

August Editor's Choices



JS BACH The Art of Fugue - excs
BEETHOVEN
String Quartet No 13
Australian Chamber Orchestra / Richard

Tognetti *vn* ABC Classics

Tognetti and his ACO colleagues bring their trademark energy and virtuosity to this hugely enjoyable programme.



DEAN Dramatis personae
FRANCESCONI Hard Pace
Håkan Hardenberger *tpt*
Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra / John

Storgårds BIS

Two contemporary concertos for trumpet, performed by – as Andrew Mellor puts it – a ‘dream team’ of musicians.



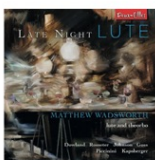
DVOŘÁK ‘American’
String Quartet & Quintet
Škampa Quartet
Champs Hill

What an era it seems to be for fine young string quartets, with the excellent Škampa Quartet deservedly numbering among them, as this superb Dvořák disc demonstrates in style.



BEETHOVEN. CHOPIN
Piano Works
Elisabeth Brauss *pf*
Oehms

A really note-worthy debut this. Young German pianist Elisabeth Brauss's first disc demonstrates impressive assurance, freshness, intelligence and, most of all, talent. A pianist to watch.



‘LATE NIGHT LUTE’
Matthew Wadsworth *lute*
Deux-Elles

This beautiful recital wraps carefully chosen and elegantly played historic repertoire around a fascinating new work from Stephen Goss, drawing imaginatively on the theorbo's unique sound.



JS BACH Secular Cantatas, Vol 8
Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki
BIS

So frequent an appearance on this page is Masaaki Suzuki and the Bach Collegium Japan – Bach recording veterans of 22 years – that one can only reiterate past praise again!



EISLER Lieder, Vol 1
Holger Falk *bar* Steffen Schleiermacher *pf*
Dabringhaus und Grimm

The first part of an anticipated four-volume survey of Hanns Eisler's songs, baritone Holger Falk and pianist Steffen Schleiermacher offering, as critic Hugo Shirley puts it, terrific performances.



KURTÁG Complete Works for Ensemble and Choir
Netherlands Chamber Choir; AskolSchönberg / Reinbert de Leeuw

ECM New Series

A treasure trove of György Kurtág's compositions, his diversity of approach demonstrated over this three-disc set.



‘FIRST DROP’
Ars Nova Copenhagen / Paul Hillier
Canteloupe

Paul Hillier directs a disc of contemporary choral works that offers a beautiful journey through modern music, sung – and recorded – with evident care and passion.

in John Adams's *Harmonielehre*, with a ruminative development section that grows so naturally and agreeably that one wishes it were even longer.

In the *Very spacious* second movement, pianist Charles Owen makes the most of Dove's various ‘bell’ effects, sometimes distant, at other moments clangorously strident, when he interrupts the strings' hazy somnolence. A southern-European languor is abruptly banished by the *Lively* finale. This post-minimalist helter-skelter is a bundle of chunky, metrically challenging fun. *Petrushka* pops up for a very brief glimpse, as does some Bartókian bitonality, before romping home with a breathlessly joyful élan. With this delightful work Dove has refreshed the piano quintet genre; it is worthy of admittance to the canon of great examples by Brahms, Dvořák and Elgar.

The earliest work on the disc, the string

quartet *Out of Time* (2001), has been described by its composer as ‘a serenade for someone I never met’. A Vanbrugh Quartet commission, this ‘pure’ piece is something of a mosaic, cast in six short(ish) movements, with little folkish fragments contrasted with snippets of quasi-plainsong, all carried through in a pulsing vein. It is full of striking contrasts. The opening owes something possibly to Adams's *Shaker Loops*, although Dove conjures up some extraordinarily exquisite filigree textures later on. The third (and shortest) movement, *Stomping*, should have the listener leaping up into the air in terpsichorean delight, while the concluding, wistfully elegiac *Gently moving* somehow suspends time itself.

This last movement sets the scene perfectly for *In Damascus*, a harrowingly vivid setting (in Anne-Marie McManus's translation) of verses from Ali Safar's *A Black Cloud in a Leaden White Sky*, published in *Syria Speaks* in 2014. The

texts alone are sufficient to provoke outrage and intense sorrow at the plight of ‘a nation where the sun had burned out’, but when they are expressed and reinterpreted through the medium of music the sense of grief is almost too much to bear. Dove gives the string quartet several roles, including accompanist (in the recitatives) and gear-grinding combatant as well as a reflective type of chorus. Traversing a huge emotional range – from the bleakness of Warlock's *Curlew*, if you will, to the hypnotism of Reich's *Different Trains* – this half-hour-long masterpiece should leave the listener utterly exhausted. There are 10 vocal sections divided by an angrily dissonant instrumental interlude. This work was tailor-made for Mark Padmore, who summons up every iota of his immense interpretative powers to steer us through this reflective testament.

This important release cannot be recommended too highly. **Malcolm Riley**