

# BRIEF NOTES

Your quick listening guide to more new releases, including prize-winning Chopin, flamenco-tinged Falla, and the lost folk songs of St Kilda



**NORWAY NEWBIE:**  
treble Aksel Rykkvin  
makes a superb debut

**Abrahamsen Works for wind quintet**  
Ensemble MidtVest  
Dacapo 8.226090



Hans Abrahamsen's music is having a moment in the spotlight, and this is another excellent

contribution from the Ensemble MidtVest. 1970s wind quintets open the programme, followed by loving arrangements of Schumann's *Kinderszenen* and Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*. (RF) ★★★★★

**Chopin Piano Concerto No. 1; solo pieces (selection)**  
Seong-Jin Cho (piano); Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra/Kaspzyk Fryderyk Chopin Institute NIFCCD625



A staggering live recording of the 2015 International Fryderyk Chopin Competition winner as he progresses through the rounds. Seong-Jin Cho's playing has depth of colour and a mature sense of line. The orchestra sounds a little woolly in the concerto. (OC) ★★★★★

**Enescu Piano Trio No. 1 Arensky Piano Trio No. 1**  
Trio Enescu  
Genuin GEN 16447



Captivating performances of contrasting late-Romantic trios that deserve to be heard more often. Composed in his teenage years, the Enescu is a joyful splash of folkiness, while the Arensky, composed in memory of a beloved cellist colleague, Karl Davydov, plunges us into deeper emotional waters. (JP) ★★★★★

**Puts Symphony No. 2; Flute Concerto; River's Rush**  
Adam Walker (flute); Peabody Symphony Orchestra/Marin Alsop  
Naxos 8.559794



Kevin Puts (b1972) is a contemporary American composer. His Symphony No. 2 – a musical illustration of the events of 9/11 – is movingly performed under the direction of Marin Alsop, alongside some of his lighter music. (EC) ★★★★★

**Reger Sonatas for Violin Solo**  
Ulf Wallin (violin) CPO 777 762-2



Reger's wonderful, Romantic music for solo violin is heavily influenced by Bach's Sonatas and Partitas down to the majestic Chaconne of the Fourth Sonata. Virtuoso as well as lyrical, rich and enticing, Wallin shapes it all with great skill. The recorded sound is very close and a little harsh at times. (OC) ★★★★★

**Shostakovich String Quartets Nos 11, 8, 5; Elegy**  
Debussy Quartet  
Evidence Classics EVCD018



Three quartets, one from each period of Shostakovich's life, are programmed in reverse order. The Debussy Quartet plays assuredly and expressively throughout, with moments of fizzing energy. Shostakovich's Elegy, which opens the disc, offers a welcome moment of sweetness in this intense collection. (EC) ★★★★★

**Smith Jacobite; plus Rachmaninov & Corelli**  
Tommy Smith (saxophone); BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Clark Rundell  
Spartacus Records STS022



Saxophonist Tommy Smith leads us onto the orchestral battlefield in a three-movement work that traces Jacobite history from the risings of 1689 to the catastrophe of Culloden. Suitably dramatic, with occasional bluesy solo moments. (JP) ★★★★★

**Stravinsky Petrushka Debussy La boîte à joujoux (arr. Caplet)**  
Seattle Symphony/Ludovic Morlot  
Seattle Symphony Media SSM1010-



This recording's unforgiving close acoustic doesn't take any prisoners, but the Seattle Symphony conquers any dryness with its vivacious playing. The Stravinsky is tightly rhythmic and the suavity in the Debussy is a joy. (OC) ★★★★★

**Tchaikovsky The Seasons; Grand Sonata in G major**  
Jonas Vitaut (piano)  
Mirare MIR 308



Vitaut's year sadly lacks seasonal colour as he plods prosaically from one month to the next. June's Barcarolle and October's Autumn Song notably fail to sing, and September's Hunt gets stuck in the woodland mud. The Grand Sonata fares better. (JP) ★★

**Van der Aa Violin Concerto; Hysteresis**

Janine Jansen (violin); Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/Jurowski; Kari Kriikku (clarinet); Amsterdam Sinfonietta/Candida Thompson  
Disquiet DQM 05



Janine Jansen captivates in the 2014 Violin Concerto written for her by Van der Aa, full of energy and cool beauty. *Hysteresis* (2013) offers an invigorating blend of analogue and digital sounds. (RF) ★★★★★

**Van Dieren 'Chinese' Symphony; plus other orchestral works**  
Raphael Wallfisch (cello); Soloists; BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales/William Boughton  
Lyrita SRCD.357



The 'Chinese' of the title refers to the poems sung, in German translation, by a quintet of soloists and chorus. The English composer's 1912 symphony is a dreamy, late-Romantic wallow. Atmospheric, in a Delius-like way, but not hugely memorable. (JP) ★★

**Zelenka Six Trio Sonatas**

Zefiro Arcana A394



Close miking brings an immediacy to this addictive recording of music by the 18th-century Czech challenger to Bach. Consummate playing make this two-disc set a winner. (OC) ★★★★★

**Airs, Blues and Dances**

**Tippett, Bennett, Weir, Bray, Matthews, Grime, Tavener et al** James Turnbull (oboe), Libby Burgess (piano); Ensemble Perpetuo

