

LISTENING LOG: A – L

ANONYMOUS

O Antiphons; 3 late medieval carols

Attached to Pierre de La Rue, *Missa Conceptio tua*. Possibly the oldest music in my library: seven chants sung both before and after the Magnificat during the seven days leading to Christmas eve. The Naxos CD presents only the first in full. They are apparently more than 1200 years old, thus dating back as far as the ninth century, possibly even earlier. The first two carols are like sacred motets. The third, “Nova nova,” gets delivered in the excessively rowdy manner of early music groups. (F¹⁷)

ANONYMOUS

Messe de Noël XII° Ecole Notre Dame

Reconstruction by Manuel Pérés of a twelfth-century mass for Christmas Day. It is entirely chant and organum, the chant highly ornamented in what sounds improvisatory fashion. I’d appreciate a better explanation of what they’re doing. I did not realize the *Liber Organi* was lost, only surviving in copies made a hundred years later. I like the vaguely Moorish sound of the chant. (Ja¹⁸)

EVARISTO dall’ABACO

8 Concerti Grossi

I’d be hard put to identify any distinguishing marks of style here, except that the writing seems fresh, elegant, and very pleasing — exceptionally pleasing. Excellent of their kind. The performance is first-rate — baroque instruments that sound good. (Ja¹¹)

CARL FRIEDRICH ABEL

Sinfonia Concertante in B \flat , violin, oboe, clarinet & orchestra

Abel, who settled in London and worked with J.C. Bach, sounds like early Mozart both in elegance of phrasing and brilliance of solo writing. An early use of clarinet (circa 1765), and an unusual collocation of three treble soloists. Delightful. None of the cadenzas in this CPO set are credited — could they be original? I doubt it very much. (Mh¹²)

6 Symphonies, op 10

Abel together with J.C. Bach in London were key in establishing the style of the independent classical symphony and, at the same time, the subscription concert. All of Abel’s op 10 are in three movements with Andante centers — two have Minuetto Finales. Abel avoids counterpoint, minimizes technical difficulties, keeps first violins dominant, other strings subordinate, winds dispensable. Even within these limits, his invention is abundant and graceful. These Symphonies strike me as more classical, less pungent than Boyce, more satisfying than J.C. (whose music sounds more like juvenile Mozart, though one of Abel’s was long mistaken for juvenile Mozart, who had copied it out by hand). Lots of bustling but very few triadic mottos à la Mannheim — real tunes, one after another. Performances are exquisite — a super CD. (Mh¹²)

JOSEPH ACHRON

Violin Concerto No 1, op 60

I resisted this, expecting Achron to be another lesser virtuoso composer like Sarasate, then bought it for Silverstein, only to find that he’s conducting instead of playing. But Oliveira is fine, and the Concerto turns out to have great musical interest. The first movement — a vast 25’ long — is based on the cantilations of certain cantors (liner notes give details). The style, surprisingly, is more modernist than Bloch (ferocious dissonance just before the end), rhythmically very complex, fiendishly difficult. Structure seems episodic. The 10’ second movement is based on secular Jewish Yemenite dance tunes — likewise inventive, free from cliché. An intriguing curiosity. (Mh¹¹)

The Golem Suite

Five short bits of incidental music for Levick's Hebrew play reworked for chamber orchestra. Nothing special but the instrumentation — but liner notes on the legend are fascinating. (Mh¹¹)

Two Tableaux from Belshazzar

Two substantial movements from music written for a Hebrew play of uncertain origin. Begins with atmospheric section with some acrid bitonality, then moves into a kind of grotesque processional with blatting fanfares. Good stand-alone concert piece. (Mh¹¹)

ADAM de la HALLE

Robin et Marion

Lively reconstruction, with natural voices, convincing sound. (Au⁰⁸)

ADOLPHE ADAM

Giselle

Disc presents an abridged version of the ballet, enough to fill in the best known parts and give narrative continuity. The music is simple, and I recognize parts if rather dimly. It's fairly generic, with lots of on-and-off-the-stage filler, and I doubt if it could stand alone in concert — it is never programmed as a concert piece. Perhaps a Suite could be drawn, which would include the solo viola pas de deux. (Mh¹¹)

JOHN ADAMS

Doctor Atomic

An important piece, but I had problems with it. The lyrical parts do not rise to the occasion (e.g. the Love Duet, "Batter my heart"), nor does the music dance when the characters do. Chorus underused in Act I, but sound variously like Britten, Orff, or Glass in Act II, while Adams is bent on sounding "modernist" rather than "minimalist." Suspense rises in Act II, but the music never rises with it. The Sellars libretto is fragmented, but the stagecraft is quasi-realist and continuous, while the music rarely sustains an idea. Nor does it probe the ethical questions. I liked the spoken Japanese at the end. Performances were good — Finley excellent. The opera disappointing. (MetHD—N⁰⁸)

Violin Concerto

Much more complex than the Glass Concerto, and much more interesting. Triads float away like soap bubbles while the soloist does calisthenics. After cadenza, the Chaconne begins à la Pachelbel, but on multiple planes, bass, chimes, soloist, stratospheric violins — glorious. Finale a "toccata," nearly moto perpetuo. Impressive piece. (Ja⁰⁹)

String Quartet

Lengthy Quartet in two movements, the first a complete Quartet in itself (in four recognizable traditional sections), the second much shorter, a kind of rhythmically driving epilogue. JA's style is clearly recognizable — minimalist bearings but not numbingly repetitive, rhythmic, not atonal nor harshly dissonant. Not too hard to get the measure of in one hearing, exciting — JA at the top of his game, St Lawrence group playing with full commitment. (St Lawrence Qt—live—F⁰⁹) Having heard St Lawrence play one of the first performances of this piece, I now find it empedestaled on CD. I don't really recognize it, but it feels familiar. (Jy¹¹)

Harmonium

Early Adams, a half-hour minimalist work for chorus and orchestra on texts by Donne and Emily D — three impressive, slow-moving panels, a nice reflective setting of Emily's carriage ride, plus a wild Finale on "Wild Nights." I think I like Adams — early minimalist mode better than the later stuff. A very short measure CD, alas. (Ap⁰⁹)

Short Ride in a Fast Machine

This has become standard rep, a good thing. (CBC—Ag⁰⁹) Add-on for kids on BBC Shostakovich CD – it's not quite Pachelbel's Kanon yet but getting there. (My¹⁵) Again on CBC, driving. (O¹⁵)

Nixon in China

Gripping throughout, even with a sympathetic Nixon, a sweet Pat Nixon, a doddering Mao, and a warm Chou En Lai. Act I is all Nixon and public diplomacy. Act II begins with Pat, rather bewildered, touring the sights, a ballet showing Kissinger as rapist and torturer, and a fearsome Madame Mao. Act III (which Bernheimer calls anti-climactic) is a nostalgic looking back on history, life, the passing of time — all passion spent, the intensity gone out of it — beautiful. Alice Goodman's libretto rises at times to poetry. The music: Carl Orff meets Janacek in a pop wall of sound. A most implausible operatic masterpiece, exploring political emotions hardly felt on the operatic stage since V-E-R-D-I. (F¹¹)

Tromba lontana

Nice gentle program opener, fanfare with two trumpets set behind the orchestra. (TSO live—Mh¹¹)

Son of Chamber Symphony

JA's second Chamber Symphony, a genre in which he says he can exploit the full individual and ensemble virtuosity of his players — especially in the first movement, bright, intricate play with the timp rhythm of Beethoven's Ninth. II a long cantabile in winds over a string vamp. When strings take over, the texture gradually breaks into cross rhythms. III was to be called can-can, but it's actually serious in its strenuous minimalism. Super piece. (Jy¹¹)

Phrygian Gates

A 26' challenge of pianistic minimalism – cycles through half of the circle of fifths alternating Lydian and Phrygian modes while the hands keep independent repeated note patterns. There are shocks along the way, like the sudden dive into bass register, but it's basically Adams's purest minimalist style. (N¹³)

China Gates

Short minimalist piano piece in style of Phrygian Gates, technically within limits of amateur. (N¹³)

Chamber Symphony

From 1992, an important piece in Adams' output. Three movements: Mongrel Airs layers prominent solo violin (à la Stravinsky's L'Histoire) over slap bass, horn chords, high wind schrapnel, a kind of avant garde klezmer with three wild clarinets. An explosion of Les Six, captivating. Aria with Walking Bass is sung by trombone, then trumpet, then other instruments complicating the texture. The bass seems to walk up and down at random – I'd like to see how he notates those superimposed tempi. Roadrunner: Crazy! I had high expectations, but this piece exceeded them. A major masterpiece. (Mh¹⁴) As I follow the score, the rhythmic patterns look more rational. The sound is just as zany. All the composer's talk about Schoenberg's op 9 seems whitewash to cover its true roots in L'Histoire and Petrushka – naught to be ashamed of. (My¹⁴) This piece is now more than a quarter of a century old, and more and more it seems defining, like Schoenberg's First Kammer-symphonie. With its dry klezmer sound and dryer wit, however, its heritage is more Stravinsky. The score is blinding in its rhythmic complexity, the sound captivating. The stride bass sounds as natural as jazz or Handel. Those horns! Roadrunner captures the comic genius of the original. A defining masterpiece. (O¹⁸)

The Dharma at Big Sur

I suppose California must have electric violins, but I don't like them. (1) A New Day: Lots of slurping around on higher strings, a pseudo-Asian sound. I hadn't heard an erhu when I listened to this before. Harpist deserves equal billing. (2) Sri Moonshine goes up-tempo dancing in irregular, nervous pulses, with harp and drum. Up-dated Lou Harrison, but it begs the question Why an orchestra— Lots of plucking, lots of pedal, lots of natural harmonics. Big crescendo at end. (O¹⁷).

Grand Pianola Music

Three movements, 31', for two pianos and ensemble of winds, brass, percussion, and three female

voices. This is early John Adams at his most minimalist, sounding closest to Philip Glass – tonal, largely consonant, delicate he calls it, but the brass and two bass drums add wallop. The pianos mainly play the same material a fraction of a beat apart, creating an acoustic shimmer, while the mechanistic repetitions are softened by the voices. Not for frequent listening, but I like it. The final bit is a send-up of the grand romantic piano concerto. (O¹⁸)

MURRAY ADASKIN

Quartet No 3 “Tre Vecchi Amici”

Big Quartet in three movements, each arranged from early work to which MA had somehow lost copyright (hence the title). American style of Copland-Harris, diatonic, transparent open space, rhythmic figures, imitation, mirror writing. Second movement too similar to first — not enough tricks up his sleeve. Bird-calls in Finale welcome, but there’s simply not enough invention. (Ag⁰⁹)

THOMAS ADÈS

Arkadiana, op 12

Seven short movements for string quartet that Adès characterizes as nostalgia pieces. Decidedly avant garde in texture, they still have tonal referents, and allusion without quotation. It’s a winning formula. The riff on Elgar’s Nimrod is pure magic. I understand why Adès has won his supporters. Besides, anyone so devoted to Couperin can’t be wrong. (Jy¹¹)

Living Toys, op 9

A 20’ programmatic chamber symphony, continuous but with a progression that divides a narrative into eight sections. Avant garde-ish with a hint of jazz in the trumpet writing. Interesting but makes sense only vaguely, except for the funereal ending. (Jy¹¹)

Sonata da Caccia, op 11

Neo-baroque Trio Sonata in four movements for oboe (specified as “baroque”), horn (unspecified) and harpsichord. The recording, with Adès at the keyboard, does not overcome the obvious balance problem — the harpsichord can hardly be heard. (At least it’s honest and not electronically doctored.) Surely there are bigger harpsichords. A pity, because the music with its baroque referents is fairly accessible. (Jy¹¹)

Gefriolsae Me, op 3b

Anthem setting a verse of Psalm 51 in Middle English (the actual text not printed by EMI). Brilliant, with organ pedals helping sustain pitch. (Jy¹¹)

The Origin of the Harp, op 13

Of course there’s no harp in it. A weird combo of 3 clarinets, 3 violas, 3 cellos and percussion — actually a nice sound, the clarinets (including bass) filling the entire range, softened by strings, colored by percussion. Little or no attempt to imitate the harp. First half builds to sudden turn, then a long slow diminuendo. Nice. (Jy¹¹)

The Tempest

Brilliant operatic adaptation of Shakespeare, daringly cast in semi-rhyming accentual verse by librettist Meredith Oakes (predictably trashed by the critics). Keenlyside was a magnificent middle-aged Prospero, and Audrey Luna owns the stratospheric role of Ariel — a daring and innovative compositional concept — and Isabel Leonard has a beautiful voice in the role of Miranda. I was impressed with Alek Schrader as Ferdinand, but he, Caliban (Alan Oke), Antonio (Toby Spence), and Alonso (William Burden) are all tenor roles, and I wonder in England is so full of tenors that this is necessary. (Spence was overparted, both he and Burden sounded strained at times.) John Del Carlo as Gonzalo sings as low as Ariel sings high, but he didn’t have the profundo for his big utopian speech (there was a hymn tune in there somewhere). I liked the ending with Caliban and Ariel repossessing the island between them. The piece could do with more symmetrical writing than it has, à la Britten, but it’s very, very effective. LePage’s staging

had real magic — the opening shipwreck, the floating Ariel. I had no preconceptions, but I loved it. (Met in HD, N¹²)

Chamber Symphony, op 2

Four movements without tempo indication or title. It begins with irregular percussion, fragmentary noodles, jazz bits, tonal horn fifths, in gradual crescendo. II settles, still fragmented. In III clarinets and flutes take the lead – high winds build to climax. IV begins with explosion, hands lead back to strings. Interesting parallel with Adams's Chamber Symphony, which I liked much better. (N¹⁶)

The Exterminating Angel

Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel* yesterday at the Met in HD was a succès d'estime – it has been well received by audiences and critics alike, and I admired it very much, particularly the intrepid cast who sang fearlessly and I assume accurately. But I was neither wholly convinced nor deeply moved by it. The opera is based on a 1962 film by Luis Buñuel, *El ángel exterminador*, but by 2017 both the surrealistic texture and the message of existential Angst are becoming a tad tired. As a Marxist allegory of the wealthy ruling class sunk into self-indulgence, witless cruelty, and abuleia (in its fullest theological sense), it is more timely than ever, but it seemed one-dimensional. The libretto by Tom Cairns and the composer does a fine job of differentiating the multiple characters, but it generates little sympathy for them, nor for the suffering servant class nor the masses at the gate. One other external issue is the number of similar modern operas that depict an ensemble cast of characters trapped within an inescapable symbolic prison: Jimmy López' *Bel Canto* (2015), which also features an operatic diva character, is the closest and most recent, and before that Stephen Hartke's *The Greater Good* (2006) and Domenick Argento's *Postcard from Morocco* (1971), perhaps the best of them. Thomas Adès' score is almost relentlessly complex and unforgiving, and as accustomed as I am to post-serialist music, I was still wishing for a few more hooks. Adès tries, God knows. There are discernible solos, duets and trios to relieve the constant ensemble work, and there's an array of momentary musical allusions. There are fine touches of comedy – “What does it matter, one conductor more or less—” someone remarks, and the violinists play “The Sheep May Safely Graze” on tiny squeaky violins as live sheep on stage are about to be slaughtered. There are brilliant ideas everywhere, I suppose, and a second or third hearing would no doubt reveal many more. But my first impression was that these ideas were left too briefly developed, and that the musical high points were not operatic enough, insufficiently contrasted with the overall anarchic texture. But *The Exterminating Angel* has been generating a great deal of interest, so I may be too harsh. (N¹⁷)

RICHARD ADDINSELL

Warsaw Concerto

From a disc of faux piano concertos for film – written-to-order Rachmaninoff. I'll always associate it with that woman in Sarnia who lived her fantasy of playing the Warsaw Concerto with an orchestra. Naxos sound is awful – flat and distant. [or was that a faulty connection?] (Je¹⁶)

SAMUEL ADLER

Sonata No 2 for Violin & Harpsichord

I know nothing of Adler: he was apparently a student of Piston and taught at Eastman and wrote his Sonata modeled after his teacher's. Allegro brusque, good humored—Lento sends violin into stratosphere above the keyboard ambit, loses its way – Allegro a stylized hoedown. (My¹³)

Canto III fir Violin Alone

Single 8' movement in four sections, slow-fast-slow-fast – lots of gliss, harmonics, scrubbing, scrunching. (My¹³)

JACQUES ANDRÉ FRANÇOIS d'AGINCOURT

Feste de Pentecoste au Convent des Visitandines

An expensive organ CD that I bought on impulse — an Organ Mass by a contemporary of Rameau and J.S. Bach. The voices are women singing plainchant in French baroque style, alternatim with the Organ both Ordinary and Proper. Very beautiful, wonderful organ, but highly soporific. (Ap¹²)

ALEXANDER AGRICOLA

4 Motets in “Chant sur livre” style

Despite his death as late as 1506, Agricola is described as a “late Gothic” composer, as the archaic feel of these pieces affirms. Odd that he was so revered when his sweeter sounding successors were active. Dense texture even in three-part writing, with barely coordinated counterpoint over cantus firmus. Two texts in Latin, two in Old French. Huelgas sails through without apparent effort, closely miked but nice ambience. (O⁰⁹)

Missa Guazzabuglio

Movements are assembled from five different Masses, all 4-part. Style seems less complex than the previous — is it a contrast between experimental and functional music? Probably not. Close imitation, fauxbourdon, Machaut cadences, great rhythmic complexity in Credo. Guazzabuglio— means “jumbled.” (O⁰⁹)

Salve Regina

Superficially sweet-sounding, but full of melismatic twists and curlicues, sudden moments of homophony. Extravagant in concept and filagree — attentive to text but also obscuring it. (O⁰⁹)

3 Secular Chansons

Hard to distinguish from the sacred style. Is the Bergerette more pastoral, i.e. smooth and consonant? Is there any likelihood of more upbeat performance? “Fortuna desperata” is done in two ways, the 3-part original (middle stanza) flanked by JA’s 6-part elaboration. (O⁰⁹)

Secular works (Unicorn Ensemble)

Substantial selection on Naxos pleasant to hear, almost approaching the later madrigal style but preserving the Gothic complexities and angularities. Unicorn is criticized for using too many bells and whistles, but they seem relatively restrained here, if anything too “pure.” The verses are all langue d’oel courtly love set in long melismas so that words are scarcely audible. A nice mix of vocal and instrumental, shorter, longer pieces, and multiple realizations of the same music. (O¹⁰)

Missa In myn zyn

Wonderful disc built around the masterpiece of Agricola’s largest extant Mass, beginning with multiple versions of the original folksong, the Mass itself punctuated with three instrumentals, followed by two shorter works including a gorgeous Regina coeli. The Agricola style is all here — long melismas, complex rhythms of Ars Subtilior, changes of vowel color — the text broken into small bits, each set independently. Snellings’ Capilla Flamenca is simply superb, beautiful singing but nothing prettified – reminiscent of the Orlando Consort. (O¹¹)

KALEVI AHO

Symphony No 5

Serious single-movement Symphony — discordant hammerstrokes with solos, trumpet, other brass rising over top, plus some tonal harmonic wash in background — steady buildup, eerie novel texture, a bit like Honegger. Settles in middle, then takes off at 18', then seems to stop silent at 23'. A tonal elegiac passage, slow winding down, then crescendo. Symphony is disquisition on hammering motif, but it seems to add up to less than the sum of its notes. (N⁰⁹)

Symphony No 7 “Insect Life”

Drawn from Aho’s opera on the Capeks’ satirical Insect Play, the five movements are in disparate styles — more accurately, late modernism interspersed by raunchy pop dance modes. Grasshoppers have scherzando. I like these bits best. If this is supposed to be a symphony as collocation of eclectic styles, the styles aren’t eclectic enough. (N⁰⁹)

NICOLAUS À KEMPIS

Symphonia No 2 “Dolorosa”

Very brief early Trio Sonata, under 5', sectional rather than in movements. (D¹⁰)

JEHAN ALAIN

Organ works

The selection begins with Litanies, one of the few organ pieces I “know.” The organ is massive, the echo cavernous — oddly less so in the other works here. Most are very brief, and bear secular titles. *Le Jardin suspendu* is a paradisaical evocation à la Messiaen. The *Deuxième Fantaisie*, too, is evocative, slow. The *Janequin Variations* ring changes — but not “divisions” — on a modal tune. This is minor music, but very appealing. (My¹¹)

Suite for Organ

The longest work on the disc at 17' is also the most understated. In 4 movements. (My¹¹)

Le jardin suspendu

Organ cushion between stark avant-garde anti-war shell-shocked compositions by Jolivet and Dieter Schnebel. (My¹²)

Deux danses à Agni Yevishta

For four hands. Yevishta was an Asian fire dancer Alain saw perform in 1934, when he was first impressed by non-Western music. (Je¹⁴)

ISAAC ALBENIZ

L'Automne; Piano Sonatas Nos 3, 4 & 5

Early work, pre-Iberia, dismissed cavalierly as salon music. Chopinesque stuff, pretty, but more diatonic, no thematic development, no Spanish feel whatever. Salon music for sure. (Ja⁰⁸)

Recuerdos de viaje; Espagne; Azulejo; La Vega “Fantaisie espagnole”; Navarra

Super collection of Albeniz piano music outside Iberia — but good stuff. The earlier *Recuerdos* less adventurous harmonically, and not all Spanish tinged — but fine. Good car music. (Jy⁰⁹— Muskoka)

Piano Concerto No 1 in A minor, op 78 “Concierto fantástico”

One could miss the Spanish element easily, though I detect it in spots — a dreamy late romantic Concerto, simple texture, harmonized melodies, tasty piano writing. The orchestration is by someone named Traytor, but it's not clear whether he worked with Albeniz or after the fact. *Andante semplice*, rudely interrupted by *Presto*. Finale has stormy beginning, settles down to affirmative ending. Nothing special — I don't think de la Rocha bothered — but a look into Albeniz's creative problems — a slow developer, uncertain what kind of music to write (salon music, opera, light opera, serious concert music), uncertain whether to be European or Spanish, hampered by weak orchestration skills, his life debilitated and shortened by kidney failure — he died at 49. (N¹²)

Iberia; Navarra

This seems Albeniz' sole masterpiece, here in the orchestration by his friend Enrique Arbós. The harmonic daring that impresses me in the piano version seems softened, but the music is still strong — a geographic tour of Spain in five movements. Navarra was completed posthumously by Sévéric and later orchestrated by Arbós. Orchestration sounds great, but I'm surprised Ravel didn't try tweaking it. (N¹²)

Catalonia — Suite Populaire

Simple 6' piece based on folk tunes, orchestrated with help from Dukas. Not as brilliant as Chabrier's *España*, but it bears the comparison. Why isn't it heard? (N¹²)

Suite Española No 1, op 47: Asturias

On the BBC guitar concerto disc, a nice Spanish flavored conclusion. (F¹⁶)

EUGENE d'ALBERT

Piano Concerto No 2 in E, op 9

Unlike No 1, a compact Lisztian one-movement structure in 4 movements, without the chromaticism or glitter. Both Concertos are early — d'Albert then pursued opera, not wholly successfully (I still want to hear Tiefland properly). This piece is pleasant but generic stuff. Big ending. (F⁰⁹)

Overture to Esther

More a symphonic poem by virtue of length — not loud or flashy, but nicely varied. Good piece, but harmonically half a century late. (Naxos sound recorded in Moscow is poor.) (F⁰⁹)

Piano Concerto No 1 in B minor, op 2

Big 43' Concerto: The CD tracks are 5, but it's really the standard layout with cadenza inserted in the Finale. First reaction: This is more appealing than No 2, less "efficient," more leisurely, more sparkle and thunder — what a Concerto is about. Beautiful slow movement, solemn portentous Finale. A big meat-and-potatoes Concerto that deserves revisiting. I'll give No 2 another try. (F⁰⁹)

Symphony in F, op 4

A pleasant surprise — a vast Brahmsian Symphony written when d'Albert was 20, surprisingly relaxed, ingratiating rather than ostentatiously impressive, youthful only in being too full of ideas, but a constantly unfolding canvas. I can't say if it is architecturally sound, but the surface is constantly appealing. Passionate climax in the Langsam. Scherzo seems *moto perpetuo* romp — then a slow, wandering B section. Finale has long *serioso* introduction à la Brahms First — then a tune that sounds like Elgar in his jolly English mood. A puzzlement, immensely attractive. (D¹⁰)

