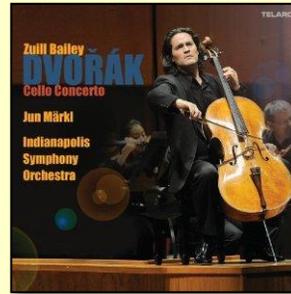


“Something Almost Being Said”
 Bach: Partitas 1 2 + Schubert: Impromptus, Op. 90
 Simone Dinnerstein, piano
 Sony

“Something Almost Being Said” takes its title from a line in Philip Larkin’s “The Trees” concerning occasions that seem rich in unsung lyricism. Likewise, says pianist Simone Dinnerstein, “Bach and Schubert, to my ears, share a distinctive quality. Their non-vocal music has a powerful narrative, a vocal element... as though they might at any moment burst suddenly into speech.”

There’s also an element of timeliness here, of not giving utterance to something profoundly beautiful until one is good and ready, that unite Dinnerstein, the theme of the Larkin poem, and the music heard on this program. That J. S. Bach’s Partitas No. 1 in B-flat major, BWV 825 and No. 2 in C minor, BWV 826 were part of a set of six such works the composer published together as his “Opus 1” (Book I of his *Klavier-Übung*, “Keyboard Practice”) calls for an explanation to the modern reader. In Bach’s day, composers published only their most mature instrumental works, directed towards a select market consisting of professional musicians and the most knowledgeable music lovers. Hence, Opus 1 was not a collection of early compositions, as it might have been in the romantic era, but represented Bach at his very best.

By the same token, Dinnerstein’s performances of these two Partitas, or suites, have a distinct sense of timeliness in her phrasings and her transitions from one moment to the next. A good example is the slight pause between Menuetts I and II in BWV 825, a point of reflection before proceeding that emphasizes their family resemblance and the perfect way they complement one another. The sense of imminent greatness, the “something almost being said” in the opening Prelude of BWV 825 is confirmed by the time we get to the deeply moving lyricism of the Sarabande. Likewise, the expansive Sinfonia that opens BWV 826 anticipates the feeling of joyous release that occurs when a mercurial Rondeau succeeds the severe lyrical beauty of the Sarabande, traditionally the deep-water mark of any keyboard suite. In the endings of both partitas, joy reigns supreme: a



Dvořák: Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104
 Zuill Bailey, cello
 Jun Märkl, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
 Telarc

It’s a funny thing, but I hadn’t reviewed *any* recording of Antonin Dvořák’s Cello Concerto in the past two decades, a remarkable gap for work of its stature. (And you *know* I don’t neglect the standard romantic repertoire in this column!) The best explanation I can think of is that a cellist of the caliber to do this great work full justice comes along only once in a generation. Now, it’s Zuill Bailey’s turn. The American cellist makes the most of the present live recording opportunity for Telarc, backed up by superb support from the Indianapolis Symphony under Jun Märkl.

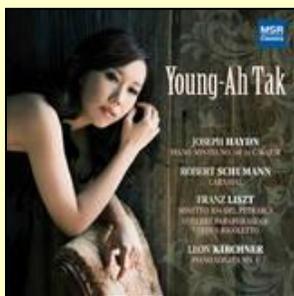
The B minor Concerto has an extraordinary number of gorgeous, deeply felt, soulful melodies, being as profligate in this respect as Dvořák’s “New World” Symphony of several years earlier. Not only does its melodiousness afford Bailey plenty of opportunities to display his beautiful singing style, but the general seriousness of the work (which Dvořák composed as a memorial to his beloved sister-in-law) gives him really meaty material to explore, more than one would expect in any concerto. That is particularly the case with the diminuendos and the muted passages found in the opening movement and the Adagio. The latter features one of the most deeply lyrical melodies in the whole literature. At one point, the cellist is called upon to play double stops accompanied by left-hand pizzicato on the open strings. The movement ends with the cello playing harmonics very quietly.

The demands on the performer in the way of execution and expression continue in the finale, which closes with a gradual diminuendo, masterfully accomplished in the present performance. There is a pause, “like a breath” (Dvořák), and then a sudden crescendo, the last measures of which are taken up by the orchestra in a stormy conclusion. This ending never fails to give yours truly goose-bumps, and never more than it does here!

The “fillers,” if you want to so describe two large scale symphonic poems with a combined playing time of 35 minutes, are Dvořák’s *The Water Goblin*, Op. 107, and *In*

Gigue in perpetual motion in BWV 825 and a scarcely less restrained Capriccio in duple time in BWV 826.

