

July 2012

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Recording of the Month

*'Kožená encapsulates
and conveys the spectrum
of moods with a wealth
of understanding and
apt vocal inflection'*

► FOR THE REVIEW BY GEOFFREY NORRIS, TURN TO PAGE 46

'LOVE AND LONGING'

Dvořák Biblical Songs, Op 99 (orch Zemánek)

Mahler Rückert-Lieder **Ravel** Shéhérazade

Magdalena Kožená *sop*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra / Simon Rattle

DG 479 0065GH



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ELGAR

Cello Concerto, etc

Paul Watkins *vc*

BBC Philharmonic /

Andrew Davis

Chandos CHANI0709

'Watkins's golden-toned
and technically flawless
contribution strikes
a judicious balance
between classical poise
and unexaggerated
depth of feeling.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 50



FOULDS. SAINSBURY

Cello Concertos

Raphael Wallfisch *vc*

Bournemouth SO;

RSNO / Martin Yates

Dutton Epoch CDLX7284

'At the heart of the
Salisbury is a beautiful
quasi-Elgarian slow
movement. Strange how
some pieces as vivid and
beguiling as this can slip
through the net.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 51



GÁL. SCHUMANN

Symphonies

Orchestra of the Swan /

Kenneth Woods

Avie AV2231

'The Orchestra of
the Swan provide a
quietly compelling
account, relishing the
many solos, duos and
textural intricacies
that Gál wrings from
his orchestra.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 51



'WALZER REVOLUTION'

Waltzes by Mozart,

J Strauss I and Lanner

Concentus Musicus Wien

/ Nikolaus Harnoncourt

Sony Classical 88697 91411-2

'The collection
succeeds not just in
pioneering period
performances but also
through imaginative
programming.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 58



BEETHOVEN

Bagatelles

Steven Osborne *pf*

Hyperion CDA67879

'At the other end
of Op 33 is No 7,
ostensibly restrained
for *Presto* but with a
cumulative thrust of its
own, pedal markings
scrupulously observed
for ear-catching washes
of *pianissimo* sound.'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 68

In the concert hall Paul Watkins has already shown himself to be an exemplary exponent of Elgar's Cello Concerto, so it was a shrewd move on Chandos's part to invite him into the studio to set down his abundantly communicative interpretation for posterity. Aided by outstandingly eloquent support from Sir Andrew Davis and the BBC Philharmonic, Watkins plays with consummate artistry, his golden-toned and technically flawless contribution striking a judicious balance between classical poise and unexaggerated depth of feeling that put me in mind of the great André Navarra on his classic 1957 recording with Sir John Barbirolli (Testament, 3/01). Pacing is spot-on throughout, the first movement lean and purposeful, the *scherzo* mercurial without being breathless, the sublime *Adagio* ideally flowing. Best of all is the finale, its main *Allegro ma non troppo* fairly twinkling with mischief, yet when the shadows begin to lengthen for the *Poco più mosso* at fig 66 or 6'05", Watkins and Davis manage to distil exactly the right degree of pathos. Moreover, that achingly intimate *Lento* reminiscence of the slow movement at four after fig 71 or 8'51" really does tug the emotions.

Durable rewards guaranteed, then, and the same certainly holds true for Davis's dashing articulate, meticulously observant and superbly musical handling of the *Pomp and Circumstance* Marches. What a joy to hear No 1's indestructible trio melody unfold with such heartwarming naturalness and spontaneity – and how perceptively Davis quarries the dark undertow of the magnificently defiant No 3 (that swaggering *allargando* at two after fig Q or 4'50" is brought off with genuine aplomb). No grumbles, either, with Davis's sensitive conducting of the 1909 *Elegy*, which so touchingly mirrors Elgar's sense of loss at the recent death of his dear friend, AJ Jaeger (aka 'Nimrod').

Only the Introduction and *Allegro* slightly underwhelms. Or is it just that Barbirolli has spoilt us for good in this music? Let me steer you in the direction of his thrillingly combustible 1956 Hallé account in particular (available from the Barbirolli Society), next to which this laudably disciplined newcomer sounds decidedly reserved. No matter: for the two main offerings alone every Elgarian should investigate this release, which has been engineered with resplendent realism in the BBC Philharmonic's new Salford home.

