



Exposition repeats are taken in the first three symphonies. (There is no repeat indicated in the Fourth Symphony.) Observing the repeats in Symphonies 1 and 2 is rare. The Symphony 3 repeat is usually observed and is the one most needed, because of the brevity of the exposition. I like all three repeats.

What I particularly like in the excellent performance of Symphony 1 is the attention Bychkov gives to the timpani. I have never heard them so crisp and clear, not only in loud passages, but also in quieter passages. The Third Symphony seems to be the most difficult for many conductors. Even Toscanini had trouble with it. His NBC Symphony recording is perhaps the worst he ever made (though his Philharmonia Orchestra performance is splendid). Bychkov's is of a piece with the quality of the other symphonies in this worthy set.

FOX

BRAHMS: *Variations*

David Korevaar, p

Ivory 74004—78 minutes

David Korevaar is Assistant Professor of Piano at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He has garnered many awards, given concerts extensively, and brings to his Brahms a healthy, robust, yet supple approach that fits the master like a glove. The plummy rounded sound given his Kawai instrument is ideal and works hand-in-hand with his generosity of phrasing. Korevaar includes the composer's transcription of his String Sextet in B-flat variation slow movement, but does not include the Paganini Variations. That would have required a second disc. Despite the many variations, there is no internal tracking. If this is a drawback you may stop reading here.

The Schumann Variations, Variations on an Original Theme, and Variations on a Hungarian Song all reside on a plush sound cushion that is very easy to listen to but may send some to other recordings for virtuosic thrills. The Sextet slow movement may remind some of the opening of Symphony 1 and does require the same sort of forceful measured pace—and gets it.

The Handel Variations is, next to the Paganini Variations, his largest set. Korevaar, using a similar approach to the other variations, does sound a bit staid and inflexible when compared with some other renditions. The final fugue realizes all of its potential minus any raw quality and speaks with clarity and full authority. There is a gentleness and a reticence that keeps one from being initially impressed with his Brahms, but further listening rewards the diligent listener with performances that are

male singers (Hotter, Kipnis, F-D, and, more recently, Quasthoff); Lemieux's singing doesn't stand comparison with any of them. Even in the folksy songs, she does little with the words; her singing, for all the beautiful sounds, is generalized and often droopy. In a word, these are dull performances.

There are but few exceptions. 'Feldeinsamkeit' shows us a beautiful legato and is sung with inwardness. Lemieux, to her credit, doesn't exaggerate the simple sentiments of 'Über die Heide' and 'Klage I', but even those folksy songs lack charm and character. And one can hardly fault the singing in 'Geistliches Wiegenlied', one of the two songs with viola—among Brahms's most beautiful—still, expression often seems perfunctory even there. Texts and translations.

MOSES

BRAHMS: *Symphonies, all*

Cologne Radio Orchestra/ Semyon Bychkov
Avie 2051 [3SACD] 2:50

There is little in these performances that listeners would consider ground-breaking or revelatory; but that does not mean that "standard" tempos, clean textures, and clear-sighted conducting cannot make for fine performances, which these are. I cannot imagine that Bychkov heard much Brahms as a youth in the Soviet Union, so he probably hears Brahms through fresh ears, as it were, which can be all to the good. The sonics are good, but not spectacular. Perhaps that is because this is a hybrid multichannel recording. I reviewed it on a CD player, and perhaps the SACD sound is better.

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greatly satisfying, if a trifle cautious. Listen to this one before buying.

BECKER

BRAHMS: *Requiem*; see Collections

BRITTEN: *Missa Brevis*

Kieran White, treble; David Bednall, org; Wells Cathedral/ Malcolm Archer

Lammas 171—59 minutes

This is oddly titled “Britten—Missa Brevis and other works for treble voices with Kieran White”. This might lead one to expect more music by Britten, but no, there are 16 selections (the last two misnumbered) by 13 other composers, five of them by Mr Archer. Brief selections by Mendelssohn, Vaughan Williams, John Ireland, Philip Moore, Fauré, Stanley Vann, Mary Plumstead, Noel Rawsthorne, Leonard Blake, George Dyson, and Nadia Boulanger make up this program of little recorded music. Only the Vaughan Williams (‘The Call’) and Mendelssohn’s ‘If With All Your Hearts’ are well known.