Dinnerstein, who has been careful not to over-expose herself to the home listener, releasing one timely compact disc per year during the period of her growing reputation as one of the best keyboard artists of her generation, seems to understand the principal of readiness we find reflected in Franz Schubert's Four Impromptus, Op. 90. From the steady, gradual revelation of inward pain in the march-like opening of No. 1 in C minor to the final resolution of tension into tranquility when the piece ends in C major, we are reminded once more of Larkin's principle of "something almost being said." The pianist continues her good work in the lively, rhythmically off-beat motion of No. 2 in E-flat major, the long, languid spaciousness of the "Rosamunde" Impromptu No. 3 in G-flat major, and the cascading arpeggios and murmuring chords of No. 4 in A-flat major.

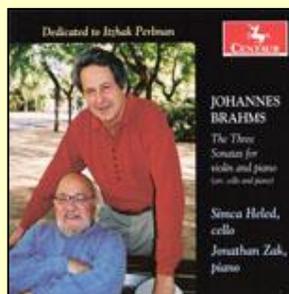


Haydn / Schumann / Liszt / Kirchner
Young-Ah Tak, piano
MSR Classics

A lithe, quick, flexible touch on the keyboard, plus an unerring feeling for the rhythmic values inherent in the works she plays, combine in pianist Young-Ah Tak to make a technically challenging program seem deceptively easy. The Korea-born, U.S.-trained pianist essays an extremely varied program consisting of Haydn's delightful Piano Sonata No. 60 in C major, Schumann's wide-ranging and often deeply romantic Carnival, Liszt's superb paraphrase of themes from Verdi's *Rigoletto* and the first really convincing account I have yet heard of his Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, plus a consummately fine performance of the sometimes disturbing Piano Sonata No. 1 by the late American composer Leon Kirchner (1919-2009).

The Haydn makes for a truly delicious curtain-raiser, what with its scintillatingly alert rhythms and smartly accomplished repeated notes in its opening movement and the nice sense of flow Ms. Tak imparts to the music. She brings off the lyricism of the Adagio with all the quasi-improvisatory spontaneity it deserves. And she keeps a steady feeling of irresistibly onward movement in the finale when encompassing three of the most egregious "wrong note" passages in the literature (deliberate examples of Haydn's humor, we should add), the last of which gives the hilarious impression that the

Nature's Realm, Op. 91. In the former, the tale of a supernatural creature that lures unsuspecting souls to death by drowning, there is a lot of robust symphonic substance to engage Märkl and the ISO (this is a goblin, remember, not an elfin water sprite) and they obviously enjoy its frequent changes of mood and texture which include a musical depiction of a swirling storm on a lake. *In Nature's Realm*, a charming overture with an abundance of entrancing, dance-like material makes an effective compliment to its stormier album-mate.



Brahms: Three Sonatas for Violin and Piano
(arranged cello & piano)
Simca Heled, cello; Jonathan Zak, piano
Centaur

It is always a great pleasure to review the Yuval Trio from Israel. Whether playing together as a trio, which they did all over the world for 26 years beginning in 1961 (and still occasionally today, in a lighter concert schedule) or in duo sonatas, pianist Jonathan Zak, violinist Uri Pianka, and cellist Simca Heled have upheld the highest standards of chamber musicianship, with timing and mutual sympathy that has become instinctive after so many years.

This time, we have Heled and Zak performing Johannes Brahms' three Sonatas for Violin and Piano, with the violin role transcribed for cello. It should be noted that arrangements and transcriptions were very much part of a composer's craft in Brahms' day. He himself made the transcription of Sonata No. 1 heard on this CD, and he certainly authorized the transcriptions of Sonatas 2 and 3 by other hands. As Zak observes in his booklet notes, the character of the work is changed somewhat, though it remains essentially the same music. But, "the new color and timbre gives it a different angle, a different point of view, sometimes even a different emotional impact."

That contention is certainly borne out by the performances on this Centaur offering, in which all the nobility of utterance and the magical transformations of theme and harmony are still present, now enhanced by the warmth and intimacy of tone that Heled's cello imparts to the music. That difference is, of course, most evident in the slow movements of all three sonatas, in which the cello does what a cello does best, trading on the incredible richness of its middle register. The wonderful slow, buoyant lift-off of the lead melody in the very opening of Sonata No. 1 in G major, Op. 78 is another example. But here, in the course of a movement marked *Vivace ma non*

performer must be falling off the end of the bench!