Andrew Achenbach

Foulds · Sainsbury

Foulds Cello Concerto, Op 17^a

Sainsbury Cello Concerto, Op 27^b

Raphael Wallfisch ^{vc} Bournemouth Symphony

Orchestra; ^bRoyal Scottish National Orchestra /

Martin Yates

Dutton Epoch © CDLX7284 (70' • DDD)

gramophone.co.uk



Dutton revives 'missed' English cello concertos

It is a particular pleasure to welcome Lionel Sainsbury's Cello Concerto, since many years ago by happenstance (it's a long story) I was invited to afternoon tea by the composer in his Cotswold home when he was working on the score. I did not envisage from the composer's illustrations at the piano a work of such expressive range and intensity (try the central *Adagio*). It is quite thrilling to hear, after all this time, the fruits of his labour realised in such commanding style. The longest and structurally most complex movement is the finale, with its jig-like main subject of 'infectious, raffish good humour' (Malcolm MacDonald in his excellent booklet), which rounds off a composition that, by whatever magical means these things occur, is unmistakably English.

Sainsbury's Concerto is followed by a work completed exactly 90 years earlier, in 1909. John Foulds's Cello Concerto (the only surviving one of three he wrote between 1906 and 1910) was performed once in 1911 and then not heard until Raphael Wallfisch revived it in the 1980s. Its three movements are linked by the same theme, and boast a number of unusual features such as the soloist's *pizzicato* first utterance and the composer's invitation to the soloist to improvise his or her own cadenza in the finale. At the work's heart is a beautiful quasi-Elgarian slow movement. Strange how some pieces as vivid and beguiling as this can slip through the net. One really could not ask from Messrs Wallfisch and Yates and both orchestras for more persuasive world premieres of two concertos that already seem like old friends. Jeremy Nicholas

Gál · Schumann

Gál Symphony No 4, 'Sinfonia concertante', Op 105

Schumann Symphony No 2, Op 61

Orchestra of the Swan / Kenneth Woods

Avie © AV2231 (73' • DDD)



Third instalment in Woods's Midlands Gál project

If there were an Olympic discipline for transparency of orchestration (not so fanciful a notion, since music formed part of the modern Olympics from 1912 to 1948), then Gál's Fourth Symphony (1974) would win the gold medal with ease. Styled *Sinfonia concertante*, perhaps with Haydn in mind, it is resourced for pairs of oboes, bassoons and horns with timpani, strings and flute, clarinet, violin and cello solos who operate at times independently, at others in duets or as a concertino group.

In addition to the remarkable limpidity of Gál's scoring, the overall atmosphere is lyrically pastoral. But appearances are deceptive, as





Mark Padmore

sings Britten



Stephen Bell, horn
Britten Sinfonia, dir. Jaqueline Shave

Serenade for tenor, horn & strings Op.31
Nocturne Op.60

Celebrated tenor Mark Padmore joins with Britten Sinfonia in some of the most beautiful English music for voice and orchestra. The centrepiece is Benjamin Britten's magical evocation of twilight and nightfall, the *Serenade* (with Stephen Bell, horn). In Gerald Finzi's song-cycle *Dies Natalis*, the ecstatic mood reflects a child's wide-eyed wonder at the world. Britten's poignant *Nocturne* completes the programme.

Also available



'Before Life & after'
 Winter Words, Donne Sonnets, Folksongs
 with Roger Vignoles, piano

"Padmore's sound is more beautiful and easily expressive than Pears's ever was"
 Andrew Clements, *The Guardian*, 26 June 2009

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Halvorsen in Bergen: Melina Mandozzi and Ilze Klava

Woods notes in his intelligent booklet-notes, noting the music's 'intense rigour and deep concentration' where what 'seems the simplest and most straightforward...proves to be the most sophisticated and complex'. There are lighter moments aplenty, particularly in the second and fourth movements (framing the beautiful *Duetto: Adagio*), respectively a gentle evocation of Harlequin and Columbine and a 'Buffoneria', the title of which does no justice to its subtle design.