Seejungfräulein, op 15

Luscious scena for dramatic soprano based on Hans Christian Andersen's story. Liner notes compare style to Tristan, loosely accurate though there are no echoes except for the notion of sea music. Kasyan sings a fine performance, beautiful sound. (D¹⁰)

Quartet No 1 in A minor, op 7

Opens with twisty theme, chromatic, cross-rhythmed — settles into hyper-Brahmsian manner — pizzicato triplets in cello, hammered afterbeat figures, soaring cello tune. Slow movement *sehr innig*, later unfolds over rhythmic figures gaining intensity, then subsides into reflective state — wonderful. Third movement a sinuous waltz — beautiful. Finale a Theme with Variations — always risky — d'Albert tries to obscure joints between variations — one has radical cross-rhythms in countermelody, then in whole ensemble. Finishes with springy Allegro variation. Super piece, even if Variation movement is hard to bring off. Sarastro Quartet excellent. (Je¹¹)

Quartet No 2 in E, op 11

Andantino is relaxed, legato. Allegro a striking texture — buzzing doodles, pizzicati, figures off the beat — B section slower with threats of fugato, an extraordinary movement. Adagio tries for depth, intricate formally, reaches emotional climax over rhythmic figure. Too rich to wrap my mind around, but deeply involving. Allegro Finale works its motifs very hard. D'Albert dedicated this Quartet to Brahms, and he's labouring to impress. (Je¹¹)

Piano Sonata in F# minor, op 10

The matrix is unmistakably Brahmsian — d'Albert was a valued friend, and the dedication is to Hans von Bülow. Mässig is rich, warm, gorgeous — not a lot of overt virtuosity, though it's clearly a handful. Langsam opens with inward serenity of late Beethoven — anxious B section — return of A with chromatic ornamentation, gradually simplifies. Finale is large Prelude and Fugue on a chromatic subject that anticipates Reger or Busoni, slow at first, gradually faster through diminution. Masterpiece — wonderful music. (O¹¹)

Vier Stücke, op 16

Four extensive, unrelated pieces. Waltz is nice, not spectacular. Scherzo is phenomenal — perfect flashy encore material with substance. Intermezzo, lackadaisical, improvisatory. Ballade, the major work, is ternary for, dark, agitated, impressive. (O¹¹)

4 Pieces from op 5

More in the way of miniatures — I thought I was hearing late Brahms, and that's saying a hell of a lot. Gorgeous jewels. I want the whole set. (O¹¹)

TOMASO ALBINONI

6 Sonate da chiesa, op 4; 12 Violin Sonatas, op 6

These two sets, from 1694 and 1711, are presented on two CDs interleaved with each other — a wise effort to relieve sameness, though the difference is felt mainly through the organ continuo for op 4. They are all in four movements, and stylistically they are very similar. The liner notes elaborate on some details. Albinoni was of the Venetian school of Vivaldi and the Marcellos. He wrote fluently and vigorously, though on occasion he seems to have just discovered the sequence. The Sonatas are published under the name Tratteniment Armonici rather than Sonate da camera, so I didn't notice my duplication of op 6. (Jy¹³)

Sinfonia in G

Just Largo and Allegro, from God knows what collection. (FSA Strings, live N¹⁷)

JOHANN ALBRECHTSBERGER

Harp Concerto in C

Best remembered as one of Beethoven's teachers. This piece is square, businesslike. Adagio is more plangent, but it gives way to routine. The harp arpeggiation that works so well elsewhere becomes tedious here, and the movement goes on much too long. Finale in brisk 3 lively but repetitive. I caught him repeating a phrase on the supertonic — Beethoven's favorite trick. (Ja¹⁶)

Partita in F, harp & orchestra

Concerto laid out like a small four-movement symphony, but the orchestra is dominated by solo harp. All bright and cheery, with modulation to supertonic after first repeat. Larghetto in pianissimo slow 3, gorgeous harp trills — but interminable. Standard Scherzo, Finale in perky 3. Utterly uninspired music. (Ja¹⁶)

FRANCO ALFANO

Symphony No 1 in E "Classica"

Alfano's operas have a fanatical small cult of admirers, but this is the first I've heard outside Turandot Act III. Allegro bursts with energy and manic color, most like Respighi, Italianate, touched with French impressionism, super-Straussian orchestration, simple musical ideas over-developed with romantic determination. (Like Respighi, Alfano had Russian connections.) I like it. Lento has modal tinge — a nocturnal love scene in a medieval garden, or something just as melodramatic. God knows what he meant by "Classica." Finale opens with solemn fanfares — Presto breaks into dancy fast 4. Beautiful music to bask in, impressive but brain softening. (My¹²)

Symphony No 2

In three movements: A vast 18' Allegro alternates between rhetorical proclamation and quieter bits with pastoral feel — lots of waiting in suspense, which is OK in opera, less so in a Symphony. Alfano is avoiding the over-the-top flamboyance that makes the First so much fun. Largo again has modal sound, Scotch snap figures — goes on forever. Finale, after slow intro, launches into a march marked pomposo and not very catchy. (My¹²)

ALFONSO X "El Sabio"

Cantigas de Santa Maria

The Cantigas are given without texts, making them utterly mystifying — and the Unicorn Ensemble has been roundly condemned for dressing up to modern audiences. Lots of spoken Old

Galician, smooth singing, a large ensemble of instruments to join in. The tunes are pleasant, but that's about all one can gather — the notation is definitely mensural, some of the earliest. There's some 3+3, 2+2+2 rhythm, even today felt as Spanish. Arabic sound in the recorder tootling, and in instrumental track 10, but the Cantigas themselves are European. A totally annoying disc. (Jy¹⁰)

HUGO ALFVÉN

Symphony No 4 in C minor, op 39 —From the Outer Skerries—

Big Romantic Symphony, unadventurous harmonically but wholly gorgeous and rewarding — big melodies, lots of scurrying winds and harps. It seems shorter than its 48 minutes. Four movements without pause. Two solo voices are a novelty, treated prominently from the start but do not steal the show. No holds barred, long passionate slow movement. Attractive piece. (S⁰⁹) Huge 49'

Symphony in a single movement, with eleven tempo changes. Two voices, wordless as in Nielsen's Third, suggest sexual yearning, frustrated passion, while orchestra depicts wild seascape (flutter-tonguing flutes, harp, piano, celeste, trills and skitters). The singers have a bigger role than I recall — but pornographic (according to contemporary critics). Well, there are intimations of Tristan far less steamy than the original. Besides, he was Scandinavian. (Mh¹²)

Festival Overture

Elgarian flourish, then a cute folk tune. Unpretentious, winning, but odd for 1944. (S⁰⁹)

Symphony No 1 in F minor, op 7

Grave intro dramatic with solo cello cadenza, stormy intensity — Allegro plunges into jerky, angular theme, second subject in major, extended development very brassy (all natural horns). Andante predictably lyrical — the best bits happen when Alfvén lets the woodwinds loose. Scherzando opens with modulating sequence. I wonder if he knew Berwald's music. A hint of Bruckner too. Finale folksy. The piece seems by the book — not enough surprise. (Mh¹²)

Symphony No 2 in D, op 11

Yes, this is the one I pegged years ago as Alfvén, knowing only the Midsommarvarka. It's a huge piece, just short of an hour. Expansive Moderato is sunny, full of arpeggios and spirited themes. Andante stern, foreboding, alternating with espressivo passages, emotion of operatic proportions with dramatic silences, shifts of mood and texture — superb. Allegro in minor again dark, relentless — B section in major — material over-extended. Finale is a Prelude & Fugue, stern, the Prelude long — a brass chorale introduces the Fugue with chromatic twists and an accelerando coda. A beautiful Symphony, though the sunny first movement proves misleading. (Mh¹²)

Symphony No 3 in E, op 23

Allegro opens with bright, brusque dance — second motif cut short with rude dissonance — strongly suggestive of Nielsen, with hints of Brahms (the E-major Scherzo in the Fourth). Andante begins with woozy variant of Home Sweet Home on English horn (shades of Dvorak!). Joy touched with melancholy. Presto a piece of prancing, tripping whimsy. Finale opens with fanfare then takes off like the overture to a comic opera. How rare — a Symphony of unproblematic happiness! (Mh¹²)

Dalarapsodi (Swedish Rhapsody No 3), op 47

Moody, melancholic, haunting slow opening — folk dance of ambiguous modality — distant horn melody — genteel waltz-like dance with horn whoops — return to opening theme in full orchestra — aggressive dance in 6/8 (some weird chords). Beautiful but without the infectious innocence of Midsommarvarka. (Mh¹²)

The Mountain King Suite, op 37

Invocation opens with dissonant crashes, ominous tic-toc bass, then a shimmering Eden with celeste, sax. Finale is the wonderful Herdmaid's Dance, a terrific violin showpiece — I've even played it. Super concert Suite, a light music masterpiece on a level with Peer Gynt. (Mh¹²)

Elegy from “Gustav II Adolf,” op 49

Short 4' piece, lovely but not memorable. (Mh¹²)

Symphony No 5 in A minor, op 54

The Fifth stands apart from the rest since Alfvén worked at it for decades until its premiere in 1953 and even after. Massed scurrying strings could be Sibelius, but the Allegro settles into a gentle melancholy with chromatic embellishments out of Liszt — a vast 17' movement. Andante unfolds a modal Lied — passion restrained, perhaps recollected. Scherzo opens with unusual Lento, a chromatic marimba theme, grotesque raspberries from the brass, really weird (Is he giving Modernism the finger?). Finale is another 17' behemoth, a mix of gestures, moods, tempi recycling rather aimlessly, seemingly without formal direction and quite bad. (Mh¹²)

Uppsala-rapsodi (Swedish Rhapsody No 2), op 24

Alfvén's academic festival piece caused some controversy with its potpourri of student drinking songs — light, happy, with unmistakably intoxicated horn glissandi near the end. (Mh¹²)

Drapa, op 27

Another nationalist festival piece, with formal fanfares, two big harp cadenzas — but the big tune is a rather somber march with Trio. Would hardly be out of place in Smetana's Ma Vlast. (Mh¹²)

Andante Religioso (from Revelation Cantata, op 31)

Short piece with a tradition of independent performance in Sweden. Great final cadence. (Mh¹²)

A Legend of the Skerries, op 20

There's no information about the legend, so the tone poem remains a mood piece. It begins with ominous loomings, becomes stormy, then emotively uplifted, then more violently stormy, conflicting — ends as it began with desolate seascape. Superb. (Mh¹²)

The Prodigal Son Suite

Seven numbers from a ballet written when Alfvén was in his eighties. Lively music dominated by folkdances with at least three polkas — tuneful, unpretentious, very enjoyable. (Mh¹²)

Midsommarvaka (Swedish Rhapsody No 1), op 19

I saved Alfvén's smash hit for last: The title means “midsummer vigil,” and in fact depicts a night-long carouse, even with a snooze mid-way. Great stuff. Was it a model for Max Davies' Orkney Wedding and Sunrise? (Mh¹²)

ANTON ALIABIEV

String Trio in G minor

Short and very attractive variations on a Russian folksong, here arranged for standard Trio from original for two violins and cello. I recognize the composer's name from his famous song, but knew nothing of the pathos of his unfortunate life. (Je¹³)

CHARLES-VALENTIN ALKAN

Sonatina, op 61

Four concentrated movements in 18', each furiously prestissimo perpetuo moto except for the Allegramente. Even Hamelin seems to be playing on the edge. Pure virtuoso flash and dazzle. Wow! (S¹¹)

Barcarolle, op 65/6

Short engine cooler, lovely melody over rocking bass, with some exotic accidentals. (S¹¹)

Le festin d'Ésop, op 31/12

Variations on an eccentric theme named for fable in which a man invites guests and serves them a dinner in which every course features tongue, sauced and dressed various ways. The entire piece seems a celebration of eccentricity. Alkan was spiritual father to Satie. Fabulous! (S¹¹)

Piano Sonata, op 33 “Les quatre âges”

Monumental virtuoso piece in four movements, just under 40' long. The four ages are the ages of

life — 20, 30, 40 and 50 years — each successively slower. First, relatively short, is sheer poetic fireworks. Second, the beefiest, is a Faust piece with themes for Faust, Mephisto (its inversion), and Marguerite, ending with a monstrous eight-voice (!) fugue and a forearm smash. Third is idyllic, in thirds and sixths. Fourth, “Prometheus Bound,” is slow chordal homophony — final striving upward scale, then fizzle. Fine music, but the problematic design of the Sonata is a steady decline. (O¹¹)

Cello Sonata in F, op 47

Written for the same cellist as the one so honoured by his friend Chopin. Allegro turbulent, virtuosic for piano. Allegretto has the feel of barcarolle — Trio a bit bouncy. Adagio becomes more soulful, a 12/8 gentle figure in the cello — beautiful. Finale a mad tarantella — piano has more notes than the cello, some peculiar cross rhythms near the end. Intriguing signs of Alkan’s eccentricity throughout. (F¹³) My second listen. After the Violin Sonata it seems less eccentric, but it’s still out there. Naxos CD is poorly recorded, the piano close, cello distant – much better all around on Harmonia Mundi. Finale is Saltarello, not Tarantella. What’s the distinction? (Ap¹³)

Duo Concertante in F# minor, violin & piano, op 21

Opens in deceptively Schubertian mode – the the piano rumbles, violin resorts to striding octaves, passion soars. Second movement is entitled L’Enfer – piano is flamboyantly dissonant in its deep register, then taunting on high, and gets all the fireworks – extraordinary for circa 1840. Finale is marked “aussi vite que possible,” but the players wisely restrain themselves. Could it be F# major? Afterbeat bits are very odd – the piece has eccentricity written all over it. Weird. (Ap¹³)

Piano Trio in G minor, op 30

The earliest of Alkan’s three chamber works to be written, and most conventional. But it has many catchy features: the running notes through the compact Allegro; the pizzicato and romantic lyricism of the Scherzo Trio. Lentement begins deceptively, but the piano takes over with a bombastic solo passage and sets up alternating dialogue with the strings, who ultimately establish an orchestral tremolo for the piano – very original. Finale a moto perpetuo in 3 for piano, strings joining in final race to the finish. A fine piece. (Ap¹³)

GREGORIO ALLEGRI

Miserere

The celebrated Miserere is given by Fabre-Garrus in two versions, the familiar George Guest edition (after Burney), reflecting performance practice from the late 18th century, when the ornamentation had become fixed, and from mid-17th century, when ornamentation was improvised. A useful comparison. (Muskoka — Jy¹²) The Miserere is a cumulative work, a tradition of improvised ornamentation – including the famous high C captured by Mendelssohn – and frozen in editions of 1870 and 1951. It’s unforgettable anyway. (O¹³)

Missa Vidi turbam magnam

The CD is an unprecedented opportunity to hear Allegri apart from the Miserere. The six-part Mass, written a cappella for the Papal chapel, was written in high Renaissance style but with strong evidences of influence from secunda practica — less constant counterpoint, greater attention to vertical sonorities, and stronger feeling of tonality over modality. The result must have been new then, but now seems relatively tame, though beautiful nonetheless. (Muskoka — Jy¹²)

3 Motets

All use organ continuo and sound early baroque, almost more like madrigals with florid bits rather than motets. Cantate Domino has nice duple-triple time shifts. (Muskoka Jy¹²)

Missa in lectulo meo

Eight-voice Mass in stile antico, like all five of Allegri’s Masses, with a magnificent nine-fold

alternatim Kyrie. Several moments of syncopation seem madrigalistic (or does Trendell point them up?) Et incarnates and Crucifixus are beautifully simple and solemn – Sanctus fully contrapuntal – gorgeous Agnus Dei. An exceptionally beautiful Mass. (O¹³)

Missa Christus resurgens

Eight-voice Mass for Easter based on Allegri's own motet. The tone is warm, rich, rigorously consonant, only lightly contrapuntal – the text is quite audible. Variety arises from antiphonal effects and changes of meter (plus changes of tempo and articulation, courtesy the conductor). I didn't detect the "telling dissonances" in the Agnus Dei. (O¹³)

3 motets & Miserere

The first of Allegri's two Lamentations is 4-part and quite plain, nearly homophonic – just the beginning is on the Carwood CD. The Miserere is done from George Guest's edition, which tries to recover the original from two centuries of overlay – even in 1640 soloists had a free hand. However it's done, it remains unutterably beautiful. The second setting of Lamentations is also 4-part but for the unusual combination SSAT. It too is nearly homophonic, but with plangent expressiveness. Carwood also inserts a highly polyphonic 5-part Palestrina motet, no doubt for contrast: Cantantibus organis is a Cecilian motet. Allegri's Gustate et videte looks forward, with organ continuo and contrasts tutti and soli ripieni alternately, with a ritornello. Very much of the early baroque. (D¹⁸)

WILLIAM ALWYN

Quartet No 1 in D minor

Alwyn designated this the First, having discarded four earlier Quartets that had been performed and well received. This is in a woozy neo-romantic style, bitonal touches but not dissonant. Quick Scherzo with Debussyish B section. Adagio is the magical centerpiece — winds around chromatically but settles into muted section with violin melody in stratosphere. Finale, fast, driven, stops for nostalgic episodes. Nearly persuasive throwback written in 1954. (Ja¹¹)

Quartet No 2 "Spring Waters"

Written 22 years after No 1, much more modern, astringent sound. In three movements of variable tempi, generally slow-fast-slow. Nearly static, atmospheric, working a 5-note motif with some romantic harmony emerging near the end. Scherzo teases between a harsh motif and a romantic motif, mostly pianissimo. Finale desolate, pianissimo, a desiccated fugue. Ends on a most implausible major-key cadence. A proper English Kancheli searching for a language. Too much of one thing, but nice. (Jy¹¹)

Quartet No 3

In two long movements: Allegro begins with sharp dissonant chords and a feroce passage — followed by romantic theme, almost soupy — marcato section over burbling accompaniment — rugged themes develop — a ponticello bit, then viola brings back the romance, nice ending. Second movement is slow-fast-slow: Adagio sustains gentle romantic lines over undulating figures, builds energy to B section. Described as waltz but more a danse macabre, exciting. Adagio returns, bittersweet. Gorgeous ending. Super piece, best of the three Quartets, a real journey. (Jy¹¹)

Novelette

Lightweight encore piece for string quartet, unpretentious, pleasant. (Jy¹¹)

JOAN ALBERT AMARGÓS

Flute Sonata

Amargós, a native Spanish contemporary, seems mildly serial, melodic, and uses no extended techniques. (My¹⁴)

JOHN AMNER

Amner was a provincial composer of great talent who wrote only choral music for Ely Cathedral, plus one extant organ piece. I bought this for the anthem we sing at FSA — which isn't here. Style is characteristically Jacobean, with casual cross relations and infinite placidity. Present are a fine Te Deum. “O ye little flock” is outstanding, viols accompanying a double choir, final Alleluiah. “I will sing” has rhythmic life. “My Lord is hence removed” finally has an upbeat bit in the final Alleluiah. The organ divisions don't grab me, but it's good to have them documented. The Ely choir boys seem unusually strident. (O¹⁰)

GILBERT AMY

Missa cum júbilo

Kyrie begins beautifully — whole tones dominate, then avant garde textures interpose — the 3+3+3 pattern is clouded, but otherwise the traditional sacred text anchors the abstract gestures in a comprehensible purpose. Gloria opens with parlando section — then kaleidoscopic textures (beautiful solo soprano), spoken bits, an elaborate crescendo Amen with brass and chimes. Credo seems pageant of avant gardish word painting. Agnus Dei has marvellous processional opening. The elaboration is wild and baroquish, probably overlong, but it seems to convey sincere faith. Very impressive piece. (Jy⁰⁹—Muskoka)

LEROY ANDERSON

Sleigh Ride

I'd normally shrug this off, but hearing it in two organ renditions — Ross MacDonald and Paul — makes me reflect on the power of the organ and all its traps to make a mediocre player like Ross sound great, while Paul sounds bland on his German baroque instrument. On Paul's recital, if Gerald Near's “Divinum Mysterium” is the spiritual reality of Christmas, the joyous carols and Sleigh Ride are just as real a component. “I'm a biker — I gotta have fun!” (D¹⁰—live)

HENDRIK ANDRIESSEN

Symphonic Study

Impressive work fixed on opening figures in winds, worked through. Similar in sound to Pijper's fine Third Symphony, but of a lesser order. (Au⁸)

LOUIS ANDRIESSEN

De Stijl

Dutch minimalist's tribute to Mondrian's boogie-woogie by Hendrik's son. I should hate the pop music sound, but it is so stylized that I don't. Primary colours, drum set rim shots, boogie bass, loud, garish, abrasive, wordless voices in the texture, all electronically manipulated. Ensemble calls for flutes, brass, saxes, 4 keyboards, percussion, 3 electric guitars. Spoken bit mid-way is unfortunate. It's a new sound — I like it. (F¹¹)

M is for Men, Music, Mozart

Four songs with three instrumental interludes written for a Peter Greenaway TV art film. The songs are scatological nonsense sung by a nasty actress's voice (not even pop), truly hateful. The interludes are more entertaining, scored for thirteen instruments, mainly brass & saxes, containing nuggets of Mozart on a bed of pops, big band, minimalism and pseudo-Weill. The point is obviously to de-Pater the bourgeoisie. I could warm to this were it not for the degradation of the human voice. (F¹¹)

FELICE ANERIO

Salve Regina

For double choir, just 4-part, but the two choirs are high and low voices. (D¹⁸)

JEAN-HENRI d'ANGLEBERT

Pièces de clavecin

Kenneth Gilbert tunes his clavecin in true temperament, and it takes getting used to. I can tell by ear the names of some of the dances, but would be hard put to place this music in relation to Lully or Rameau (d'Anglebert was born earlier than Lully). Rather somber sounding. This puts all of Couperin's colour and character into perspective. (D⁸)

ALLESANDRO ANNUNZIATA

Meltemi

Short programmatic quartet piece. The title refers to rough autumnal winds that dissipate the intense Mediterranean summer heat. (Alcan Qt live—Ja⁰⁹)

GEORGE ANTHEIL

Symphony No 3 "American"

First bars have syncops, blue notes, sax, tunes out of Jerome Kern. Parallel fifths à la Sioux, vulgar vamps, crazy juxtapositions, bitonal touches, all like Ives. A great piece! But is it because he can't develop a theme? Finale a mere workaday rouser. (O⁸)

Tom Sawyer Overture; Hot-Time Dance; McKonkey's Ferry

Overture a rouser, as is McKonkey (sounds like Shostakovich Festival Overture, with unfortunate stops and starts). Dance is cross between "Hot Time in the Old Town" and "Hora Staccato" — quirkier than Leroy Anderson. (O⁸)

Capital of the World

Three numbers from ballet – a farrago of dances — lots of ideas — it could do with more tongue in cheek, à la Virgil Thomson (who admired it). GA has no *dry* humour. (O⁸)

A Jazz Symphony

Composed 1923, same time as Ballet mécanique, for Paul Whiteman, an effort to outdo Gershwin. Then felt revulsion (for the piece, for jazz— because of Pound). Reorchestrated in 1955, the version recorded. A musical comedy — great nose thumbing. (O⁸) The Peress recording uses the original version, with solo piano — a smash. The performance of choice. (Mh¹¹)

Jazz Sonata; Can-Can; Sonatina; Death of Machines; Little Shimmy

Two minutes of avant garde ragtime, five minutes of avant garde Offenbach à la Milhaud, a bit of mock neoclassicism. "Death of Machines" is puzzling, not percussive but transparent, slow etude. "Shimmy" is syncopated dance with bluesy tune, title more provocative than the music. (O⁸)

Piano Concerto No 1

Very Stravinskian in spirit throughout, in places echoing Le Sacre and Petrouchka — but with an idiosyncratic twist. GA seems Russian in feel, like Prokofiev's factory music. (O⁸)

Piano Concerto No 2

Less Stravinsky, more GA. Oddly, neither Concerto goes for showy virtuoso display. (O⁸)