Carnaval, perhaps Robert Schumann's best loved major work as well as his most personal, provides Tak lots of opportunities for well-defined characterizations in its panoply of characters and situations inspired by personae from the commedia dell'arte and Schumann's own life and loves. Perhaps the most telling of these "miniature scenes in quarter-notes" are "Chiarina," Schumann's portrait of his future bride Clara that captures her decided artistic temperament; "Chopin," which pays its dedicatee the ultimate compliment of being cast in the style of a Nocturne; and "Aveu," a deeply felt lover's vow. Tak displays great flexibility in the way she adjusts to the changes in hand position, texture, rhythm, and color that occur continually throughout the 21 brief sections of this work.

Tak scores some of her best points in the Liszt part of the program, starting with the only satisfying account I have heard of Petrarch Sonnet 104, as she deftly follows the sense of a poem which describes all the deliciously unsettling sensations of being in love ("I fear, I hope and burn and freeze: / I fly above the sky and collapse to the earth.") She sheds equal insight on the paraphrase of Verdi's Rigoletto, which takes as its point of departure not the showy aria "La Donna è mobile," but the vocal quartet "Bella figlia dell'amore" which immediately follows it, cutting to the very heart of the opera.

The Kirchner sonata requires the utmost of the performer in its dissonances, driving rhythms, and a personal style of expression that recalls Bela Bartok to many observers, though Scriabin seems to me a likelier influence. Tak manages superbly the work's brooding declamations and its passionate fast sections in which the composer seems to spray scattered notes at the listener like gun bursts. Though I admit I have yet to acquire a taste for Kirchner's music, I feel that he could wish for no fairer or better balanced interpretation than Tak gives us here.



Stravinsky: Violin concerto
Tchaikovsky: Symphony no. 6, "Pathétique"
Peter Rybar, Jonathan Sternberg, Winterthur SO
Pierian

What a joy these unexpected treasures from yesteryear are! Originally released by Westminster in 1954, they reveal conductor Jonathan Sternberg at the top of his form in Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky performances with

troppo, we find the cello the cello is also capable of an expansive range and a speed in the tricky transitional passages that is equal to the violin. As is well known, Brahms made extensive use of melodies from two of his songs, *Nachklang* (Remembrance) and *Regenlied* (Rain Song) which occur as motifs or thematic materials in all three movements. In music that can be both pensive and deeply nostalgic, the close partnership of Heled and Zak results in moments of exalted beauty. Their timing in the tricky dotted rhythm passages in the third movement calls for special commendation. So does the sensational moment in the Adagio when the gentle "Rain Song" motif is transformed, taking on the character of a funeral march.

I've focused on Sonata No. 1 because it showcases so clearly the artistry of Simca Heled and Jonathan Zak. But so do Sonatas No. 2 in A major, Op. 100, and No. 3 in D minor, Op. 108. The former has a slow movement, marked *Andante tranquillo* that is just as eloquent and lyrical as the corresponding movement of the "Rain song" Sonata. The latter has a fetching scherzo and a restless, irresistible finale, marked *Presto agitato* and having the character of a fast *Tarantella*, ending in a brilliant, exciting coda that gives Heled and Zak plenty of opportunity to display their bravura.



"Discovering a Legend," Vol. 1
Vera Gornostaeva, piano,
featured in a Chopin Recital
LP Classics

If Vera Gornostaeva was not a household name outside her native Russia during her active career as a concert pianist, it is high time to make amends to her during her retirement from the stage (though *not*, it should be noted, from music itself, as she remains very active as a teacher and jury member). As was usual in Russia in the bad old days, politics were at fault for her invisibility to the outside world. Out of favor with the Party because of her openly-stated religious beliefs and support for Boris Pasternak, she was denied an exit visa to travel to the West. Never one to brood, she recalls that "I was still able to do what I loved doing." Beginning in the mid 1950's, "I went anywhere I was invited, as long as there was a hall and a piano," often playing a hundred concerts a year. "I got to know my country extremely well," she adds (no small achievement, considering the magnitude of the subject).

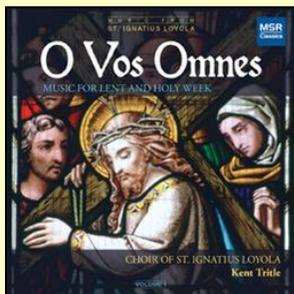
Now, thanks to some timely support in the form of mostly live concert recordings provided by *Gosteleradiofond*, the

the Winterthur, Switzerland Symphony Orchestra. These recordings are definitely monaural, but, keeping in mind that Westminster's mono sound was among the best, that's actually a plus because it allows us to hear a wealth of warm beautiful detail.