The Orchestra of the Swan provide a quietly compelling account, relishing the many solos, duos and textural intricacies that Gál wrings from his orchestra. Their account of Schumann's C major brings playing necessarily of greater fire. While Zinman's just still remains first choice, Woods's finely wrought interpretation confirms his credentials – if confirmation were needed – as a symphonic conductor of stature. Avie's natural sound is clear but listeners may need to set the volume a touch higher than normal. Strongly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Schumann – selected comparison:
Zurich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman
(5/04) (ARTS) 82876 57743-2

Grieg

Piano Concerto, Op 16^o. Norwegian Dances, Op 35. Lyric Suite, Op 54

Miroslav Kultyshev of NDR Radio Philharmonic Orchestra / Eivind Gullberg Jensen
Orfeo © C815 121A (64' • DDD)



Another Norwegian goes south for German radio Grieg

More Grieg from a German radio orchestra under a Norwegian baton. And, like Eivind

Aadland's recent work in Cologne (Audite, 10/11, 11/11), good, fresh Grieg – although of a decidedly other, more athletic kind. As he showed us at his London Coliseum debut three years ago with *Jenöfa*, Gullberg Jensen likes rhythm and popular melody and is not afraid of being romantically expressive to bring out these aspects of a work.

His evident enjoyment here of the *Lyric Suite* uses a wide range of dynamics. At times one is almost reminded of Wagner, while remembering that it was Anton Seidl's (in Grieg's opinion) over-Wagnerian orchestrations of these pieces for a New York audience that encouraged their composer to re-present them in more sparing instrumental dress. But Gullberg Jensen's 'Wagnerism' here is more a matter of holding back and letting go (especially in 'Notturmo') than of undue indulgence of orchestral sonority. And this conductor, importantly for Grieg, has a sense of humour. Listeners to European radio broadcasts about a year back may remember a *Peer Gynt* from Hanover of much Beechamesque wit and point – certainly on display in this 'March of the Dwarves'.

The *Norwegian Dances*, an unmatchably sad, wistful set of miniatures, are beautifully captured here with no punches pulled in their darker – or more modern harmonic – corners. Here in true national style Gullberg Jensen allows his wind soloists to lead with a forward *concertante* balance. The Concerto performance is clearly not a collaboration of chance which began with two strangers in a studio. Communication and apparently parallel instincts appear to have taken Kultyshev and Gullberg Jensen to a genuine ensemble of purpose as regards tempi, structure and, intriguingly, how best to integrate the

decorative, playful elements of the piano-writing in the first movement and the tricky grandstanding of the work's final pages. Overall, this is a serious, dark reading, more Liszt than Schumann, a good companion to the conductor's work in the purely orchestral suites. The recorded balance in the finale of the Concerto is helpfully clear between soloist and orchestra. **Mike Ashman**

Halvorsen

'Orchestral Works, Vol 4'

Rhapsodie norvégienne - No 1; No 2. Brudefølget drager forbi (Norwegian Bridal Procession). Passacaglia, Op 20 No 2^o. Queen Tamara - Dance Scene. The King - Symphonic Intermezzo. Norsk Festouvertur (Norwegian Festival Overture), Op 16. Norske Eventyrbilleder (Norwegian Fairy Tale Pictures), Op 37

Melina Mandozzi vln **Ilze Klava** vc

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos © CHAN10710 (73' • DDD)



Out of symphonies, the cycle moves to incidental Halvorsen

The previous releases in Chandos's Halvorsen orchestral series juxtaposed shorter pieces with the symphonies and theatrical suites. Having run out of symphonies, the focus of the fourth instalment is more diffuse, the *Norwegian Fairy Tale Suite* lacking the gravity of those from *Masquerade* (Vol 1, 8/10) or *Fossegrimmen* (Vol 3, 6/11), with only the Symphonic Intermezzo from the incidental music to *Kongen* ('The King') providing anything remotely heavyweight.

The brace of *Norwegian Rhapsodies* make attractive opening items, colourful, deftly orchestrated showpieces based on local folk material not unlike the equivalent nationalist rhapsodies of, say, Alfvén or Enescu, presenting Halvorsen at his best. The *Norwegian Festival Overture* is more workaday but it and the Symphonic Intermezzo provide hints of the composer of larger-scale works. Yet Halvorsen was a natural tone-painter and story-teller, as the Dance Scene from the incidental music to Knut Hamsun's *Queen Tamara* (styled 'Oriental Character Piece' and much admired by Grieg) and the *Norwegian Fairy Tale Pictures* (derived from music written for a children's Christmas play) emphatically confirm.

The Bergen Philharmonic under Järvi once more provide beautifully idiomatic performances caught in rich Chandos sound (although on the advance copy I had the volume needed turning significantly higher than normal). The show is stolen, however, not by one of the orchestral works but by Halvorsen's superb arrangement for violin and cello duo of the G minor Passacaglia from Handel's seventh Harpsichord Suite of 1720. Melina Mandozzi and Ilze Klava deliver