

Second Thoughts and Short Reviews: Spring 2017: Part 1
by Brian Wilson

This is another catch-up exercise after unforeseen circumstances have slowed proceedings. Dan Morgan has promised some reviews for Part 2.

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Azahar: Music by **Alfonso**, **Machaut**, **Stravinsky** and **Ohana**_La Tempête_Alpha

Catharsis: Baroque Opera Arias_Sabata_Aparté

Azahar

ALFONSO el Sabio (1221-1284) *Cantigas* 100, 76, 256, 212, 10 and 100 (repeated)

Guillaume de MACHAUT (c.1300-1377) *Messe de Notre Dame* (1360-65)

Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971) *Mass* (1948)

Maurice OHANA (1914-1992) *Cantiga de los Reyes Magos, Cantiga de vela, Cantiga del azahar, Cantiga de la noche santa, Cantiga del nacimiento*

La Tempête/Simon-Pierre Bestion

rec. 6-9 March 2016, Église Notre Dame du Liban, Paris

Texts and translations included

ALPHA ALPHA261 [82:29] Reviewed as 24/88.2 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com.

Subscribers stream from Naxos Music Library. CD from Amazon UK – Presto



The title of this CD won't tell you much about it, even if you know that *Azahar* means citrus blossom, usually orange blossom. *Virgen del azahar*, virgin of the orange blossom, is the opening of one of the *Cantigas*, a set of poems in medieval Gallego, the language of NW Spain, set to music by or at the court of King Alfonso 'the wise' in the thirteenth century and again in the twentieth by Maurice Ohana. Selections from both sets are included in this very mixed programme together with two settings of the Mass similarly separated by centuries, from Guillaume de Machaut and Igor Stravinsky. The Ohana *Cantigas* are otherwise available only on a download-only all-Ohana recording from Warner (**2564613212** – from Presto).

This is not the first pick- and-mix selection which La Tempête have given us: in 2015 Alpha released a recording in which they explored a wide range of settings of music related to their name, itself inspired

by Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (**Alpha 608**). I haven't heard that earlier release and we seem not to have reviewed it on MWI but it was well received elsewhere. In theory such anthologies of music from very different periods shouldn't work but these performances and the recording make a good case for doing so. My only reservation is that I don't like to have the sections of Machaut's and Stravinsky's Mass settings scattered around the programme in this way. Those who object to overt instrumental accompaniment in the Machaut Mass may well be put off by the very plush treatment accorded to the closing *Ite missa est*; I thought it a good way to end the work but try it first (track 10).

William BYRD (1540-1623) O Lord, make thy servant, Elizabeth our Queen [2:50]

Benjamin BRITTEN (1913-1976) Hymn of St Columba [2:07]

William BYRD *Nunc dimittis* [6:37]

Benjamin BRITTEN *Jubilate Deo* [2:21]

William BYRD *Ave verum corpus* [3:53]; *Laudibus in sanctis* [5:02]

Benjamin BRITTEN Hymn to St Peter [5:43]

William BYRD Praise our Lord all ye gentiles [2:32]

Benjamin BRITTEN Antiphon [5:58]

William BYRD The Queen's Alman [3:26]

Benjamin BRITTEN *Missa Brevis*, Op.63 [10:20]

William BYRD *Quomodo cantabimus* [8:07]

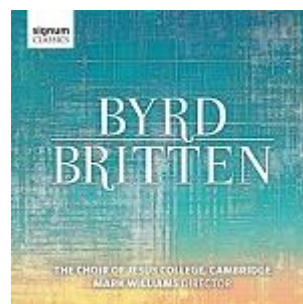
Benjamin BRITTEN *Te Deum* in C [8:10]

Bertie Baigent, Jordan Wong (organ); College and Chapel Choirs of Jesus College, Cambridge/Mark Williams

rec. Chapel of Jesus College, Cambridge, 27-30 June 2016. DDD.