That is first apparent in Stravinsky's Violin Concerto in D, with Peter Rybar, a longtime champion of the work, as the distinguished soloist. Stravinsky deliberately eschewed the showier aspects of the typical concerto genre in this neo-classical work (significantly, there is no cadenza) in favor of a concertante approach in which the soloist interacts in interesting and unusual ways with the ensemble, including a duet with an orchestral violin in the finale. While it isn't virtuosic in the usual sense, the violin part calls for continuous re-positioning on the part of the soloist as new ideas intrude and set the music off in a different direction. The four movements are: Toccata, Aria I, Aria II, and Capriccio. The most compelling of these, Aria II, ranges in mood from austere to unsettling with implications of tragedy, which explains why balletic genius George Balanchine used the music of this concerto successfully in his 1941 ballet *Balustrade*.

Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6 in B minor, the *Pathétique*, affords Sternberg manifold opportunities to display the maestro's touch. The low opening theme in the bassoon, the long build-up to the mid-movement climax in the opening movement, the graciously flowing little waltz in 5/4 with an unexpectedly doleful central episode, and a third movement, marked *Allegro molto vivace*, in which the controlled frenzy becomes more unpredictable with the clashing syncopated measures at the end: all these and more reveal the epitome of the conductor's art. Sternberg brings them through with an exuberant sweep and a way with secondary themes that often has them start just before the beat, imparting an impression of irresistible onward movement to the music.

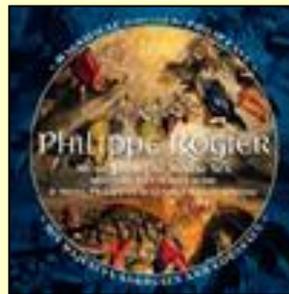
The finale, *Adagio lamentoso*, was Tchaikovsky's boldest stroke of all: placing the slow movement last. Here, where so many interpretations get stifled along with the downward descent of first and second violins together, Sternberg keeps our interest to the very end. There is a brief flickering of hope in the form of the yearning second theme, but the power of an implacable fate prevails as the music subsides slowly into darkness and oblivion.



"O Vos Omnes," Music by Palestrina, Byrd, Allegri, Victoria and Tallis

State Fund of Television and Radio Programs, and really first-rate digital mastering of the original analog sources by engineer Silas Brown, we can at last appreciate a great pianist in her prime. The performances in the present 71-minute CD program are a revelation in terms of how an artist like Gornostaeva can get right to the heart of a given piece of music and communicate its essence to the listener. There is a warmth, a sincerity, in the fifteen Chopin pieces she plays on this disc, that is difficult, if not impossible, to convey in a studio without the presence of a live audience.

Gornostaeva's performances bring out the essential character of each Chopin selection, not just the unquestioned masterpieces such as the Fantasia in f minor, Op. 49 and the Scherzo in c-sharp minor, Op. 39, which grab us by the ears and compel our attention. Her magic and her immediacy are equally apparent in the half-dozen Mazurkas she plays here. Ranging from the exotic quality of Op. 67, No. 4 in a minor to the tripping, waltz-like lilt of Op. 41, No. 4 in A-flat major, there is a lot of rhythmic and textural variety in these unassuming dance pieces, and Gornostaeva obviously enjoys exploring it. Her Chopin Waltzes are nicely contrasted: the zest and aristocratic brilliance of Op. 34, No. 1 in A-flat major and the subdued reflectiveness of Op. 34, No. 2 in A minor. Likewise, the two Nocturnes selected for this program are a study in contrasts: Op. 15, No. 1 in F major with its sudden savage outburst interrupting a theme of great simplicity, and Op. 48, No. 1 in C minor which strikes a disturbing note of foreboding tragedy underneath its calm, broad compass, before subsiding at the last into three quiet chords and disappearing into silence.



