

Brief notes

Our selection this month includes Myths, Unsung Heroes and a little Sondheim

Asger Baden *If the Music Stops They'll Eat Him Up*

Asger Baden (piano, electronics)
Neue Meister 0302077NM



There's a delicious ambiguity about this solo effort from the Danish composer-pianist. It's a rich and complex soundworld of piano, percussive effects, strings and synths but with an improvisational quality. Baden paints with sound, and the pictures are immersive and sometimes unsettling. (MB) ★★★★★

Bartók *Violin Sonatas etc*

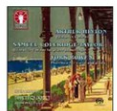
Franziska Pietsch (violin),
 Maki Hayashida (piano)
Odradek ODRCD419



Pietsch and Hayashida are uncompromising in their approach to the pair of sonatas. The works' jagged edges and silken curves are expertly navigated, while the shorter folk dances afford the listener several moments of unmitigated pleasure. (MB) ★★★★★

Bowen • Coleridge-Taylor • Hinton *Chamber Works*

Tippett Quartet et al
Dutton Epoch CDLX7386



There's a dazzling sheen to both the recording and performance of these British chamber works. I'll always love the lilting *Larghetto* of Coleridge-Taylor's Piano Quintet in G minor, but it's a real treat to discover Arthur Hinton and his own colourful Piano Quintet. Bowen's *Phantasie* positively fizzles. (MB) ★★★★★

E Coates *London Suite etc*

Slovak National Symphony
Naxos 8.555178



Okay, this is a reissue of a 1992 recording but it's too good not to share here. The orchestra brings just the right amount of fun and flair to these familiar works by one of Britain's light music heroes. The *London Suite* is just the tip of an enjoyable iceberg. (MB) ★★★★★

Gesualdo

Dolcissima mia vita – Madrigals
 Collegium Vocale Gent/ Philippe Herreweghe *PHILPH036*



These one-to-a-part performances are perfect for navigating the gnarly dissonances and extreme expression of Italy's controversial Renaissance great, as emotions run from ecstasy to deepest pain. (JP) ★★★★★

Michael Harrison *Seven Sacred Names*

Roomful of Teeth et al
Cantaloupe CA21157



This single, hour-long work by Michael Harrison is ethereal, embedded in a knotty, Indian soundworld. Designed as a companion to *Nature's Hidden Dimension*, a book by astrophysicist WHS Gebel, the work is made up of complex rhythmic patterns. (FP) ★★★★★

Hindemith *Symphony 'Mathis der Maler' etc*

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony
 Orchestra/Marin Alsop
Naxos 8.574283



Hindemith's reputation as a soulless, functional operator is belied by the three works here, which are, in turns, witty (*Das Nusch-Nuschi*), eerily unsettling (*Sancta Susanna*) and dramatic (Symphony 'Mathis der Maler'). All are performed with admirable flair and passion by Alsop and her Viennese forces. (JP) ★★★★★

Ivanovs *Symphonies Nos 15 & 16*

Latvian National Symphony Orchestra
SKANILMIC126



Edgy, angst-ridden, occasionally a little sinister and often enthralling, the Latvian Janis Ivanovs's soundworld in these symphonies is not a million miles away from that of his contemporary Shostakovich. Well worth exploring. (JP) ★★★★★

Glen Gabriel Jansson

Norse Mythology Various Artists
Audio Network ANW3521



This is a calling card for Jansson's talents as an orchestral storyteller and ought to get him plenty more offers of work in movies. Broad orchestral strokes and hearty choir are brought together in impressive style, and the melodies are good. (MB) ★★★

Medtner • Rachmaninov • Tchaikovsky *Piano Works*

Nikolay Medvedev (piano)
Quartz QTZ2143



There's something wonderfully unshowy about Medvedev's performance here, despite the glittering quality of such works as Tchaikovsky's Grand Sonata in G major. Other pianists might be tempted to showboat, but this is a pianist with poise and precision. (MB) ★★★★★

Paderewski • Szymanowski *Violin Sonatas*

Alena Baeva (violin),
 Vadym Kholodenko (piano)
Frederick Chopin Institute NIFCCD075



There's plenty of brilliant discoveries here by Szymanowski and Paderewski, particularly the latter's Violin Sonata in A minor. It's played with great virtuosity and confidence, qualities which are occasionally missing from the rest of the programme. (FP) ★★★

Pratté *Grand Concert for harp and orchestra*

Delphine Constantin-Reznik (harp)
 et al *BIS BIS-2570*



A formidably talented harpist, Antoine Edouard Pratté was the toast of Swedish music circles in the mid-19th century. Deftly played and recorded in superb sound, this concerto plus two solo works make a fine introduction to his compositions. (JP) ★★★★★

Sondheim *A Little Night Music – Suite* (arr. Eric Stern)

Opus Two
Bridge BR4010



Short but very sweet, this suite by Eric Stern based on Sondheim's classic musical is a winner. Opus Two – aka violinist William Terwilliger and pianist Andrew Cooperstock – have a ball with the familiar tunes, which are perfectly suited to this intimate chamber setting. (MB) ★★★★★

Stamitz *Four Symphonies*

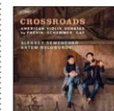
Köln Akademie
CPO 555 3442



For an overall impression of Stamitz's style here, think of Haydn in one of his feistier moods. The real star of this album, though, is the *Le jour variable* Symphony, which is like an earthier forerunner of Beethoven's *Pastoral*. (JP) ★★★★★

Crossroads

Works by Previn, Schemmer et al
 Aleksey Semenenko (violin),
 Artem Belogurov (piano)
BIS BIS-2545



As well as a violin sonata by André Previn, BBC New Generation Artist Aleksey Semenenko and his duo partner present premiere recordings of jazz-influenced sonatas written in the 1980s. The Schemmer is a particularly joyful discovery. (FP) ★★★

Labyrinths

Works by Max Richter et al
 Orchestra of the Swan
Signum Classics SIGCD694



Following on from its debut album *Timelapse*, the Orchestra of the Swan presents a wildly eclectic programme, which makes for an exciting listen. While some of the ensemble playing could be tighter, the solos are ethereal and thoughtful. (FP) ★★★