Texts and translations included

SIGNUM SIGCD481 [67:09] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. CD from Amazon UK – ArkivMusic – Presto



Vigilate! English Renaissance Polyphony

Peter PHILIPS (1560/1-1628) *Ecce vicit Leo* [2:24]

Robert WHITE (c.1538-1574) *Christe qui lux es et dies* [3:38]

Thomas TALLIS (c.1505-1585) *Suscipe quaeso Domine* [10:09]; *O nata lux de lumine* [1:46]

William BYRD (1539/40-1623) *Laudibus in sanctis* [3:06]; *Civitas sancti tui* [5:27]; *Turn our captivity, O Lord* [4:19]; *Nunc dimittis* [8:43]; *Vigilate* [4:08]

Thomas MORLEY (1557/8-1602) *Nolo mortem peccatoris* [2:52]

Robert WHITE Lamentations a6 [19:28]

William BYRD *Iustorum animæ* [3:18]

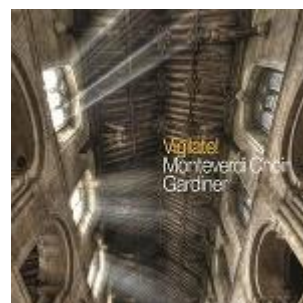
Thomas TOMKINS (1572-1656) Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom [7:12]

Monteverdi Choir/John Eliot Gardiner

rec. St Giles' Cripplegate, London, June 2013. DDD

Texts and translations included.

SOLI DEO GLORIA SDG720 [77:30] Reviewed as 24/48 download with pdf booklet from hyperion-records.co.uk. CD from Amazon UK – ArkivMusic – Presto



John Quinn [recommended](#) the **SDG** recording in 2014 but I've included it here because it covers some of the same ground as the newer Signum: on SDG the music of composers of a Catholic disposition who came to terms with the Elizabethan religious settlement in different ways and on Signum one of those composers and a twentieth-century successor whose 'otherness' manifested itself not only in his Catholicism but in his sexual orientation, the former at odds with the norm and the latter at odds also with the religious beliefs which otherwise defined him. The programme includes music from both for the Anglican rite alongside works intended for Roman Catholic consumption.

The Byrd-Britten pairing is especially interesting, featuring fine performances of two composers whose music goes very well together. Separate recordings of either composer may be preferable – for Byrd the 2-CD budget-price Tallis Scholars recording offers the best introduction (**CDGIM208**)* – but I enjoyed the Signum recording.

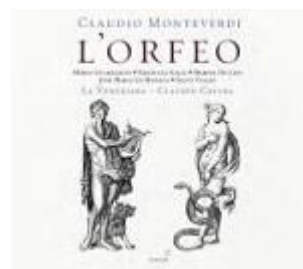
My other reason for including the SDG is to draw attention to the availability now of the full catalogue from that label as lossless downloads from Hyperion, including Sir John Eliot Gardiner's complete Bach Cantata cycle with better quality booklets than from any other download site that I know and at reasonable prices. They also offer his very fine new recording of the St Matthew Passion (**SDG725** – [review](#) – [review](#)).

* another excellent introduction, the three Masses on one former Regis super-budget CD from Christ Church Choir, Oxford – [review](#) – is no longer a bargain, with Amazon UK currently asking over £23 as I write.

Claudio MONTEVERDI (1567-1643) *L'Orfeo*

Emanuela Galli – La Musica/Euridice; Mirko Guadagnini – Orfeo; Marina De Liso – Messaggiera; Cristina Calzolari – Proserpina; Matteo Bellotto – Plutone; Josè Maria Lo Monaco – Speranza; Salvo Vitale – Caronte; Vincenzo Di Donato – Apollo
La Venexiana/Claudio Cavina – rec. San Carlo Church, Modena, Italy, February 2006

GLOSSA GCD920941 [52:34 + 62:18]



Reviewing a recording of Orfeo directed by Andrew Parrott (**AV2278** – [review](#)) I recommended this Glossa release in an earlier incarnation as the version to choose for those looking for a more refined approach but that doesn't mean that it's too laid-back, as Simon Thompson reminds us in his [review](#) of the reissue, where purchase links can also be found.

One small point: ST refers to the availability of the reissue at lower mid-price but I haven't been able to find it for less than £19.50/\$29.99, except as a limited special offer. If you are looking for a real bargain and are prepared to download [7digital.com](#) are offering Sergio Vartolo's Brilliant Classics recordings of all three extant Monteverdi operas, *L'Orfeo*, *Poppea* and *Ulisse*, for £8.99 (mp3) or £11.99 (lossless), albeit without any booklet. If you can still find any of these Vartolo recordings on disc – only *L'Orfeo* seems to be generally on offer, for around £8 – the scholarly booklets would be models even at full price but the download represents wonderful value even without them: it would be worth having for *Ulisse* alone, of which it's one of my favourite recordings.