Rogier: Music from the *Missae Sex* (1598)
Philip Cave directs Magnificat
with His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts
Linn Records

Once again, Philip Cave directs his famous á capella ensemble Magnificat in music by Philippe Rogier that demonstrates why that previously obscure Flemish composer at the Court of Philip II of Spain (obscure, that is, in the years B.C., "Before Cave") is one of the four cornerstones of the group's repertoire, along with Palestrina, Tallis, and Victoria. The program is also of interest in that all the major vocal works are "parody" Masses and motets. That is, they are based on themes from previous works by other composers. Lest there be any confusion, this "borrowing", so widely practiced by

Kent Tritle directs the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola
MSR Classics

Kent Tritle, director of the famed Sacred Music in a Sacred Space series at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola in New York city for 23 years and recently appointed musical director and organist at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, has long been one of the bright lights among American choir directors. His good work bears abundant fruit in "O Vos Ones," music written by the greatest Catholic composers of the 16th century expressly for performance during Lent and Holy Week. Works expressing the highest religious fervor and representing the epitome in the polyphonic art of a great era are found in this program, as Tritle directs the Choir of St. Ignatius Loyola in performances that define his tenure there.

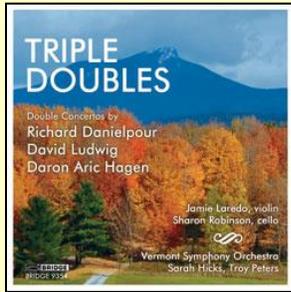
The works heard on this program by Byrd, Palestrina, Allegri, Victoria, and Tallis are unforgiving in their demands for absolutely pure intonation and pitch and a cohesive ensemble capable of the greatest variety of expressive shadings. The polyphonic purity of such selections as Giovanni da Palestrina's eloquent setting of Psalm 42:2, "*Sicut cervus*" (As the hart pants for running waters, so my soul yearns for thee, o Lord) and William Byrd's imposing "*Ave, verum corpus*" (Hail, O True Body) speak for the flawless execution of the St. Ignatius Choir. The setting of Lamentations 1:12, "*O vos omnes*" by Tomás Luis de Victoria adds further to the choir's luster as they capture the world weary grief and sadness of the verse (translated) "O ye that pass along this way, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The Lamentations of Jeremiah, a setting of verses 1:1-5 by English composer Thomas Tallis, comes across in the present compelling performance as the many-voiced expressions of utter desolation and loss, while Tallis' "*O sacrum convivium*" (O sacred banquet) represents the height of the Easter celebration and the reason why that feast is central to the Catholic faith. Placed last on the disc, as is appropriate, it provides a needed leavening after an emotionally laden program.

Perhaps the most challenging single item in the program is the "*Misere mei, Deus*" (Have mercy upon me, Lord) of Gregorio Allegri, the indescribably beautiful setting of Psalm 51 (= Vulgate Psalm 50) that was for centuries so jealously guarded a possession of the Vatican that to copy it or perform it elsewhere other than at St. Peter's during Holy Week was expressly forbidden upon pain of excommunication (Those old Popes didn't need to mess around with copyright laws). With the famously sensational "gear shift" from g minor to c minor in the second half of the verse toned down a bit in the present rendering but with the stratospheric descant still floating effortlessly about the verse, this *Miserere* creates a stunning effect, as it was meant to do.

composers of the Renaissance, was intended as a token of respect, and certainly not in the spirit of burlesque that we would associate with the word "parody" today. We should add that in the great era of polyphonic music, the latter-day emphasis on writing strikingly original melodies was not an overriding concern for composers. What one *did* with a melody in the course of setting and distributing the various strands of a polychoral motet or Mass was the important thing, and in this Rogier was a master.

The most notable example of the use of parody in this program is the Missa "*Inclita Stirps Jesse*" (The Tree of Jesse has born a beautiful branch) which takes its thematic material from the existing motet of that title by Jacobus Clemens, also known as "*Clemens Non Papa*" (roughly, "I ain't the Pope, ya dope."). Clemens' musical setting, heard on Track 1, is both immediately appealingly and quite simple, making it ideal for Rogier's purpose. The first part is based on stepwise rising and falling figures, the second on a gently rocking motif. What Rogier does with these borrowed themes in the way of harmonic progressions, suspensions, and cadences is nothing short of remarkable. A defining moment here is the glorious harmonic change that occurs on the words "*suscipe deprecationem nostrum*" (receive our prayer) in the Gloria.

Remarkable, also, are the performances by Magnificat, in double SATB settings that place the crucial emphasis on absolutely impeccable pitch, flawless voice leading, and an unerring sense of timing within the ensemble. The singers heard in the present parody Mass as well as the equally demanding *Missa Philippus Secundus Rex Hispaniae* on the same CD program, are as follows: Julie Cooper and Alex Kidgell, sopranos; Sally Dunkley and Caroline Trevor, altos; Jeremy Budd and Matthew Long, tenors; Ben Davis and Eamonn Dougan, baritones; and Christopher Adams and Rob Macdonald, basses, the last-named heard in solo intonations in the Masses. By way of balance and variety, the CD also features organist Alastair Ross in handsome accounts of a *Cancion* and an arrangement of the hymn *Ave Maria Stella* by Rogier's great Spanish contemporary, Antonio de Cabezón.