Young master White performs eight solos (some with piano accompaniment by Malcolm Archer) in addition to a solo in the Benedictus of the Britten. He sings with agreeable tone and musicianship but is not spectacular. The boy choristers are a mellifluous crew, displaying a pleasantly burnished tone with little edge or scrape. The recorded ambiance of the great cathedral is quite appealing.

There are brief notes, but no texts—and most curiously, among the bios, no bio of soloist White.

PARSONS

BRITTEN & RUBBRA: *Recorder Works*

The Flautadors; Dante Quartet; Patricia Rozario, s; Laurence Cummings, hpsi; Susanna Pell, gamba—Dutton 7142—74 minutes

Carl Dolmetsch (1911-97) was a pioneer in the revival of the recorder in the 20th Century. Not only did Dolmetsch perform older music for recorder, but he helped to establish a contemporary repertoire for the instrument. Between 1939 and 1989 Dolmetsch performed 45 recitals in London’s Wigmore Hall; 51 new works were heard there.

This superb disc not only includes the complete recorder works of Edmund Rubbra and Benjamin Britten, but also throws in three much older pieces by Josquin Des Pres, Juan Vasquez, and Guillaume De Machaut. It is most surprising that these three “antique” works do not sound so terribly different from the modern works of Rubbra and Britten.

Edmund Rubbra (1901-86) composed more for the recorder than Britten. He is repre-

sented by ten works of varying lengths and instrumentation. Multi-movement pieces are *Air and Variations for Pipes* (1949), a Sonatina for treble recorder and harpsichord (1964), First Study Pieces (1962, a six-movement suite), and the *Cantata Pastorale* (1955-56, three movements with soprano singer, treble recorder, cello, and harpsichord). Five shorter pieces by Rubbra round out his recorder compositions. Somehow his Introduction, Aria and Fugue (1960) for solo harpsichord snuck into the program. His Fantasia on a Theme of Machaut (1954) aptly follows a performance of the original Machaut ‘Plus Dure’.

Britten only composed two pieces for recorders, the *Alpine Suite* for recorder trio (1955) and a Scherzo for recorder quartet (1954). The ‘March’ and ‘Morris Dance’ from his opera *Gloriana* arranged for recorder solo and duet respectably, are performed too.

This is expertly and beautifully performed, the music a delightful combination of the old and the new.

PARSONS

BRITTEN: *Simple Symphony; Temporal Variations; Charm of Lullabies; Lachrymae; English Folk Tune Suite*

Catherine Wyn-Rogers, mz; Nicholas Daniel, ob; Philip Dukes, va; Northern Sinfonia/ Steuart Bedford—Naxos 557205—72 minutes

Naxos continues to reissue the “Britten Edition” first published by Collins. My March/April 1999 review goes into greater detail on the works themselves, but here I shall only briefly comment on the performances. *Simple Symphony* has a mellow, more elegant and gentle ambiance than usual, with little of the excitement or virtuosity that others find in the work.

These are the first recordings of Colin Matthews’s orchestrations of the *Temporal Variations* and *Charm of Lullabies*. The *Variations* are a splendid performance (though the oboe is a bit on the astringent side), but the original oboe and piano combination works better. The string sound blurs the harmonies, imparting a richer, romantic sound unintended by the composer. The piano accompaniment not only clarifies the texture, but also restores the balance so that the two soloists are more of a partnership.

Matthews has slightly expanded the *Charm*, with new orchestral introductions to several songs and some new accompaniments. He has also joined the first three songs and the fourth and fifth to form a two-part cycle. This time his orchestration is beautifully effective. Wyn-Rogers is quite the best of the recordings (all others are with piano accompaniment), combining a luxurious, lovely mezzo sound with intelligent musicianship.