Dario CASTELLO (c.1590-c.1658)

Sonate concertate in stil moderno, Book I (Venice, 1621)

Sonata prima for two violins [5:01]

Sonata seconda for two violins [5:38]

Sonata terza for violin I and cornetto [4:47]

Sonata quarta for violin I and violetta [4:18]

Sonata quinta for violin II and trombone [5:22]

Sonata sesta for cornetto and violetta [4:51]

Sonata settima for violin I and dulcian [5:19]

Sonata ottava for violin II and dulcian [5:20]

Sonata nona for cornetto, violin I and dulcian [6:40]

Sonata decima for two violins and dulcian [4:43]

Sonata undecima for two violins and dulcian [7:27]

Sonata duodecima for two violins and trombone [7:44]

Academy of Ancient Music/Richard Egarr (harpsichord and organ)



AAM RECORDINGS AAM005 [68:32] Reviewed as 24/96 download from eclassical.com and as streamed from Naxos Music Library (both with pdf booklet). CD from Amazon UK – ArkivMusic – Presto

This is the only generally available complete recording of the first book of these striking and often challenging sonatas though an earlier recording by Ensemble Alraune on the Musica Novantiqua label can be streamed or downloaded. I haven't heard that but there's no need to chase it up when the new AAM recording is so good.

A CPO recording of Book II was very favourably received by Jan van Veen recently – [Recording of the Month: review](#) – and there's an ECM recording of Sonatas from both books together with music by Fontana (**4764641**, John Holloway [violin], Jane Gower [dulcian] and Lars Ulrik Mortensen [harpichord]). One sonata from each book features on a recording on the Flora label (**FLO3415**: *La Suave Melodia* with music by Andrea Falconieri, Giovanni Gabrieli, etc., performed by Harmonia Lenis and Les Timbres, download only – available from eclassical.com, 16- and 24-bit, NO booklet). A Hyperion Helios reissue is devoted half to Castello – mostly from Book II – and half to Giovanni Picchi (**CDH55320**: *Bargain of the Month* – [review](#)). Download in mp3 or lossless sound or CD for £6.50 from hyperion-records.co.uk. *The Contest of Apollo and Pan*, containing sonatas by Castello and other 17th and 18th century composers (**CHAN0756**, five sonatas from Book II – [review](#)) is download only.

The very detailed and highly informative AAM set of notes somehow manages not to give Castello's dates. They do, however, remind us that very little is known about this shadowy figure and mention the conspiracy theories that have been promulgated, including the idea that the name was a cover for Monteverdi.

Antonio CESTI (1623 – 1669) *L'Oronthea* (1656) (ed Á Torrente)

Paula Murrihy – Oronthea; Sebastian Geyer – Creonte; Juanita Lascarro – Tibriño, Amore; Guy de Mey – Aristeia; Xavier Sabata – Alidoro; Simon Bailey – Gelone; Matthias Rexroth – Corindo; Louise Alder – Silandra; Kateryna Kasper – Giacinta; Katharina Magiera – Filosofia
Frankfurter Opern- und Museumsorchester; Monteverdi-Continuo-Ensemble/Ivor Bolton

rec. live Frankfurt Opera, February-March 2015.

Synopsis, text and translation included.

OEHMS OC965 [62:18 + 55:15 + 58:20] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. Subscribers stream from Naxos Music Library. CD from Amazon UK – ArkivMusic – Presto



One of the most successful operas ever before it faded from the scene, *Oronthea* is now almost unknown except on recital recordings*. The style will be familiar to anyone who knows Cavalli's comico-serious operas such as *La Calisto*. A very fine earlier (1982) complete recording directed by René Jacobs is now download only (Harmonia Mundi **HMC901100/02**: from Presto, mp3 or lossless, NO booklet). Written for the Habsburg Court at Carnival, the action is both comic and erotic – ideally one needs to see the action, which leads me to hope that Oehms will also release this on DVD/blu-ray, as they often do.

Though the Frankfurt Opera Orchestra is leavened with the period-instrument players of Monteverdi-Continuo-Ensemble, the overall instrumental sound is a good deal heavier than that of Concerto Vocale on the Harmonia Mundi; not unduly so, however. With mostly very fine singing, too, and good recording – just a few extraneous noises to remind us of its live provenance – I enjoyed this romp. At \$48.15, however, the 24-bit download is rather expensive – the 16-bit is a more reasonable \$32.10, but those happy with 16-bit sound will find the Jacobs download, which I still marginally prefer, available for much less**, albeit without texts. The Italian libretto is available online.