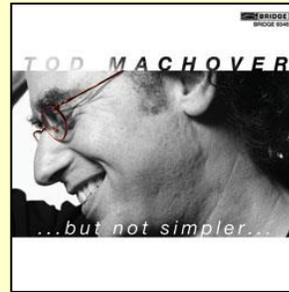


“Triple Doubles,” Concertos for Cello and Violin
By Danielpour, Ludwig, Hagen
Jaime Laredo, violin; Sharon Robinson, cello
Vermont SO conducted by Sarah Hicks, Troy
Peters
Bridge Records

What an unexpected experience this new Bridge offering was for yours truly! Three new works by contemporary composers (only one of whom was previously familiar to me) all benefit from award-class performances and recorded sound in “Triple Doubles.” The title refers to the trio of double concertos for violin cello and orchestra composed expressly for, and featuring the artistry of, two of our best loved classical artists, violinist Jaime Laredo and his wife cellist Sharon Robinson. And the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sarah Hicks in the first two works on the program and Troy Peters in the third, is in tip-top shape, as it must be to perform these works by Richard Danielpour, David Ludwig, and Daron Aric Hagen with all the bravura and conviction for which they cry out so persuasively.

Danielpour composed *A Child's Reliquary* in 1999 as a piano trio in memory of the tragically deceased child of close friends, revising it in 2006 as a double concerto. The composer admits he couldn't get Brahms' *Wiegenlied* (Cradle Song) out of his mind the summer he began composing the new work, though it must be said that the variations he composed on and around it are so finely and subtly conceived that the Brahms original doesn't just leap out at the listener. The opening movement is filled with anguish at the pain of sudden loss, while the alacrity of the middle movement seems a flashback recalling happier moments. The third, an extended Adagietto prominently featuring the warm, tender discourse of Robinson's cello in dialog with Laredo's violin, is the heart of the work, the private aspect of mourning after the public has subsided.

David Ludwig conceived his Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra (2008) as portraying the Greek concept of the three types of love: Eros, sexual or carnal love; Agapé, courtly love or romance; and *Philia*, the love of all mankind. It is in three movements, with two interludes. The first movement, inspired by the story of Odysseus and Calypso, is filled with a chaos of powerful rhythmic and motivic conflicts, representing the compulsive power of Eros as well as its potential for creative ferment. The



“...but not simpler,” music of Tod Machover
The iO String quartet; Michael Chertock, hyperpiano
Paul Mann, Odense Symphony Orchestra
Bridge Records

I know I'm getting along in years when I start encountering composers that I'm old enough to beat up. In the case of Tod Machover (b.1967), I'm afraid I will have to spare the rod. Not that he isn't already spoiled enough as it is by an evident delight in strange, rare and beautiful sounds and musical colors worthy of the early years of childhood. But in these newer works, all composed 2001-2011, he shows a mature awareness of form and design that makes them all memorable experiences – and makes us realize that great new music didn't come to an end just because composers stopped wearing long, shaggy beards!

Of course, Machover is still himself in his never-ending quest for ways to make musical colors ever more fetching and stunning. But the controversial figure who was once described in print as America's “most wired composer” has tempered the electronics in these new compositions in favor of the natural timbres of the instruments themselves, tastefully enhanced by an electronic element that creates a vibrant halo illuminating the natural instrumental sounds. Or conversely, as Machover describes what he does in his 2001 work *Sparkler*, the sounds of the orchestra “push, pull, twist, and morph” with their electronic extensions. At the same time, Machover's controlled venturesomeness in terms of rhythm, tempo, and dynamics makes the music so scintillating that “Fireworks” would have been a likelier title for this work.