Quartet No 1; Lithuanian Nights

Quartet is single large movement, varying tempi & textures, moderately dissonant, but no excessively complex rhythms. In patchwork mode, 00not as flamboyantly avant garde or jazzy as other works. The others are tiny juvenalia ending with gross theft from Petrouchka. (N⁸) The Quartet sounds much more convincing in the Peress performance — jazzier, more edge. (Mh¹¹)

Violin Sonata No 1

Repeated dissonances and clusters, glissandi, sempre fortissimo. Rhythms irregular but underlying pulse seems steady. (D⁸) Much larger than No 2, at 25 minutes, and in four movements. Mark Fewer's version seems different from what I remember — better check. Allegro full of repeated banging, dissonant quadruple stops, scraped bow effects (did Olga do this?). Short Andante played over piano tick-tock. Funebre fairly objective, with African tinge. Presto Finale most familiar with repeated chords, glissandi, bow scrapes, measured silences — the works. (Fe¹²)

Violin Sonata No 2

Add to the mix violin glissandi — more upper register passages — stiches of pop parody (Randall Thompson's —hoochie koochie—) — as hilarious as Ives. Yes, there's a drum at the end — North African sound. These Sonatas are GA's true avant garde masterpieces. (D⁸) Terrific performance on the Peress disc, technically stronger and in better sound, I think. Check it. (Mh¹¹) A single 9' movement full of parody, quotations, wildness — familiar and wonderful in supreme performance by Mark Fewer. Could Antheil have known Ives's music in 1923? Katherine Heyman championed it a little later, but he doesn't get mentioned. OTOH Antheil didn't flag his influences. (Fe¹²)

Sonatina for Violin & Piano

Conventional (more or less) neoclassicism, with extreme touches — a violin gliss, a run off the fingerboard. Finale gets down country. Erikson does not have refined technique but plenty of commitment — persuasive performances. (D⁸)

Violin Sonata No 3

Gentler opening tune on G string (Olga's) — some bitonality. Seems like Stravinsky in peasant mode — less frenetic than usual for GA. (D⁸)

Quartet No 2

Lots of ideas—cliché figurations—one after another, in four movements. A nose thumbing piece. (Ja⁹)

Six Little Pieces for String Quartet

Miniatures in eclectic styles from 1931, eight minutes total. Parodistic. (Ja⁸)

Quartet No 3

More ingratiating work from 1948 — folksy themes, American sounding where not Russian after Prokofiev, Shostakovich. Touches of dissonance, lots of rhythmic drive, but not convincing. (Ja⁸)

Mécanique No 1

Previously unknown 2' piece on a piano roll picked up by Marc-André Hamelin at a flea market. Dating from 1920, probably GA's first pianola piece, possibly fragmentary. In GA's bad-boy machine-music mode. (O¹⁰)

Ballet mécanique

Realization for two player pianos — I'm not clear whether GA sanctioned such a version himself. There are a few things that seem different, like the 2 on 3 rhythms near the beginning, but maybe my memory is poor. Not as powerful as the multi-piano version with full percussion, but very good in itself, infinitely better than the pallid reading on Naxos. (O¹⁰) The Peress disc claims to reproduce the version performed at Carnegie Hall in 1927 — a single pianola, plus pianos and percussion, with aeroplane propellor. It sounds very convincing, though not as overpowering as the electronic version for Open Minds. (Mh¹¹)

Violin Sonata No 4

This is entirely new to me. Three movements. Allegro Scherzo is stolen, no, photographed from Prokofiev. GA's kleptomania never got cured. Passacaglia: long piano passage — violin finally enters in nostril position (copied after the Classical Symphony?). Oddly unsatisfying, even though I'm a sucker for passacaglias. Toccata in irregular bars. More Prokofiev, with return of opening material at the end. Superficially exciting. (Fe¹²)

Sonata for Violin Solo

Unfinished work, planned for Olga in 1927, but GA left it in the midst of the slow movement. He doesn't seem to know what to do without the piano mechanism. Open strings, arpeggios, left-hand pizz, big stuff on the G string (for Olga) — all over the map. Second movement more of same. No wonder he abandoned it. (Fe¹²)

Symphony No 4

Wartime piece premiered in 1945, contemporaneous with *Bad Boy of Music* — both being ostentatious testaments to his patriotic loyalties, though the echoes of Shostakovich and Prokofiev are impossible to miss. Militaristic, quite dissonant for post-conversion Antheil. Allegro tries to be upbeat, but it actually seems fragile (rolling ostinato out of the Sibelius Second). Scherzo brassy, bitonal bits, disintegrates at the end. Finale starts with a bang, big triumphant allargando ending. The problem with Antheil's juxtapositional method is that it lacks direction, telos. Goossens—1959 recording sounds amazingly true. (N¹²)

HANS ERICH APOSTEL

Quartet No 1, op 7

Apostel was a Schoenberg protégé, and this piece recorded by LaSalle seems the only sample available. My guess is that it's not serial — the notes say nothing. It's in Schoenberg's expressionist manner filled with Angst and quick mood changes. The Variations get fairly wild — deeply felt. Presto is scary and spooky — Halloween is coming. Largo is self-flagellant, searing. I'm glad they found room for it. (O¹³)

JACOB ARCADELT

Missa Noe Noe

Parody Mass in 4 parts from the middle generation between Josquin and Palestrina, based on a motet by Mouton performed here. Lovely clear textures, a gentle Sanctus, restrained Hosanna, a few plangent cross relations in the Agnus Dei. A Christmas Mass, inwardly festive. Henry's Eight sing 2=to-a-part, making a sound more human than ethereal, and they shun the reverberant acoustic of most other recordings in this repertoire. The remainder of the disc features Mouton's "Nesciens mater" — one of the most heavenly motets I've ever heard, a 4-part double canon. A lengthy motet by Isaac, "Virgo prudentissima" (q.v.), and 4 macaronic Marian songs from a century before the named composers: "There is no rose" is a beautiful standard; "Alma Redemptoris mater, a joyous "Alleluia," and an "Ave Maria" done with chant. Super Christmas repertoire. (Jy¹⁰)

ANTONIO ARCHILEI

Aria d'Armonia

Early example of *secunda practica* from 1589, from an Intermede — a masque or tableau — composed in collaboration with Emilio de Cavalieri. Armonia = Music of the Spheres. (O¹⁷)

ANTON ARENSKY

Piano Concerto in F minor, op 2

Fully mature despite early opus number, very attractive — big tune, some bombast, lots of glitter, Russian folk feel — mediates Tchaikovsky and Rimsky. I've heard it before and would gladly hear it more often. (Je⁰⁹)

Fantasia on Russian Folk Songs, op 43

Short piece, exactly as advertised. Good rep. (Je²) As "Fantasia on Themes by I.T. Ryabini" I thought it was a different piece. Liner notes identify Ryabini as a peasant who sustained the oral epic tradition; the piano solo is written to suggest the *gusla*. Very nice stuff, quiet ending. (O⁰⁹)

To the Memory of Suvarov

Patriotic march — not quite up to Walton but does the job. (Je¹⁰)

Symphonic Scherzo

More elaborate, better than Rachmaninoff's, glimpses of good tune but repetitive workout. (Je¹⁰)

Suite No 2 "Silhouettes"

Five character pieces for orchestra — very minor music indeed, but the last two sounded interesting — The Dreamer, The Dancer (i.e. Spanish dancer). (Ag¹⁰)

Suite No 1 in G minor, op 7

Distinctively Russian, set out in 5 movements: Variations on a folksong, a dance in 5/4. A Scherzo straight out of Borodin. A processional. Basso Ostinato, also in 5/4. Triumphant March. Ostinato was Arensky's great hit, deservedly. Super music. Check out "Silhouettes" again. (Ag¹⁰)

Suite No 3, op 33 — Variations in C —

Had he called it Variations for Orchestra this might have gained the prestige of genre, cf Brahms or Schoenberg. But it's more in the nature of a Suite — charming pastiches, especially the bits with piano (& celeste in the Minuet) — but lightweight. (Ag¹⁰)

Symphony No 1 in B minor, op 4

Allegro contrasts sinister brass with perky manner and sentimental motif in strings — full of ideas and surprises, interplay of feelings, subito ff — wonderful coda with gong. Andante has Rimskian flavour, broadly melodic, more sinister brass, hints of ballet. Scherzo a gnome dance with gentler Trio. Finale a giocoso Russian dance in major key — gnomes threaten but get fended off. Terrific piece. (S¹⁰)

Coronation Anniversary Cantata, op 26

Elgar had nothing to teach Arensky about pomp and circumstance — what thrilling occasional music with the advantage of brevity. Based on Slava! theme. Both soloists, alas, sing flat. (O¹⁰)

Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky, op 35a

Theme is that piano piece arranged so beautifully as a Christmas anthem — that's why I know it so well. Another in the line of Quartet movements with an independent life — Tchaikovsky, Borodin, Barber. It's great to have it. (O¹⁰)

Three Vocal Quartets, op 57

For SATB with solo cello, a beautiful Romantic sound. Solo obligato is lovely, though cello activity easily obscures text — a problem Arensky evades but does not entirely solve. Cello as burbling spring in No 3 is remarkable. (O¹⁰)

Violin Concerto in A minor, op 54

I've heard this before and to my surprise recognize, vaguely, the principal theme. In one movement, the opening theme returning between Adagio, Valse, and Cadenza episodes in rondo fashion, very appealing, terse at 22' — a concert showpiece with no symphonic pretensions. It should be at least as popular as the Glazunov. (N¹¹)

Piano Trio No 1 in D minor, op 32

The one piece of Arensky's that has entered standard rep. The Hochelaga performance is very good, but blurry in places where I want icy crispness. What great music! Is the Finale a bit off — until the return of the first movement theme? Arensky never touched this altitude again. (N¹¹) Yes, it's a handful, just as hard as it sounds — Arthur Rowe had all he could do with those runs in the Scherzo. But so wonderful to hear it, see I live. (Rowe, Preucil, Kim Trio, N¹²)

Piano Trio No 2 in F, op 73

The lesser known of the two: Allegro unfolds richly, laid back mood — finishes with Vivace coda. Romanza a beautiful outpouring, just a few dark moments — a hit. Scherzo competes with the ebullience of the First and nearly equals it. Wow! Finale a set of character Variations — piano brilliance, a waltz, a galop, a slower nostalgic waltz, a festive march — that plunges unexpectedly into reprise of earlier matter, the sudden drama giving way to wistful resignation. It's hard to choose between this masterpiece and that. (N¹¹)

Piano Quintet in D, op 51

Lush Allegro opens with agitated development, brilliant piano writing — smashing. Variations develop a smiling-through-tears tune — what a cello solo! — quick variation leads to final

plaintive restatement of theme. Scherzo a flighty 6/8, with Trio in slower tempo — a big movement. Brief Finale acts as coda to the piece — severe counterpoint in minor key — in modo antico — with reprise of lush opening in major. Perhaps too equally divided between piano and ensemble, but what thrilling music! (Ja¹²) I made my acquaintance not too long ago and was impressed. Nothing is held back — a warm, ardent soundworld. Variations ardent, whether turbulent or lyrical — reprise of theme at end glorious. Superb Scherzo. Finale a heavy-booted fugue with retuning themes. A real beauty. (Je¹³)

Quartet No 1 in G, op 11

Allegro is well made sonata-allegro with nicely contrasted but not particularly striking ideas — nice Vivace coda. Andante presents a sentimental song, truly gorgeous; fugato in B section (a modified inversion of A—). the Yings really soup it up. Minuetto rhythmically tricky, nice. Finale begins in minor on folksy Russian modal theme — virtuoso razzle-dazzle variations. (Fe¹²)

Quartet No 2 in A minor, op 35

This is the Quartet first written and often performed in a version with two cellos — the Yings present the normal configuration. three movements: Moderato opens with idea from Orthodox liturgy, dark, with second more Romantic tune over top, gorgeous and distinctive — passage with violin arpeggios soars — ending returns to liturgy. Second movement is the famous Variations on a Theme of Tchaikovsky, sounding even better in the chamber version. Wow! Finale begins with Andante recalling liturgical mood — Allegro develops the great Russian national hymn Slava! How is this glorious masterpiece not core repertoire? (Fe¹²) The string quartet with two cellos. I didn't know it was written immediately after Tchaikovsky's death, it has the Variations on a theme of Tchaikovsky as its long slow movement, and the Rasumovsky/Boris theme Finale. The two cellos give the piece a gorgeous mahogany sheen, incomparable! Beautiful piece, caught in live performance on CBC, driving home from Muskoka. (Jy¹⁸)

DOMINICK ARGENTO

I Hate and I Love

Three choral songs on Catullus in English translation, with light percussion. A model of text setting for clarity, a severe challenge for intonation and balance. Argento dwells on the motif of romantic thralldom. (Mh⁰⁹)

The Boor

Charming one-act opera on a comedy by Chekhov: boorish neighbour intrudes on mourning widow to demand payment — they quarrel, she challenges him to a duel, he falls in love and carries her off. A 3-hander (her servant is a tenor) with superb music, vocal writing, musico-dramatic fluidity, a great trio in middle, a super duet comic externally (he explains how to shoot the gun), romantic internally (they are attracted). James Madeiros, Sonia, Eric Nies. (live London Fringe—Je¹¹)

Te Deum

Written 1987, apparently Argento's sacred magnum opus, for choir and orchestra with no soloists. Each of six segments of the Latin text is paired with a medieval English song. Style alternates between solemnity and informality, but not radically — at first I thought not enough. Tonal, with a few chromatic lines — presumably serial — running through, sometimes contrapuntal, very intricate. Gorgeous moments, but Argento doesn't lose sight of the big sweep. Marvellous quiet ending (D¹¹)

Evensong — Of Love and Angels

Major and moving masterpiece — written after the death of Argento's wife. A worship service, a de facto Requiem for his wife, and a meditation on his own death. Text of the service is the Bethesda pool passage in John's Gospel, the centerpiece is a sermon sung by the soprano, the

beautiful text also written (and assembled) by Argento. Style is almost wholly triadic, consonant, solacing, with a three-triad progression that acts as motto throughout. A treasure. (Seattle Ja¹²)

Jonah and the Whale

Liturgical music drama in two parts, 11 numbers, without a break, for Narrator, Tenor, Bass, choir and instruments. Text is based on medieval mystery play *Patience*, plus *Jonah*, *De profundis* (Psalm 130), sea chanties, and *Lobet dem Herrn*. Written 1973, a few years after Tavener's *Whale*. (Part I, 1) *The Lesson* [Chorale] Mildly dissonant, no recognizable tune. (2) *The Charge to Jonah* [Arietta and Cavatina] God is basso profundo, Jonah a tenor afraid for his life. (3) *His Flight* [Worksongs & Sea Shanties] Chorus divisi, narrator speaking over, Jonah joining in – great ensemble! (4) *Storm at Sea* [Variations on a Shanty] God summons the winds; narrator speaks over choir. Solo calls for lots to determine victim – Jonah – tossed overboard and the storm ceases. (5) *In the Belly of the Whale* [Intermezzo] Narrator, two trombones. harp. Choir counsels patience. (6) *His Prayer* [Aria with Chorus] Jonah prays, choir sings *De Profundis* – big 9' scene – contrapuntal setting of psalm with tenor prayer, beautiful. Narrator relates that the fish vomits him out – and he accepts God's command. (Part II, 7) *In Nineveh* [Ostinato & Kyrie] Ostinato is the camel train. Jonah preaches of sin and God's vengeance. The Hing (baritone) agrees, as choir sings *Kyrie* – beautiful, with high soprano solo. (8) *Jonah's Despair* [Cadenza] Jonah prays to die – God rebukes him. Narrator tells of Jonah's flight, hiding in enclosed booth. (9) *The Booth* [Nocturne & Aubade] Again a duo of trombones. Choir sings of the beautiful vine of Jonah's dream, big crescendo, to triumph – but Narrator tells of the worm and the vine wilting. (10) *God's Rebuke* [Fugal Aria & Hymn] God, angry, berates Jonah, while the choir sings *Lobet dem Herrn*. Go now in peace. (11) *The Lesson Restated* [Chorale and Coda] Absolutely glorious ending. Masterpiece. (Ag¹⁷)

THOMAS ARNE

6 Keyboard Concerti

Liner notes are very informative here: Concerti were published as a set posthumously, but written over a period of years, conceived primarily for different keyboard instruments, revised before publication. My first reaction was how very baroque they sound, considering that Arne died as late as 1787, but the earliest was written probably in the 1740s, and the notes observe certain galante and classical features. Delightful music — I somehow seem to know No 2 in G. Not good car music because of the dynamic difference between solo and orchestra. (Muskoka Jy¹²)

8 Overtures

I had no idea that Hogwood's *L'Oiseau Lyre* LP was an iconic event in early music circles — the first recording of the Academy of Ancient Music, an experiment with original instruments, and it shows once or twice in the winds, the horns especially. But the performance holds up extremely well. Can anyone distinguish Arne from Handel by ear — I can't. But I'm delighted to have tracked down the *Air* (as dolled up and recorded by Boyd Neel) in the *Second Overture*. Good stuff. (F¹³)

MALCOLM ARNOLD

Symphony No 7, op 113

Serious Symphony by composer I know only through the *Dances* and the atmospheric *Tam O'Shanter*. First movement is solid — brassy, big strokes, tonal dissonance, nice sour jazzy bit, never drags. Second and Third less convincing — much repetition of uninteresting figures. Finale never catches fire, ends on wholly arbitrary, unprepared triad. Disappointment. (N⁰⁸)

Symphony No 8, op 121

Much more satisfying than No 7, the spirit of Shostakovich hovering near. March tune in First movement ironic, distant, wistful, heard at one point through Kancheli haze. Reflective Second. Vivace Finale — dissipates into thin texture then recover for race to the end. Good piece. (No⁸)

English, Scottish, Cornish, Irish & Welsh Dances

Good British light music, some with a darker or more serious edge, and a textbook of orchestration. Not all are dancelike — rather lyrical, marziale, whatever. Few are familiar tunes. (F⁰⁹)

Symphony No 5

Tempestuoso features inconclusive phrases on winds in vast spaces marked by chimes, glock, celeste, timps — builds, dissipates oddly. (Liner notes describe a “brutal” climax, but I’d not use that word.) Andante sounds like a Brit flic love theme in strings, very lush — B section becomes dissonant, weirds out — celeste arabesques bring love theme back. Con fuoco opens innocently over 5/4 ostinato, grows into raucous brass fugato — moves into big band territory, 4/4 with swung afterbeats. Risoluto has military fifes & drums — builds to return of the big tune in full Hollywood glamour — ending quiet, introspective. I’m put off by stylistic incongruities that sound neither coherent nor incongruous enough. This piece could grow on me, or turn me off completely. (Ag¹¹)

Symphony No 6, op 95

In 3 movements: Energico has short, nervous brass phrases sounded over pizzicato running bass with pedals that grow and explode — big climax. Lento has similar nervous phrases over sustained strings, passages of big band sound not well integrated, ends down. Finale begins with Shostakovich-like fanfare in major, works into nervous development. Recap much pared down — coda begins march to triumphant major. Coherence: the design is artful, but the ending sounds fraudulent. (S¹¹)

Symphony No 1, op 22

In three movements: Allegro begins with brass and timps in oddball polytonal fanfare — second idea tentative (all seem built on minor thirds). Fragmented gestures in isolated space, a unique soundworld. Andantino similarly spare, sudden, almost like tonal Stockhausen, but the fragments never take off — they just peter out. Vivace begins fugally, a nervous motif, more coherent because fragments overlap, then a silly circus bit, then a maestoso movie theme with a mighty V-I cadence. Novel but awful. (D¹²)

Symphony No 2, op 63

In three movements: Allegro has three-note pick-up as main motif — less fragmented and polytonal than the First, even a bit of oom-pah, but sustained building through the movement — to a quiet ending. Lento opens with broad G-string melody à la Bruckner, unfolds in the cellage, reveals a two-note motif that’s repeated all too obviously, to big ending. Allegro Finale begins playfully — it seems silly after end of Lento — quiet note-spinning, lots of runs with ominous undertones — some nice soaring bits — Presto coda with furious timps. (D¹²)

Symphony No 4, op 71

Scherzando opening with bongos, then a tune with delicate sounds, capricious interjections, a jungle passage, another with light pop touch, traces of TV theme. Scherzo is dissonant, quiet but with a snarl. Andantino circles around until violin entry gives shape, still quiet; well into movement a second idea rises in brass, only to be banished by pizzicato strings; later, artificial harmonics in glissando, all very laid back. Finale, marked con fuoco, begins with syncopated fugato, develops at length, interrupted by vulgar, crazy march; fugato returns, builds to grand maestoso, rhythmic finish. This might be the most interesting of the Arnold Symphonies I’ve heard, though there are still longueurs. (D¹²)

Guitar Concerto, op 67

Allegro is light in tone, even a bit louche, and thankfully evading Spanish idioms. Orchestration is careful, of course, though the BBC recording is very close. The movement ends *en l’air*. Lento threatens dissonant modernism at first but settles into a reflective tone with reminiscence of the

Allegro; a quicker B section in loping, off-kilter 3 interrupts, and then the Lento is restored. Finale is a shorter movement in an amiable 3 – is it a passacaglia. Very enjoyable piece, despite my apprehensions. (F¹⁶)

4 Scottish Dances

Wonderful pieces, too sophisticated for lite music, too pop for mainstream. Best of the sets? (N¹⁷)

ALEXANDER ARTUNIAN

Trumpet Concerto

The only piece by this Armenian composer that gets played — and I'm hearing it for the first time. As expected, it has overtones of Khachaturian, even Rimsky. Balsam plays it Western style, no vibrato. Muted middle section has a night-club touch, but it's quite beautiful. Finale a quickstep with cadenzas. Effective showpiece. (Ap¹²)

THOMAS ASHEWELL

Missa Ave Maria

More primitive sounding than Lassus or Palestrina on same disc — not only because of dissonant false relations avoided by those composers. (Van Nevel uses them freely in his Richafort CD as well, but I'm not sure why.) Long work, 31 minutes for 4-movement mass (lacking Kyrie as usual for English Masses). Beautiful of course. Notes make great issue of contrasting styles, but dissonances aside, the contrasts remain subtle to me. (Je⁰⁸)

EMMANUELE d'ASTORGA

Stabat mater

I've never heard of this composer, who was once, apparently, famous for his extravagantly adventurous biography, like Stradella — and his death date is unknown, though he was of minor nobility. In any case, the Stabat mater with four soloists is lovely, in the manner of Pergolesi, baroque but showing signs of coming classicism. (Ap¹¹)

KURT ATTERBERG

Symphony No 1 in B minor, op 3

Atterberg's First was hugely successful for a while, the most played Swedish Symphony abroad. The Allegro has Brahmsian themes, together with the propulsion and the warmth — development fairly chromatic (a whiff of Reger) — coda builds magnificently. Adagio presents a hymn-like melody that builds to glorious fortissimo, twice — no wonder Stokowski loved it. Scherzo, nearly a Furiant, opens with trumpet blast — before it's over a huge storm at sea. Finale opens with recalled slow movement — breaks into vigorous march, nice but rather repetitive. Final bars super, ending in major. Near masterpiece. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 2 in F, op 6

Pastoral Symphony in the pastoral key, lots of bass pedals, with somewhat turbulent development. In three large movements, gorgeous from the get-go. Middle is lovely Adagio alternating with Presto, a relentless march — big brass chorale ending. Finale is agitato in minor — high nobility gives way to quiet passages — inevitable return to major comes with another nobilmente chorale. Magnificent. Atterberg does not merely repeat the Brahmsian pattern — orchestration too is more detailed.. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 3 in B minor, op 10 — West Coast Places —

After a Brahmsian, then a Mahlerian Symphony, KA tries a travel triptych, with atmospheric rather than programmatic movements. Sun Smoke is languid, almost static. Storm the reverse, violent, full of lightning strokes — wonderful. Summer Night is a long Adagio/Vivace Finale — glamorous romantic tranquility moving into Mendelssohnian fairyland, fleet, exalted. Did Atterberg ever write anything that wasn't perfectly gorgeous? (N¹¹)

Symphony No 4 in G minor, op 14 “Sinfonia piccolo”