If you don't yet know **Francesco CAVALLI's *La Calisto***, René Jacobs' recording is now available at budget price on Harmonia Mundi **HMY2921515/17**, while Raymond Leppard's abridged – and more knockabout – Glyndebourne version for Decca is now download only. With Janet Baker, Ileana Cotrubas, Hugues Cuénod and James Bowman in the mix, I'd still go for the Leppard despite all the liberties which he takes.

* most recently on Joyce DiDonato's *Drama Queens* (Erato **6026542**)

** but not from eclassical.com, where it's a very steep \$41.90, without booklet. They do, however, offer three excerpts from the Jacobs recording on an album of Cesti Cantatas which comes with a pdf booklet (**HMX2901018**).

***Son of England* – Music by Jeremiah Clarke and Purcell**

Jeremiah CLARKE (1674-1707) Ode on the Death of Henry Purcell [25:25]

Henry PURCELL (1659-1695)

Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary, 1695: Funeral Sentences [14:09]

Welcome to all the pleasures (from *Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, 1683), Z339 [16:10]

Katherine Watson (soprano), Nicholas Tamagna (alto), Jeffrey Thompson (tenor), Geoffroy Buffière (bass); *Le Poème Harmonique*, Les Cris de Paris/Vincent Dumestre, Geoffroy Jourdain

rec. Church of Notre-Dame du Liban, Paris, 23 to 25 November 2016. DDD.

Texts included

ALPHA285 [55:45] Reviewed as mp3 press preview. CD available from [Presto](#)



Henry PURCELL

Ayres and Songs from *Orpheus Britannicus: Harmonia Sacra* and Complete Organ Music (details after review)

Jill Feldman (soprano); Nigel North (archlute); Sarah Cunningham (bass viol); Davitt Moroney (organ)

rec. Church of Habloville, Orne, France, 13-15 February 1992; Church of Saint-Miliau, Guimiliau, Finistère, France, 14-18 September 1992. DDD.

Reissued from Arcana A2 and A10.

Texts and organ specification included

ARCANA A430 [70:00 + 69:20] Reviewed as mp3 press preview. CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [Presto](#)



Henry PURCELL

Ode for Queen Mary's Birthday: *Come, ye Sons of Art, away* (Z323)

Margaret Ritchie (soprano); Alfred Deller (counter-tenor); John Whitworth (tenor); Bruce Boyce (baritone); Ruggero Gerlin (harpsichord); St Anthony Singers; Ensemble Orchestral de l'Oiseau-Lyre/Anthony Lewis – rec. 1954.

NAXOS CLASSICAL ARCHIVES 9.80629 [23:30] Reviewed as mp3 download from [emusic.com](#) (NO booklet) Not available in USA and some other countries.

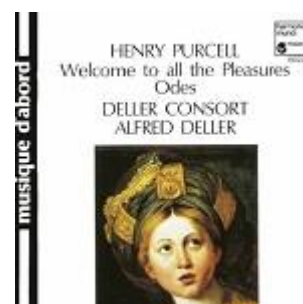


Ode on St. Cecilia's Day: *Welcome to all the Pleasures* [18:39]

Ode on Queen Mary's Birthday: *Love's Goddess sure was blind* [20:49]

Deller Consort; Stour Music Festival Orchestra/Alfred Deller

HARMONIA MUNDI HMA190222 [39:28] Reviewed as lossless download from [eclassical.com](#) (NO booklet). Subscribers stream from [Naxos Music Library](#). Download/stream only.



Te Deum, Z232[15:05]

Jubilate Deo, Z232 [8:25]

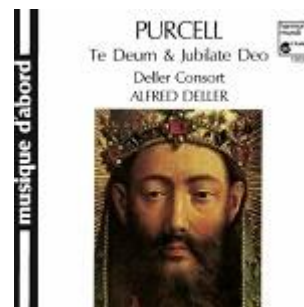
In guilty Night (*Saul and the Witch of Endor*, Z134) [9:27]

Funeral sentences: Man that is born of a Woman, Z27 [10:56]

Honor Sheppard, Christina Clarke (sopranos); Neil Jenkins (tenor); Maurice Bevan (baritone)

Stour Music Festival Choir and Orchestra/Alfred Deller

HARMONIA MUNDI HMA190207 [43:53] Reviewed as mp3 download from emusic.com (NO booklet). Subscribers stream from Naxos Music Library. Download/stream only.