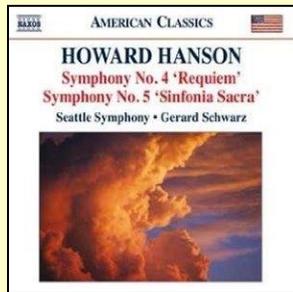
Machover's exquisite attention to line and form is most evident in the trio of splendid short works for string quartet that he created between 2004 and 2011, largely at the urging of the Ying String Quartet. Indeed, he nods handsomely to the ethnic background of the Ying family themselves in the title “Three Hyper-Dim-Suns.” As with the eponymously-named tray of delicacies that tempt the palette of the patron in a Chinese restaurant, these *dim sun* are bite-sized and flavorful. The subtitles of the three short movements, “Glade,” “Winding Line,” and “Punchy,” aptly describe their predominant affect. In *Interlude 1* (2006), we have a Beethoven-like sense of the layering of sounds within the quartet medium in addition to its strong linear thrust. In *Interlude 2* (2011), subtitled “After Byrd,” the noble polyphony of the *Agnus Dei* from the Renaissance composer's Mass in Four Voices serves as

second is more formal, with a constraint such as lovers feel whose union is doomed to frustration (Ludwig claims the tragic tale of Tristan and Iseult as inspiration); correspondingly, the soloists do not play together until the very end – union in death. The finale is more joyous and celebratory, filled with chiming bells and other bright sounds. As with the other works on the program, there is plenty of opportunity for Laredo and Robinson to make their presence felt, but no cadenzas – an indication that we are witnessing symphonies with solo instruments rather than concertos in the showy romantic sense.

Finally, Hagen's *Masquerade – Concerto for Violin, cello and orchestra* (2007) recalls the personae of the commedia dell'arte as its point of reference in its implied tale of young love lost, lamented, and then rediscovered as a memory happily recalled. The four movements are *Burlesque*, *Elegy*, *The Last of Pedrolino* (wherein a dying *vecchio* reconciles the separated lovers), and *Gallopage*. There is a lot of choice interaction between the soloists here, in a work whose Richard Strauss-like wealth of incident and texture remind us of Hagen's prowess as an operatic composer.

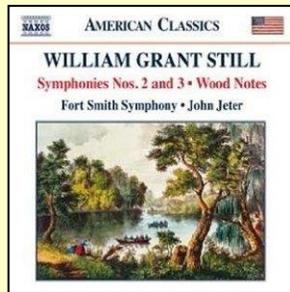
a springboard for Machover's febrile imagination.

As they did in the previous trio of works, the New York-based iO String Quartet play with total conviction in Machover's first full-scale work to date for the medium, "...but not simpler." They pay full justice to a solid work whose enigmatic title the composer explains as a reference to modern life itself as filled with "glimpses of equilibrium that feel straightforward and well-earned, but hopefully not simplistic." Finally, Paul Mann and the excellent Odense Symphony Orchestra, augmented by an expanded battery of percussion, return in *Jeux Deux* for Hyperpiano and Orchestra. The title pays homage to the *Jeux* of Debussy, a work that it resembles in its sense of play and propulsion, though the steady pulse underlying Ravel's *La Valse* might seem a likelier inspiration. Here, Machover utilizes his "hyperpiano" concept, in which the grand piano, played with consummate sensitivity by Paul Chertock, interacts with the Yamaha Disklavier in a way that augments, transforms and splinters the music, sometimes releasing a volley of pre-composed notes in greater profusion and rapidity than a live pianist could possibly play them. The result is an absolutely stunning experience for performer and listener alike.



Hanson: Symphonies Nos. 4, "Requiem," 5, Sinfonia Sacra, Elegy
Gerard Schwarz, Seattle Symphony Orchestra
Naxos

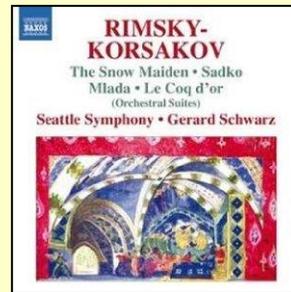
Profoundly religious and elegiac moods predominate in this, the fourth installment in Naxos Records' re-release of stunning recordings that originally appeared several decades ago in Delos International's famed series of neglected American symphonic masterworks by figures such as Copland, Barber, Piston, Creston, Diamond, Hovhaness, and Hanson. It reflected the passionate dedication of a number of individuals, including first and foremost, Gerard Schwarz, who guided the artistic development of the Seattle Symphony as its music director from 1985 to 2011, before assuming his current laureate status with the



Still: Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, Wood Notes
John Jeter, Fort Smith Symphony Orchestra
Naxos

William Grant Still (1895-1978) has often been called "the dean of African-American composers." Just as important, his work is so very attractive. Of all the composers I know, his music is among the most immediately accessible and easiest to love. The three works on the present CD, last volume in a fine three-part survey of Still's complete symphonies by John Jeter and the Fort Smith (Arkansas) Symphony Orchestra, all reveal abundant evidence why this should be so.

