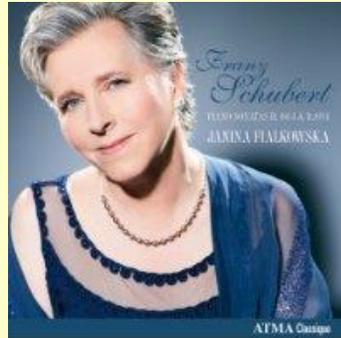


## Phil's Classical Reviews

Audio Video Club of Atlanta

"Hier sprechen wir Deutsch"

October, 2013

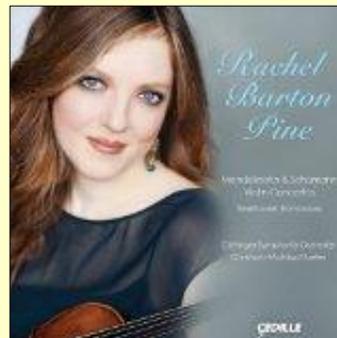


Schubert: Sonatas in A major, D664;  
G major, D894  
Janina Fialkowska, piano  
ATMA Classique

Montreal native Janina Fialkowska is most famous for her Chopin, a fact which fits in with her Polish ancestry. But from what I hear on this disc, she also seems to be a born Schubert interpreter. She knows instinctively that a note-perfect performance is not enough. The beauty of Schubert's music is in details of time, touch, and even breathing that made his music what it is. To this most lyrical of piano composers, pauses, often a mere breath or heartbeat, can vitally affect the emotional effect of a passage; and even when the score indicates a rest, Schubert's rests are not all created equal. A seemingly innocent line of music can suddenly change character as it becomes increasingly dense in texture or harmony.

Perhaps most important of all is the pianist's feeling for the right touch to apply to a chord or a single key at a given moment. Fialkowska has a superlatively well-developed sense in this regard, so that her tone always sounds full and true. She is also aware of the fact that the *cantabile* (songlike) element is seldom long absent from any Schubert passage, even when it is not so marked. The composer's contemporaries often remarked that under his hands the piano keys sounded like signing voices. In the course of a strikingly beautiful recital, Fialkowska shows us what they meant.

The Sonata in A major, D664, was a breakthrough from the inherited rules of formal construction that Schubert accepted (and knew when to break) and which Beethoven constantly challenged. Even the intrusion of a more pensive mood into the otherwise carefree Andante, with its repeating pulse (a quarter and an eighth note, three eighth notes, a dotted quarter note) underlying the melody, does not disconcert us. It is only the melancholy of youth, and nothing more. In Fialkowska's hands, this charming sonata sounds (deceptively) as if it just sat down one fine day and wrote itself.



Mendelssohn + Schumann: Violin Concertos  
Beethoven: Romances 1 & 2  
Rachel Barton Pine, violin; Christoph-Mathias  
Mueller, Göttingen Symphony Orchestra  
Cedille Records

Two great violin concertos, one world-renowned and universally performed by famous violinists since its premiere in 1845, the other still struggling to find its place in the sun, are both given warm, eloquent performances by American artist of the bow Rachel Barton Pine.

The world-famous one is, of course, Mendelssohn's Concerto in E minor, Op. 64. Pine does a splendid job of making her points and following the contour and the seamless flow of Mendelssohn's narrative, making it seem almost new and fresh in spite of its long familiarity with audiences. In its day the almost immediate entrance of the violin in the opening movement and the fact that all three movements are melodically and harmonically connected and are taken *attacca* were striking innovations. Even today, the vivacity with which the effervescent finale springs from the slow connecting passage at the end of the songlike Andante can still make news with listeners. Pine clearly enjoys the rapidly ascending and descending arpeggios in the opening movement cadenza and the finale, and the sensational trills in the latter signaling the end of the cadenza and the final burst of activity as we approach the finish. Unfortunately, Pine's enthusiasm is not matched by conductor and orchestra, whose rather pedestrian performance keeps this account of the Mendelssohn from being more memorable.