ALPHA285 Jeremiah Clarke and Henry Purcell are forever linked by the fact that both died young and that Clarke's *Trumpet Voluntary* was for many years attributed to Purcell. I hadn't, however, realised that Clarke had composed an ode on the death of Purcell: I thought at first that Alpha had recorded the more familiar ode by John Blow. The fact that this is the only generally available recording of the Clarke makes a strong case for the new release, though there are other, preferable, recording of the Funeral Sentences and of the complete *Welcome to all the pleasures*, here puzzlingly presented without one short section. Philippe Herreweghe, for one, offers both Purcell works on a 2-CD Harmonia Mundi Gold mid-price reissue – DL News 2014/11.

An earlier recording of the Clarke, with Blow's *Ode on the Death of Purcell* and other music dedicated to his memory performed by soloists with The Parley of Instruments is now download only or Hyperion Archive Service (**CDA66578** – from hyperion-records.co.uk). Both odes are pastoral in nature and go very well together in very fine performances on Hyperion.

A430: Beautifully pure if not very expressive singing from Jill Feldman makes a strong case for CD1, first released in late 1992. CD2 intersperses the songs which Playford included in his publication with the complete organ works. There seems to be no other current recording of *Orpheus Britannic* so this 2-CD release, which would have been more attractive at mid-price, is generally attractive.

I've slipped in three inexpensive recordings with **Alfred Deller** who had an important part in the revival of Purcell's music. He was certainly my own *vade mecum*.

The **1954 O-L**, first released on a 10" LP, now sounds very dated: the recording, praised in its day, is very thin in this Naxos transfer, but it's well worth spending £0.84 to download for subscribers from emusic.com or to stream from Naxos Music Library (not in the USA) if only for Deller's distinctive voice and Lewis's sure sense of Purcell's style.

The two **Harmonia Mundi** releases are more recent. The two Odes were released on LP in 1978 by which time Deller's style of performing Purcell had become somewhat outdated, with the likes of David Munrow offering a sprightlier view of these pieces. Better still are the recordings which the King's Consort made for Hyperion, available separately but best obtained in the budget box set of Odes and Welcome Songs (**CDS44031/8** – [review](#)). Once again, however, I wouldn't wish to be without Deller's take on these works, inexpensive as they are to download from eclassical.com.

Even better than the Hyperion set of the Odes is their complete set of Purcell's Sacred Music, again available separately but a superb bargain as an 11-CD set (**CDS44141/51: Bargain of the Month** – [review](#)). The Deller recording of the two morning canticles, released in 1980, is not in that class but the album is well worth the modest cost of the download for the dramatic performance of *Saul and the Witch of Endor*. (The track can even be purchased separately for £0.42).

A430 details:

CD1: Ah! Belinda, I am prest (*Dido and Aeneas*); From rosie bow'rs (*Don Quixote*); Music for a while (*Oedipus*); Fly swift, ye hours; Strike the viol, touch the lute; Sweeter than roses (*Pausanias*); I attempt

from love's sickness to fly in vain (*The Indian Queen*); From silent shades (*Bess of Bedlam*); Whilst I with grief did on you look (*The Spanish Friar*); What a sad fate is mine; Ah! how sweet it is to love (*Tyrannic Love*); Since from my dear Astrea's sight (*Dioclesian*, add.); Ye gentle spirits of the air (*The Fairy Queen*, add.); Thrice happy lovers (The Epithalamium: *The Fairy Queen*); Hark! how all things (*The Fairy Queen*); 'Tis nature's voice; Fairest isle (*King Arthur*); Dear, pritty youth (*The Tempest*); Oh! lead me to some peacefull gloom (*Bonduca*); The cares of lovers (*Timon of Athens*); If musick be the food of love
 CD2: Voluntary in G; A Morning Hymn: Thou wakeful shepherd; A Divine Hymn: Lord, what is man? Voluntary in d minor; The Aspiration: How long, great God; In the black dismal dungeon of despair; O solitude; Voluntary in C; The Blessed Virgin's Expostulation: Tell me, some pitying angel; Voluntary in d minor, for double organ; On our Saviour's Passion: The earth trembled; With sick and famished eyes; Verse in F; Full of wrath; Voluntary on the Old 100th in A; Sleep, Adam, sleep; An Evening Hymn: Now that the sun

Carl Heinrich GRAUN (1704-1759)

Arias

Sento una pena (from *L'Orfeo*)
Sforzero (from *Iphigenia in Aulis*)
Senza di te, mio bene (from *Coriolano*)
La gloria t'invita (from *Armida*)
Piangete (from *Il Mithridate*)
Parmi...ah no! (from *Silla*)
Rodelinda, regina de'Langobardi: Sinfonia
Il mar s'inalza e freme (from *L'Orfeo*)
D'ogni aura al mormorar (from *L'Orfeo*)
No, no, di Libia fra l'arene (from *Silla*)
A tanti pianti miei (from *Armida*)
Mi paventi il figlio indegno (from *Britannico*)

Julia Lezhneva (soprano)

Concerto Köln/Mikhail Antonenko

rec. Deutschland Kammermusiksaal, Cologne, 15-18, 26-30 September 2016. DDD.