To begin with, Still tapped into the rich vein of his cultural heritage, including, jazz, the blues, and



Rimsky-Korsakov: Suites from *Snow Maiden*, *Sadko*, *Mlada*, *Le Coq d'or* – Gerard Schwarz, Seattle Symphony Orchestra
Naxos

Once again, Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony have come out with another terrific recording of Russian classics to solidify their special place among American orchestras. This time, it's four sumptuously scored works by Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, consisting of the suites from three operas, *The Snow Maiden*, *Mlada*, and *Le Coq d'or* (The Golden Cockerel) plus his musical tableau *Sadko*, not to be confused with his later opera of the same title.

Much of this music is in his choicest "Nationalist" vein, combining a love of Russian folk song with exotic harmonic, melodic and rhythmic elements in a manner, practiced by

<p>orchestra.</p> <p>These recordings also reflect the inspired efforts of producer Adam Stern and, particularly, the recording genius of the late John Eargle (1931-2007), whose advanced soundstage concept in sonic recording found ample scope in Delos' American series. It is nowhere more evident than in these Hanson works, heart-on-sleeve and unabashedly romantic in feeling at a time when cooler, more analytical approaches and precompositional techniques tended to predominate in musical theory.</p> <p>This emotional emphasis, always present in Hanson's music, became more pronounced with his own spiritual crisis, occasioned in part by the death of his father, to whom he dedicated his "Requiem" Symphony (No 4, 1943), a powerful statement of his personal trust in the resurrection of the dead. Significantly, <i>Dies irae</i> (Day of Wrath) is the least-compelling of the four movements in this positively optimistic work – which I find a welcome respite from the many settings of the Latin text I've endured over the years that sounded like all the devils in Hell howling at once! The testimony to Hanson's personal faith continues with this Symphony No. 5, "Sinfonia Sacra" (1954), Elegy in Memory of Serge Koussevitzky (1956), surely one of the most eloquent tributes one musician ever paid another, and <i>Dies Natalis</i> (Day of Birth).</p>	<p>spirituals. That is a vein that many listeners, not just African-Americans, have found very attractive to listen to. And it fit in ideally with his special purpose as an artist in proclaiming the rise of his own people. That is very evident in Symphony No. 2 in G minor (1937), subtitled "Song of a New Race" (heard on this CD) which celebrated the steady striving of African-Americans towards greater freedom and equality. Fortunately, Still wisely eschewed a detailed extra-musical program, relying instead on the luminous moods of his music and its smoothly flowing rhythms, moving irresistibly but not aggressively, to convey his message. Likewise, his Symphony No. 3, "Sunday," celebrates the sustaining joys of a simple faith in the context of a day in the life of a believer, its four movements entitled "Awakening," "Prayer," "Relaxation," and "Day's End and a New Beginning," without being too precise in its associations.</p> <p>Strong primary colors, often based on simple pentatonic melodies, alert rhythms, and the ability to convey pensive, wistfully brooding moods without descending to depressive states – all are found in William Grant Still's symphonic suite <i>Wood Notes</i>, depicting his love of nature. Receiving its recording premiere on the present disc, it benefits from its effective woodwind scoring and the lushly beautiful sound of the Fort Smith SO strings.</p>	<p>Rimsky and such kindred spirits as Borodin and Mussorgsky, that came to be known as musical "orientalism." To this day, many listeners find this vein in Russian music very approachable indeed, and it is often their earliest acquaintance with Russian classics.</p> <p>Certainly, Gerard Schwarz is very much at home with Rimsky's strong rhythms and his palette of bold primary colors backed by stunning orchestrations that add additional color and flavor to his music. And he has, in the high level of bravura musicianship found throughout the Seattle SO, just the right resources to bring it off.</p> <p>These are some of the composer's better known opera suites, and they include such familiar chestnuts as "Dance of the Clowns" from <i>The Snow Maiden</i> and "Cortège" (also known as "Procession of the Nobles") from <i>Madama Butterfly</i>. Best known of all is the Suite from <i>Le Coq d'or</i>. Its exotic tale of despotic excess and foolishness (an obvious parallel with the Tsar's unpopular, disastrous 1905 war with Japan very much in the background) provided Rimsky with abundant opportunities for lush orchestrations that nevertheless contain a strong admixture of the astringent and the absurd. Schwarz and his cohorts bring off the comic and the lyrical elements in this ever popular suite in a very satisfying manner, with optimal support from the recording team.</p>
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