The Schumann is, on the whole, given a better performance, which is fortunate, considering its long history of neglect (the story of which I will let you look up for yourself, for lack of column space). The opening movement, with its robust double exposition, is certainly more symphonic than you would expect in a romantic concerto, creating problems of stamina for violinists less capable than Pine, who takes its demands in stride while

The G major sonata, D894, has been termed a “fantasia” sonata, a title Schubert’s publisher attached to the opening movement, although Schubert himself merely titled it *Molto moderato e cantabile*. It is nonetheless not a free fantasia, but a sonata movement in which Schubert articulates and develops his themes so well, they seem to flow naturally into each other, as they do in this performance. Peace and serenity characterize this remarkable opening movement, notwithstanding a climactic moment when we find the only *fff* marking in any of Schubert’s sonatas. We are given a quiet, inconclusive ending to this long-limbed movement (17:09 duration), a sure sign that it was not meant to be self-contained. It is followed by a peacefully flowing Andante with a surprisingly stormy second theme, a vigorous Minuetto with a gorgeous trio, and a joyous, simple-hearted Allegretto in rondo form with dancelike episodes.

I need to say something about the instrument used in this recording. This is one of the most beautiful sounding pianos I’ve ever heard. It is not identified in the program credits, although piano technician Marcel Lapointe is. Beautifully maintained, and with a full, luminous sound throughout its range, it provides the perfect keyboard for an artist such as Fialkowska. And she is not slow to capitalize on it.



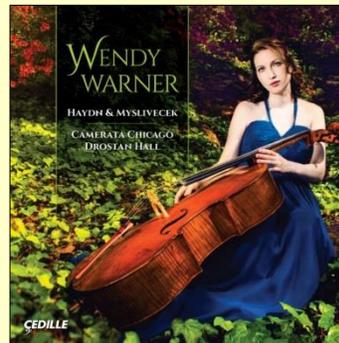
Beethoven: Piano Sonatas 28, 29, “Hammerklavier”  
 Mari Kodama, piano  
 PentaTone Classics

Pianist Mari Kodama completes her 9-CD multi-year journey through the Complete Beethoven Sonatas in fine form in this excellent account of two of the Late Sonatas. As in her previous recordings in the series, she combines keyboard style with a virtuosic technique that she keeps in reserve until the appropriate moment.

The two sonatas have more in common than just proximity in time. Sonata No. 29 in B-flat major, Op. 106 of 1819 is the better known of the two, being a Mount Everest among sonatas whose formidable demands pose a challenge for every Beethoven interpreter. It is not simply a matter of its great length: at 41:21, Kodama actually clocks in a little on the quick side, thanks to her steady, no-nonsense approach to the music. I’ve actually heard 50-minute interpretations, if you can believe it. The main culprit in such ponderous performances seems to

engaging in intimate discourse with the various sections of the orchestra in the minor-key development section. She also brings out the searching character and the aching, poignant mood of the slow movement, remarkable even for Schumann, and soon dispelled by the sonata-rondo hybrid finale based on a striking Polonaise rhythm. Yehudi Menuhin has been criticized for proclaiming the Schumann the “missing link” among great violin concertos upon its re-discovery in the 1930’s; Pine’s eloquent performance makes you wonder if he was so wrong, after all?

The Romances in G major, Op. 40 and F major, Op. 50 possess a miniature perfection and effortless Mozartean lyricism that are almost the last qualities one expects from Beethoven. Both have enjoyed a long history as favorite encores for violinist and orchestra, and Rachel Barton Pine shows us why.



Haydn: Cello Concertos 1 & 2  
 Mysliveček: Cello Concerto in C major  
 Wendy Warner, cellist  
 Drostan Hall conducts Camerata Chicago  
 Cedille Records

My estimation of Chicago-based cellist Wendy Warner increases with each new release on the Cedille label. On this release, she plays three late 18<sup>th</sup> century works – two by Franz Josef Haydn and one by the Bohemian composer of untimely demise Josef Mysliveček (1737-1781) – that all make demands on the performer’s virtuosity and pay handsome dividends on it in terms of great music for her chosen instrument.

