GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

PROKOFIEV
Piano Concertos
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet *pf*
BBC PO / Gianandrea Noseda
Chandos Ⓜ ②
CHAN10802
▸ ROB COWAN'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 26

'Throughout, Bavouzet displays a light touch and laudable levels of physical stamina, with a firm grasp of the very different personalities of each piece'

CHOPIN
Piano Concertos
Ingrid Fliter *pf*
Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Jun Märkl
Linn Ⓕ CKD455
'Fliter plays with such grace and heartfelt sincerity – abetted by some lovely duetting with the SCO's bassoonist – that I was quickly won over.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 30

MOZART
Piano Concertos
Nos 20 and 25
Martha Argerich *pf*
Orchestra Mozart / Claudio Abbado
DG Ⓕ 479 1033GH
'Once again her microscopic alterations of touch make even the most mundane run of semiquavers dance and sing.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 35

R STRAUSS
Orchestral Works
Pittsburgh SO / Manfred Honeck
Reference Recordings
Ⓕ FR707
'What make these performances so outstanding are Manfred Honeck's interpretations, which vividly bring out the music's emotional and pictorial detail.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 38

TELEMANN
'Ouvertures à 8'
Ensemble Zefiro / Alfredo Bernardini
Arcana Ⓕ A371
'The much-vaunted lean muscularity of the Ensemble Zefiro performances favours the wind instruments and produces a freshly balanced sonority that alters our experience of these works.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 39

MILOŠ KARADAGLIĆ
Guitar Works
Miloš Karadaglić *gtr*
LPO / Yannick Nézet-Séguin
DG Ⓕ 481 0652DH
'It's in Rodrigo's *Invocación y danza* that we find Karadaglić at his soloistic and, yes, elegant best.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 40

SCHMELZER
'Sacro-Profanus'
Ensemble Masques / Olivier Fortin *hpd*
Zig-Zag Territoires
Ⓕ ZZT334
'Their performances apply conversational sophistication to contrapuntal intricacy, nowhere more so than in the softly rapturous slow passages during Sonata IX.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 51

GRIEG
Piano Works
Ivana Gavrić *pf*
Champs Hill
Ⓕ CHRCD067
'Everything glows with affection; and in the *Lyric Pieces* she casts a delectable impressionistic haze over pages which show Grieg at his most intimate and confiding.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 62

'REMEMBER ME MY DEIR'
Jacobean Songs
Fires of Love
Delphian Ⓕ DCD34129
'There's wit as well as despair here, and when they overlap, as in the casual tragedy of "St Valentine's Day", the result is loaded with dramatic friction.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 78

'THE SACRED SPIRIT OF RUSSIA'
Choral Works
Conspirare / Craig Hella Johnson
Harmonia Mundi
Ⓕ HMU80 7526
'Everything is rooted in the bass and the forward brightness of the upper voices creates thrilling friction against their darker tones.'
▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 78

DVD/BLU-RAY
BELLINI
La Sonnambula
Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of La Fenice, Venice / Gabriele Ferro
C Major Ⓕ DVD 713908; Ⓕ Blu-ray 714004
'The cast has been carefully assembled. Jessica Pratt vocalises the put-upon heroine with skill and beauty.' ▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 84

REISSUE/ARCHIVE
'LE VIOLON VAGABOND'
Graf Mourja *vn* **Natalia Gous** *pf* Harmonia Mundi
Ⓑ HMA195 1785
'A delightful collection of violin miniatures ranging from Paganini to Cyril Scott.' ▸ REVIEW ON PAGE 83

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Nordgren

Concerto for Clarinet, Folk Instruments and Small Orchestra, Op 14[a]. Symphony No 1, Op 20
[a]Christoffer Sundqvist *cl* **[a]Anna-Karin Korhonen** *kantele* **[a]Ilkka Heinonen** *bowed hp* **[a]Markku Lepistö** *acco* **Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Juha Kangas**
Alba Ⓕ ABCD359 (62' • DDD/DSD)

Juha Kangas's track record in Nordgren's music goes back a long way, at least to the 1970 premiere of the Concerto for clarinet, folk instruments and small orchestra recorded here, in which he played the bowed harp. With the Ostrobothnian Chamber Orchestra he performed, commissioned and recorded many Nordgren scores, and his understanding of the style is probably unsurpassed. His presence here gives these recordings an authority that would be second only to the composer's, were he still with us.

The Concerto and First Symphony (1974) are relatively early, showing the composer in experimental guise, still seeking to satisfactorily integrate folk music within a radical, late-20th-century idiom. Neither quite manages it, although repeated listenings reveal how close he was getting. The Concerto is texturally unconventional, the folk trio operating increasingly independently as its five movements progress. The First Symphony (1974) is nominally more orthodox but the kaleidoscopic central *concerto grosso* contains some wildly diverse writing, including a wonderfully manic episode for trumpet that 1920s Shostakovich would have been proud of. It proves a welcome contrast to the rather grim opening March. The closing Epilogue rounds affairs out neatly but the work is a bit of a cul-de-sac; when Nordgren returned to symphonic production 15 years later, his view of the form was radically different.

