

**Art – Opera & Concert Arias  
Karin Gauvin; Les Violons du Roy; Bernard  
Lapointe  
NAXOS ACD2 2636**

While Mozart's concert arias were originally composed as additions to an opera or as substitutes for other arias, two represented his recordings were composed specifically for concert performance: *Misera, dove sei*, composed for Countess Baumgarten and *Com'è mi scordi di te?... Non temere, amato*, which was originally intended for insertion for performance in *Idomeneo*. However, the version Gauvin performs was adapted for the farewell concert of Nancy Storace, a singer much adored by Mozart. Gauvin's superb purity of tone and dramatic interpretation shine in this aria. The orchestration calls for piano obbligato, deftly handled by Benedetto Lupo. One can imagine Storace performing Mozart thoroughly enjoying the break in the passage where the orchestra withdraws to feature the two.



Another wonderful exchange between instrumentalist and singer occurs in *Non ti scorderò* from the opera *La Clemenza di Tito* with André Moisan's gorgeously expressive basset horn obbligato. The opera arias featured are also marked by a superb sensitivity to the deeply emotive undertones in Mozart, especially Susanna's deeply moving *Figaro* aria *Deh vieni non tardar* from *The Marriage of Figaro*. This recording demonstrates that Karina Gauvin shares a trait with Mozart: the ease and grace with which it comes on the ear of the listener belies the true complexity and supreme artistry inherent in the crafting of a truly exquisite performance.

**Dianne Wells**

**Verdi – Wanderers Nachtlied  
Matthias Goerne; Helmut Deutsch; Eric  
Friedlander  
Decca Monumeta Mundi HMC902109.10**

This is the eighth volume in Matthias Goerne's epic project recording Schubert's songs and cycles. Goerne meets every expectation of delivering the drama and interpretation of the texts by Rückert, Goethe and other poets, especially as he masters so deftly the musical vehicle in which Schubert set them.

But these performances transcend preoccupation with technical and stylistic correctness. At this stage in the singer's relationship with his composer one begins to ask just how



deeply one artist has ventured into the soul of the other? There is, in Goerne's singing, a sense of ownership of Schubert's ideas, and with that, an exercise of interpretive license quite unlike anything other Schubert singers have ever done.

The single item that will stop listeners in their tracks is the title lied, *Wanderers Nachtlied*, oddly buried partway through the second disc. The speed and dynamics of this interpretation are not just unconventional, they are wildly unorthodox. First impressions are shock and incredulity. How Goerne sustains the pianissimo and daringly slow tempo is technically stunning. Even more so is the realization that this is not a self-indulgence but a bold re-invention of Schubert's original impulse. It's unlikely that the composer ever intended this lied to be sung this way, but Goerne does it and makes it work, credibly and movingly. Simply masterful. Goerne has a unique artistic conviction that informs all his singing. It's what will make his Schubert recordings an interpretive benchmark.

**Alex Baran**

**Verdi – Arias  
Krassimira Stoyanova; Munchner  
Rundfunkorchester; Pavel Baleff  
Orfeo C 885 141 A**

In my journey last year through all of Verdi's 26 operas I found one thing in common. The most interesting character, in conflict between her love and other, higher moral issues is nearly always the woman: Traviata, Aida, Luisa Miller, Amelia, Elisabetta..., the list is endless. Verdi was very partial to the lead sopranos, even his wife was one. It was true "he murdered sopranos," he was so demanding and non-compromising: "Pay attention to the quality of the voice" he so ordered Boito while selecting the right soprano ... "to the intonation and above all to the intelligence and feeling."

*Intelligence and feeling* could be the trademark of **Krassimira Stoyanova**, Bulgarian-born, who quickly rose to fame as leading soprano of the Vienna State Opera and is nowadays one of the most sought-after soloists worldwide. This new album is her third solo release, the previous two having won some prestigious awards.

The ambitious program takes us to the very core, the heart of Verdi, to roles of high vocal demands and intense emotional complexity. All of them are a rare treat for a Verdi-phile such as me. Stoyanova's range is amazing: from the young and innocent *Giovanna d'Arco* through the tortured and victimized heroine *Luisa Miller* to the pinnacle of vocal grandeur of *Don Carlo*, in the supremely difficult and challenging aria *Tu che le vanità*. Certainly no stranger to these pages, I



reviewed her *Desdemona* back in April 2007, in a DVD of Verdi's *Otello*.