Haydn’s C major Concerto, up first in the program, was believed lost for many years and was only rediscovered and authenticated around 1962. It was a marvelous find, as you can hear from the entrance of the cello on a long, sustained note in the opening movement. Thereafter, chords that engage all four melody strings, passages in the cello’s uppermost range, rapid repeated notes, and quick changes of registration allow Warner plenty of opportunity to display her virtuosity. There’s also use of Baroque-style ritornello, which keeps soloist and orchestra on their toes. The Adagio is a heavenly cantilena in the manner of an operatic aria, while the cheerful finale has the cellist playing running passages in the high register, the instrument alternating from low to high so that it seems like two cellos in duet. It’s a grand

be the slow movement, *Adagio sostenuto*, which some critics and performers have seen as an “apotheosis of pain” and a “mausoleum of collective sorrow.” Rather than indulge herself in such bathos, Kodama gives the moodily introspective element in this movement its just due, but no more. And she focuses on the pacing and timing that are so essential to the success of this far-ranging rumination in which the tempo in both melody and accompaniment is likely to change unexpectedly, with significantly expressive results. She also makes judicious use of Beethoven’s unusually detailed instructions for the use of the *una corda* pedal to dampen and soften the effect of this deep meditation.

Elsewhere in this sonata, Kodama is right on the money in sounding the fortissimo chords at the very opening of the coda in the Allegro. She strikes the right note in the mischievous Scherzo with its shadowy trio in the dark key of B-flat minor. In the really monumental finale with its three-voice fugue in triple meter, she handles this grand gesture of Beethoven’s art in a way that makes it seem inexhaustible without being exhausting for the listener.

Sonata No. 28 in A major, Op. 101, composed 3 years earlier in 1816, anticipates Op. 106 in terms of the very fluid nature of its writing, its freedom of imagination, and its mastery of form, texture, and tonality. This beautiful work, encompassing a lot of expressive territory in just under 20 minutes, was described by Beethoven as “a series of impressions and reveries.” Its four movements were marked by the composer as “rather lively and with innermost feeling,” “lively, march-like,” “slow and longingly,” and “Swiftly, but not overly so, and with determination.” The German *entschlossenheit* implies a strong sense of finality as well as resolution. Taking Beethoven at his word, Kodama is keen on closing the deal at the end of this work, which makes for a truly satisfying conclusion.



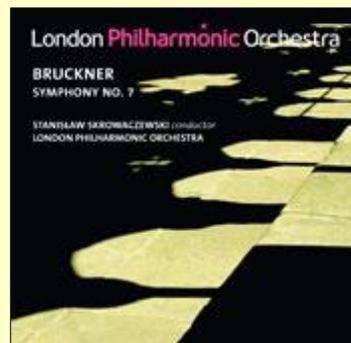
“A Beethoven Odyssey,” Vol. 2  
 Pathétique, Moonlight, Waldstein Sonatas  
 James Brawn, piano  
 MSR Classics

In a keenly anticipated follow-up to Volume 1 of his “Beethoven Odyssey,” pianist James Brawn continues his multi-year exploration of the qualities of heart and

showpiece, and Warner makes the most of it, including the wonderful opening- and slow-movement cadenzas by Maurice Gendron.

The Mysliveček is next. Like Haydn, Mysliveček was an operatic composer, residing principally in Naples. The fact is discernable from the Italian-style bel canto that informs his graceful themes, and not just in the meltingly lovely Adagio. Syncopations, misplaced accents, touches of chromaticism, and wide interval leaps mark his style in the opening Allegro, while the brilliant finale, a Minuetto in the form of a rondo, made me want to get up from my chair and start dancing, it was so infectious. Again, Wendy Warner displays great style and flair in this work which makes such a worthy addition to the program that one laments the composer’s almost complete obscurity.

