

Marc Rochester

MacMillan: Visions of a November Spring
Delphian ⑤ DCD34088 (A/14)



James MacMillan's 55th birthday fell during the year and among a number of discs released marking the occasion was this stunner from the

Edinburgh Quartet. There is something profoundly moving about this intimate music, not least the emotionally charged *For Sonny*, composed in memory of the tragic and premature death of an infant.

'Compellingly sung, beautifully conducted and played, it's a delight' Hugo Shirley

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R Strauss: Intermezzo
CPO ⑤ ② CPO777 901-2 (11/14)

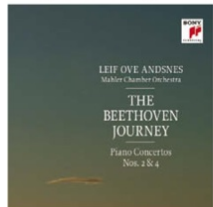


The Strauss anniversary hasn't delivered a bumper crop but CPO's excellent new recording of his autobiographical 'bourgeois comedy'

shouldn't be allowed to slip under any Straussian's radar – or any opera lover's, for that matter. Compellingly sung, beautifully conducted and played, it's a delight, and an important addition to the composer's discography.

Harriet Smith

Beethoven: Piano Concertos Nos 2 & 4
Sony Classical ⑤ 88883 70548-2 (6/14)



Beethoven proved king this year; I was much taken with Trio Zimmermann's superbly reactive readings of his Op 3 and Op 8. But that has to cede

the top spot to the concerto cycle from Leif Ove Andsnes and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra. Picking just one, the second volume finds them joyously unbuttoned in the Second Concerto, while the Fourth is, quite simply, one of the most moving renditions in the catalogue.

Julie Anne Sadie

'A French Baroque Diva'
Hyperion ⑤ CDA68035 (7/14)



This evocation of Rameau's muse, the soprano Marie Fel – who enjoyed a glittering career in Paris, as a soloist at the Opéra and in choral and

orchestral works at the Concert Spirituel, and at Versailles and Fontainebleau – by Carolyn Sampson and Ex Cathedra provides invaluable context for little-known French masterpieces.



Ken Smith

Benjamin: Written on Skin
Opus Arte ⑤ DVD OA1125D;
⑤ OABD7136D (4/14)



With a live recording already available, why take up more shelf space with the DVD? Even though George Benjamin's first full-length opera is so psychologically laden that staging might seem

superfluous, Katie Mitchell's original production matches visual layers to musical ones – with subtitles to catch every turn in Martin Crimp's text.

'Quite simply, as wholehearted, as gritty, as angry, as defiant as any performance you are ever likely to hear' Edward Seckerson

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Shostakovich: Symphony No 13, etc
Praga Digitals ⑤ PRD/DSD350 089 (9/14)



Tempted as I was to celebrate the completion of Vasily Petrenko's Liverpool Philharmonic cycle with this tremendous piece, there is something

so potent and historically significant about this famous live performance (brilliantly remastered by Praga) that it had to take pride of place. It is, quite simply, as wholehearted, as gritty, as angry, as defiant as any performance you are ever likely to hear.

Pwyll ap Siôn

A & R Panufnik: 'Reflections'
BIS ⑤ BIS2003 (8/14)



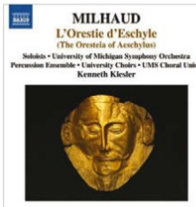
Father and daughter's music is featured on this rich and diverse collection for solo piano. Clare Hammond's performance is

excellent throughout, especially in Panufnik Snr's virtuoso *Twelve Miniature Studies*, which shift rapidly between powerful, visceral and dreamier, more reflective moments.

'Katie Mitchell's production matches visual layers to musical ones' Ken Smith

David Patrick Stearns

Milhaud: L'Orestie d'Eschyle
Naxos ⑤ 8 660349/51



You thought you knew Darius Milhaud? His medium-weight, jazz-inflected works hardly hint at the epic *Oresteia* of

Aeschylus, which occupied him and librettist Paul Claudel from 1913 to 1923, evolving into a mercilessly fierce brand of primitivism that certainly influenced Stravinsky's 1927 *Oedipus Rex*. The University of Michigan forces under Kenneth Kiesler are mighty if not always the most idiomatic. But just be glad this set exists.