After three vast symphonic canvasses, each one different from the others, the Fourth squeezes four continuous movements into 21', and introduces folk elements for the first time. It begins turbulent, then moves into a sprightly tune in a disjunctive mood. Andante features melancholic solo clarinet, an extraordinarily sensuous string passage, more solo winds — all so luscious it's hard to believe the folk origins. Scherzo is brief, with odd duple Trio. Finale is like a folksong and dance fantasy, loosely structured, ending too cute. Atterberg is also stretching his harmonic language. A strong, important work despite its brevity and a few miscalculations. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 5 in D minor, op 20 “Sinfonia Funebre”

Pesante opens dramatically — percussion, and brass dissonance opens to molto agitato — settles into highly emotive second subject with rhapsodic rhythmic freedom — orchestration is phenomenal. Lento is a pained funeral march (without drumbeats until the end) — it calls for heckelphone — I hear piano, I think sax — waves of grief, unbearable climax. Finale breaks in with opening motto and fiercely desperate march — peculiar oriental episode suggests a lost happiness — a depression interrupted by the march, which builds — breaks unexpectedly into a grotesque waltz, relentless, intolerable — triple and quadruple rhythms compete — returns to 4/4, settles into Slavic grief to the end. It is almost cinematic, though there's no stated program. A lacerating masterpiece. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 6 in C, op 31

After the explosive emotionalism of the Fifth, this is KA's first Symphony in major. It strikes a more restrained neo-classic attitude (though the harmonic vocabulary continues to broaden). Moderato offers march-like theme in horn over repeated notes in strings, almost like Prokofiev. Adagio offers solo winds over sustained strings — temperature rises when strings take the tune — twice, the second time to a higher level. Finale perky with mock fugue — jauntiness grows into general melee — ends with whacky percussion. On a lower level than the preceding series, perhaps, but a completely unpredictable turn. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 7, op 45 “Sinfonia Romantica”

A dozen years after the Sixth, drawn from the opera Fanal. Opening sounds modernist for a moment, settles quickly into a key (undesigned). Drammatico soars on its own energy — impact is immediate, powerful. Semplice begins with English horn aria in rocking 6/8 — harmonic language broadened, in-and-out-of-key, odd parallelisms, superimpositions. Feroce Finale also in 6/8 uses folkdance material in rough-rugged manner, hyperbolic, greater allowance for dissonance. There are complex textual problems in this piece, including a cancelled fourth movement. Problematic but magnificent. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 8, op 48

Based like the Fourth on folk tunes. Lento begins with tragic tone, continues in jaunty melancholy. Adagio reminiscent of Grieg's Peer Gynt, in glorious orchestral dress. Scherzo combines two triple-meter tunes. Finale on a rousing tune given full treatment. Despite the booklet, I don't think KA makes his material fully symphonic, but the result is an appealing folksong Symphony. (N¹¹)

Älven — The River

An effort to produce a Swedish Moldau — great Maestoso passages, folkish themes, colorful orchestration, but nothing as memorable as Smetana's indelible melody. Fantastic passage on the harbor — horn whoops and a beer-hall band — grand stentorian finish. Fine piece. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 9, op 54 ‘sinfonia Visionaria—

Symphony for mezzo, baritone and chorus with orchestra, setting passages from the Icelandic Voluspá — Russell Poole knows it well. Rather Wagnerian subject matter — Odin, Erda, Ygdrasil

and the Norns, a prophetic vision of the “final battle,” though the narrative seems more like Blake (what did he know of Norse myth?). Odin and the gods are slain by Loge, the wolf Fenris, and a figure named Surt. Tone is bleak, reminiscent of Sibelius— e.g. Kullervo. Written in Cold War nuclear anxiety. Strange. (N¹¹)

2 Autumn Ballads, op 15; Valse monotone

Atterberg was not a piano composer — this disc gives his total output. The first Ballad sounds like Erlking made easy, the second opens atmospherically, becomes pleasantly romantic. The delicious Valse is another matter — KA’s Valse Triste, a version of the great Violin-Viola Suite. (Ja¹²)

Rondeau retrospectif, op 26

A comic occasional piece for the opening of a concert hall, a melange of tunes and allusions, many of them lost on me. (Ja¹²)

Violin Sonata in B minor, op 27

I wonder if Atterberg requires orchestral dress? The Allegro should sound fine, but the themes and gestures don’t convince. Adagio presents a square-phrased melancholy tune. Finale an energetic pomposo theme in 3. Maybe it’s the piano writing, maybe it’s the performance, but this doesn’t work for me. (Ja¹²)

Trio Concertante, violin, cello & harp, op 57

Arranged from a Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, the piece is rooted in KA’s folk interests. One is conscious that the harp is assigned to an orchestral reduction — it loses much of its characteristic sound function, alas. And he’s such a magnificent orchestrator! I’d like to hear the original version, though it does not strike me as Atterberg’s best. (Ja¹²)

Rhapsody, piano & orchestra, op 1

KA cut his teeth on this short piece, learning form and orchestration on the job. But he was a fast learner, since the splendid First Symphony was only op 3. Primary theme is pungent, an exotic edge — second theme drags, alas. (Mh¹²)

Ballade and Passacaglia, op 58

On a theme “in the Swedish folk tone.” Opening motto and simple folktune form basis of a highly condensed four-section design, a mini-symphony. Tune re-enters in bass under tarantella to initiate passacaglia — huge ending. Stunning, and once frequently performed. (Mh¹²)

Piano Concerto in Bb minor, op 37

KA’s bid for a full-blooded romantic symphonic Concerto: Piano storms in at beginning and is rarely silent thereafter. Lots of bombast, romantic Angst. Andante contrasts with homophonic melody in piano octaves over sustained strings — builds to magnificent full orchestra climax à la Rachmaninoff — lovely quiet finish. Finale bouncy, folkish, finishes with restatement of big theme. This piece has all the right ingredients — but do the tunes carry it? (Mh¹²)

DANIEL AUBER

The Crown Diamonds Overture

French bandshell stuff. (Ag¹⁰)

JACQUES AUBERT

Selected works

Aubert is contemporary with Rameau, and his ensemble music is very similar in style but, even as car music, noticeably duller. But then, maybe it’s Standage. (Mh⁰⁹)

GEORGES AURIC

Le Peintre et son modèle

Short 15' ballet score in style that suggests Poulenc with large dollops of Honegger or Prokofiev. Acid brass, big sound, utter confidence after decade of writing film scores. Auric seems a great

talent manqué — a bit like Korngold. (D⁰⁹)

Phèdre

Large ballet score reveals Auric to be a fairly conventional Romantic — tonal, square phrased, danceable rhythms spiced by mild dissonance, brilliant orchestration and a Cocteau scenario. There's a sense of pictorialism, motion, but not sharp characterization. A touch of Prokofiev, but not the wit, the melodic sense, the skewed tonality. Overall, highly energetic score, impressive, but I understand why it is passed over. (D⁰⁹)

Film Music

The entire disc sounds like, well, movie music. There are fine touches — the alto flute in *The Innocents*, the wonderful tune from *Moulin Rouge* — but I don't think any of these Suites would stand alone as a meaningful concert piece. (D⁰⁹)

Violin Sonata

In four movements: First is mercurial, jumps around unpredictably but cheerfully. Vif is happy, jumpy — flashy piano part. Lent is a kind of torch song, con sordino. Finale takes a simple tune, complicates it without soiling its freshness. A strong piece — I'd guess Milhaud at his best, but with more ballast. (Jy¹¹)

Trio, clarinet, oboe and bassoon

Tour de force of composition and virtuosity, style à la Poulenc. Three movements. A delight. (Jy¹¹)

Les Facheux

One-act ballet on a subject adapted from Molière. Auric's music is reminiscent of *Pulcinella* — though all original, not adapted — with hints of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Not a bad mix. Auric is more frivolous than either Ravel or Stravinsky, but the frivolity is undercut by the huge orchestration. Still, it's too good to lose. (S¹¹)

La Pastorale

One-act ballet notable for being the first post-Soviet ballet by a very young George Balanchine, who scandalized purists by introducing certain acrobatic moves and a bicycle into his choreography. Auric's score is broad, sassy, bright, but I like *Les Fâcheux* better because of the Louis XIV airs. Disc is a super representation of Auric. (S¹¹)

ARNO BABAJANIAN

Violin Sonata No 1

Armenian composer I know nothing of, yet by sheer coincidence I've seen his name twice today. First on CBC while driving to Muskoka, a young Armenian-Canadian violinist played this piece, written in the Soviet era — a lot like Khachaturian, not surprisingly, but full of gestures striving to be more modern — wild notes at odd ends of the keyboard. (Jy¹⁷)

Four piano pieces

Charles Richard Hamelin on CBC, interesting programming. Music has inevitable Armenian sound, very pianistic. The first an Elegy for Aram Khachaturian, who was Babajanian's mentor. Worth investigating. (Jy¹⁸)

MILTON BABBITT

Relata I

As I expected, a quarter hour of inaudible abstraction. Paul Zukofsky seems a good fit. (F⁰⁹)

Correspondences

Ten minutes for string orchestra & tape — as audibly nonsensical as any other Babbitt. (Ap¹¹)

GRAZYNA BACEWICZ

Piano Quintet No 1

My first serious listening to this composer. Here in 1952 the style is accessible (unfashionably) and

uses classical forms: a thickly voiced, sustained intro to irregular dance rhythm which quickly returns to the solemn chorale. Jiggy Scherzo keeps slowing down, but otherwise energetic. Slow movement moves in steady, solemn 4 – very beautiful – she is not shy of passionate expression. Finale begins vigorously – then the damned second subject bogs down – odd ending. (My¹³)

Piano Sonata No 2

Written just after the Piano Quintet, a major work in three movements. Agitato full of flash, running and darting passages – a handful – interspersed with reflective bits. Largo more velvety, quiet in middle and lower registers), quite haunting – fugato forms and dissipates. Toccata Finale plays with irregular Polish dance rhythms – dark, earnest. Fine piece. (My¹³)

Piano Quintet No 2

Transition work for Bacewicz, who was moving into final phase influenced by post-war avant garde. The work is still cast in three discrete movements, fast-slow-fast, but gestures are dramatic and sudden – I hear glissandi, artificial harmonics, massed clusters. Larghetto nearly static, lots of chromatic snaking around – piano resonance, ponticello tremolos, glissandi – eerie stuff. Finale is marked “giocoso” – a kind of avant garde take-off on jazz – slap bass, pizz, marvelous keyboard sweeps. Very strong piece. (My¹³)

Violin Concerto No 1

Three movements, 13'. I haven't grasped Bacewicz's musical character, really – maybe this will help. Allegro is rather slap-happy – lots of spiccato, pizzicato thrown in, a lyric bit, flashy but diatonic, almost in modo antico. Espressivo floats a cantabile line over horn and bassoon; the stew thickens, the soloist develops dissonant double stops, ends on harmonic amid flutes. Vivace is a second scherzando, kept close to the string. Very nice. I might guess Milhaud. (Mh¹⁹)

C.P.E. BACH

Harpsichord & Fortepiano Sonatas

Coming to these from Scarlatti, these seem to step backward rather than forward in time — irregular phrases, fussy ornamentation. Domenico is exact contemporary of C.P.E.'s father. Or rather, C.P.E.'s extravagancies look forward to the Romantics, the *Empfindsamer Stil*. Fascinating pieces. (Au⁰⁸)

Five Clavichord Sonatas

Sonatas in galant style, binary form pointing to classical sonata and almost there, like Scarlatti but without the brilliance. C.P.E., alas, has shed much of his flukiness in these -- closer to J.C. The middle tracks have more character. Spányi plays, thankfully, with rhythmic freedom, but has little chance for special affects. The first track seems familiar, a student piece. (Mh⁰⁹)

6 Organ Sonatas

These pieces are recognizably C.P.E.'s, though they are not as fluky as some of his work. Not galant, certainly not classical — I suppose late baroque, but not contrapuntal — more finger-exercises like the Partitas, not highly ornamented, and (after I've been listening to so much French baroque) quite serious sounding: the importance of being earnest. The Finale of No 5 seems vaguely familiar — where? Nice pieces, but not major work. (D¹⁰)

6 Hamburg Concertos, harpsichord & orchestra

These are outwardly standard pre-classical Concerti in three (in one case four) movements, with strings plus horns and flutes. (The flutes seem to appear only in slow movements.) C.P.E.'s tricks consist mainly in sudden changes of tempo, tone, and texture. The Allegro of the Concerto in D has two sudden lurches into Andante. The Finale of the Eb Concerto begins unexpectedly in the minor. Elsewhere passages end in a sudden "wrong" note, or sudden silence, or movements continue with no break. The play is at the level of large form or phrase structure, but far less with melody or

harmony. There are, however, fragments tossed between soloist and accompaniment. On the other hand, the C major Concerto has a fully formed double exposition — the reference point is not J.S. Bach's Concertos but Mozart's. This is probably the most elaborately formed and figured and detailed of the six. (My¹¹)

5 Piano Trios

All are in three movements with cello doubling the bass and violin the treble, while fortepiano dominates with a great xylophonic clatter — essentially keyboard sonatas with strengthening, with mostly four-square phrases. C.P.E.'s genius shines through, however, even as it veers from movements that sound like Mozartean J.C. to others resembling Bach père. Not the pleasantest disc (I loathe fortepianos) but valuable insight. (Mh¹²)

Clavichord music

Jaclyne Cuiller brings the Thurston Dart revelations up to date. C.P.E.'s music is given the same complete freedom and variability of tempo and dynamics. Chopin's hypersensitivity no longer seems to come from nowhere, nor the virtuoso dexterity. To be savoured in small doses. The Sonata (the same given by Spányi) is more regular rhythmically but equally sensitive. Rondo in C varies wildly from one bar to the next. Assumptions about baroque performance are based too much on organ and harpsichord, not enough on clavichord and theorbo, not to mention strings. Fabulous CD. (My¹²)

Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu

Wow! I've not heard C.P.E.'s sacred music before, and this bowls me over, especially after listening to Graun. The date, 1774, is late, but even so, the double basses at the beginning are worthy of Berlioz, as are the rumbling timps and the melting choral entry, the trombone bles and violins diminuendo into thin air like Handel's angels. Stephan Genz for once has technique almost adequate for his aria. The arias have quirkiness — gorgeous soprano-tenor duet — rousing tenor aria of triumph. The highlight of Part II is the multi-sectioned triumphal Schlusschor, with a wonderful Alleluia gigue. (S¹²)

5 Trio Sonatas

My first reaction was surprise at the classical sound, with repeated notes marking the rhythm in accompaniment, but as so often C.P.E. hovers on the edge of baroque and classical. The texture throughout is relatively complex, with the contrapuntist's imagination always in evidence, simple melodies in thirds kept to a minimum. It's C.P.E. in top form — witness track 9. The Medlam performance is superb. First-rate CD. (D¹²)

Trio Sonata in A, WQ146

In three movements not four, and sounding fairly galante and bright. Rachel Podger sounds unaffected and the fortepiano is barely distinguishable from harpsichord. C.P.E. was still a teenager when he wrote it. (Mh¹⁵)

Trio Sonata in C minor, WQ161

Subtitled Sanguineus and Melancholicus, the two violins and cello (no flute) alternate moods over the independent keyboard. Changes are so sudden and extreme the live audience laughs (there's probably some stage business going on as well). C.P.E.'s Florestan and Eusebius. (Mh¹⁵)

Violin Sonata in C minor, WQ78

Three movements in *serioso* mood, the Allegro the longest movement on the CD. *Anadante* very elegiac. *Finale a bustling vivace*. (Mh¹⁵) I'm transported into a distinct world like those of the great Romantics by the poignant melody and the interchange between the two instruments. Texture is essentially two treble lines over bass. *Adagio* pits dissimilar movement, active in the keyboard, violin entering with near static tones – magic. *Presto* is a baroque tarantella, still in minor – with a

surprise stop in play near the end. The playing of Breuninger and Kuijken is magnificent – beautifully shaped, not afraid of feeling. A true masterpiece. (N¹⁶)

Keyboard Sonata in E minor, WQ59/1

Played on a very dry fortepiano, lots of snap, rolled chords, dramatic dynamic contrasts. Adagio brief and dreamy. Andantino very quirky, with sudden ending. C.P.E. risks chaotic form for the sake of challenging baroque unitary motif and tempo – a true radical. (Mh¹⁵)

Violin Sonata in B ♭

Unlike the C minor Sonata, this is full of C.P.E.'s hijinks – flukey fragmentary motifs, stops and starts, changes of direction – a real demo piece for C.P.E.'s eccentricities. Largo begins with keyboard alone, violin enters with double stops, unusual interaction, some unexpected chords. Presto is more classical in style, like early Mozart, but branches out. C.P.E. truly shines in this genre. The fortepiano doesn't even bother me. (N¹⁶)

Arioso in A, violin and fortepiano

Variations for cembalo and violin – unlike the Sonatas, here the keyboard takes the lead. I wonder if the violin could be omitted, as in Haydn's Sonatas— The trickster shows up mainly in the violin sforzandi. (N¹⁶)

Violin Sonata in B minor

Allegro opens with keyboard statement – a real concerto for right hand. Violin enters with entirely different material. Violin leads the melody in the Andante, a wistful tune with answering keyboard, full of embellishments but retaining a feel of simplicity – gorgeous. Finale is Allegretto siciliano, still in minor, the two instruments fully interactive. C.P.E.'s three Violin Sonatas are complete realizations of the genre setting a bar that Mozart attained latterly, but Haydn never as far as I know. Only Beethoven surpassed – in the Kreutzer. Essential CD! (N¹⁶)

JOHANN CHRISTIAN BACH

Sinfonias, op 6, 9 and 18

[→Desunt nonnulla – have some notes disappeared?] So much happy music I can't stand it! It must be better in small doses. The pattern is rigid, not just from piece to piece but from opus to opus. Every Sinfonia has three movements, every middle movement an "Andante." Lots of tonic triad mottos, lots of harmony in primary colors I, IV and V, lots of predictable harmonic rhythm, lots of bustle, some speed, some impetus, but too much of one thing. I suppose it was new and fresh at the time. (Muskoka Jy¹⁴)

6 Keyboard Sonatas, op 5

ADJUST THE VOLUME FOR THE CLAVICHORD! These are played on clavichord rather than the square fortepiano for which they were written (with dynamic indications) – a plus, I think – and all repeats are intact. They are in two or three movements, the last in C minor with slow-fast-fast pattern. The first in B♭ features two-part texture throughout; the Allegretto is all Alberti bass. Style is galante, simple – nothing beyond the reach of a good amateur – but not sensitive *Empfindsamer Stil*. The D major Allegro has massive chord flourishes, almost too much for the clavichord, with melodic activity in the left hand. Andante has some harmonic surprise. Allegro of the E♭ has a wild particularly nice. In the E major, outer movements are toccata-like; the Adagio is performed with radical rubato, dotted rhythms against triplet accompaniment – I hadn't noticed this elsewhere. The C minor begins *serioso* rather than galante and launches into a full-blown fugue; the final stately Allegretto stays in minor. This is a nicely varied set of pieces. J.C. seems to let himself go here, more than in the Symphonies. (S¹⁴) Good heavens, have I duplicated— Second hearing confirms the first, uncannily. This is the source of some of the early Mozart Piano Concerti. Tracks 9 and 11 are especially nice, plus the entire last Sonata. Alexander-Max uses equal temperament, lots of

rhythmic freedom (which I like), and preserves dotted rhythm over left-hand triplet in slow tempo. J.C. at his best. (Mh¹⁶)

Mailänder Vesperpsalmen

These were composed separately, not as a unitary work, though all date from 1758 to 1760. The Magnificat is short, not the culmination of a sequence. The brief Dominus adjuvandum is J.C. in top form, with nice soprano-alto duet. Confiteor is more elaborate, in seven sections running 25' – mostly soloists. The galant style suits the psalm of praise – there's minimal counterpoint, maximum floridity, trills, harmony in primary colors. Doxology begins oddly in minor, with fugal Schlusschor. Beatus vir (Psalm 112) is the longest section, a blessing on the righteous. Nicely constructed with soloists leading to tenor solo leading to chorus, then a canary-like soprano solo with obligato flute and violin. "Dispersit pauperibus" is given to bass, while chorus and all four soloists gnash their teeth. In Laudate pueri (Psalm 113), calling on children to praise, solos are given to high voices with no chorus – very bright music, though much of the music is simple arpeggios. J.C.'s melodic powers seem very weak. Magnificat is short but uses four soloists and chorus with trumpets and drums, while the choral writing is somewhat more complex, with a fugal finish. (O¹⁶)

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDMAN BACH

Concerto for viola & fortepiano in Eb

The style is early classical much like the London Bach. The orchestra seems to have no violas — there's a hole in the middle for the soloists. Pleasant, but it goes on. (My³)

J.S. BACH

Cantata 80: "Ein feste Burg" (Leipzig, 1730)

Reformation Day (Oct 31) — a lengthy special occasion cantata with warlike trumpets & drums. Chorale Cantata on Luther's great hymn. Chorale is 1/fugal, 2/chorale prelude (soprano & bass solo), 3/triple time, 4/straight. Nice balance of chorale prelude movement with two duets (incl chorale prelude duet), with intervening recits & arias. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 106: "Gottes Zeit ist der allerbestes Zeit" [Actus Tragicus] (Mühlhausen, c1707/10)

Actus Tragicus: Very early Funeral Cantata in the old style — no formal arias, middle part free, ariosos & choral bits, superimposed texts, e.g. "Es ist der alte Bund" vs "Komm Herr Jesu," "du mit mir im Paradies" vs "mit Fried und Freud." Final chorale is doxology with subdued but glorious Amen of acceptance. Wow! (Jy⁸) Did I make no note of the soloists — live performance at FSA a year back? Pity. I picked up Daniel Taylor's CD at his live concert. Performance polished, a trifle bloodless. His aria from Cantata 200 likewise, gentle, unfamiliar, mildly florid. (S¹²)

Cantata 36: "Schwingt freudig" (Leipzig, 1731)

Advent Sunday: Adapted for Advent from birthday cantata, but metaphor is wedding — bride waiting for bridegroom, settling in comfort. Three successive arias (middle one not da capo, thank God): Why did Mallon not use alternative Chorale Cantata version? Disc had room for it. [There are 5 versions, 2 secular, 3 sacred — the most complex rearranging in all the cantatas.] Chorale is subdued version of "Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern." (Jy⁸)

Cantata 61: "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland" (Weimar, 1715)

Advent Sunday: John the Baptist, joyful "make ready" aria, followed by stern call to repent (T), questioning Wer bist du? (B), acceptance of sin and baptism (A, running water by violin): Chorale celebrates death of old self, birth of new. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 132: "Bereitet die Wege" (Weimar, 1714)

4th Sunday in Advent: Fine French Overture with choir. Theology generalized — striking recit for bass, pizzicati = knocking at door, fine chorale prelude finale. Mallon's A at 415 is too low for

John & others. Ridiculous. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 57: "Selig ist der Mann" (Leipzig, 1740)

2nd Day of Christmas: specifically, St Stephen's Day (*no* Christmas joy – see Murray Young's asinine remark): Dialogue cantata about Soul (soprano) accepting death/martyrdom, in need of Saviour (basso). Particularly fine arias, beautifully sung by unknown Hungarian soloists. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 152: "Tritt auf die Glaubensbahn" (Weimar, 1714)

Sunday after Christmas: Dialogue Cantata: Opening Sinfonia, but no Chorale—instead, lovely closing Duet between bass (Jesus) and soprano (Soul). Text rather drab play on Stein as stumbling block, Eckstein as corner-stone; only the reference to Incarnation in last Recit brings it to Christmas. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 58: "Ach Gott, wie manches Herzeleid" (Leipzig, 1733)

Sunday after New Year: Dialogue Cantata, opens with beautiful Choral Prelude Duet between Affliction (soprano) and Patience (bass). Recit refers to Herod's persecution and Joseph's saving dream. Closes with second Chorale Prelude Duet, joyous, on a different tune. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 123: "Liebster Immanuel, Herzog der Frommen" (Leipzig, c1740)

Epiphany: Chorale Cantata. Theology general. Nice opening Chorus in courante rhythm. Tenor Aria slow with odd allegro break. Peter Kooij, alas, tries to sound more like Fischer-Dieskau than Bach. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 124: "Meinen Jesum lass ich nicht" (Leipzig, date uncertain)