Haydn’s Concerto in D major, for many years “the” Haydn Cello Concerto, is unusual in that the opening Allegro, longer than the other two movements combined, is composed in a thoroughly symphonic style that still allows the soloist plenty of room to maneuver. The deep expressiveness and melodic beauty of Haydn’s writing in the Adagio allows Warner the chance to really distinguish herself. The cheerfully rollicking finale ends things on a really affirmative note. As with the C major concerto, there are cadenzas in movements 1 and 2, by Emanuel Feuermann and Maurice Gendron respectively, and Warner treats them with all the brilliance they deserve.



Bruckner: Symphony No. 7 in E major  
 Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, London Philharmonic LPO

Stanislaw Skrowaczewski is absolutely timeless. Armchair audiophiles who remember his long tenure (1960-1979) as conductor of the Minneapolis Symphony (later Minnesota Orchestra) might be surprised to know that he is not only “still around,” but remains quite active, having been music director and guest conductor of orchestras in North America, Europe, and Japan. He was 89 when he led the London Philharmonic Orchestra in this moving performance of Bruckner’s Seventh on October 24, 2012 at the Southbank Centre Royal Festival Hall, London. From the evidence of this recording, his deft ability in handling an orchestra remains undiminished by age.

Anton Bruckner is certainly one composer who brings out

spirit that inform the piano sonatas. As a self-designated time traveller, he aims to make a vital connection with Beethoven and to serve as a mediator to the modern listener of the timeless truth in the composer's music.

If that seems a trifle pretentious, it is no more than the mission Beethoven set out for himself. He made no secret of the fact, which is apparent from his letters and the testimony of contemporaries who knew him. "Music," said Beethoven, "is the one incorporeal entrance into the higher world of knowledge which comprehends mankind but which mankind cannot comprehend." He described it as "a higher revelation" and a "mediator between the spiritual and the sensual life." His avowed purpose was to make this revelation known to other men. It wasn't an easy task, requiring much torment of body and soul: "Tones sound, and roar and storm above me until I have set them down in notes." But he also had the consoling thought that, "as I am aware of what I want to do, the underlying idea never deserts me. It rises, it grows up. I hear and see the image in front of me from every angle."

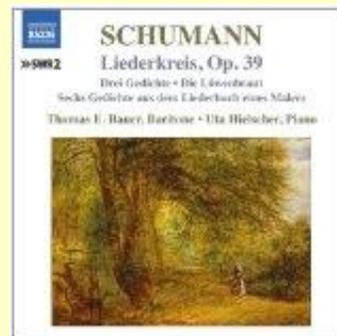
There are five sonatas on this CD: first the "Pathétique" and the "Moonlight," then the two "easy" (*leichte*) sonatas, Op. 49 as a charming if lightweight interlude before we plunge into the controlled fury of the "Waldstein" Sonata. There is intelligence behind the design of the program. The three "*grandes sonates*" are related in key: C minor, C-sharp minor and C major, respectively. Keeping the image before him and viewing it from every angle is one of James Brawn's major strengths in the way he approaches Beethoven. He shows infinite patience as he explores and puts together the carefully ordered mosaic of each of the three major works, taking his time and allowing plenty of breathing room between the tempestuous movements and the relaxed, focused music that follows them. For example, there is a good 10-11 seconds of "white space" between the Allegro molto e con brio that opens the "Pathétique" and the gentle Adagio cantabile that succeeds it.

A similar buffer exists in the "Waldstein" between the Allegro, with the trembling chords and quiet, ominous bass notes in the opening, cascading passagework and staccato broken octaves in the main section, and fortissimo chords at the closing, and the short movement, Adagio molto, that follows it. The latter serves a very necessary role as mediator between the stormy Allegro and the even more agitated music of the Rondo, into which we plunge without pause. That finale, marked Allegretto, builds up to hurricane force in its Prestissimo section as glissando octaves, trills, and sensational passagework span the entire keyboard, flying overhead like torn fragments of clouds. We end with the most wickedly triumphant C major chords imaginable.