Texts and translations included.

DECCA 4831518 [65:06] From [Amazon UK](#) – [Presto](#)



For Roy Westbrook an insertion aria performed by Julia Lezhneva from Graun's *Britannico* was the highlight of a first-rate recording of Hasse's *Siroe*: **Recording of the Month** – [review](#). That one aria apart I had previously encountered only Graun's instrumental and sacred music but this new release makes me hope to hear more from his operas. 'Attractive enough' was the best that I could say of a Capriccio recording of his *Montezuma* – [review](#) – but the new Decca recording, which includes several world premiere recordings, together with Hungaroton and Hyperion recordings of his Passion music *Der Tod Jesu* – [DL Roundup March 2012/1](#) – suggests that there other, better, fish in the sea of Graun. On the strength of this release I'd be very happy to hear Julia Lezhneva in more of his music.

Catharsis: Baroque Opera Arias

Xavier Sabata (countertenor)

Armonia Atenea/George Petrou

rec. Megaron, Athens, 22-16 September 2015. DDD.

Texts and translations included

APARTÉ AP143 [66:05] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eClassical.com](#). Subscribers stream from [Naxos Music Library](#). For CD purchase details see [review](#) by Michael Cookson.



Handel, Vivaldi and Hasse apart, most of the composers included are not household names. Ariosti, for example, though one of Handel's rivals in London, is less well known and less often recorded than his other rival Bononcini, though the same two excerpts from his *Coriolano* which are recorded here

also appear with music by Handel and Bononcini on a very fine Harmonia Mundi recording featuring Lawrence Zazzo as soloist (**HMU807590: *Recording of the Month*** – [DL News 2014/14](#)). As with earlier releases such as *Dilettanti* – [review](#) – the trade-off for baroque specialists is the wide vibrato of Sabata’s singing against the discovery of out-of-the-way repertoire. Goran Försling was less troubled by this is his [review](#) of another recital – *Handel Bad Guys* – and I also enjoyed that album – [DL News 2013/10](#). Nor did it worry me unduly on the new release.

One small niggle: Ariosti’s opera *Caio Marzio Coriolano* is mis-spelled in the booklet with a missing *r* from *Marzio*.

Franz Joseph HAYDN (1732-1809)

Symphony No.53 in D (‘Imperial’) [21:59]

Symphony No.64 in A (*Tempora mutantur*) [18:41]

Symphony No.96 in D (‘Miracle’) [21:02]

The Oregon Symphony/Carlos Kalmar

rec. live Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland, Oregon, 2013 (Symphony No. 64) and 2016 (Symphonies Nos. 53 and 96).

PENTATONE PTC5186612 SACD [61:51] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). Subscribers stream from [Naxos Music Library](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



This is big-band Haydn but the performances wear dancing pumps rather than heavy boots. All Haydn lovers apart from the most unrelenting advocates of period performance should enjoy them. Carlos Kalmar’s previous recordings (Pentatone, Hyperion and Cedille) have been of Romantic and twentieth-century repertoire. Both John Quinn and I admired his recording of Copland’s Third Symphony, with music by Piston and Antheil – [review](#) – but he also seems have a natural affinity with Haydn.

The notes ascribe the expression *tempora mutantur* to John Owen, a contemporary of Shakespeare; he popularised it, but it dates back at least to before 1554 when the German protestant writer Huberinus adapted a line from Ovid (*tempora labuntur*, the times are slipping away) to *tempora mutantur nosque mutamur in illis* (the times are changing and we change with them). Whatever its origin and import, it seems to have been one of the very few titles which Haydn gave to his own symphonies. When the booklet admits that the epithet ‘Miracle’ should really be applied to Symphony No.102, as has been known for some time, it’s rather naughty to continue to apply it to No.96 here.

