

# Brief notes

Our collection of 25 further reviews takes us from rising stars to hidden gems

## JS Bach The Art of Fugue

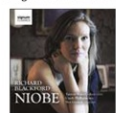
Austrian Art Gang  
Gramola 99142



What do five men on a green tractor have to do with Bach? I've no idea. But this baffling cover did make me pick up this jazzed-up Art of Fugue. That said, the result is a bit of an acquired taste. (RF) ★★★

## Blackford Niobe

Tamsin Waley-Cohen (violin); Czech Philharmonic/Ben Gernon  
Signum Classics SIGCD539



This concerto is based on the story of Niobe, who was destroyed by the goddess Leto. It's played with searing tone by Waley-Cohen, but is less memorable than hoped. (RF) ★★★

## Daugherty Dreamachine, etc

Evelyn Glennie (percussion), Albany Symphony/David Alan Miller, et al  
Naxos 8.559807



Three concertos, with top-notch soloists. Michael Daugherty's idiom is colourful, tonal and well-crafted, though not always distinctive. (RF) ★★★

## Debussy

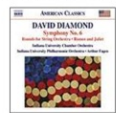
Music for Two Harps and Voice  
Duo Bilitis  
Brilliant Classics 95657BR



With rare repertoire for female voice and two harps, this disc stands out from the many releases in Debussy's centenary year. Ethereal performances of considered arrangements. (FP) ★★★★★

## Diamond Symphony No. 6, etc

Indiana University Chamber & Philharmonic Orchestras/Arthur Fagen  
Naxos 8.559842



BETTY

Clean lines and uplifting melody in abundance. The Symphony is perhaps overshadowed by his delightfully tuneful *Romeo & Juliet* suite. (MB) ★★★★★

## Ekier • Szymanowski Piano works

Wojciech Pyrc (piano)  
Dux DUX1458



The works of Jan Ekier are vibrant and engaging, while Szymanowski's are reflective and melancholic. Pyrc plays with wonderful insight and a delicate touch. (FP) ★★★★★

## La Rue Masses

Beauty Farm  
Fra Bernardo FB 1800751



Behind the curious cover lurk premiere recordings of masses by a talented contemporary of Josquin des Prez. Pierre de la Rue's cause, alas, isn't helped by singing that is occasionally frayed around the edges. (JP) ★★

## Nowowiejski Symphonies Nos 2 & 3

Poznan Philharmonic/Borowicz  
Dux DUX1446



Two characterful but contrasting symphonies. One is tempestuous and spiky with Stravinsky-like touches, the other more melodious and infused with quirky humour. (JP) ★★★★★

## Preisner Piano music

Jeroen van Veen (piano)  
Brilliant Classics 95411BR



The helpings here are generous, the performance bright and breezy, but this two-disc set lacks stylistic variety. A little too much for one sitting. (MB) ★★

## Rachmaninov All-Night Vigil

Agnieszka Rehlis (mezzo), Choir of the Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic, et al  
Dux DUX1404



Rachmaninov's work requires big voices, and that's what we get here: full-throated, bold singing, full of intensity (and proper, low basses). A few, tiny intonation issues. (OC) ★★

## Ravel • Debussy Sonatas

Blake Pouliot (violin), Hsin-I Huang (piano)  
Analekta AN2 8798



Pouliot's playing is utterly electric throughout, full of nuance and character. Huang provides beautifully controlled, rock-solid support. (OC) ★★★★★

## Ravel • Szymanowski String Quartets

Joachim Quartet  
Calliope CAL1747



The players bring out the sensuality of Szymanowski's two quartets, which sandwich a vibrant reading of Ravel's 1902 quartet. The booklet notes are hard work. (RF) ★★★★★

## Sibelius • Rautavaara Violin Concertos

Tobias Feldmann (violin); Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liège, et al  
Alpha ALPHA357



Feldmann glitters in Rautavaara's 1977 Violin Concerto, but there's a heavy feeling that weighs down Sibelius's 1905 Violin Concerto. (RF) ★★★

## Smetana Festive Symphony, etc

Berlin Radio Symphony Orch/Ang  
Naxos 8.573672



Smetana's Festive Symphony is a vibrant, celebratory affair. As with the *Bartered Bride* excerpts, it is performed here with a winning joie de vivre. (JP) ★★★★★

## Stanford Concert Overture, etc

Leon McCawley (piano), Sergey Levitin (violin), Royal Northern Sinfonia, et al  
Dutton CDLX 7350



Stanford learnt a lot from Brahms and Mendelssohn if these entertaining albeit slightly forgettable works are anything to go by. Enjoyable performances all round. (OC) ★★

## R Strauss Aus Italien

Wolf-Ferrari Suite Veneziana  
Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra  
Capriccio C5344



The orchestra are engaging guides on this largely sunny tour of Italy-inspired Romanticism. The rarely heard Wolf-Ferrari is a particular treat. (JP) ★★★★★

## Hidden Gems Works by Locatelli, Corelli, Gesualdo, Nico Muhly, etc

Calefax Reed Quintet  
Pentatone PTC5186 696



Superb performances and charming programme notes, but the programme's eclecticism sometimes slightly jars. (FP) ★★★★★

## Matthew Gee's Amazing Sliding Circus!

Works by Stravinsky, Sondheim, Leoncavallo, etc  
Matthew Gee (trombone), et al  
MG Music GEE002



It's impossible not to be charmed by this colourful celebration of the versatile trombone. Matthew Gee and co. clown around, but with serious musicality. (MB) ★★★★★

## Mirages Songs by Fauré

Bettina Smith (mezzo), Jan Willem Nelleke (piano)  
Lawo LWCI146



This disc is only 49 minutes long which seems a little mean, but the rich, expressive singing and alert, responsive pianism are first rate, so all is forgiven. (OC) ★★★★★

## Nothing Proved Works by Norderval, Olson and White

Parthenia, et al  
MSR Classics MSI635



A collection of new works composed for viols, voice, and electronics. The music is at times haunted, barbed and beautiful. (MB) ★★★