

The Century recommends: Classical music

selected by [Bradley Lehman](#) in the [December 16, 2008](#) issue

Vaughan Williams: Symphony No. 4, Mass in G minor, Six Choral Songs to Be Sung in Time of War. *London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Richard Hickox Singers, Richard Hickox. Chandos, \$18.98.*

Vaughan Williams's martial and acerbic fourth symphony gets a muscular performance with great brass. The a cappella mass provides a calmer and quieter contrast. The Six Choral Songs (1939-1940) feature the choir in unison singing texts by Shelley.

CPE Bach: Violin and Piano Sonatas. *Amandine Beyer, violin; Edna Stern, fortepiano. Zig Zag Territories, \$18.98.*

CPE Bach's violin sonatas have dramatic quirks and mesmerizing slow movements. The most familiar sonata here is usually played as a flute sonata; it was previously catalogued as belonging to the composer's father (BWV 1020). The performances sparkle.

Anderson: Orchestral music (5). *BBC Concert Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin. Naxos, \$9.98 each.*

For the centennial of Leroy Anderson (1908-1975), Naxos has issued five discs of his "concert music with a popular touch." Each disc juxtaposes familiar gems and first recordings of Anderson rarities. My young children exclaim: "I like this music!" Volume 3 has a hilarious version of "Old MacDonald," along with a "76 Trombones" arrangement that keeps being overrun by Sousa quotes. Volumes 2, 3, 4 and 5 include Christmas suites.

Grieg: Choir Music. *The Norwegian Soloists' Choir, Grete Pedersen. BIS, \$20.98.*

A fine selection of Edvard Grieg's sacred and secular songs, most of them previously unavailable. The music is full of rich harmonies and expressive nuances. The folksy

ornamentation in some of the songs is especially beautiful.

Metamorphoses Fidei. *Montserrat Figueras, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Hesperion XXI, Jordi Savall. Alia Vox, \$12.98.*

This CD explores the different expressions of Christianity in Spain, before and after explorations of the New World. The music is intense, exploring mysticism and fervent faith. A highlight is the arrangement of the “Song of the Birds.”

Flagello: Missa Sinfonica. Rosner: Symphony No. 5. *National Radio Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, John McLaughlin Williams, Naxos, \$9.98.*

These two orchestral pieces each get their first recordings. Both are based on the ordinary of the mass and include quotations of plainchant melodies. Arnold Rosner’s symphony is packed with irregular rhythms and spicy harmonies. Nicolas Flagello’s has an appeal similar to Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring*.

Frescobaldi: Arias, Toccatas, and Canzoni. *Anthonello. BIS, \$19.98.*

Anthonello is a five-member ensemble from Japan specializing in early Baroque music. The program gives a delightful variety of Girolamo Frescobaldi’s soprano arias and instrumental pieces. The instruments are cornetto, recorder, viola da gamba, harpsichord, harp, theorbo (a type of lute) and guitar.

JS Bach: Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord; Trios and Keyboard Sonatas. *Mikko Perkola, viola da gamba; Aapo Häkkinen, harpsichord. Naxos, \$9.98.*

The three sonatas for harpsichord and viola da gamba are some of Bach’s most elegant music, exploring a balance between French and Italian styles. This CD includes several isolated trio movements and a rarely played harpsichord sonata. Perkola and Häkkinen play with an uncommon flexibility.

Haydn: Symphonies No. 41, 44 and 47. *Heidelberger Sinfoniker, Thomas Fey. Hanssler Classic, \$19.98.*

Thomas Fey’s excellent cycle of the Haydn symphonies continues with these three from the experimental middle part of his career. The performances are energetic, with bold tempo changes to emphasize rhetorical points in the flow. The orchestra uses modern strings and woodwinds, but older-style brass instruments and timpani.

JS Bach: Inventions and Sinfonias. *Peter Watchorn, harpsichord. Musica Omnia, \$13.98.*

Bach wrote these 30 short compositions to teach his students how to play keyboards in a “singing” manner, and to give a foretaste of composition. Watchorn plays them with a terrific variety of touch and character, bringing out the melodic lines beautifully.

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