1st Sunday after Epiphany: Exceptionally beautiful Chorale Cantata, with virtual concerto for oboe d'amore in opening Chorus and tenor Aria. Theology general, sticking to Jesus like a burr (the leaping motif in opening, cf Handel's frogs). Spectacular soprano-alto Duet. A gem. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 111: "Was mein Gott will, das g'scheh Allzeit" (Leipzig, date uncertain)

3rd Sunday after Epiphany: Chorale Cantata, the joy of embracing death with confidence in the Saviour. Opening Chorus joyous in minor key — likewise superb canonic Duet (alto/tenor), possibly too florid. Theology general, but reference to Jonah in Recit suggests necessity of accepting the revealed God of Epiphany like the aged Simeon, not running away like Jonah. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 82: "Ich habe genug" (Leipzig, c1731)

Candlemas (February 2): Familiar Solo Cantata, three arias with intervening recits based on Simeon's Nunc Dimittis. First: Glorious air with oboe obbligato with richly voiced strings; second, lullaby resembling close of Matthew Passion; third, joyful, florid, minor key. Da Capo arias are quite long but still wonderful. Prey sings beautifully. (Jy⁰⁸) Yes, Tyler Duncan was most impressive in this, live, with beautiful Bach articulation — though Ruth complained of his lack of line. I thought the low so-called "baroque A" placed the tessitura uncomfortably low for him, and his voice has definite registers, with coarse bottom, flutey top. But most impressive. Young with crew cut — should have been singing Papageno. (Stratford, live Ag¹²)

Cantata 125: "Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin" (Leipzig, c1730-34)

Candlemas (February 2): Again, Simeon embracing death in faith of Saviour. Magnificent Chorale Prelude: unusual dramatic silence on "sanft und stille," as also in the (too) long Alto Aria, on "sterben." Unusual Bass Recitativo Accompagnato incorporates lines of chorale into Recit. Duet is pure joy. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 54: "Widerstehe doch der Sünde" (Leipzig, 1714—)

Oculi. [Or 7th after Trinity, given elsewhere more plausibly]. Short Solo Cantata for Alto, just two Arias with Recit denouncing sin und der Teufel. Second Aria is quasi-academic, descending or "falling" chromatics. Höffgen is a lady bass, "unbattered." (Jy⁸) I hadn't remembered hearing this before when Daniel Taylor sang it with Tafelmusik as program opener: I was disappointed, but

Taylor, speaking later, noted difficulties of the low range for both voice and instruments — there were two viola parts (and hinted that he may have been stopped for speeding on his way to Stratford). He seemed distracted. (Stratford, live Ag¹²)

Easter Oratorio [Cantata No 249] (Leipzig, 1725)

Festive Cantata with trumpets and drums. Enacts BVM (soprano) and Magdalene (alto) bringing Peter and John (tenor, bass) to the empty tomb. Soloists have named characters and join in unusual and beautiful composite Recits. Lengthy Sinfonia, with super “hurried footsteps” — Chorus — trumpets & drums return for celebratory final Chorus. Arias are lovely but a bit long. Hamari is best soloist. Why have I never heard this – a Bach masterpiece— (Jy⁸) Dramatic narrative, the singers in character through the events of Easter morning. Opens with grand trumpet Sinfonia, Adagio sets tragic mood, chorus urges hurry to joyous discovery, lachen und scherzen among the men. Composite recit restores dark tone, and Mary laments the vain spices. Composite recit and Petrus responds to Magdalene’s story with no surprise in pastoral aria. Recit of two Marys. Magdalene wants to see Jesus, her heart orphaned. John’s recit assures them Jesus lives. I’m let down this time: the narrative is weak, and even Bach’s musical tone uncertain. (Ap¹⁹)

Cantata 4: “Christ lag in Todesbanden” (before 1717)

Easter: Familiar, wonderful. Bach’s only Cantata in “old style,” early, no recits paraphrasing hymn stanzas, every stanza set differently, wonderfully contrasted Alleluiahs. Some surprises — sudden silence, basses dropping to the cellar on “Tod.” Bach gets A+. (Jy⁸) Fanshawe Choir live version, not very good. I hate to say it, but they did better with Gerald Fagan. (Je¹⁵)

Cantata 145: “Ich lebe mein Herze” (1729—)

3rd Easter Day: Problematic, missing perhaps opening Sinfonia & Chorus written by someone else (Murray Young’s prose is infuriating). Brilliant bass aria with trumpet and flute. (Jy⁸)

Ascension Oratorio [‘Cantata No 11]

Pure gold. Unlike Easter Oratorio, has Evangelist (for Scripture passages) but no named soloists. Brilliant opening & closing Choruses with trumpets & drums, straight Chorale in middle. Alto Aria familiar from Mass in B minor. Soprano Aria senza continuo, just violins & high winds, seems to float in air. Wonderful Arioso of two men. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 34: “O ewiges Feuer” (after 1749)

Pentecost: Superior Cantata, opening chorus is magic fire music with trumpets & drums; melting Alto Aria with flutes and sordino strings. Final Chorus dramatic attacca after Recit, “Friede über Israel,” then superb closing Chorus. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 59: “Wer mich liebet, der wird mein Wort halten” (possibly Weimar 1716)

Pentecost: Odd, possibly incomplete. Opens with fine soprano-bass Duet with trumpets & drums, which do not return. Chorale positioned third, followed by fine Bass Aria. Nemeth ends there, as in MS; Gardiner interpolates another setting of the Chorale. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 74: “Wer mich liebet, der Wird mein Wort halten” (Leipzig, 1735)

Pentecost: Later setting of same words, music of first two numbers adapted from Cantata 59. Three excellent Arias, the third for Alto with breathtaking bravura violin obbligato, arpeggiated. Ends with Chorale, trumpets & drums. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 172: “Erschallet, ihr Lieder” (Leipzig, 1724)

Pentecost: Pure gold. — dancing opening Chorus with trumpets & drums, Recit & Aria by basso as Christ, brilliant trumpets & drums again. Minor key tenor Aria, and wonderfully intricate Duet between soprano and the Comforter (alto) in quasi-erotic language, “Gnadenkuss,” “Ich bin dein und du bist mein.” Chorale is “Wie schön leuchtet.” (Jy⁸)

Cantata 174: “Ich liebe den Höchsten” (Leipzig, 1729)

2nd Day of Pentecost: Interesting mainly for Sinfonia, an interpolation of Brandenburg 3d, first movement, with tripled strings, 2 horns & 3 oboes. Alto and Bass Arias are unremarkable. Rilling is awfully plodding! (Jy⁸)

Cantata 129: “Gelobet sei der Herr” (Leipzig, 1732)

Trinity Sunday: Chorale verses set with no recitatives, but with melody only in opening and closing Choruses, festive with trumpets & drums. Three successive Arias between. Topics are Father, Son, Spirit, Trinity, sing joyous praise. Shapely, stately piece. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 39: “Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot” (Leipzig, 1732)

1st Sunday after Trinity: Occasioned also by influx of refugees from Salzburg, where the Archbishop was persecuting Protestants. (What Archbishops Salzburg has had!) Super opening Chorus, hunger/staggering motif (cf Esurientes of Magnificat) followed by fugue of salvation. The remainder rather dreary for Bach. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 93: "Wer nur den lieben Gott" (Leipzig, 1728)

5th Sunday after Trinity: Bach's second Chorale Cantata (after “Christ lag”), but it seems less ingenious in its working of the Chorale. Nice canonic Soprano-Alto Duet. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 107: “Was willst du dich betrüben” (Leipzig, 1735)

7th Sunday after Trinity: Chorale Cantata: After this point (1735), Bach gives up libretto paraphrases and uses only chorale texts, though not sticking to the Chorale tune throughout. Beautifully solemn opening Chorus, free treatment of Chorale. After Recit, four Arias in succession (two for tenor—unusual), though none is da capo. First two are striking—fast tempo hunt motif, followed by fear represented by silences. Soprano has 2 oboes. Lovely Sicilienne setting of final Chorale. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 137: “Lobe den Herren” (Leipzig, 1732)

12th Sunday after Trinity: Pure gold! Chorale Cantata with familiar chorale. Thrilling Opening Chorus with trumpets and drums, then Aria — Duet — Aria — Chorale, varied treatment of Chorale. Herewege's disc is distinctly inferior to this. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 78: "Jesu der du meine Seele" (Leipzig, 1735-44)

14th Sunday after Trinity: Familiar and fine, though the arias are somewhat less familiar than I expected. Schöne makes appalling unmusical hash of the bass aria, alas. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 51: "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen" (Leipzig, 1731 or —32)

15th Sunday after Trinity: Solo Cantata, very familiar throughout. Text is generic joy and praise, for “general use” Bach indicated. This is the only cantata that shows presence of Italian opera style. Bach must have had a virtuoso boy soprano, or perhaps he wrote it for his own ear. I've always thought Donath under-rated, but here she blurs some articulation; otherwise fine. (Jy⁸)

Cantata 99: “Was Gott tut” (Leipzig, c1733)

15th Sunday after Trinity: Glorious opening Chorus (Walton put it into The Wise Virgins, senza voices. The rest at a lesser level, though nice chromaticism in tenor Aria (“so bitter”), and nice soprano/alto Duet (Young says they are Flesh and Spirit in conflict). (Au⁸)

Cantata 8: "Liebster Gott" (Leipzig, c1725)

16th Sunday after Trinity: Waiting for death with anticipated salvation. Opening Chorale Prelude in triple meter, oddly joyful, despite Young's “fear” motif in repeated notes; unusual pizzicato strings. Wonderful bass Aria, a gigue, is familiar. Huttenlocher sings it exceptionally well. Final Chorale nicely elaborated. (Au⁸)

Cantata 27: “Wer weiss wie nahe mir mein Ende” (Leipzig, 1731)

16th Sunday after Trinity: Another beauty through and through. Extraordinary, moving Chorus — Chorale with solo recits interspersed. Fine Alto Aria and wonderful Bass Aria, alternating joy and

- fear (repeated notes). Final Chorale in five parts, rich, the only example in all the cantatas. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 48: "Ich elender Mensch" (Leipzig, c1740)
 19th Sunday after Trinity: Miracle of healing the body = redeeming the soul. Opening Chorus complex, with chorale tune in instruments. Lament of the sick body (Höffgen's contralto is piercing), followed by spirited tenor Aria. Inserted Chorale is different tune. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 56: "Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen" (Leipzig, 1731 or —32)
 19th Sunday after Trinity: Familiar Solo Cantata for bass. Metaphor of ocean voyage, safe arrival in heaven (cello = waves in Recit). Chromatic first Aria, with expressive triplet passage repeated in final Arioso. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 52: "Falsche Welt, dir traue ich nicht" (Leipzig, 1726)
 23rd Sunday after Trinity: Solo Cantata for soprano, with Augér in top form. Sinfonia from Brandenburg No 1 (sans trumpet) is oddly joyous opening. Soprano enters with high note, angular Recit & Aria of righteous anger, followed by comfort. Second Aria unusual texture, 3 oboes & bassoon, lovely, with florid B section. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 26: "Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig" (Leipzig, 1724)
 24th Sunday after Trinity: Pure gold — theme of mutability, image of rushing waters. Beautiful Chorale Prelude, with tune in soprano, instruments and lower voices doing different things. Followed by two extraordinary Arias — tenor at extreme of virtuosity (outdoes Jauchzet Gott — Adalbert Kraus nails it) — bass in relentless stomping motion, with florid B section and cellos going wild. A surprise treasure. (Au) Second hearing just as awesome as first. A very special masterpiece. (Au⁸—Cooperstown)
- Cantata 60: "O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort" (Leipzig, 1723)
 24th Sunday after Trinity: Dialogue Cantata between Hope and Fear. Complex opening Chorale Prelude with tune in sopranos, solo tenor over top. Dialogue first between Alto (Fear) and tenor (Hope), then basso (Christus) who three times gives comfort. Great Chorale "Es ist genug." (Au⁸)
- Cantata 90: "Es reisset euch ein schrecklich Ende" (Leipzig, 1723)
 25th Sunday after Trinity: Warning of Apocalypse — seems uncharacteristic of Bach's themes. No opening Chorus. Florid tenor Aria with violin, stern bass Aria with final trumpet. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 140: "Wachet auf" (Leipzig, 1731)
 27th Sunday after Trinity: Visitation of our Lady (July 2). Most familiar. Metaphor of bride and bridegroom (quasi-apocalyptic, but cx harsh Cantata 90). Gönnerwein is real throwback to old style, slow tempos, legato phrasing. Beautiful, but even I wish he'd get on with it. (Au⁸) The most familiar of the lot, and the most formally perfect and balanced. The Prussian Rilling returns for the great tenor middle movement, but solos and duets and outer movements are beautiful. (S¹⁷)
- Cantata 147: "Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben" (Weimar, 1716)
 Famous for "Jesu Joy" (twice, at ends of Parts I and II), but otherwise not familiar. Text = paraphrase of Magnificat, but emphasis on Mary lessened. Fine bright toned fugal Chorus, super soprano and bass Arias (young Sutherland is perfect, even her German; Hemsley is wretched). Recits, with accompagnato in II, above par. The recits in cantatas are Bach's innovation — from opera, but serving the purpose of doctrinal teaching. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 117: "Sei Lob und Ehr" (Leipzig, c1733)
 General Theme of Praise. Nine verses of Chorale, no paraphrases, but arias and recits. Chorale Preludes at beginning and end, straight Chorale in middle, Recits treat refrain line as arioso. Sturdy, joyful music. (Au⁸)
- Cantata 131: "Aus der Tiefe rufe ich, Herr, zu dir" (Mühlhausen, 1707)
 Pure gold — very likely the earliest of Bach's Cantatas. No recits, continuous movements. Text is

Psalm 90 verbatim, so dark in tone, exceptional treatment of “fürchte.” Three great Choruses in free counterpoint, changing tempi, separated by two Chorale Preludes, solo voice plus tune in chorus. The second is particularly haunting. Final Chorus ends in subdued joyous fugue in minor key, ending on half cadence. (Au⁸)

Cantata 202: "Weichet nur" (Cöthen, 1717-23)

Wedding Cantata: Familiar and wonderful. Cantatas make good car music. (Au⁸—Cooperstown)

Cantata 209: "Non sà che sia dolore"¹

A real charmer, even if arias do go on a bit. Ameling gorgeous, of course. (Au⁸—Cooperstown)

Christmas Oratorio

6 Cantatas (64 numbers) performed over 6 days, 2 weeks, as a single unified work. All but 5th adapted from previous material (occasional cantatas 213-215). As in Ascension Oratorio, uses Evangelist to narrate Nativity, I-IV from Luke, V-VI from Matthew. (D⁸)

I “Jauchzet, frohlocket auf” — Christmas Day

Famous opening Chorus, trumpets & drums. Beautiful arias for Alto (Mary) and Bass, with two Chorales. Veldhoven, alas, is impossibly mannered.

II “Und waren Hirten in derselben Gegend” — 2d Day of Christmas

Pastoral contrast to I — beautiful 12/8 Sinfonia alters mood, amazing sound of four-oboe choir representing shepherds. Lots of Recit — 2 Chorales — very florid tenor Aria — alto Aria is lullaby (rather rapid, heavy-footed rocking). “Ehre sei Gott” is big Chorus. Final Chorale oboe-shepherds alternate with angels. The numbers are short, move along very well.

III “Herrscher des Himmels” — 3d Day of Christmas

Festivity returns — Shepherds go to Bethlehem to see for themselves. First 5 numbers = single unit (2 Choruses, 2 Recits & Chorale). Duet, with 2 oboes. Evangelist — Alto Aria — Mary sings second lullaby, beautiful violin obligato. (Pitch is suspiciously very low.) Ends with 2 Chorales and reprise of opening Chorus. This is unlike most of the stand-alone cantatas: Bach is really experimenting with complex form, mixing Cantata and Passion-like narrative.

IV “Fallt mir Danken, fallt mit Loben” — New Year

Evangelist’s brief Recit identifies circumcision and name day, concentrates (tactfully) on Jesus’ name — most self-contained and conventional of the six cantatas — only one with horns. Opening Chorus is elegant minuet of praise. Two gorgeous Recits for Bass in arioso with Soprano in Chorale. Echo Aria for soprano with two oboes. Glorious Tenor Aria, quick fugue in minor key, very florid. Chorale repeats Jesus— name. Every number has something special.

V “Ehre sei dir Gott” — Sunday after New Year

Great florid opening Chorus of praise. Evangelist announces Genesis story of Weisen vom Morgenlande searching for King of the Jews, seeking the light. Bass Aria: illuminate my darkest

¹BWV 209 ("He does not know what it is to suffer") is unique among the extant works of this type in being the only one set to an Italian text. The principal source is a copy made around 1800 by Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, and its authenticity has been doubted. The date of composition is unknown, but the anonymous poet's specific address to the town of Ansbach has led experts to believe that it may have been composed in honor of Johann Gesner, a native of Ansbach who was rector of the Thomasschule in Leipzig between 1730 and 1734. The court at Ansbach was strongly inclined toward Italian culture, not only performing operas by Cesti and Alessandro Scarlatti but also employing Italian musicians, most notably Giuseppe Torelli. Bach's cantata for solo soprano closely follows the model of those of Scarlatti in its adherence to alternating recitative and aria. In addition to newly written poetry, the text also draws on passages from such famous writers as Guarini (his Rime of 1598) and Metastasio. The subject is apparently concerned with the departure of a young man to sea to enter military service.

mood. Evangelist on Herod — fear of Jesus — extraordinary Trio, S & T — when will He come, — A ‘schweig, He is already here — closing Chorale. Real argument for an interior Jesus.

VI “Herr wenn die stolzen Feinde schnauben” — Epiphany

Trumpets & drums return — opening Chorus gentle dancing 3/8 — Finale of Oratorio not a big flourish but subdued, more interior rejoicing. Evangelist tells of Magi, Herod is Bass. Soprano Recit & Aria denounces Herod and weakness of men — Chorale — Tenor Recit & Aria, tremble proud enemies. Final Chorale Prelude with trumpets & drums.

Prelude and Fugue in G, BWV 541

One of the less familiar big organ pieces, neither minor key and serioso nor major and dancing — just beautifully worked out fantasia. (Oldengarm live—Ja⁹)

Cantata No 91: “Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ”

Chorale Cantata for Christmas Day, text on Incarnation. Trumpets & horns — very brief and florid opening Chorus (Chorale tune in soprano sounds distant. Recit & Tenor Aria, Recit & SA Duet with rising chromatic on “Jammerthal,” in minor key for God’s poverty. (Mh⁹)

Cantata No 101: “Nimm von uns Herr du treuer Gott”

Outstanding Cantata (performance so-so). Commemorates destruction of Jerusalem by Romans — contrition for just punishment. Truly extraordinary complex counterpoint in opening Chorus — surprising dissonances, 3 oboes. Florid tenor Aria with florid flute obligato — unusual bass Aria alternates chorale, florid passage, declamation — SA duet with flute, oboe da caccia. Simple Chorale. (Mh⁹)

Cantata No 121: “Christum wir sollen loben schon”

Super. Opening Chorus begins abruptly — all florid counterpoint (à la motet, say the notes) — minor key serioso for second day of Christmas. Fine florid tenor Aria, even more serioso — even more florid bass Aria changes to joyful affirmation. Closes with Recit & Chorale. (Mh⁹)

Cantata No 133: “Ich freue mich in dir”

For third day of Christmas — opening Chorus simple chorale with joyous activity in the violins. Wonderful happy florid alto Aria — nice Soprano aria (with Nonoshita a pipsqueak) (Mh⁹)

Prelude and Fugue in C-sharp Minor & F Minor

Warm-up recital openers for Jan Lisiecki — clean, no pedals, not especially distinguished playing — but then the kid is only 14 years old. (S⁰⁹)

Keyboard Concerti in D minor, E, D & A (BWV1052, 53, 54 & 55)

I bought this set because it was a bargain and filled a great gap in my library and to survey these Concerti, locate any I’m not on speaking terms with, and chart duplications. (Only the Flute-Violin-Harpsichord Concerto is lacking.) Of the first 4, only the D major Concerto duplicates the E major Violin Concerto (itself after Vivaldi — which I’ve never heard in the original). The first 2 are very familiar, except for the beautiful slow movements, which seem harder to recall. The A major sounds familiar only in the Finale. I’m amazed how these pieces stick without my knowing it. And I realize how substantial these pieces can be — at 23’ and 21’ as long as many Romantic Concerti. (Jy³)

Keyboard Concerti in F minor, F, and G minor (BWV 1056, 57 & 58)

The first is a wholly independent piece, quite familiar. The Concerto in F with 2 flutes is Brandenburg No 4 without solo violin. The G minor is the A minor Violin Concerto. (Jy³) The G minor Concerto is the filler for Hercules auf den Scheidewege — the sustained line in the Siciliano sounds unbalanced and silly on harpsichord. (S¹²) The G minor on CBC. (Jy¹³)

Concerti for Two Keyboards in C minor, C & C minor (BWV 1060, 61 & 62)

The first is the C minor Violin-Oboe Concerto; the last is the Double Violin Concerto. The second

is independent, and I don't remember ever hearing it before. (Jy³)

Concerti for Three Keyboards in D minor and C (BWV 1063 & 64)

I don't remember hearing either of these pieces before. Strange — both are echt Bach, the D minor especially serious and weighty. (Jy³)

Concerto for 4 Keyboards in A minor (BWV1065)

This is Bach's transcription of Vivaldi's 4-violin Concerto in B minor, op 3/10. Very familiar. (The booklet makes a funny comment about the sound of 4 harpsichords.) (Jy³)

Lute Suite in G minor; Fugue in G minor

I don't know why I have resisted the sound of plucked instruments so strenuously -- their popularity perhaps, and for the wrong reasons. Here the theorbo sound is closely related to harpsichord, more pleasant in fact, and just as contrapuntal -- more like the clavichord in fact, capable of expressive dynamics and variable timbres. The opening fugue sounds familiar -- are these pieces all adaptations of others? The independent G minor Fugue is from the Solo Violin Sonata. (S¹⁰)

Lute Suite in E minor; Prelude, Fugue and Allegro

More of same, no recognition factor. Bach's fecundity was immeasurable. (S¹⁰)

Lute Suites in C minor and E; Prelude in C minor

The E major Suite is the Solo Violin Partita, the others I don't place elsewhere. I am bothered by the unevenness of tone in Kirchof's playing: Is that the nature of the instrument? Or is it a sign of difficulty another player might overcome? (S¹⁰)

Lutheran Mass No 1 in F

The 4 Lutheran Masses comprise Kyrie and Gloria only, the Gloria divided into 5 parts with choruses sandwiching three solo movements. All are reworked from Cantatas. The F major is cheerful, even the Kyrie. Glory begins with swirling 3/8 movements — soprano Qui tollis and alto Quoniam are plaintive — Cum Sancto returns to festive trot with burbling horns. Great stuff. (O¹⁰)

Lutheran Mass No 4 in G

The general mood is somewhat pastoral, but active, not somnolent. Herreweghe keeps a good strong pulse going. Bass aria a florid challenge met by Kooy — lovely soprano-alto duet — so-
so tenor aria. The final chorus is fast, florid, magnificent. (O¹⁰)

Lutheran Mass No 3 in G minor

This is the one Howard recorded with LPM, so it sounds vaguely familiar. Fiendishly fast and florid Gloria. Lesne's Qui tollis is particularly nice. I don't like some of Herreweghe's phrasing — the swoop in the Kyrie fugue subject, or the exaggerated balloons in the Gloria. (O¹⁰)

Lutheran Mass No 2 in A

The short-breathed *grazioso* opening sounds almost rococo — but not for long. The Christe is set unusually for the four soloists, quasi-recitativo; second Kyrie a dark-toned fugue. Lively Gloria chorus is also interrupted by soloist bits. Beautiful long Domine Deus for bass with violin obligato — Beautiful longer Qui tollis for soprano with 2 flutes sounding like glass harmonica — Beautiful short Quoniam for alto. Final Cum Sancto a complex swinging 6/8 that also incorporates soloists. This is the most elaborate and unconventional of the four Lutheran Masses. (O¹⁰)

Sanctus in D

A stray movement 3' long — breaks into rollicking 6/8. Too good to miss. (O¹⁰)

