **VIVALDI**, to which have been added for this release music by **BACH** and **PACHELBEL**, 77:57 in all. The problem is that it has all been given the over-



plush Herbert von Karajan treatment and the original music has drowned in the process. Some of the tempi are over-ponderous, too. Definitely not recommended, so I won't even give a purchase link, though an earlier reissue¹ of most of the contents can be found to download for as little as £3.96.

¹ It's been much reissued, though none the better for that.