Wolfgang Amadeus MOZART (1756–91)

March in D, K 335/1 [4:13]

Serenade No.9 in D, ‘Posthorn Serenade’, K320 [41:07]

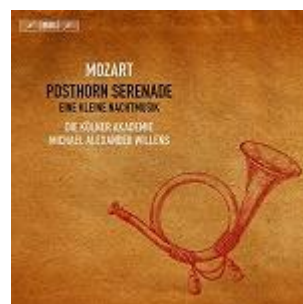
March in D, K 335/2 [4:17]

Serenade No.13 in G, ‘Eine kleine Nachtmusik’, K525, including additional minuet from String Quartet in G, K80 [24:20]

Die Kölner Akademie/Michael Alexander Willens

rec. Deutschlandfunk Kammermusiksaal, Cologne, Germany, December 2015. DDD/DSD

BIS BIS-2244 SACD [74:41] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from [eclassical.com](#). Subscribers stream from [Naxos Music Library](#). CD from [Amazon UK](#) – [ArkivMusic](#) – [Presto](#)



Having completed their series of recordings of Mozart’s piano concertos with Rudolf Brautigam (fortepiano), now my prime recommendation among period-instrument recordings of those works, BIS, Michael Alexander Willens and the Cologne Academy turn their attention to four further Mozart releases, beginning with very fine performances of these two well-known serenades: forthright but far from devoid of feeling. The added movement is attractive but of no great import.

Neither work is neglected in the recorded catalogue, with over 60 versions of the *Posthorn*, many of them coupled as here with *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, itself with 200+ versions to its name. Among my favourite versions of *EKN* are Jordi Savall and Le Concert des Nations (Alia Vox **AVSA9846**, with *Serenade No.6 (Serenata Notturna)*, *Notturmo for four orchestras* and *A Musical Joke*) on period instruments, Karl Böhm with the Vienna Philharmonic (DG Virtuoso **E4783387**, with *Serenata Notturna* and *Posthorn Serenade*, budget price) and the Academy of St Martin with Neville Marriner (Philips Duo **E4640222**, *Serenata Notturna*, *Haffner Serenade*, *Posthorn Serenade* and *EKN*, super-budget twofer, download only).

Marriner's *EKN* comes with the *Posthorn Serenade* but a more recent recording from the same orchestra directed by Iona Brown offers an even better compromise between modern instruments and period style. (Hänssler **098.129**, with the contemporary *Symphony No.33*, reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com; stream from Naxos Music Library – NO booklet from either).

Savall's performances are predictably vigorous and forceful, which will not be to all tastes, and the recording is not of the clearest: I'm pleased to be able to turn to them, especially for the gloriously wrong notes in the *Musical Joke* but not as my sole option – [review](#) – [DL Roundup](#).

After Savall's brisk opening to *EKN* Böhm at first sounds ponderous, though one's ear soon adjusts to what is in effect the old-school Mozart at its best. For most listeners Marriner provides a very good compromise between the two though, like Böhm, he doesn't observe all the repeats, as Savall and Willens on the new BIS recording do.

Strong competition, then, but the new recording is equal to the challenge: as Dave Billinge has written – [review](#) – further Mozart releases from these performers would be most welcome.

Franz SCHUBERT (1797–1828)

Works for Solo Piano, Volume 2

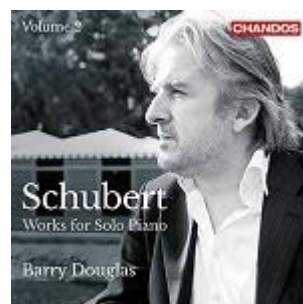
Four Impromptus, Op.90, D899 (1827) [26:49]

Piano Sonata in A, Op. posth., D959 (1828) [42:31]

Barry Douglas (piano)

rec. Curtis Auditorium, CIT Cork School of Music, Bishopstown, Cork, Ireland; 4 and 5 February 2016. DDD.

CHANDOS CHAN10933 [69:20] Reviewed as lossless download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. Subscribers stream from Naxos Music Library. CD from Amazon UK – ArkivMusic – Presto



Franz SCHUBERT (1797-1828)

Piano Sonata in B-flat, D960 [42:39]

Piano Sonata in A, D664 [20:06]

Javier Perianes (piano)

rec. Auditorio Manuel de Falla, Granada, Spain, December 2016. DDD

HARMONIA MUNDI HMM902282 [62:45] Reviewed as 24/96 download with pdf booklet from eclassical.com. CD from Amazon UK – Presto



Schubert's late piano works are at the very top of the tree: if anything I rate them slightly higher than Beethoven's. Having given us the greatest of them all, the sublime Sonata No.21 (D960) and the 'Wanderer' Fantasy on CHAN10807, **Barry Douglas** now turns his attention to its almost equally sublime predecessor and to the Impromptus from the previous year whose profundity also belies any casual expectations to which their name – given by the publisher, not Schubert – may give rise.