The painstaking care with which Brawn navigates his way through the opening sections of the three major sonatas, particularly the *grave* section in the "Pathétique" and the quietly pulsating *pianissimo* at the opening of the "Waldstein," pay dividends later when the more stirring music occurs. The impression of slow deliberation is only

the best in "Mr. S" (as the typesetters for the Minneapolis dailies used to call him). Says the maestro, "[Bruckner's] message speaks about the infinite, transcendental cosmos, God, timelessness, love and tragedy." It also speaks about these things at infinite length, requiring a conductor who has the patience to slowly build up to the climax of a movement through a series of stages, as Skrowaczewski does in the opening Allegro moderato, which clocks in at 21:52) and the even longer Adagio (24:23) which Bruckner marked "*sehr feierlich und sehr Langsam*" (very solemn and very slow). The Allegro has no fewer than three themes – the first long, arching, and very beautiful, the second melancholy with a seeming nostalgia for lost glory and happiness, and the third more animated and dancelike, with lots of woodwind and brass support. In the finale there are again three themes, presented this time in reversed order, sometimes called "tragic sonata form." And we are pleasantly surprised to find that the first, a light dancing theme, is actually the opening melody of the first movement, in entirely different tempo and character, taking us full circle.

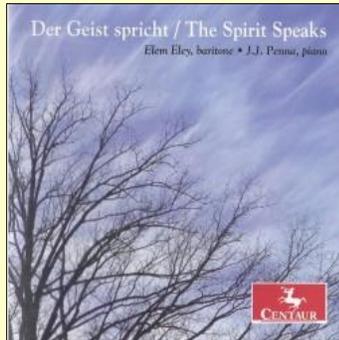
The most memorable movement in this performance is the Adagio, as it should be. If the Allegro movement stormed the heights in hard-won stages, the Adagio seems to drift effortlessly upward to them like a slow but irresistibly rising cloud, buoyed in large measure by the LPO's superb string section. At the climax of this movement we have the tremendously sensational cymbal crash with triangle and tympani that Bruckner included in the revised edition of the Seventh Symphony at the urging of his friends. Purists have been decrying this insertion ever since, but, as we hear in the present recording, Bruckner and Skrowaczewski knew what they were doing. After this, the horns and the Wagner tubas sing a deeply satisfying elegy (intended as a tribute to the soon-to-be deceased Richard Wagner) and the Adagio concludes sublimely in a mood of utter peace.



Schumann: Liederkreis, Op. 29, other songs  
Thomas Bauer, baritone; Uta Hielscher, piano  
Naxos Records

Thomas E. Bauer is a phenomenally accomplished artist, both in the range and pleasing quality of his voice and in his sure grasp of a poetic text and its deepest point of emotion. From his earliest training as a boy chorister in the Regensburger Domspatzen (Regensburg Cathedral Sparrows), he has benefitted from excellent teachers

apparent: at timings of 18:45 (Pathétique), 15:54 (Moonlight), and 25:58 (Waldstein). Brawn is well within customary expectations. The difference is in the details.



*“Der Geist Spricht”* (The Spirit Speaks)  
Songs of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms,  
Wolf, and Martin  
Elem Eley, baritone; J.J. Penna, piano  
Centaur Records

Elem Eley, baritone, gives deeply expressive, moving performances of some of the most awesome examples of German lieder we are likely to encounter on record. With the assistance of his recital partner, pianist J. J. Penna, who is a fellow faculty member of the Westminster Choir College of Rider University, Princeton NJ, he conveys the full emotional weight of songs that are likely (and *no* exaggeration) to inspire the fear of God in the listener.

To say the least, it is unusual to encounter a lieder recital with such unity of theme and concentrated power. At the risk of obsessively dwelling on what Alice’s dormouse would have described as “much of a muchness,” Eley and Penna have given us a powerhouse of a recital consisting of settings by Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf of the three “Harfner” Songs from Goethe’s novel *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, Three Serious Songs by Brahms after biblical texts, and Six Monologues from *Jedermann* by Frank Martin. The themes of loneliness, alienation, distrust of worldly appearances, last things, the bitterness of death, and the need for consolation and redemption are all-pervasive throughout this program. There is no getting away from them.