Concerto in D minor, 2 violins

The Bach Double on PBS Live from Lincoln Center, Cho Lang Lin & Ida Kavafian's super. (D¹⁰)
On CBC, wonderful as always, even though Jean Lamond and friend sound afraid of feeling too much feeling. (S¹⁴)

Cantata No 31: "Der Himmel lacht, die Erde jubiliert"

One of only three Bach works written for Easter Sunday (with Christ lag & the Easter Oratorio) — not long at 20', festive with trumpets and drums — opening Sonata, great chorus, 3 recits & arias for bass, tenor, soprano, chorale. Bach seems to be making up in floridity what he lacks in length. Dig that high trumpet in the chorale! (Ja¹¹)

Cantata No 21: “Ich hätte viel Bekümmernis”

Large Cantata in 2 parts with a complex compositional/textual history. As presented, Part I depicts the sinner in a state of repentance. Gorgeous Sinfonia and opening chorus followed by famous aria “Seufzen, Tränen.” Recit — fine aria with brief florid bit — closing chorus with mixed sorrow and gentle hope. Part II is cast as dialogue between Jesus and die Seele. The comparison of their duet in the liner notes to comic opera is a stretch, but it is a love duet. Subsequent chorus is a thrilling chorale variation. Then joyous aria and closing chorus with 3 trumpets and timps. This is one of the greatest of Bach’s Cantatas. Alas, though Monika Frimmer copes with the exceedingly difficult soprano part, she has shallow tone and aspirated articulation. (Ja¹¹)

6 Harpsichord Partitas

No recognition factor, apart from the First in B \flat , which I probably picked up from the Lipatti LP. Each collection of dances is prefaced with an “overture” or “praeludium” or “sinfonia” — the nomenclature differs for each. The choice of dances also varies, though the allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue pattern seems the default sequence. These are keyboard works, not particularly dancelike. The liner notes raise the question of Bach’s published music: Was it restricted to the keyboard works? [Almost — Wikipedia gives an account.¹] There is some progression from the slightest, the First Partita, to the Sixth in E minor, with lengthy Praeludium and extended Gigue. In their intricacy, constant invention, these pieces are weightier than the average dance suite. (Ja¹¹) Partita No 3 in A minor: Vaguely recognizable, but not as familiar as it should be. Brilliant crisp, somewhat romantic performance on CBC by Nareh Arghamanyan. (Ja¹²) Partita No 4 in D minor: No, I didn’t recall it, though it was done with very ornate French style ornamentation, and steely fingers by young Russian Georgy Tchaidze — all very deliberate, every repeat, very intense — an endurance contest, especially the slow-paced Allemande. Is there a performance tradition here? Very impressive, but lighten up for God’s sake. (live — Mh¹³). Partita No 2 played in piano recital by Jan Lisiecki, caught on CBC. He seems to have matured, though there were traces of sewing-machine stiffness in his playing of the piece, which was still unfamiliar. A pleasure to hear. (Jy¹⁶)

Toccat, Adagio and Fugue in C, BWV 564

The opening is the most un-Bach-like stuttering I can recall — Paul says it’s a famous pedal solo. What is David Goode doing with that organ? (Je¹¹)

Concerto in A minor after Vivaldi, BWV 593

Very familiar, both in Bach and original versions — but again, Goode does strange things, including a slow vibrato stop in the Adagio. (Je¹¹)

Organ works, BWV 654, 544, 682, 541

A group of Chorale Preludes, Preludes & Fugues. That strange sounding instrument is described as an intact period organ in mean temperament, with an incredibly high A = 476. Am I somehow hearing that sharp pitch? Paul says he knows the Silbermann organs in Freiburg — Bach was a friend, but criticized him for clinging to mean temperament. (Je¹¹)

Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 582

Why does a Passacaglia always sound magnificent? Goode gets every color out of that organ. (Je¹¹)

Goldberg Variations

I thought I had notes on Kilpatrick’s wonderful harpsichord version, but apparently not. Freddy Kempf’s piano version was recorded live, and it is wonderful in spots but flawed (in the way that

annoyed Glenn Gould with live performances): sometimes Kempf seems like an excited kid running away with the tempo and almost making it just right. The flaws are notes dropped out of the stitching from being touched too lightly. Elsewhere I can't help feeling that the beat gets obscured. (Ag¹¹)

Triple Concerto in A minor for flute, violin, harpsichord & strings

One of Bach's most complex Concerti — but I'm distressed to read that it is assembled from other works and re-orchestrated, perhaps not by Bach himself. Oh well, it's great music, good to hear once again. Performance is OK, but the baroque flute sounds feeble. (D¹¹)

Oboe Concerto in D minor, BWV 1059a; Oboe d'amore Concerto in D, BWV 1053a; 2 Sinfonias

I knew these were modern reconstructions, but had assumed from the BWV numbers that they were taken from keyboard concerti, so they would be familiar. No, they are assembled from various sources — only the slow movement of the D minor and the outer movements of the D major are familiar. Both Sinfonias feature oboe, and seem like slow movements of lost Concerti. Unfortunately, Robson has a baroque honk. (D¹¹)

6 Flute Sonatas; 2 Trio Sonatas; Partita in A minor

Great set from Berlin Classics — my fear of the German vacuum cleaner whoosh was unfounded — beautiful playing on a modern instrument. Liner notes are quite informative distinguishing one piece from another — they were not written as a set. Music is glorious of course, though often the flute writing is predictably breathless. The B minor (1030) is marked as masterpiece of the lot, long and elaborate, familiar from Dale's practice. The E minor (1034) and E major (1035) are in Sonata da chiesa format, vaguely familiar — gorgeous Siciliano in BWV 1035. The two Trio Sonatas in G (1038, 1039) are both familiar from my LP that included the Musical Offering Sonata plus the wonderful spurious C major. Sonata in E \flat (1031) is extremely familiar — the Siciliano in John's gig book, the Finale from CBC; its authenticity has been questioned on stylistic grounds, and it does seem somewhat galante, but it is well attested. Sonata in C (1033) is included in both its original form (reconstructed) without bass, and with continuo as supplied by C.P.E., who seems to have lost interest before finishing; I prefer the accompanied version. Partita in A minor is a virtuoso piece for composer, nearly 20' of unaccompanied flute, played here with as much sensitivity as I've ever heard — moderate tempo, rhythmically free, shaped phrasing. The Sonata in A (1032) I don't recall having heard before. (Ap¹²) Susan Hoepfner started her recital with the G minor Sonata. It was whoosh, and Sandra thought she wasn't mentally present. There was apparent mix-up about repeats. The rest of the recital was very good. (live, Jeffery Concerts, Mh¹⁴)

6 French Suites

Bicycle tour through a masterpiece, since Dart was obliged to omit the repeats in order to fit the set on one LP. But the revelations that the clavichord brings more than compensate, not so much in rhythmic freedom, as in Froberger, but in dynamic emphasis. Beautiful soundworld. (Ap¹²)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD1

The Amsterdam organ restored in the 1960s to its 1730s original condition, with A = 466, sounds admirably clean and clear in this recording. I do not know the enormous E \flat Prelude & Fugue, BWV552: the fugue begins in a staid 2, then takes off in 6/8. Chorale Partita, barely shorter, is also unfamiliar — Partite in this case meaning "divisions." The G minor BWV659 is the familiar Little Fugue, complete with its elaborate Fantasie. Three Chorales including everyone's favorite, "Wachet auf," overlapping countermelodies, savored ornaments. The celebrated Toccata & Fugue in D minor BWV565 (which may not be by Bach) is done with fancy ornamentation, speedy roulades, distinctive articulation. I like it. (Muskoka — Jy¹²)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD2

Program begins and ends with a Prelude & Fugue in C minor, a short unfamiliar one BWV549, and a famous big one, BWV546, which I don't know. Between are two Chorales, including "Am Wasserflüssen Babylon," plus the Trio Sonata in C (at quite a tempo!) and the much-played A minor Concerto after Vivaldi. I dislike the blast stop Koopman uses in the Chorales. The organ sounds OK otherwise, but the detailed history in the liner notes raises questions whether the best feature of the instrument is its case. (Muskoka — Jy¹²)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD3

Program opens with the great Dorian Toccata & Fugue, which I should know more readily than I do, and a great Partita on "Sei gegrüsst," possibly the longest piece in the box; the tune is familiar, but I don't recall hearing the Variations before. There a fine little Fantasy in G, plus the G major Trio Sonata. (Muskoka Jy¹²) The Chorale on the Lord's Prayer has a familiar tune disguised chromatically almost out of recognition, over a halting stride in pedals — lots of Scotch snaps. Chorale on Jesu Christus, BWV688m is incredibly spiky with extraordinary running pedal work. Both are Bach at his most challenging. A minor Prelude & Fugue sounds vaguely familiar. (Jy¹²)

Cantata 170: "Vergnügte Ruh"

Big solo Cantata for alto/countertenor which I've not heard before: three arias with intervening recits on desire for death and rest: Cantata gives organ unusual soloistic prominence. Middle aria senza basso, eerily transparent (and visibly uncomfortable in performance for Daniel Taylor, Jeanne Lamon— clearly under-rehearsed), with lively but minor key final aria, odd tierce de picardie. I'd like to hear it again. (Stratford, live Ag¹²) Solo Cantata for alto, one of only three in the cycle – three arias connected by recits. The middle aria is extraordinary, with full strings in unison, no continuo, and two clearly differentiated lines on organ. The first is pretty conventional, the last nice with oboe d'amore. (Je¹⁴)

Suite for Orchestra No 3 in D, BWV1068

The most popular of the orchestra Suites, everything but the incredible Overture in Sandra's gig book. I was amused to see the Tafelmusik purists play off the string, and use vibrato and crescendo in the Air. How things have changed! (Stratford, live Ag¹²)

Cantata 213: Hercules auf den Scheidewege

A rare secular Cantata on a mythological theme — a "dramma per musica" no less, written to flatter one of the multitude of sons of August the Strong. The arias were all reworked for the Christmas Oratorio, but this, oddly enough, came first. Helmut Rilling's 1967 performance sounds rich and Romantic à la Raymond Leppard, but the sound is good, and it's a joy to hear Hertha Töpfer once again. Her Echo aria is surprising from Bach. Hercules must choose between the road of easy pleasure and the road of virtuous hardship. Guess! The music is Bach at his most sumptuously melodic and appealing. I don't know the Christmas Oratorio well enough for the music to be really familiar. (S¹²)

Partita No 2 in D minor, violin alone

It's been too long since I've listened to this, but to hear it live, performed by the greatest living player of his instrument, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I looked round during the Chaconne, and every person in that packed hall was intent, silent, transfixed. (James Ehnes live, S¹²) Nikki Chiu in a fine performance technically, maybe on the precious side. (Jeffery Concert live, My¹⁵)

Clavierübung III

Monumental organ study published in Bach's lifetime, performed on local Létourneau organs in St Catherine's by James Kibbie. The larger instrument is not vast, the other a tiny four-stop positif, so

the lines are crystal clear. Bach's Clavierübung collections have confused me², but Book III contains organ music organized — according to Kibbie's traditional analysis — as a German Mass. (Paul tells me this is now disputed.) Whatever, the Mass order is present to a palpable degree, and the pairings of excursions on the same chorale are fascinating and (as intended) instructive. Bach was always a teacher. I wonder what it was from the Clavierübung years go that sounded so weirdly un-Bach-like— It's not here. Maybe track 15, with its Scotch snaps, triplets, and chromaticism? A fine CD — I'm grateful to Paul for the gift. (F¹³)

Cantata 161: "Komm du süsse Todesbande"

Cantata for male alto René Jacobs, not my favorite singer whatever his gifts as conductor, with a tenor aria for Nigel Rogers, who overacts the text and cannot trill. First aria is lovely chorale fantasy on the Passion Chorale. Recits are wonderful deathwish dramas. Great final chorus with double flute obligato. I don't like Linde's exaggerated performance style, but otherwise well executed. (Je¹⁴)

Cantata 177: "Ich ruf zu dir"

The opening chorale-based chorus is transporting, with violin and two oboes obligato — very rich contrapuntally, very consoling (despite Linde's mannered phrasing). Three arias follow for alto, soprano and tenor. "Ich bitt noch mehr" has simple continuo accompaniment. "Verleich," for soprano and a deep oboe da caccia, asks grace to forgive. "Lass mich kein Lust," for tenor, is livelier, more festive, with violin and bassoon obligato — gorgeous. There's chorale to finish. The best of the three on this CD. (Je¹⁴)

Concerto in C after Vivaldi, RV 208 "Grosso Mogul"

One of Bach's longest Vivaldi transcriptions captures string crossing figures, bird calls, an operatic style recit for Adagio, lots of boring sequences in Allegro plus a runaway cadenza. I felt the performance lacked brilliance. (Jonathan Oldengarm live, FSA Jy¹⁴)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD4

Featured is the great Passacaglia in C minor, positioned at the end of the CD — a complex but unmistakable ground, deep pedals fortissimo, a 12' juggernaut that leads into a huge fugue — ends without pedal tone prep, but on tierce de Picardy. There are big Preludes & Fugue, a couple of Chorales, and Pastorale in F, another 12' piece, much more complex than Handel's or any other baroque pastoral music — divided into sections, the second entirely on high flutes, the third a processional in 3, the fourth a lengthy fugue in 3/8. I'm not sure what holds the piece together. (Je¹⁴)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD5

Three big works here: I remember someone playing the opening gambit of the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C (which is not repeated) and I couldn't believe it was Bach. This is a big 14' piece, one of the largest organ pieces. The Andante is pure lament, reminding me with its slow, steady pulse of the A minor Violin Concerto. The fugue expands on a rhythmically ambiguous subject — it's in 3, I think, but it sounded at first like 4. Wow! The Trio Sonata in Eb (is it No 1?) is less intense — what a gorgeous Adagio! — the Allegro bobs up and down agreeably. Who was it described these pieces as both gentle and formidable at the same time— The last Prelude & Fugue in D minor is another 12' piece with a great dramatic prelude and an oddly repetitive sequential fugue subject — it ends in triumphant major. The eight little Preludes & Fugues are short enough to let Koopman use

²The four collections are Part I: Six Partitas (1726—1730); Part II: Italian Concerto and French Overture (1735); Part III: German Organ Mass (1739); [Part IV — without Part number]: Aria with Diverse Variations, later nicknamed Goldberg Variations (1741).

various exotic stops – the E minor is wild, with a wildly chromatic fugue subject. (Je¹⁴)

Organ works — Ton Koopman CD6

The big pieces here are the Trio Sonata No 3 in D minor, and the grand finale Prelude & Fugue in E minor. Koopman contrasts this with a shorter E-minor Prelude and Fugue with a dramatic toccata, Prelude and an extraordinary echo fugue. The larger one is grand and unrelenting – the fugue develops a subject of expanding alternating intervals, very muscular, with lots of virtuosic roulades. It sounds mind-bogglingly difficult. The Trio Sonata features Bach the melodist, one of those ornate minor key melodies that have never been equaled. The Adagio provides pastoral relief. Vivace stays in minor, serious, not too fast at first until it launches into frenzied triplets – an exciting journey. Slow chorales fill out the rest. (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 1 in G

I've always had trouble grasping these pieces, at least the non-dance movements. Apparently Bach had little precedent – unaccompanied string music was more often written for gamba. All follow the same pattern: Prelude – Allemande – Courante – Sarabands – Danse [minuet, bouree, gavotte] – Gigue. I remember Fournier as surprisingly rough. Rostropovich in live BBC performance of 2, 3, and 6 also makes heavy weather. Viola de Hoog, trained in the Dutch early music tradition, is faster and lighter of touch – she understands the directions best. Some of the wayward lines, even though tonal, sound outright Schoenbergian. The famous Prelude is unashamed *molto affetuoso*. Courante delicate, light, half off the string. (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 2 in D minor

This is the darkest, most serious of the set. De Hoog here is slower than Rostropovich, and freer. She de-emphasizes non-harmonic notes wonderfully. Sarabande very special. Gigue seems light despite the instrument sounding like a bass viol. (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 3 in C

Bouree and Gigue are very famous. All of the players, even De Hoog, are guilty of a lot of resinous scratching, especially in faster tempos. Did De Hoog tune her instrument way down? (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 4 in Eb

This is said to be an awkward key – I'm not sure why. The Bourees are transformed at De Hoog's quick tempi – the Gige as well. (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 5 in D minor

This has scordatura A string tuned to G – odd for D minor. Allemande is particularly graceful. Sarabande very stately. Bourees bright, vaguely familiar. (Jy¹⁴)

Cello Suite No 6 in D

This one is the most polyphonic in feel with greatest use of double stopping. Prelude begins with bouncing figure on D, culminates in virtuosic bit. Allemande has melody in lower line of double stops. (Jy¹⁴)

Prelude, Fugue and Allegro in Eb, BWV 998

Guitar performance on BBC disc – a really substantial piece at 14' with a very stately and substantial fugue doubtless more impressive on organ. Allegro attacca in running 3. (F¹⁶)

St. Matthew Passion: Arias for Soprano & Alto

I looked forward to this CD but it was a let-down because of the poor sound. And the arias seem more than usual ripped out of context. Elly Ameling and Janet Baker are consummate of course. Paul Steinitz, the conductor, was apparently a pioneer in “historically informed” performance of Bach in England – as late as 1972! Among other things, he insisted on singing in German! He still shows residue of the English Oratorio School, most notably in the slow tempos, but also, say, the plodding basses of “Können, Tränen,” or the blastissimo attack in the final chorus. A historical

document. (Ap¹⁶)

Italian Concertos for Organ

I expected these to be familiar from the originals and so they are, mostly. Vivaldi A minor is the second best known in that key. Vivaldi D minor is also known but less so. The 1998 Dutch organ sounds full of overtones and lacks the cleanness of FSA's tracker. Prince Johannes Ernst von Sachsem-Werner is unknown to me, but Bach transcribed at least two of his works, here a single movement in C and a Concerto in G. The Marcello D minor Oboe Concerto is well known and a highlight – the Finale all up in the little pipes. Prince Johannes does well for himself in the stately G major too. The G minor solo violin fugue is transposed up to a brighter D minor – O that he had written them all out! What an education! The Vivaldi Grosse Mogul I've heard but should remember better – the organ cadenzas are spectacular – I must dig out the original. (May¹⁶)

Capriccio sopra la lontananza del fratello, BWV 992

I haven't heard this piece for many years and remember none of it. I must have thought it was a sentimental valediction – as it seems in the weeping chromatics of the Adagio. But I've never connected it with Kuhnau's Biblical Sonatas, and the secularized Biblical programs turn the piece into an even slyer spoof than the Kaffee Cantata. The posthorn Aria and Fugue – with solemn intro – are particularly delicious. (Je¹⁶)

Toccatina in D, BWV 912

Three parts, fast-slow-fast; both parts 2 and 3 are fugues. A show-off piece, in the virtuoso fingers at beginning and end, in the intricate double fugue in F# minor, in the dramatic recitativo connections, in the freedom of counterpoint modulating to remote keys. Wow! (Je¹⁶)

Partita on O Gott, du frommer Gott, BWV 767

Why would a hymn on this text be in minor? Divisions graduate from 1 to 2 to 3-part inventions, getting progressively more complex. (Je¹⁶)

Suite in A minor, BWV 818a

French Suite not included with the packaged 6. It begins with a wild virtuosic prelude, then settles into the familiar dance forms. Sarabande is danced in heavy wooden shoes – scary. Nice lute-stop Minuet. (Je¹⁶)

Toccatina in E minor, BWV 914; Toccatina in G, BWV 916

The first has unusual layout as two consecutive preludes and fugues in the same key – the novelty confused early editors. The second is a Wow piece – festive opening, gorgeous Adagio. The fast and embellished fugue subject sounds fiendish. (Je¹⁶)

Brandenburg Concerto No 3 in G

On CBC, performed by Argentinian group Cappella Gambetta: I liked the extended slow movement improvised (as if) by solo harpsichord. The Finale, however, was absurdly fast, over the top – why would J.S. even bother to write those thirty-second notes at that speed— (Jy¹⁶)

“Dorian” Toccatina & Fugue

On Noehren's Recital, one of the great ones. The Toccatina maintains constant sixteenth-note motion in 4. The Fugue (less familiar than I expected) is a solemn Moderato, the pedal entry earth-shattering, with a sustained trill to boot. (Ag¹⁶)

21 Organ Chorales, Rinck & Rudorff collections

These are neither chorale preludes nor naked chorale harmonizations but chorales with limited embellishment. Best in small doses – beautiful but much of a sameness. (O¹⁶)

Cantata 50: “Nun ist das Heil und die Kraft”

Fragment, a single orphaned five-part chorus with three trumpets and drums, very pompous and wonderful. Rilling's performance is unnecessarily Prussian. (S¹⁷)

Cantata 29: “Wir danken dir Gott”

I bought this CD to fill this gap: the Sinfonia, another version of the E major violin Prelude, and the great first chorus, eventually reworked to become the Kyrie of the B minor Mass. It always sends chills. The Cantata is not liturgical, but was written for public celebration, with trumpets and drums, a cantata of praise. The soloists carry the main burden – the tenor aria is a killer, the gentler soprano prays for blessing. Alto sings Halleluia with organ obbligato and a prosperity gospel text. The two organ obbligatos are a real rarity. Final chorale is relatively elaborate, familiar text but not tune. This is one of the great cantatas. (S¹⁷)

Partita No 3 in E, solo violin

Menuhin live in 1976, aetat 60. It’s hard to believe so little is left of that amazing technique. (O¹⁷)

Sonata, clavecin, in D, BWV963

Early 10’ work in five movements in imitation of Kuhnau (including, I think, the designation “sonata”). Two prelude-like movements, fugue, short Adagio, and an unusual Finale “all’imitatio gallina cucu.” Are there any other bird movements in Bach? (Ap¹⁸)

Sonata, clavecin, in B=, BWV 821

Early 10’ piece in five movements – Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabnde, and a colorful “Echo” Finale. (Ap¹⁸)

Sarabande con Partita in C, BWV 990

An extraordinary set of variations, often considered spurious. On a sarabande by Lully, a Clavierübung of progressive difficulty lasting a full 19’. The Goldbergs are in the distant future, but this stands nicely on its own. (Ap¹⁸)

3 fugues, 2 preludes

The B \flat Fugue has a subject like a student exercise. The D minor prelude is only attributed. The A minor fugue is called “fine” in the liner notes, and it seems to have extra freedom in the episodes. The Prelude and Fugue in B minor are paired for convenience in the recording. The Prelude is attributed to Johann Pachelbel’s son Wilhelm and claimed here for Bach on the basis of its adventurous harmonies. It is also virtuosic in its arpeggiation. The fugue is an expansion of Albinoni’s Trio Sonata, op 1/8, second movement – certainly not student work. (Ap¹⁸)

Toccata and Fugue in D, BWV 912a

Earlier 10’ version of better known later elaboration. I don’t see any need for improvement. Fine 6/8 fugue on festive gigue subject. (Ap¹⁸)

Ouverture in G minor

Ouverture followed by Aria, Gavotte, Bourée, three Minuets, and Gigue, 13’. Ouverture is filled with finger-twisting trills and turns in the French manner. The Aria too. This has all the charm and piquancy of the French Suites. (Ap¹⁸)

4 fugues after Albinoni

Liner notes describe progression from BWV 951, slightly expanded, and BWV 946, with a fourth voice added to the fugue from op 1/12, to the last, BWV 949, which stretches resemblance to the original (op 1/9) to the limit. (Ap¹⁸)

Capriccio in E, BWV 993

This has ambitious and difficult fugue written in honor of brother Johann Christoph Bach, but lacks the picturesque effects of the more famous fraternal Capriccio. (Ap¹⁸)

Fantasy and Fugue in A minor, BWV 561

Organ work of doubtful attribution because it breaks Bach’s usual patterns; OTOH as Terry said, it exemplifies the stylus fantasticus in which rules are broken. The piece is not in my CD collection. Lots of flourishes. Terry is a pianist turned organist, so his recital was courageous,

enjoyable, impressive in its way. (live at FSA, S¹⁸)