I liked that earlier recording – [DL News 2014/6](#) – though, like [Dominy Clements](#) and [John Quinn](#) I didn't think it quite dislodged my top recommendations.

Wisely Chandos open the new recording with the Impromptus. I recently praised in a round-up of recent releases on independent labels a talented young pianist, Matthew Cameron's account of these on an album which also includes Chopin and Liszt (Arabesque **Z6900**). I liked his combination of beautiful tunefulness with the pathos which for me lies behind all Schubert's late music, without quite matching Alfred Brendel or Clifford Curzon in this repertoire. I find that the same applies here: these are fine performances without quite competing with the best.

It's to Curzon on a budget-price Decca Duo (**4560612**, 2 CDs, complete Impromptus and *Moments Musicaux*) that I turned again as the benchmark for the new recording. I still turn to those performances of D899 and D935, on an earlier Philips single-CD release when I want to listen to these works. It's not that Brendel's approach is the only one or that his tempi are sacrosanct but I did think Douglas a trifle too fast and in slight danger of sounding perfunctory in No.3, the most popular of the set, with over 200 recordings in the catalogue. At 5:21 he matches Brendel's first thoughts, set down for Vox when he was just coming to the public attention. By the time of the analogue recordings on the Duo set Brendel's view of the music had broadened slightly but significantly and by the time of his digital recording (download only) the tempo had broadened slightly again.

Even on the Vox recording (**CD3X3041**, 3 CDs, budget-price) I hear a degree more *innigkeit* from Brendel than from Douglas. I think that is to the advantage of the music, but others may believe that I regularly read too much depth into Schubert's last years. Though the signs of his fatal illness must have been apparent, he appears to have been of a generally happy disposition, with growing public recognition and improvement in his finances. Some performances of the late piano works and chamber music hover on the brink of sentimentality but I don't think that Brendel falls into that trap.

Imogen Cooper's live recordings of the late sonatas have been very well liked all round. D959 features on Volume 1 (**AV2156**, 2 CDs, with Sonatas D845, D850, etc.) which I reviewed in [August 2009](#). Good as she is, however, I think she sells the music a little short by not observing all the repeats in the first movement, as does Brendel. Andras Schiff, recorded in 1990, believes that not to observe all the repeats is to deprive Schubert of a limb. His performance comes on another budget-price Decca twofer, with D959's two companions, D958 and D960 and the Impromptus D899 (Double Decca **4751842**). His D960 contains too many gear-changes for my liking but on his later recording of that work on an ECM 2-CD set the problem is less noticeable – [review](#).

Artur Schnabel, recorded in 1937, can be excused boots for not observing the first-movement repeat in order to fit 78 rpm sides. I find myself drawn back to his Beethoven, much of which I once owned on 78s – those really were albums, each the size of a large atlas. Sadly, I never got the whole series: I dropped one set which I had purchased from the Gramophone Exchange in nearby Wardour Street down the escalator at Piccadilly Circus station, with the inevitable result. Now I find myself attracted similarly to his Schubert, especially to D959, on a 2-CD Warner Références set with D850, D960, etc. (**7642592**, download only). The sound is exceptionally good for its age – no fried-egg surface noise but no loss of sound quality either. There's a much less expensive Musical Concepts 2-CD set, not quite so well transferred but more than tolerable (**MC3202**).

Javier Perianes: I'll start with one major criticism: it was a great mistake to place D960 before its predecessor, thus creating a considerable anti-climax, which I hope didn't unduly influence my feeling that the fine performance doesn't quite equal the best.

In intensity Schubert's last piano sonata, D960, is rivalled only by another work from his late burst of creativity, the String Quintet in C. Like the Quintet, which has over 100 recordings to its credit in the current catalogue, it's a much-recorded work – almost 200 versions currently available, many of them outstandingly good, with recommendations at all prices and from a range of vintages.

So strong is the competition that my own favourite, from Clifford Curzon, is available only in a 23-CD + DVD set of all his Decca recordings. At around £78 that's an expensive purchase but it does contain *inter alia* his wonderful Brahms and Mozart concerto recordings (**4784389**). It's rather less expensive to download at around £32. For other recommendations of D960, please see my review of Barry Douglas (Chandos – [DL News 2014/6](#)).