Did I say “all-pervasive”? Just consider the following sentiments [translated]: “He who never ate his bread with tears, who never in sorrowful nights sat weeping on his bed, he knows you not, you heavenly powers” (Goethe). “Oh God, how I dread death, white fear breaks over me in crisis” (Four Serious Songs). “I have laid upon myself such a horrible mountain of sins that only God can forgive me” (*Jedermann*).

To put across a dire-foreboding program such as this requires the utmost in intelligence and interpretive insight. Elem Eley and J. J. Penna possess both, plus the technical powers to do justice to awesome settings of

over the years. He is now constantly in demand in opera and song recitals everywhere.

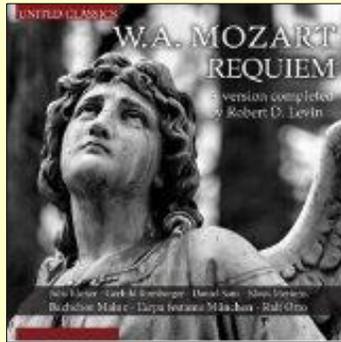
This is Volume 7 in Bauer’s ongoing series of Robert Schumann’s lieder (art-songs), and perhaps the richest yet in terms of its variety. Certainly, Schumann reached a peak with the 140 song settings in his “*Liederjahr*” of 1840. And none were more romantic and far-ranging than the 12 songs of his *Liederkreis*, Op. 49 to poems of Eichendorff. Here we find intense longing to break free of the prisons of convention and self-doubt, as in *Wehmut* (Sadness): “Then all hearts listen, and everyone rejoices, yet no one feels the pain, the song’s deep sorrow.” Or as in *In der Fremde* (In a Foreign Land): “It is if in the garden full of red and white roses, my beloved were waiting for me, yet she died long ago.” Poet and composer find correlatives in the world of nature for the inner pain of the lover in exile, in deep forests, the soaring of larks and the darkling songs of nightingales. In *Auf einer Berg* (On a Castle), the skeletal form of a long-deceased knight in armor is mute witness to the present-day human drama that passes down below in a wedding procession. Here, Thomas Bauer does a splendid job of relating the slow, fate-laden progress of the music to the emotion in the final line: “*Und die schöne braut, sie weinet*” (And the lovely bride is in tears).

In *Zweilicht* (Twilight), the lyrics draw on the common German metaphor of the huntsman sounding his horn as he gallops after his quarry with the wandering of desire and the treachery of one who was thought to be a friend. Bauer pauses, focusing our attention on the spoken final line: “*Hüte dich, sei wach, und munter,*” Be on guard, awake, and alert!” Treachery of several kinds informs the more complicated emotions of *Waldesgesprach* (Forest Encounter) in which a wandering knight comes upon a beautiful woman travelling alone in a dark forest, offers to be her guide and protector, and then is horrified to discover her true identity: “*Jetzt kenn ich dich – Gott steh mir bei! Du bist die hexe Lorelei*” (Now I know you – God stand by me! You are the witch Lorelei.)” He is told he will never leave this wood again, his sentence reinforced by the thrice-repeated word “*nimmermehr*” (nevermore). Uta Hielscher’s piano, in a short prelude and postlude filled with the spirit of chivalrous adventure and romance, reminds us that this is the stuff of an old Rhine legend.