Brandenburg Concerto No 2 in F

With Wynton Marsalis, so rarely played because the trumpet part is so altitudinous. Remember that notorious Casals recording where he substituted a saxophone. Marsalis rock, high Fs and all. He must be playing a small trumpet, but it doesn't sound at all puny. Such a glorious Adagio. All played à la Raymond Leppard. (Je¹⁹)

WILHELM FRIEDMANN BACH

Pianoforte Sonata in D

This Naxos disc might make me swear off pianoforte altogether. Professor Hill plays according to a theory and so destroys rhythmic coherence that the music sounds like Boulez. He comes with great credentials, including study with Leonhardt and ample scholarship — perhaps I'm wrong. But the playing seems out to make a point rather than to make music. Underneath, the quality of W.F.B.'s *Empfindsamer Stil* is barely detectable. I must try a different sampling. (Ag⁰⁹)

Organ Works

Apparently complete, W.F.'s organ pieces consist entirely of fugues and chorales such as his father might have written. I've not found a good sampling of his music, though the disc is well performed and very listenable. (Ag¹⁰)

HENK BADINGS

Concerto, harp & small orchestra

Starts with ominous rumbles, seemingly avant-gardish, then settles into aimless neoclassic mode, with ruffles & glitters from the harp, touches of jazz near the end, final triad. Perfect example of inept search for a style. Does the anti-chromatic harp cause problems? (Au⁰⁸)

Trois chansons bretonnes

Three choral songs with piano on poems of Théodore Botrel, fairly impressionistic, with complex part writing. Very beautiful. (Mh⁰⁹)

Symphony No 2

Terse Symphony in neo-classic three-movement format, rugged sounding, abstract, very serious — somewhat reminiscent of Honegger. All three movements including the last, which begins lightly, build to heavy, fated conclusions. Better than I expected. (N¹¹)

Symphony No 7 “Louisville”

Standard four-movement format, Louisville commission written for conservative American audience. Pandiatonic — ominous slow intro followed by passionate Allegro — Pesante Scherzo — Adagio with celeste, continues deep and somber — Finale lively, brassy, rhythmically intricate. Nothing exceptional. (D¹¹)

Symphony No 12 “Symphonic Sound Figures”

Written ten years after the Seventh, incorporates avant garde techniques including some limited aleatoric passages. Eight episodes plus Finale, continuous. The result would not be mistaken for Stockhausen, since there are decidedly tonal lines throughout. Amalgam work well — not a bad piece. (D¹¹)

Concerto, flute and winds

One movement in three sections, 14'. Badings is a chameleon. Here he is pandiatonic, fairly conventional. The flute plays in impossible stretches of staccato sixteenths without breath. Adagio gives an underlying pattern, crescendo to accompagnato. Flute plays torrents of notes over top. Vivace lets flute dance over top. (Ap¹⁹)

EDGAR BAINTON

Viola Sonata

The composer of my favorite Anglican anthem – I’ve just become aware of his more ambitious music, and I had no idea he had disappeared into Australia as Willan did into Canada. Allegro drops and wanders, alas – a touch of impressionism in the harmony. Allegretto has a modal folksiness. Finale begins with stentorian maestoso and extended prologue to vigorous Allegro with flurries of downward scales. (Je¹³)

Pavane, Idyll and Bacchanale

Slight little Suite for orchestra, almost Brit lite – pure enchantment, the Pavane pure gold. The Bacchanale, however, is celebrated with warm tea. (F¹⁴)

Symphony No 2 in D minor

I’m curious about any music written by the composer of my favorite English cathedral anthem. Bainton turns out to be Australian, a pupil of Stanford. His Symphony is cast in one long movement full of tempo changes, first conceived as a tone poem after Swinburne’s “Thalassa.” My blind guess would be Bax. A grandiose British impressionism with tragic colors and Elgarian moments, very sophisticated orchestration. Wonderful ending. Very impressive. (Muskoka—Jy¹⁴)

Symphony No 3 in C minor

Brief slow intro, tragic throbbing brass and timps – Allegro explosive and wild – Bax-inspired impressionism. Pentatonic wind motif reappears in later movements, falling fourths. Fluttering strings, radical chromaticism, extremely complex orchestral textures. Allegretto grazioso picks up snaky flutterings and even more extreme chromatics – B section with quizzical winds. Adagio was started when the composer’s wife died – it seems more desolate than grief-stricken – Ôd und leer das Meer. Finale opens with assertive falling fourths, trick rhythms à la Walton, dissonance in brass, heavy footed – turns to gentle major – brass chorale on falling fourth leads to big ending. Impressive – loses its way sometimes (or I do). (My¹⁵)

Sir EDWARD BAIRSTOW

5 anthems

David Hill’s choir of St. John’s sounds terrific. Brief “Jesu the very thought” is nice. “Blessed City” has lovely moments but seems text-driven, formally unsettled. “Lord thou hast been our refuge” compiles Psalm snippets and turns into another formal anaconda. “If the Lord had not helped me” is more coherent textually and musically – effective. “Let all mortal flesh” does not use the wonderful French tune, but it’s still a gem. “Save us O Lord,” finishing the CD, is a lovely little nighttime prayer. (Jy¹⁶)

Evening Service in D; Evening Service in G

Mag and Nunc in D has the measure of the moving N.T. texts, both doxologies perfect in their calculated exaltation. The shorter G major moves along even better – a perfect crescendo in the Magnificat to the doxology. (Jy¹⁶)

Five Poems of the Spirit

Five poems set for solo baritone, choir and orchestra. (Orchestration of the last three are by another hand.) The poets are Crashaw, Mary Sidney, Herbert (2), and Raleigh. The Mary Sidney bit from Psalm 139 is beautiful (solo baritone), the first Herbert surprisingly playful, the second Herbert and Raleigh the best. Very reminiscent of the Vaughan Williams Mystical Songs, but not nearly as memorable. (Jy¹⁶)

OSVALDAS BALAKAUSKAS

Requiem in memoriam Stasys Lozovaitis

My first exposure to Balakauskas, his only sacred work, wholly orthodox in its text. Style is Baltic minimalist. Extremely transparent, pared down, with the surprise of harpsichord at the beginning. Choral writing is mainly homophonic, with word-for-word treatment of text, modal with hints of

chant and with faint hints of jazz in Dies irae. Is that a mandolin? Little or no sustained writing, all dry short phrases. Interesting, but I don't like it much. (Ja¹⁹)

MILY BALAKIREV

2 Songs: The Clear Moon; Spanish Song (Gorchakova)

Nice melodies, direct, varied strophic — the Spanish accent seems natural. (My¹⁰)

Islamey

Balakirev's one big hit, in its original virtuoso piano incarnation. Paley's technique is sufficient, but the recording sounds as though the mikes were under the lid — no ambience whatever. (My¹¹)

Piano Sonata No 1 in B \flat minor, op 5

This Sonata is generally considered inferior to the other, also in B \flat minor. In three movements, the long Andante is a thunderous affair closer to Liszt than to Rubinstein, perhaps an ideological choice. Relief in the shape of a short Mazurka, heavy footed in the bass. Andante Finale is unexpectedly lyrical, simple, beautiful — perhaps not intended to be the Finale. A solid piece, but nothing distinctively Russian. (My¹¹)

Piano Sonatina

Tiny three-movement bauble, less than 6', charming with a hint of Borodin. (My¹¹)

Fantasy on Themes from Glinka's Life for the Tsar

Lisztian operatic paraphrase on Glinka's Slavic tunes, the piano pretending to be a balalaika, ending in a thunderous polonaise. Terrific flavourful showpiece. (My¹¹)

Fantasiestück

Romantic piece with harplike cadenza midway. So so. (My¹¹)

Capriccio

Substantial 11' eclectic virtuoso ramble, with great swirls, roulades, trills. Horowitz territory — great entertainment. (My¹¹)

3 Nocturnes

MB doing a Chopin impersonation — very nice but not the real thing. Major key section of No 2 is beautiful like an Orthodox hymn. No 3 a mournful barcarolle. (My¹¹)

Piano Sonata in B \flat minor

Not a revised version of op 5 as I thought, but a new piece, generally considered superior. The Mazurka is kept much the same. Andantino keeps to thin textures, a wistful Slavic tune. Intermezzo a lyrical improv over arpeggiated left hand. Finale works up a Russian dance in virtuoso manner, well varied if obsessive, with a quiet ending. A less polished piece than the Sonatas of either Rubinstein or Tchaikovsky, but more interesting. (My¹¹)

Tamara

Substantial 25' tone poem that I've heard before but don't remember. It sounds like a discarded movement from Rimsky's Scheherazade (overly repetitive phrases, rapid reiterations, lush orchestration) with hints of Borodin (the occasional exoticism, a touch of Polovtsi). (My¹¹)

CLAUDE-BÉNIGNE BALBASTRE

Harpsichord works

I can't say more about Balbastre, the last of the French clavecinistes, than that his music has as much character as that of Couperin le Grand, but that is saying much. If anything, the individual pieces are longer and more fully developed than those of the earlier generations. Otherwise, I can't hear an individual style, or detect when the music becomes Rameau's in Balbastre's arrangement. Played on beautiful large instrument with a variety of colors — whether for this reason or for the quality of Balbastre, this is a go-to disc for harpsichord music. Ends with variations of La Marseillaise, marking the end of a musical era too. (Jy¹¹)

Tapage; Noël

The Tapage on Chapuis's recital sounds like the organ is shaking apart — I've never heard a sound like this. Wow! Chapuis pulls odd stops in the Noel too (and the actual carol is familiar). (D¹²)

GRANVILLE BANTOCK

The Cyprian Goddess — Symphony No 3

Lush Romantic style, rather Straussian, or maybe Delius minus the added notes. A Symphony in one movement, sectional but had to heard the sections or development — is it athenatic? I doubt it. Somehow convincing in its sequence of moods. (Jy³)

The Helena Variations

Orchestral Variations almost exactly contemporary with Elgar's Enigma — beautiful theme, nice character pieces — the relation of the pieces to the original theme is not obvious, not a bad thing. But the set doesn't have the *progression d'effet* or big ending of Enigma. A strong piece nonetheless. (Jy³)

Dante and Beatrice

Lengthy one-movement symphonic poem — the soundworld is Strauss, but Tchaikovsky's Francesca lurks in the background. There's a bit of everything — stratospheric trumpets, violin solo with harp, English horn bits. Very erotically themed music, like all the rest on this disc — the good Sir Granville wore his pecker on his sleeve. (Jy³)

Violin Sonata No 3 in C

Bantock was interested mainly in coloristic orchestral music, so chamber music got slighted. Allegro begins rhapsodically, settles into a theme in periodic phrases, then disrupts, fragments, disguises, extends — the nakedness of the genre reveals GB's underlying structural strength — I should listen to the other work more carefully. Lento is titled "The Dryad," a water portrait, chaster than Szymanowski's but effective. Finale develops more conventionally — until the extraordinary postlude that evaporates in alt. Surprising and great Sonata. (D¹¹)

Viola Sonata in F "Colleen"

I'd forgotten about the Violin Sonata, so the structural strength of this came as a surprise. An expansive piece in three movements at 34' — my first impression was the early heroic, oratorical Strauss, and the liner notes indeed point to Rosenkavalier. It is more Brahmsian in its motivic working out — a quality I don't associate with Bantock. Maestoso has feeling of troubled gravitas in a recitativo, arioso manner (notated apparently in 5/4 but no strong feeling of 5). Big emotional passage near the end. Vivace Finale an Irish jig in 6/8, hence the nickname Colleen — and the folksy feeling extends to the lively second tune. Big ending. Bantock tends to carry repeated figures too long, but this is the best piece on the CD. I much regret Ms Bradley's rough, unbuttered viola sound. I think her vibrato is a violinist's, not a violist's. (Je¹³)

SAMUEL BARBER

Music for a Scene from Shelley

The scene from *Prometheus Bound* is excuse for romantic, atmospheric evocation of mountain scenery, with big climax. Fine neo-romanticism. (Au⁰⁸)

Symphony No 2

Barber was wrong — this is a decent piece, if not the immediately overwhelming masterpiece that is Symphony No 1. Perhaps he was upset by the personal military associations, which need not affect the listener. Perhaps the third movement hasn't enough lift (the final triad seems banal). But it's well worth hearing. (Au⁰⁸)

Violin Concerto

It improves with familiarity. Dene Olding (who gets an ignorant and nasty review on Amazon)

holds his own in a competitive field. (Ja⁰⁹)

10 uncollected songs

These were published posthumously in 1994. The two earliest are simplest and best — the Marian lullaby & the Swinburne lyric (stunningly done by Hampson). The next show Barber trying to find his voice, writing angular lines, unnatural dissonances, broken meter — not successfully.

“Beggar’s Song” is a triumph. Has he picked up some Britten so early? The last two Joyce settings are pretty good too. (Ja¹⁰)

Three Songs, op 2

These are more confident, in the well tested English pastoral mode. “The Daisies” is a winner with its folksong lilt. “Bessie Bobtail” tries too hard — Barber’s besetting sin. (Ja¹⁰)

Three Songs, op 10

Three settings of Joyce, from Chamber Music — possible, but they seem over the top, especially “I hear an army.” Try again — maybe they take getting used to. But I think SB was just overawed by Joyce’s reputation and crushes the fragile lyrics. (Ja¹⁰)

Four Songs, op 13

Barber at his best. The Hopkins and Yeats settings are super. “Sure on This Shining Night” is celebrated, deservedly, and “Nocturne” (new to me) equals it. Studer is OK, but I’ve liked her better in opera. (Ja¹⁰)

Dover Beach, op 3

A true little masterpiece — a great poem set to great music, presented to perfection. (Ja¹⁰) Barber’s great setting. Randall Scarlata sings OK, but is recorded too closely with Yings, and the piece needs to breathe more deeply. I’d love to hear Barber himself sing it again. (My¹⁵)

Two Songs, op 18; Nuvoletta, op 25

“The Queen’s Face” & “Monks and Raisins” are wry, nonsensical songs that don’t work for me.

“Nuvoletta” is better in Steber’s performance, and it’s grown on me over time, but it’s hard to put across. (Ja¹⁰)

Mélodies Passagères, op 27

Five Rilke poems in French, very beautiful, chaste and uncluttered. French brings out the best in both composers — are these the same that Hindemith set? (Ja¹⁰)

Despite and Still, op 41

Five superb songs on 3 Graves poems, plus Roethke’s Lizard and a bit of Ulysses. An integral set. Dramatic expression of old age wisdom and desperation. Barber’s settings are not lyrical, but they cohere in musical lines and work. Hampson at his best. (Ja¹⁰)

Three Songs, op 45

Unrelated songs, all fine. Best is the Joyce translation of Keller (where is it printed?). The Milosz piece is witty — great if it can be put over. The Middleton is sustained-voice Abschied. (Ja¹⁰)

Hermit Songs, op 29

This cycle is as familiar and as fresh as ever. Studer’s performance is a nice change from Price’s benchmark and good to hear. (Ja¹⁰)

The Lovers, op 43

Wow! Barber’s last work, an erotic Cantata for baritone and choir on love poems by Neruda. At the end Barber threw over the Met fiasco and returned to his romantic metier without shame, and the result is a piece as true as Knoxville. Neruda’s sequence moves from erotic altitudes to love gone stale (“Love is so short, forgetting is so long”), and the end is wrenching. A few cavils: (1) The baritone’s first song is too declamatory; (2) the male point-of-view character is wholly self-involved, the female erased; (3) The text seems too personal for choral treatment — can I imagine

standing with a gang of tenors and basses singing “strip off your clothes” while the females in choir garb stare at the audience? Still, a courageous piece in many ways, deeply moving. (Je¹⁰)

Prayers of Kierkegaard, op 20

Beautiful setting of magnificent texts. Best are the soprano solo and the following chorus — the last attempts a semplice chorale, and I’m not convinced it rises to the exaltation of the words. But the whole piece is a deeply spiritual experience. (Je¹⁰)

Knoxville: Summer of 1915

Thus to revisit. Price’s version, young, fresh, with a Mississippi twang. Don Neville says he’s never heard the piece. (My¹¹) Kudos to Renée Fleming for doing it conductorless with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra on PBS. She sang it well enough, but it didn’t seem right. Ruth thought her voice thin. I thought it was swallowed, placed back, uncomfortably scaled down for the tiny venue. Very odd. The rest of the show was pops. (Ap¹²)

School for Scandal Overture

I’ve always loved this piece, but the seams are showing — a bit more disconnected than I remember it. And it seems written to a more serious and strenuous play than Sheridan’s. But nice to see programmed. (PBS Live from NYPhil, S¹¹)

Andromache’s Farewell

Gorgeous and powerful — programmed by Alan Gilbert, Voigt is in vocal decline, especially the middle voice. Her “Dich teure Halle” really missed the grand sweep. But she sang the Barber well. (PBS Live from NYPhil, S¹¹)

Quartet in B minor, op 11

Nice to hear live, the New Zealand Quartet, who performed standing. I don’t think they are A+ on a technical level, but they play very musically, and their sustaining power in the Adagio was a wonder — how extraordinarily difficult that is to do! Barber’s idea of repeating the Allegro for a Finale is interesting, but it seems perfunctory, too short. Better, maybe, to have had a developed Finale with the Allegro reappearing at the end (live, Parry Sound, Jy¹²) I like the Ying reading, firm but not rugged in opening. The piece is more substantial than I remember. The Adagio breathes and gets nuance, but not over much. I didn’t realize that they include a discarded third movement, a funny little bridge and then a truly fast scherzando. It gives the piece greater weight and some off-the-string playing, and gives the return of the first material greater point. Barber was so self-critical, to his disadvantage here I think. I like it, but it needs a smoother join to the Da Capo Finale. (Je¹⁵)

Prelude and Fugue in B minor

Barber wrote this when he was 17 and serving as a church organist. The style is not yet recognizable, but the neo-romantic approach is firmly established. (D¹³)

Wondrous Love, op 35

Barber chose one of the most beautiful of the Sacred Harp pentatonic hymns for his organ variations. I was about to say he appropriately minimizes chromaticism, when a stealthy chromatic slippage appeared. But no dramatics — the set ends quietly. (D¹³)

Souvenirs

Barber’s lighter vein — Waltz, Schottische, Pas de Deux, Two-Step, Galop. I remember this as a piano piece, but this is a duo-piano version. Did he ever orchestrate? It’s lovely stuff. (Ja¹⁵)

Serenade for Strings, op 1

I have heard this but don’t remember it — a little piece, three movements, less than 9’, full of sevenths and suspensions. Andante a wistful weepy sighing little thing. Finale is called Dance but it’s just as wistful, contained within neo-classic decorum. (My¹⁵)

WOLDEMAR BARGIEL

Piano Trio No 2 in Eb, op 20

Bargiel was Clara Wieck's half-brother, hence his soundworld. Opening theme has Schumannesque brusqueness without the drama — plangent second group — turbulence in motivic development — a liking for displaced bar lines. Andante begins with solo cello, transparent, builds to thick multiple stops (dubious), settles back. Scherzo in minor. Finale big and bold. The piece makes all the right moves, but it seems forced somehow, manufactured. I'm unconvinced. (Je¹¹)

Piano Trio No 3 in Bb, op 37

Allegro a lovely *con grazia* that reaches stormier emotions — the melody flows here without motivic anxieties. Andante also fully melodic, nicely sustained — too sustained — reaches nobilmente. Scherzo turbulent in minor key. Finale also in minor. I prefer this to the other Trio, but it seems over long. (Je¹¹)

Symphony in C, op 30

Bargiel's only Symphony was premiered in 1864, about forty or fifty years too late. Dedicated to Joachim, it has imprint of Beethoven, even to the rhythm of the Fifth Symphony, but takes its own way and has gift of the unexpected — development in dramatic minor. Andante extends a melancholy cello melody, throbbing triplets. Menuetto full bodied, not genteel (what was the last Symphony with a Menuetto?). Allegro Finale has syncops, afterbeats, an episode in minor that returns in triumphant major. Masterly, rewarding, despite date. (Mh¹⁷)

Medea Overture, op 22

Bargiel clung to the nomenclature of overture for a symphonic poem. Medea is dark with classical hues of Cherubini, with some odd dissonance — tempestuous, well made, not distinctive. (Mh¹⁷)

Intermezzo for Orchestra, op 46

Seems to be orchestration of movement from Piano Sonata. It would work as a commencement procession or concert opener — nice positive gait of purpose. (Mh¹⁷)

Romeo and Juliet Overture, op 18

Long brooding Intro and fine long-breathed tragic melody — long development. No love theme, all tragedy. Coda rises to fortissimo, dies away to major chord. (Mh¹⁷)

HENRI BARRAUD

Offrande à une ombre

The shadow is that of the composer Jaubert, dead in the War. I don't remember this from KUOM, but it is a puzzling style, French but not that of any identifiable source — delicate opening, big build-up, quiet ending. Worth another listen. (Ag¹⁰)

PIERRE BARTHOLOMÉE

Fin de série

Sequence of 15 violin duets paired in arch form around a central Canon. Avant gardist, not easy listening but always threatening to make sense. The titles help, though it's hard to discern any marching in Marche. (D¹³)

Piano Variations

Variations are built not on a theme or even a motif but on three recognizable gestures — an arpeggio structured for resonance, an oscillation between two chordal aggregates, and a free sequence of staccato notes. It's a novel plan, apparent to the ear, with structure plus freedom to play around. My first thought, hearing the arpeggiated resonance, was that this is French music. I like it. (D¹³)

Le Pointe Nocturne

A cycle of four songs for mezzo and string quartet on poems by Georges Meurant. Bartholomée extracts lines and phrases out of context, so the text remains abstract, but the French texts are

given. There's instrumental prelude and postlude. Mostly avant gardish but not afraid to become rhythmical or even to pastiche popular dances. Parts of the second song remind me of primitivist Jolivet. (D¹³)

Adieu

Shortish piece of 8' for clarinet and piano. Piano has Scotch snap rhythms and soft chords, while clarinet executes avant garde hijinx over top, gradually losing energy. As an elegy for the composer's father, it may be intended to depict stages of grief. (D¹³)

Refrains

I don't know any other duets for violin and trombone. This one is cast in six very short (thank God!) movements. Solo trombone in the fifth part gets raunchy bits – does Alain Trudel know of this piece? (D¹³)

. . . et j'ai vu l'âme sur un fil . . . elle dansait . . .