Champs Hill Records CHRCD099



This is a beautifully played, interestingly programmed showcase of the oboe as a recital instrument. Highlights include pastoral Bennett, jazzy David Matthews and refreshing Weir and Bray. (RF) ★★★★★

**Aksel! Arias by Bach, Handel & Mozart**

Aksel Rykkvin (treble); OAE/Short Signum SIGCD435



Exceptionally polished performances and, one or two clipped bits of phrasing aside, mightily impressive vocal control from the 13-year-old Norwegian treble. The arias are well-chosen. (JP) ★★★★★

**Ave Maria Music for Upper Voices**

The St Catharine's Girls' Choir, Cambridge/Edward Wickham Resonus RES10170



An imaginative disc of 20th-century and contemporary music including works by Rebecca Clarke and Cecilia McDowall. The young voices blend well, and sing with conviction and warmth. (OC) ★★★★★

**Encuentro Songs by Falla & Lorca**

Morente (singer), Perianes (piano) Harmonia Mundi HMC 902246



The smoky colours and grainy edges of flamenco singer Estrella Morente's voice add an authentic Spanish flavour to Falla and Lorca's folk-inspired songs. She's deftly partnered by Perianes. (RF) ★★★★★

**Hakim plays Hakim**

Naji Hakim (organ) Signum Classics SIGCD463



Hakim is a composer of great individuality and wit. Harmonies from the French organ school and his native Middle East combine deliciously. He gets some thrilling colours from the Schuke organ in Bilbao. (OC) ★★★★★

**Latino ladino: Songs of exile and passion from Spain and Latin America**

Yaniv d'Or (countertenor), Ensemble Naya, Barrocade/Amit Tiefenbrunn Naxos 8.573566



The brainchild of Yaniv d'Or, this programme of mostly traditional and Baroque music that flourished in exiled communities is performed with panache by the countertenor and the period group he founded, Ensemble NAYA. (EC) ★★★★★

**Roma Aeterna Works by Palestrina, Victoria and Guerrero**

New York Polyphony BIS BIS-2203



A polished performance from New York Polyphony of music by great Renaissance masters.

While the choral sound could be more characterful, the solos are beautifully expressive. (EC) ★★★★★

**The Lost Songs of St Kilda**

Trevor Morrison (piano); Scottish Festival Orchestra/James MacMillan Decca 481 2795



There's a certain charm to these piano pieces, even if the remarkable story of their provenance takes some believing. The orchestral arrangements that follow are a mixed bag, and the sentimental sleeve notes splendidly ludicrous. (JP) ★★★★★

**The Stanford Legacy Works by Stanford, Clarke and Ireland**

Martin Outram (viola), Julian Rolton (piano) Nimbus NI 6334



This disc draws together the music of Stanford and two of his pupils, Rebecca Clarke and John Ireland, in touching and convincing performances. (EC) ★★★★★

**Vox Clara**

Music by Gabriel Jackson

Joel Garthwaite (saxophone), Luke Bond (organ) Truro Cathedral Choir/Christopher Gray Regent REGCD479



A former chorister, Gabriel Jackson writes imaginatively scored and expressive choral music, here performed compellingly by the Truro choir. The exceptional soloists deserve special praise. (EC) ★★★★★  
Reviewers: Oliver Condy (OC), Elinor Cooper (EC), Rebecca Franks (RF), Jeremy Pound (JP)

**The month in box-sets**

STYLISH SOPRANO: Leontyne Price's 90th is marked

**Many happy returns**

Our reissue round-up salutes Reger, Goerne and Price

The centenary of Reger's death may have slipped a little under the radar in terms of new releases this year, but Warner Classics's

**Reger: The Centenary Collection**

(0190295974824; 8 CDs) does its bit to champion the German's genius. It's not comprehensive – you won't find, for instance, his four *Tone Poems after Arnold Böcklin* or *Sonatas for Solo Violin* – but it is wide-ranging, and adorned by performances from the likes of mezzo Christa Ludwig and the Hilliard Ensemble.

Celebrating a milestone next year, meanwhile, will be German baritone Matthias Goerne, who turns 50 in March. Harmonia Mundi starts the celebrations early with a complete edition of his *Schubert Lieder* recordings (HMX 2908750.61). Included in this sumptuous 12-disc display of the Lieder singer's craft are, of course, the great song-cycles *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise* and *Schwanengesang*, along with less familiar fare.

Goerne is but a spring chicken compared to Leontyne Price, who will be 90 in February. Sony's 22-disc

**Leontyne Price:**

**Prima Donna Assoluta** collection (88985311342) showcases many of the US soprano's finest operatic roles, from Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* to Verdi's *Aida* and Puccini's *Tosca*, all in remastered recordings, many of the performances conducted by Erich Leinsdorf.

Dating from the late 1950s and early '60s, meanwhile, are the recordings that comprise Decca's new **Beethoven Montoux**

**This Warner Classics set champions Reger's genius**

– **The Nine Symphonies** set (480 8895). As well as those nine symphonies,

we also hear the great French-American maestro – by then in his 80s – conduct the London Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic and Royal Concertgebouw orchestras in the *Fidelio*, *Egmont* and *King Stephen* overtures and a fascinating rehearsal sequence.

And, sticking with Beethoven, Alpha Classics brings us his complete string quartets, performed by the Belcea Quartet (Alpha 262; 8 CDs). These

are high-octane, immaculately played performances from one of today's most exciting string quartets. Well worth a pre-Christmas investment.