**Janos Gardonyi**

**Greatest Hits, Vol.1  
Elmer Iseler Singers; Lydia Adams  
Independent EIS 2013-01  
(elmerisellersingers.com)**

Recorded and released to mark the 35th Anniversary season of the Elmer Iseler Singers, this disc features some of the choir's most requested performance pieces.

This may be, after all, a choir with one of the longest histories in Canadian choral music. In a previous life as the Festival Singers (founded long before in 1954) the 20-voice professional chamber choir took on the name of its founder in 1979. Directed by Lydia Adams since 1998, the choir has continued to perform and record a variety of works whilst serving as a champion of Canadian choral composers.

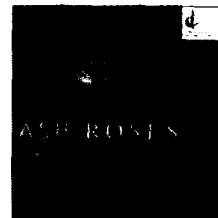
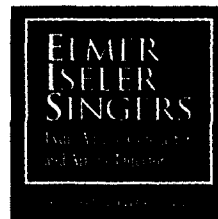
This latest offering was expertly recorded by Keith Horner and Robert DiVito in what Horner describes as the "spacious acoustics" of Toronto's Grace Church on-the-Hill. Peppered amongst favourites by Eleanor Daley, Healey Willan, Allister MacGillivray, Paul Halley, Leon Dubinsky and Rita MacNeil are traditional Mi'kmaq and Inuit chants arranged by the conductor, traditional American songs and spirituals, with a little Schubert and Mendelssohn added for good measure. As always, the choir is impeccable and soloists Anne Bornath, Gisele Kulak, Andrea Ludwig, Alison Roy and Nelson Lohnes shine forth with gorgeous clarity, as do guest artists Shawn Grenke, piano and Clare Scholtz, oboe.

**Dianne Wells**

**Derek Holman – Ash Roses  
Mireille Asselin; Lawrence Wilford; Liz  
Upchurch; Sanya Eng  
Centrediscs CMCCD 19914**

The Canadian Art Song Project was founded in 2011 by tenor Lawrence Wilford and pianist Stephen Philcox with a mission to build on the rich legacy of Canadian song, especially art

song, through performance, recording, commissions and editing. There is no finer example of Canadian art song composers to feature than the English-born and longtime Canadian resident Derek Holman. Holman has written a prolific number of choral works in addition to his opera, oratorio, keyboard, chamber and orchestral compositions. In *Ash Roses*, two song cycles and two collections are featured in this first all-Holman recording.



Wilford sings with passion, power, and clear articulation in *The Four Seasons*, an eight-song cycle commissioned by the COC in memory of Richard Bradshaw. Set to a number of British poems, it is a moving collection rich in lyrical tonality, word painting, contrasting moods and subtle harmonic shifts. In *Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal*, Wilford is joined by soprano Mireille Asselin in a virtuosic duet. Asselin shines in the song cycle title track *Ash Roses*. The at times witty text of Canadian poet Tricia Postle is given a more atonal setting with vocal interval leaps and shifting rhythmic piano accompaniment. Pianist Liz Upchurch is unbelievable in her accompaniments – these difficult piano parts sound effortless thanks to her awesome musicality and technique. Harpist Sanya Eng accompanies Wilford admirably in the intricate *Three Songs for High Voice and Harp*.

Holman ends these compositions with simple luscious resonating cadences leaving the listener begging for more Canadian art songs.

**Tina Kiik**

## EARLY MUSIC AND PERIOD PERFORMANCE

**The Art of Melancholy – Songs by John Dowland**  
Iestyn Davies; Thomas Dunford  
Hyperion CDA68007

Half a century ago a countertenor was still seen as unusual, some would say unnatural. There are now a substantial number of countertenors and I would rate Iestyn Davies



as one of the very best, judging from the record under review and also from the recent recording of Handel's *Belshazzar*, in which he sings the role of Daniel. He has a strong and very even voice with an excellent sense of pitch. He has himself said that for him the finest countertenor is Andreas Scholl and he has commented on Scholl's ability to create "a column of sound which doesn't weaken and stays absolutely even." The comment fits Davies' own singing.

Melancholy was a common malady in early 17th-century England. Think of *Hamlet* or of Jaques in *As You Like It*. It could become an affectation and it was delightfully parodied in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*, in which a character calls for a stool to be melancholy upon. Davies, however, believes strongly that, for Dowland, melancholy is more than just a pose. That conviction accounts for the passion which Davies brings to the songs on this disc.