The Eichendorff songs are easily the high point of the album. The quality of the poetry in *Drei Gedichte* (Three Poems), Op. 30 and *Sechs Gedichte* (Six Poems), Op. 36 is clearly of a lesser order, though Bauer exerts his marvelous vocal prowess to bring out the specific qualities in each of the workaday lyrics. A more serious challenge to the interpretive powers of any singer – and one in which Bauer and Hielscher rise to the occasion – is in *Die Löwenbraut* (The Lion’s Bride). Here, in a violent poem of love-jealousy by Adelbert von Chamisso that seems to cry out to Sigmund Freud for help, a lion tears apart the young woman with whom he had grown up in guileless friendship, as her helpless fiancé watches on in horror. The emotions range from gentle nostalgia to stark terror, posing a challenge for which Bauer and his

awesome literary texts. With warmth and authoritative conviction, Eley knows his lieder and his poetic texts and brings them out with honesty and searing intensity. He is particularly convincing in the Four Serious Songs, which he rightly equates with the sentiment in the last verse of Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* which gives this album its title: "*Der Geist Spricht*" (The Spirit Speaks).

Penna, for his part, is keenly aware of the nuances in all these songs. A good example is the differing way each of three great composers handles the piano at the end of Goethe's "*Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen aß*" following the stirring admonition by the poet that "all guilt shall be avenged on earth." Wolf has the music fade out to silence. Schumann ends the song emphatically with a single powerful chord, like a door closing forever. And Schubert gives the piano a brief postlude punctuated with dark chords, as if the transgressor were being marched to the scaffold.

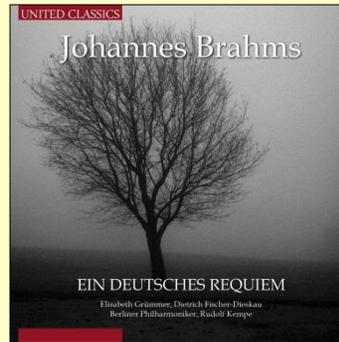


Mozart: Requiem in D minor  
L'Arpa festante München, Bachchor Mainz  
Directed by Ralf Otto  
United Classics

As you probably know, Mozart's Requiem was left in a partially finished state at the time of his death. In order not to default on the commission, his widow engaged the services of several composers to complete the score, most important Franz Xaver Süssmayr, who had been Mozart's pupil. Since then, a number of Mozart scholars have tried their hand at "completing" the received score that has come down to us from that day. This completion by the American theorist and scholar Robert D. Levin retains the basic structure of the Süssmayr version while making adjustments in orchestration and voice leading. Levin also re-wrote the *Sanctus* fugue in the key of D and re-structured the *Benedictus* to allow for its reprise. Finally, he composed a more substantial Amen at the end of the *Lacrimosa*.

At a cursory listening, all of the above completions by Levin (and others) seem to make little difference in the Mozart Requiem that we have come to know and love over the years. The main thing is in the inner logic of the narrative and its consistent flow along lines that allow for the repetition of key elements, the Amen at the end of the *Lacrimosa* being the best example. You may actually

partner are more than adequate in response.



Brahms: Ein Deutsches Requiem  
Elisabeth Grümmer, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau  
Rudolf Kempe, Berlin Philharmonic  
United Classics

By a quirk of history, which was perhaps no coincidence at all, the two very best recordings of Brahms' choral masterwork *Ein Deutsches Requiem* were made by the same chorus and orchestra in the same city and only a few months apart. In February and April, 1955, Fritz Lehmann conducted the Berlin Philharmonic and the Choir of St. Hedwig's in a recording of incredible realism for Deutsche Grammophon. Then, in the last week in June, Rudolf Kempe led the same forces in an equally inspiring performance for EMI-Electrola. It is not my purpose to do a point-by-point comparison of two great recordings. Both are remarkable for the high degree of clarity, realism, and presence of the monaural processes used. Both get the highest marks for the majesty and intensity of the performances and for the way two different conductors use just the right amount of restraint to bring out the elements of sorrow, consolation, and rapturous joy in Brahms' German texts.