Trio for flute, viola and harp (like Debussy's Sonata). There are seven short, Kurtag-like movements, the first and third repeated. There's some audible imitation. Interesting spin-off from Debussy, not too far removed. (D¹³)

BELA BARTÓK

Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra, op 1

Strident opening, then pure Liszt, surprisingly — Liszt of the maligned Hungarian Rhapsodies: slow, csardas-like rhythms, moderately fast finish. Piano front and center, orchestra subservient. (Conceived first as two solo piano pieces.) Big, not great, but interesting place to start. (My⁰⁸)

Suite No. 1 for Orchestra, op 3

Why have I never warmed to this, while I love op 4? Is it just because I knew the Second Suite so early? This one is bigger, five movements rather than four, with bigger orchestra, thickly orchestrated, multiple string divisi . . . 38 minutes compared to 26 (even with Dorati's minor cuts in Adagio and Finale). Halsey Stevens claims that BB's folklore studies began to take hold in op 4, while this is still "early." This is still an engaging, energetic piece — if too long. Super fast scherzo. A few abrupt key changes sound like early Ives. (My⁰⁸)

Suite No. 2 for Small Orchestra, op 4

Masterpiece, still has its excitement, though last movement seems weaker than I remember. (Je⁸)

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1

Why would he have withdrawn this? It's a good piece, a serene improvisation on the major seventh chord, followed by effective, not laboured fast movement. It should be popular rep. (Je⁸)

Two Portraits for Orchestra, op 5

First is identical with first movement of Concerto — gorgeous. 2d is fast and abrupt: the Concerto movements make a better pairing (Je⁸)

Fourteen Bagatelles for Piano, op 6

Exploratory works, surprisingly earlier than Schoenberg's op 11. Some great miniatures, though not necessarily as a set. (Je⁸)

String Quartet No. 1, op 7

As great as ever — a long, slow arch ("recovery of life after failed affair") (Je⁸)

Piano Pieces, op 8

Good as set or selected — 2 Romanian Dances are strong (Je⁸)

Two Pictures for Orchestra, op 10

Stevens points to Debussy but this is pure Bartok at his atmospheric best, not a minor piece (Je⁸)

Allegro barbaro

What one would expect? The furor seems strange. Primitivism. (Je⁸)

Four Pieces for Orchestra, op 12

Unknown to me two months ago, I heard it casually with excitement and questioned Stevens' critique; now I see its accuracy. A minor work, best in second piece, the rest draggy. (Je⁸)

Sonatina for Piano, Sz 55 (1915)

Misleading title, 3 movements of Rumanian dances in barely 4 minutes. Attractive (Je⁸)

Romanian Christmas Carols for Piano, Sz 57 (1915)

Two sets of folk pieces in sequence — very attractive. (Je⁸)

The Wooden Prince, op 13 (1914/1917)

Hour-long piece with no big moments. Best to ignore scenario and let it wash. Beautiful orchestra, Ravelian softness punctuated by Magyar dance episodes. Too long, heavily orchestrated and relatively featureless to be programmed. (Je⁸)

String Quartet No. 2 op 17 (1915/17)

As great as ever — final Adagio a constant surprise. (Je⁸)

The Miraculous Mandarin, op 19 (1918,1919)

Whooeee! BB has been studying *Le Sacre* and almost equals it. Popularity held back by sado-masochistic, seamy contemporary story (not overtly “mythic” like Bluebeard), and by Hungarian provenance. Worlds apart from Wooden Prince. His true Masterpiece! (But what about . . .) (Je⁸)

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 1, op 21

BB at his greatest. Big half-hour sonata — first two movements Debussyish plus fragmented meditative bit (maybe not enough contrast) — rousing dance finale. Freely dissonant double stopping, arpeggiations etc. The unforgiving BB. Stevens notes influence of Schoenberg, comments on octave displacements, freedom of violin and piano from each other as in no other duo sonatas — enthusiastic analysis of both sonatas. BB preferred No 2. Dick played it in recital at Hamlin, I'm sure, but says he doesn't remember. (Je⁸)

Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 2 (1922)

Two movements only, but just as expansive as No 1. Remarkable passages for violin in seconds. Wild bits in last movement, but quiet ending. [Re two-part *lassù* and *friss* of *verbunkos* style Hungarian music, as in csardas.] (Je⁸)

Dance Suite for Orchestra (1923)

Relatively simpler in style than music of period, series of five dances joined by ritornello into single continuous work. Good rep. (Je⁸)

Sonata for Piano (1926)

Relentlessly driving rhythm, percussive, even in middle movement, but abstract, far removed from Hungarian dance manner, also far removed from complex dual improvisatory manner of Violin Sonatas. Initially seemed more graspable, but then relentless. Allegro barbaro writ large. (Je⁸)

Out of Doors for Piano (1926⁸)

Fine short group of character pieces. The “Nightmusic” term arises from descriptive title of slow piece here. Stevens claims prototype of BB's 5-part arch form. (Je⁸)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 (1926)

Continues mode of Sonata, rigorously unbeautiful, exciting. Stevens is correct, the metrical shifts between 2/4, 3/4, 5/8, are almost undetectable by ear. Middle movement, mainly duet for solo piano and percussion, overlong, an experiment that doesn't come off. Much better in later versions, like Sonata for Pianos & Percussion. (Je⁸)

String Quartet No. 3 (1927)

I jumped to this from No 2 — quite a jump, 1917 to 1927. Free dissonance, percussive strings, slow gliss, etc. A lot happened in between. (Je⁸)

String Quartet No. 4 (1928)

Marvellous — more extreme than No 3, glissandi, percussiveness, folk elements. Arch form, highly concentrated, 2 scherzos surrounding Nightmusic movement. Stevens calls it BB's most highly organized piece — stylistically like Quartet No 3, formally like Quartet No 5. (Je⁸)

Cantata Profana, or The Nine Enchanted Stags (1930)

A favorite in the making — the fable is fierce declaration of personal independence. The choral writing is extremely difficult, yet piece has little of the brutal dissonance of surrounding works (singability). Tenor tessitura very high. Interesting to cx Bartok with Vaughan Williams for assimilation of folk music into abstract style. Secular Cantata is genre too idiosyncratic to be easily successful in concert, a piece for choral festivals. (Je⁸)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2

More ingratiating than No 1, Petrushka rather than Allegro barbaro (parallel triads rather than ninths or clusters, more varied (rubato tempi in final movement), cadenzas for punctuation. Slow movement more successful with string ritornello, unexpected Presto interlude. Good piece. (Je⁸)

Hungarian Sketches for Orchestra (1930/31)

Attractive suite of folk pieces orchestrated from earlier piano versions for concert use. Did anyone attack BB for pandering, as they did Copland? Both were committed populists. (Je⁸)

44 Duos for Two Violins (1931)

Teaching pieces, tedious listening. (Je⁸)

String Quartet No. 5 (1934)

I love this above the others because it has more variety and unpredictability than No 3 and No 4, though contained in just as sure a formal unit (somewhat relaxed). It has the youthful vigor of BB not yet touched by war and exile. (Je⁸)

Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta (1936)

As great as ever. Powerful, original, perfect. (Je⁸)

Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion (1937)

Sounds much like the Strings & Celesta piece, equally constructivist, but I know it much less well. Odd instrumentation allowed by commission by Contemporary Music festival. Stevens makes great claims for it. [There is an orchestral version that I've never heard.] (Je⁸)

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 2 (1937,1938)

Enormous, strenuous piece. I've never really warmed to it. Multiple tempo changes uncharacteristic, confusing: lengthy first movement has several (too many?) leading ideas. Middle is variations, finale also broken up. Needs more charm, passion. (Jy⁸)

Contrasts for Violin, Clarinet and Piano (1938)

Super piece more in touch with folk roots than much late Bartok (for Benny Goodman's benefit), still raised to more serious level but less abstract. (Je) Yes, a great piece — the Osostowicz performance is wilder, dirtier. I like it. (Je⁸)

Divertimento for Strings (1939)

The only BB I've actually played — lightening up in midst of cataclysm (except for middle movement) — a great work (not as long as I thought, only 26'), with a touch of Ivesian cock-snooting, as in Quartet No 5, five years earlier. (Jy⁸)

String Quartet No. 6 (1939)

I remembered this as BB's tragic piece, and the viola motto with the desolate Adagio finish (cf Quartet No 2) qualify it so — but the piece is much more various, even some humour. BB at his very greatest. (Jy⁸) Yes, it is Bartok at his grimmest and most tragic — the humor is grotesque and embittered. The Emerson Quartet were amazing — they have made a specialty of Bartok. As a

Quartet, they seem to be the successors to Juilliard – a spectacularly virtuosic group, but not much beauty of tone. Hearing them play this piece, though, will stay with me for a long time. (F¹⁴)

Concerto for Orchestra (1942/45)

Masterpiece revisited. Orchestra London performance so-so under bad acoustic. Shorter ending of Finale too abrupt. (My⁸—live) Following with score, seems like easy listening (except maybe slow movement. Dutoit takes longer ending — good. (Jy⁸)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3 (1945)

Masterpiece beloved, BB at his most appealing, moving. Stevens thinks this weaker than the other concerti, but it's just simpler, more lucid. The slow movement is transcendent, serene, unique; the finale a celebration. BB wrote while dying of leukemia. (Jy⁸)

Concerto for Viola and Orchestra (begun in 1945; completed by Tibor Serly)

Problematic, of course, but stands up as echt BB in Serly's hands. Finale seems less foreshortened than I had remembered. (Jy⁸)

Sonata for Solo Violin

The Bartok piece I've never heard — afraid myself of a half-hour of finger-twisting torture. It evokes Bach, except that the massive Ciaccona comes first, followed by Fugue, Air, and Presto. Written for Menuhin, the last piece he completed before the Third Piano Concerto. Extended techniques galore — arco/pizz in Ciaccona, gliss, gliss with trills, double-octave pizz in Fugue, double harmonics in the Adagio (with trills). The Presto first sounds like the ppp buzzing in the Quartets, then turns folksy. I think the quarter-tones are here. This may never be my favorite Bartok, but it's less hard on the ears than I expected, and mightily impressive. (Je¹⁰) James Ehnes almost made it sound easy — but not even he could do that. I never expected to see and hear anyone play it live, much less play it to perfection. (James Ehnes live, S¹²)

Rhapsodies Nos 1 & 2, violin & piano

I thought I'd visited these in my Bartok survey but apparently not — and they are only sporadically familiar, pieces in the lassu-friss format, but rough, not the refined Romantic gypsy manner of, say, Monti's Czardas or Hubay's Hejre Kati. (Je¹⁰)

Rumanian Folk Dances

This familiar encore piece was drawn from early piano works at the suggestion of Szigeti. (Je¹⁰) James Ehnes's Wolf Hall encore, a smash. (live, Ap¹⁴) A version for string orchestra. They didn't do badly (FSA Strings, live N¹⁷)

Violin Sonata, op posth

Big Sonata in three movements, written by Bartok before he became Bartok, but impressive nonetheless: Allegro is Brahmsian, with some capricious elements thrown in. Andante is broadly melodic, with a gypsy B section. Vivace Finale is pure gypsy and really exciting. Accardo in live performance sounds wonderful. This should be standard rep, but it's not what people expect to hear from Bartok. (Mh¹¹)

2 pieces from Mikrokosmos

Mementos in Elisabeth Klein's Weimer piano CD. (Mh¹³)

Bluebeard's Castle, op 11

Brilliant production, beautifully sung. I often dislike video projection on stage, but this version by Polish film director Mariusz Trelinski captures the expressionistic psychological interior and realizes the visual symbolism graphically. Beautifully sung and acted by mezzo Nadja Michael and basso (not baritone) Mikhail Petrenko. The opera itself is still powerful – the music is Debussy with bitters, declamatory, the psychology meaningful if rather dated and tawdry. Wonderful to see. (MetHD--F¹⁵)

Piano Quintet in C

A real hoot! It seemed a juvenile piece from the account, but it was written for a Paris competition in 1903/4, just before opus 1, and rejected as too difficult. Bartok revised it and when was premiered, the audience clapped louder than for his more recent pieces, so BB withdrew it and it was thought lost. Rediscovered and re-premiered more recently, the critics panned it. Yes. Poor BB just tries too too hard. It's an endless piece in four movements, turgid and over the top like really bad Reger, a bit of dissonance, piano part absolutely wild, with Hungarian dance finale. (live, Penderecki Quartet with Alexander Tselyakov, Parry Sound, Jy¹⁷)

GIOVANNI BASSANO

Cantate Domino

Big 8-voice antiphonal motet on CD celebrating masters of St Mark's. (Ag¹⁴)

HUBERT BATH

Cornish Rhapsody

Often used as side B of Warsaw Concerto – a concertante piece included whole in the 1945 film Love Story by an old hand at British Lite. It sounds familiar, but maybe it's just generic. (Jy¹⁶)

MARION BAUER

A Lament on an African Theme, op 20a

Bauer was Dick's theory teacher at Juilliard. Her music covers a range of styles, mainly pandiatonic with Franco-American flavouring, much of it written for student performance. This 5' Lament is a movement from a string quartet arranged for string orchestra by a friend. (S¹⁸)

Concertino for oboe, clarinet, and strings, op 32b

Three movements, 10', very modal but spiced with chromaticism. The third movement is a mad tarantella. (S¹⁸)

Trio Sonata No 1, flute, cello, and piano, op 40

The title suggests neo-baroque style, but it is Franco-romantic with rippling piano and independent lines in both flute and cello. Andante might have been lifted directly from middle Fauré. Vivace is a brief 6/8 romp. Easy on the ears. (O¹⁸)

Symphonic Suite for Strings, op 33

Three movements, 12'. Prelude is lush and gentle. Comodo has a similar – too similar – sound, some unusual progressions, a ratcheting up of feeling. Fugue begins without preparation, restoring the cool, but it is in minor, serious in mood. (O¹⁸)

Duo, oboe and clarinet, op 25

Four movements, 9'. I dislike uncushioned duos like this, but Bauer's works better. The two inner movements are solos for the two instruments, while the outer movements have room for some humorous interplay. (O¹⁸)

American Youth Concerto

Three movements, 16'. Piano Concerto written for talented student and student orchestra. First movement flavored with extract of Rachmaninoff. Andante has tinpan-alley harmonies and cinematic gestures, but nothing syncopated. Allegretto opens directly with syncopation (very mild) and prominent saxophone – a really gorgeous turn, plus xylophone and scraps of Rodeo. (O¹⁸)

JOSEF BAYER

Die Puppenfee; Sonne und Erde

I bought this because it was a staple on KUOM fifty years ago, and I wondered if I remembered it. Perhaps, but the music is so generic (as I expected) that it's hard to tell. Excerpts from the second score are indistinguishable from the first. (Ap⁰⁹)

ARNOLD BAX

November Woods; The Happy Forest

Now a November ritual — what a magnificent score! I'd forgotten the long quiet middle section. Happy Forest is shorter, considerably less imposing. (N⁰⁸) I'm sure we've put this CD on in the mean time, but we did this year, if a few days late. November Woods is ever wonderful – Happy Forest is more English than I remembered, Vaughan Williams tunes with Bax filigree. (D¹³)

Symphonic Variations in E, piano & orchestra

Masterpiece. Luscious Romanticism and virtuoso pianism on a grandiose scale, 46'. How will it stick? Beautiful beginning to end, invites relistening, like Reger's Hiller Variations. I've not been so taken by any of Bax's Symphonies. Liner notes give too much information about Bax's squalid sex life — but this is a brilliant legacy. (Je⁰⁹)

Concertante for Piano (left hand) and Orchestra

He should have called it Concerto: at 21' it's longer than some, but lighter in tone where Bax is less convincing. Movie-ish. Dream of Olwen. (Je⁰⁹)

6 Choral pieces

Bax is not a vocal composer, and the early choral pieces with organ (Epithalamium, Magnificat) sound like standard cathedral music, very disappointing. "Mater ora Filium" is the longest at 11' and singled out in the notes — a beautiful macaronic Christmas lyric set a cappella in modal harmony, not excessively chromatic until the free rhapsodic elaboration with some extreme soprano notes, beautiful ending. But the masterpieces for

me are “Lord thou hast told us,” a beautiful lyric in the manner of Herbert by one Washbourne set simply, homophonically. And “This worldes joie” — complex, chromatic, brilliant, terrifying. (D¹⁰)

Dream in Exile—Intermezzo; Burlesque; Nereid; In a Vodka Shop

My first taste of Bax’s solo piano work. I’m surprised at the spare texture of Exile, though it’s dreamy enough. Burlesque is in brisk 2, a grotesque Pomp & Circumstance — I’d hardly recognize Bax except for some thickened harmonies. Nereid was written for his beloved Harriet Cohen — subdued, watery, evaporating. Vodka Shop is heavy handed, vaguely Russian in its obsessive repetitive phrase. (Jy¹²)

Piano Sonata No 1 in F# minor

Bax’s so-called Russian Sonata because the first version was written in the Ukraine in the midst of “romantic adventures.” There’s nothing Russian about the music, not even Scriabin, but it is passionate, harmonically dense, thickly voiced. Middle section in upper register with morose commentary in bass — a figure becomes obsessive. (Jy¹²)

Piano Sonata No 2

No key assigned. Described as “grimmer,” it rumbles in the bass with startling dissonances opening into a half-hour of tumult. Folkish war tune thunders, gets quieter over distant rumbles, crescendos into dissonance. Extraordinary for 1919 — Ives’s Concord is not far distant. Everything is over the top, including the pianism. Impassioned mood sets in (the rumbles continuing), the folk theme returns, gets quieter, sparer (rumbles returning), an ostinato fading out, turning to major at the very last. Wow! Possible masterpiece. (Jy¹²)

Nonet

I wonder if it was suggested by Ravel’s Harp Septet— Bax uses the same ensemble, plus oboe and double bass. Moderato is in Sonata form apparently, but it’s well disguised by the moody changes of tempo. Allegro sprightly, more orchestral, and it also changes tempos and textures, ending Lento. Very beautiful, but no match for Ravel’s bejeweled masterwork – it lacks the great melody, and it’s a thicker sound with the double bass. (Ap¹³)

Oboe Quintet

In three movements, written for Goossens. First is clearly English pastoral with oboe recit, changing tempi, colorful tremolandi, ponticelli, pizzicato – sprightly B section subsides into idyllic con sordino ending. Lento has gorgeous long string passage before oboe enters alone – excitement, passion build slowly, subside beautifully. Finale is a bright Irish jig (with Scotch snaps) – middle part tremolo misterioso. Terrific piece. (Ap¹³)

Elegiac Trio for Flute, Viola & Harp

The natural assumption is that Bax imitated Debussy, but the two works seem to have been conceived and written simultaneously in 1916. Both are about the same length, Bax’s in two joined movements. It’s hard to imagine anything more gorgeous than this – Debussy or no. Why isn’t it just as well known? (Ap¹³)

Harp Quintet

A single 15’ movement – naturally gorgeous, and Bax keeps the harp from taking over as concertante soloist. Lots of prominent viola. Who could resist? (Ap¹³)

Clarinet Sonata

In two movements, slow – fast, rhapsodic but generated out of persistent melodic motifs,

beautiful, beautifully played – showing off the clarinet’s capacity for pianissimo in alt. Vivace whizzes by, a real virtuoso challenge – allargando reprises opening. Wow! This CD deserves its awards. (Ap¹³)

Violin Sonata in F

Lovely piece that Bax suppressed and rewrote as his Nonet – I should compare them. In two movements: Moderato is idyllic, with changes of tempo and mood, a disturbed second section – ending dreams off beautifully. Allegro is an impressionistic marziale, turbulent, full of violin effects and mood shifts, somehow decisive and dreamy at the same time – another quiet ending. I think I prefer this version. [Where are my notes on the rest of the CD?] (O¹³)

Violin Sonata No 1

Fairly early piece from 1910 that hovers between Vaughan Williams pastoral and Delius chromaticism, dreamy with touches of playfulness (Bax has studied Scriabin). Second and third movements were later discarded and replaced: Scherzando Allegro with a thunderous march theme and a slow, dreamy B section with lots of trills and turns, runs, a bit of ponticello. The revised Finale returns to serene Moderato, melodic – wonderful hothouse stuff. I love it. (N¹³)

Violin Sonata No 3

Two movements: Moderato is vaguely impressionist, highly chromatic – violin plays a modal folk tune with piano haze – big passage builds to restatement in virtuoso language – great ending, the texture remaining uncharacteristically thin throughout. Allegro sounds like a minor key Irish Washerwoman, but soon settles into slower section. All the Bax Sonatas are big, imaginative. (N¹³)

Tintagel

Bax’s big hit, his English La Mer and his masterpiece. I was so lucky to play it. The BBC performance is a real snorter. (Ap¹⁵)

ANTONIO BAZZINI

Violin Sonata

I was led to believe by the Naxos disc that Bazzini never attempted the higher genres — but here’s a sizable Sonata in a minor key, no ronde de lutins in evidence — early Romantic, maybe close to Mendelssohn. A pleasant curiosity. Performance acceptable. (S¹⁰)

AMY BEACH

Three Compositions, op 40

No Amy Beach in all this time— Just three salon pieces for violin and piano: La Captiva, the best, is a lamentation sul G. Berceuse gently rocking. Mazurka melancholic. (Ap¹³)

Variations on Balkan Themes, op 60

I heard this once, but I’m surprised at the scale, nearly half an hour long. (Ah, what I must have heard was the shorter version she made for her publishers – this performance is from MS.) The theme is heavy with Slavic sorrow. Variations move gradually apart and introduce new moods, along with a slow waltz. A new Macedonian song introduces a tragic funeral march, followed by a “Cadenza,” an extended fantasy on the themes. The piece ends quietly. This music is novel in form, ambitious, powerful in expression – a major achievement. (Ja¹⁴)

22 Songs

Beautifully sung by Patrick Mason (who writes pretty good notes as well). Beach had

hopeless taste in texts, but the songs are treated like serious German Lieder, so they savor less of the salon. Accompaniments are pianistic and ornate. The songs display considerable variety: some are maudlin; the Browning songs are effective (“All’s right with the world” at fortissimo). There’s a Scots folklike piece, Elizabethan pastiche, more daring harmony in later pieces. She has a sense of drama – a final line left unaccompanied, a sudden outburst of grief in a quiet song. She takes admirable liberties with text. The prize probably goes to George MacDonald’s “Baby.” (Je¹⁶)

ROBERT BEASER

Chorale Variations

Another composer bred during post-war serialist dogmatism who struggled back to tonality. This piece toys with a well-established genre, though I missed the chorale. It’s s attractive, with a heavily disguised neo-baroque sacred feeling. I like it. (O¹⁸)

The Seven Deadly Sins

Seven songs for baritone and orchestra on Anthony Hecht’s epigrams, which are wholly unsuitable for setting. They don’t work. Hecht’s wit is too mental for singing. Could Britten have done it? He wouldn’t have tried. (O¹⁸)

Piano Concerto

Three movements, 35’. Beaser says he intended to conform to the traditions of the Romantic piano concerto outwardly and nudges with a sharp elbow toward a series of allusions and quotations which, however, are not intended to be post-modern irony. The statement wraps needless veils around a piece that should stand on its own. The soundworld is modern if the big gestures are not. I’d place it in the Gershwin-Copland-Bernstein line. It might be improved with some of the fat rendered. Lento begins with (I think) a Beethoven motif but never enters that inner world – it’s all glitter and glitz. Rondo loops the 6/8 to 3/4 pattern. Big-boned, noisy, excessive, impressive. (O¹⁸)

i. Clavier-Übung I:

For harpsichord, published in installments from 1726 to 1730: Six Partitas, BWV 825-830:

Autumn 1726: Partita No. 1 in B = major, BWV 825

Easter 1727: Partita No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826

Michaelmas 1727: Partita No. 3 in A minor, BWV 827

1728: Partita No. 4 in D major, BWV 828

1730: Partita No. 5 in G major, BWV 829

1730: Partita No. 6 in E minor, BWV 830

In 1731 these partitas were collectively published as Clavier-Übung ("Keyboard Exercise").

Clavier-Übung II

Published in 1735. Both works specified for performance on a two-manual harpsichord. Bach contrasted a work in Italian style - a Concerto nach Italienischem Gusto (Concerto after the Italian taste, now known as the Italian Concerto) with a work in French style, a suite which he called Overture nach Französischer Art (Overture in the French style, now commonly referred to as the French Overture).

Geistliche Lieder und Arien aus Musicalisches Gesangbuch G.C. Schemelli

69 Sacred Songs and Arias for Georg Christian Schemelli's Musical Song Book, which contained in total 954 song-texts, for voice and an accompaniment written down as a figured bass. Not all 69 melodies were composed by Bach, but he provided (or "improved") a thorough

bass accompaniment for all of them, BWV 439-507. Schemellis Gesangbuch was published in 1736, and contains some of Bach's probably least known compositions.

Clavier-Übung III

For organ - published 1739:

Prelude in E= major, BWV 552/i

German Kyrie and Gloria settings, BWV 669-677

Catechism chorales, BWV 678-689

Four duets, BWV 802-805

Fugue E= major, BWV 552/ii (The Prelude and Fugue are joined with the nickname "St Anne")

Fourth Clavier-Übung

For double manual harpsichord - published 1741 (Not numbered as IV in the original print!): the Goldberg Variations, BWV 988

Canonic Variations on "Vom Himmel hoch da komm' ich her"

For organ, published in 1747 upon Bach's entrance into the Mizler society, BWV 769

Musikalisches Opfer

Published 1747, after a visit to Frederick the Great: The Musical Offering, BWV 1079

For diverse instruments, including a triosonata for flute, violin and continuo.

Kunst der Fuge

In preparation for print when the composer died (1750): The Art of Fugue, BWV 1080

Both instrumentation and performance order of the fugues and canons contained in this work remain subject to debate amongst scholars.

Amore traditore

It is uncertain whether Bach supervised the publication of his secular cantata Amore traditore, BWV 203, in a now lost volume containing Italian cantatas by various composers. The publication date of that omnibus volume is equally unknown. Apart from Bach's cantatas for voice and harpsichord accompaniment, the volume is supposed to have contained works by Telemann, Heinichen, Conti, and others.