Davies is ably accompanied by lutenist Thomas Dunford, who also has five solos. They include *The Frog Galliard*, a performance which, for good measure, throws in

*Greensleeves* as an excursion. Davies sang in Vancouver, Banff and Calgary a couple of months ago. I hope we shall hear him in Toronto soon.

**Hans de Groot**

**Terra Tremuit**  
Studio de musique ancienne de Montréal;  
Christopher Jackson  
ATMA ACD2 2653

Several Renaissance composers dwell on the subject of world catastrophe – the cataclysms, floods, epidemics that will lead to humanity's end. On this disc Christopher Jackson's studio (40 years old this year) interprets doom-laden compositions by six such composers.

An all-too-short one-minute motet *Terra tremuit* by William Byrd, with its sometimes clashing parts, sets the scene. Antoine Brumel's five-movement *Earthquake Mass* for 12 voices follows, starting with a serene "Kyrie eleison" and a "Gloria" initially gentle but where the discordant music finally reflects the sinister nature of this compilation. It is certainly the case during Brumel's "Sanctus, Benedictus"; his demands on the vocal abilities of the singers to change from high to low, and to perform melodic leaps must surely be intended to reflect the events of an earthquake.

Then there are the composers who followed in the footsteps of Brumel. Vaet and Crecquillon, as employees at the court of the emperor Charles V, saw first hand the terrors of absolute power; not surprisingly they bring a mellow and melancholy richness to their compositions – both are terrified as they look to the last day and their judgment. More formal is Palestrina's *Terra tremuit*. This depicts the aftermath of the earth's trembling and the quiet that pertains as God rises in judgment.

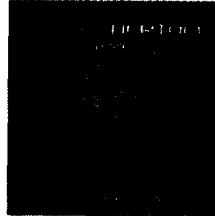
And if the sky does fall in, at least you will have been warned well in advance by some of the greatest early composers.

**Michael Schwartz**

## CLASSICAL AND BEYOND

**Italian Memories**  
Mauro Bertoli  
Independent (maurobertoli.com)

Despite Italy's long-standing reputation as a country of vocal music, there is also a keyboard tradition going back as far as Frescobaldi – and what better way of sampling 300 years



of Italian keyboard music than with this new recording titled *Italian Memories* with pianist Mauro Bertoli?

Born in Brescia, Italy, Bertoli has established an international reputation within a fairly short time, having appeared in recital and as a soloist with numerous chamber ensembles and orchestras throughout the world. A recipient of the prestigious Giuseppe Sinopoli award in 2006, Bertoli has been artist-in-residence at Carleton University in Ottawa since 2009. *Italian Memories* is his fourth recording, and one that clearly brings him back to his roots.

The CD opens with four miniatures by three composers, Benedetto Marcello, Mattia Vento and Domenico Paradisi. Bertoli's playing is elegant and poised, easily demonstrating how well music originally intended for harpsichord can sound on a concert grand. The name Muzio Clementi is a more familiar one – is there a piano student who hasn't played music by this Italian-born composer who spent most of his life in England and whose reputation rivalled that of Haydn? The two sonatas presented here are a delight, and Bertoli makes ease of the sometimes break-neck speed required of the performer. A complete change of pace comes with two brief and languorous pieces by Martucci and the *Diario Indiano* by Ferruccio Busoni, an homage to Native American culture. The latter is a true study in contrasts where Bertoli's wonderful sense of tonal colour is juxtaposed with a formidable technique.

The final work is a true *tour de force*, music not by an Italian but by the 12-year-old Franz Liszt – the *Impromptu Brilliant on Themes by Rossini and Spontini*. Here, both Liszt and Bertoli pull out all the stops in this flamboyant piece, thus rounding out a splendid program of music that deserves greater exposure.

**Richard Haskell**

**Brahms – String Quintets**  
Takács Quartet; Lawrence Power  
Hyperion CDA67900

The string quintet, as an art form, offers ingenious possibilities for creating unique harmonies and colours, and Brahms took full advantage of that. While he was known to have some difficulties establishing the right medium for his creative ideas, with string quintets he had found a perfect vehicle for expressing the depth and uniqueness of his artistry. Edvard Grieg allowed for the same sentiments in one of his letters: "How different the person we call Brahms now suddenly appears to us! Now for the first time I see and feel how whole he was both as an artist and as a human being."

In *String Quintet in F Major, Op.88*, we hear Brahms' signature use of eighth notes against triplets enhanced by syncopation