The performances are superbly prepared and Alba's sound is excellent, exposing every flick on the kantele string and nuance of attack on double-bass strings. Informative notes by Jouni Kaipainen, a fine composer – now when are we going to hear more of his music? **Guy Rickards**

R Strauss

Don Juan, Op 20. Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28. Tod und Verklärung, Op 24
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra / Manfred Honeck
Reference Recordings Ⓕ FR707 (59' • DDD/DSD)

Not surprisingly, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra play these three masterly symphonic poems with virtuosity, great feeling and a glorious patina of string tone, and the rich hall resonance is well caught by the SACD recording. But what make these performances so outstanding are Manfred Honeck's interpretations, which vividly bring out the music's emotional and pictorial detail. First this comes in the heroine's reaction to Don Juan's seductions. After the wistful violin solo, the main theme is gently yearning – an almost hesitant response, one to which she succumbs reluctantly. Then the Don is off with great virility; but now the feminine oboe solo, movingly played here, is even more tender and delicate, and very sad in the *coitus triste* sequence. In the great horn tune the Don flaunts his success and then departs again full of confidence (the orchestral playing has a thrilling, pressurised momentum). His later moments of doubt are thrown aside by the return of the horn tune, now bolder still, steady and triumphant, and here the strings assert the overwhelming passion of the lovers before the coda brings disillusionment as their sensual feeling drains away.

The change of mood for the opening of *Death and Transfiguration* is then created by haunting *pianissimo* strings, together with gentle drum beats, harp and strings hinting at the dying man's drift into semi-consciousness. Then (in the conductor's words) he 'reflects on his life', obviously vigorous and with human contradictions. Finally we hear 'a sound of transfigured beauty that anticipates eternal peace and rest'; and, after a series of resonant *pianissimo* strokes on the tam-tam, the work closes with the main theme built to a great climax. It is a solemn culmination that does not sound in the least overplayed here but richly and almost totally overwhelms the listener with its depth of feeling.

Till Eulenspiegel opens by immediately capturing the antics of its hero but the piquant Pittsburgh horn soloist immediately sets a non-malicious mood, which is obvious when he makes fun of the learned scholars and then leaves, 'sticking out his tongue'. Eventually Till departs again, this time on the way to heaven, still cocking his snook, and in Manfred Honeck's hands Strauss's coda suggests that he was not such a bad fellow after all.

This is one of the outstanding Strauss CDs of the year; the quality of playing and recording makes it very recommendable indeed. **Ivan March**

Tchaikovsky

Swan Lake, Op 20
James Ehnes *vn*
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi
Chandos Ⓕ ② CHSA5124 (155' • DDD/DSD)

This is a lively and characterful *Swan Lake* from Neeme Järvi and the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra. As with their recording of *The Sleeping Beauty* (1/13), the team is joined again by the inestimable violinist James Ehnes in the company of other sterling players from the Bergen ensemble. Cornet player Gary Peterson employs a subtle touch of chiaroscuro in his nuanced reading of the Neopolitan Dance, lending a dapper air to this street tune. There's a fine contribution too from Robert de Maine on cello, who duets with James Ehnes in the Pas d'action, the heart of the ballet, where Ehnes seems to embody Prince Siegfried, his playing by turns tender, poised and athletic. Simply heavenly doesn't seem an out of place phrase to describe the chamber-like intimacy conveyed here.

In the earlier Csardas from Act 1 Ehnes plays the cadenza-style figuration with breathtaking aplomb, the slow (*lassù*) section from the heart. The famous Act 1 Waltz offers charming wind counterpoint, a burnished trumpet contribution which goes with an irresistible lilt under Järvi, who makes a point of underlining the contrast between *forte* and *piano* here and elsewhere when a phrase is repeated. Wolfgang, the tutor of the Prince, crashes to the ground with an almighty *sforzando* chord as drink gets the better of him; and in the Dance of the Court Dwarves the bassoon bobs up in the accompaniment in mischievous fashion. The Bergen wind section get a chance to shine in Järvi's affectionate portrait of the six princesses, the Pas de six, each one individually portrayed in the scoring. In the dashing coda Järvi and his orchestra unleash extraordinary energy, as in the Polonaise and opening music to Act 3. Finally, the major-key statement of the swan theme, where Siegfried and Odette embrace, brings a powerful and noble conclusion.

Aside from a hectic tempo for the Mazurka in the divertissement of national dances, Järvi's reading doesn't stray far