

effect as it is here. Recorded at the University of Texas's Jessen Recital Hall, the sound is as brilliant as the playing, with an excellent sense of space and wonderful low cello sounds.

Laurence Vittes

Danielpour

Darkness in the Ancient Valley (Symphony in Five Movements)^a. *Lacrimae Beati*^b. *A Woman's Life*^c
^aAngela Brown, ^bHila Plitmann *sops*

Nashville Symphony Orchestra / Giancarlo Guerrero
 Naxos American Classics © 8 559707 (80' • DDD • T)
 Recorded live at the ^bTennessee Performing Arts Center, Nashville, November 4-6, 2010; ^aLaura Turner Hall, Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville, ^aNovember 17-19, 2011, ^cSeptember 20-22, 2012



Recent works inspired by Rumi, Angelou and Mozart

Based on the text of a Rumi poem about a woman who refuses to retaliate against an abusive husband, Richard Danielpour's *Darkness in the Ancient Valley*, a symphony in five movements with a soprano in the fifth serves the composer as a metaphor for the people of Iran. After opening imposingly like a Romantic minor-key symphony, the musical narrative settles into a film-score landscape in which the composer's Iranian heritage plays a key role, with influences stretching from big dramatic gestures to scurrying New York City street-scene music from the 1950s, before the concluding 'Consecration' gives Hila Plitmann a 13-minute *tour de force* opportunity during which the pounding drums of the first movement return briefly before the music ends in quiet resignation.

The 10-minute long *Lacrimae Beati* takes as its departure point Danielpour's finding Mozart in a Viennese cemetery and then surviving a harrowing flight to Berlin. Rich in big solos for the first-chair string players, the first eight bars of Mozart's Requiem, about which the composer had been thinking for 30 years, are quoted before the radiant ending.

Despite its best intentions, Danielpour's earnest song-cycle based on Maya Angelou's *A Woman's Life*, requested by Angela Brown, uses unnecessarily big forces to say necessarily small things and Brown herself never sounds entirely at ease. Naxos's production for its 'home team' orchestra in Nashville (where Naxos USA is headquartered) features excellent sound and booklet-notes in which the variety of extramusical influences to which the composer responded are painstakingly detailed.

Laurence Vittes

Mendelssohn · Schumann · Beethoven

Beethoven Romances - No 1, Op 40; No 2, Op 50



Alert to style and phrasing: Rachel Barton Pine plays the Mendelssohn and Schumann concertos

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Op 64
 Schumann Violin Concerto, WoO23
 Rachel Barton Pine *vi* Göttingen Symphony Orchestra / Christoph-Mathias Mueller
 Cedille © CDR90000 144 (71' • DDD)



Barton Pine in Romances and Romantic concertos

Recordings of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto continue to arrive, even though dozens (hundreds?) are available in some form. Only an artist who has a truly distinctive view of the work will catch the ear amid all of the competing versions. Rachel Barton Pine is one such artist. She brings to the Mendelssohn Concerto a simplicity of expression that compels the listener to sit up and take notice.

The performance is but one example of Pine's versatility. She has put a stamp not only on standard repertoire but also on Baroque fare (using a period instrument) and the distant genre of heavy metal. Her Mendelssohn reveals a musician who is always alert to style and phrasing. This is not a performance for those who favour Romantic sweep and tonal luxuriance. Instead, Pine emphasises the music's Classical grace and lyricism, producing sounds of lean purity, almost without vibrato, to trace the curve of phrases. She meets the concerto's technical challenges without hesitation, sailing through the last movement's fleet passages as if they were natural excursions.

Pine brings the same elegance to Schumann's Violin Concerto, a more difficult work to pull off, partly due to the pervading aura of melancholy that may have been a result of the composer's mental health at the time. But there is much poetry to mine in the work and Pine shows her commitment to the score in tandem with fine colleagues, conductor Christoph-Mathias Mueller and the Göttingen Symphony Orchestra. Filling out the disc are refined accounts of the two Beethoven Romances. **Donald Rosenberg**

Weber

Clarinet Concertos - No 1, Op 73; No 2, Op 74.
 Clarinet Concertino, Op 26

Alexander Fiterstein *cl*
 San Francisco Ballet Orchestra / Martin West
 Bridge © BRIDGE9416 (54' • DDD)



Israeli-born clarinetist in Weber's operatic concertos

Alexander Fiterstein has proved himself to be a clarinetist of exceptional agility and finesse in the concert hall and on recordings, notably in new works that he champions. On his newest disc, the Israeli-born musician turns back the clock to cast a spell over Carl Maria von Weber's three clarinet pieces with orchestra.

These are charming and heartfelt scores that evince the composer's vast experience in the opera house. The clarinet is the principal