This is a "German Requiem" in more than one sense. Brahms combed through the Lutheran Bible in order to find just the right passages to express what he had to say, and he arranged the seven movements in a parallel structure in order to reinforce the messages of sorrow and consolation that he wanted to express. Both the present Rudolf Kempe performance and its predecessor by Fritz Lehmann were recorded, significantly, ten years after the end of a war the German people remembered very vividly for its sheer terror, devastation, and personal loss. We Americans, protected by the buffer of two vast oceans, can have no idea of the emotions experienced by people huddled in shelters, gripped with anxiety on the eve of a bombing raid. Those memories and the messages embodied in the German texts that Brahms selected must have been a significant backdrop for the performers in the 1955 sessions, giving them an authenticity that later recordings seem somehow to lack.

Assuming you aren't in the market for both recordings (which I'd recommend, by the way), let's focus on the Kempe, that has just been reissued by United Classics. It features two exceptional vocalists in soprano Elisabeth

feel the difference in this version, rather than comprehend it intellectually.

That is as it should be, since Mozart's work is basically operatic rather than liturgical in affect, reflecting in part his admiration for older figures such as Handel and Pergolesi who were also notable opera composers. The operatic thrust is quite noticeable in the present performance, and may in fact be its best feature. This is particularly relevant in the full choruses in the opening Introit and Kyrie and in the various sections in the Sequence: *Dies irae*, *Tuba mirum*, *Rex tremendae*, *Recordare*, *Confutatis*, and *Lacrimosa*, in which the skill with which Mozart mixes solo aria, quartet, and chorus gives the impression of the flow of events in an actual opera. We move from powerful chorus to deeply personal, intimate solo and back again with impassioned declaration that reinforces the messages of tragedy, consolation, and divine pity.

In the *Tuba mirum spargens sonum* (The trumpet will send its wondrous sound throughout earth's sepulchers), we begin with a wonderfully stentorian account of the opening verses by bass soloist Klaus Mertens (I really love the way he rolls the "r" in *spargens*), succeeded by the entry of soprano Julia Kleiter, whose lovely vocal tones are used optimally in the *Recordare* and the *Lux aeterna*, sections where softness and soothing consolation are in order. The *Tuba mirum* also involves Mertens and Kleiter in intimate discourse with alto Gerhild Romberger and tenor Daniel Sans in a handsome vocal quartet.

The sound recording, made in the historic Basilica of St. John the Baptist (Basilika St. Johannes der Täufer) Geisenheim-Johannisberg, is adequate and is sufficiently detailed to allow you to hear all the important points. But the performance, as I've hinted, is the main thing, and it's a good one.

Grümmer and the then-30 year old baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. Grümmer's tonal beauty and wonderfully secure tone throughout her range made her an excellent choice for the solo role in V, *Ihr habt nur Traurigkeit* (You now have only sorrow), culminating in the verse [translated] "You see how for a little while I labor and toil, yet have I found much rest," underscored by the consolation of the chorus: "So will I comfort you."

Fischer-Dieskau rises to the occasion in III, *Herr, lehre doch mich* (Lord, make me to know the measure of my days) and VI, *Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende Statt* (For we have here no abiding city), particularly in the verse *Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis* (Behold, I tell you a mystery), followed immediately by the triumphant chorus *Denn es wird die Posaune schallen* (For the trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible). In all these verses, Fischer-Dieskau gets the chance to display both the dramatic power of his voice in its early full maturity, and also the very smoothly pleasing upper range that helped make him the most memorable lieder artist of his, or any, generation. This recording is yet another part of the enduring legacy of the great lyric baritone, who died 18 May, 2012.

The chorus is also exceptional. As in the earlier DGG recording, the Choir of St. Hedwig's Cathedral was only available for recording at night, as they had other duties during the day. It is an extraordinarily accomplished mixed choir, particularly in the treble voices, and they sing the German texts with absolute clarity, even in the climaxes and the fugal passages. Their powerful presence is felt optimally in the powerful chorus *Denn alles Fleish ist wie Gras* (Behold, all flesh is as the grass). But look for it also in the towering finale, *Selig sind die Toten* (Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord), with its ringing note of triumph and utter conviction. Really, choral artistry doesn't get better than this!