

On record: Classical, Jan 27

The week's essential new releases

Hugh Canning, David Cairns, Paul Driver and Stephen Pettitt



Unmissable: Stéphane Degout JB MILLOT

The Sunday Times, January 27 2019, 12:01am

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ALBUM OF THE WEEK

BERLIOZ

Harold en Italie, Les Nuits d'été

Tabea Zimmermann (viola), Stéphane Degout (baritone), Les Siècles, cond François-Xavier Roth

Harmonia Mundi France HMM902634

The French conductor and his outstanding period orchestra are building on the pioneering work of Roger Norrington and John Eliot Gardiner in this repertoire (and beyond, up to Debussy, Stravinsky and Ravel), which is clearly close to his heart. As the *Symphonie fantastique* blurs the distinction between orchestral music and drama, so does its successor, based on Byron's *Childe Harold*, between "narrative" symphony and concerto. The viola solo, written for Paganini — who rejected it on the grounds of its lack of virtuoso passages, but later repented — is the perfect "voice" for Byron's languid, melancholic hero, wandering in the mountains, meeting a band of pilgrims, finally being caught up with brigands.

Zimmermann is the ideal soloist in this vivid, athletic, lean-toned performance. The disc is unmissable, however, for the account of the song cycle by Degout, conceived for four different voice types, but usually sung by a soprano or mezzo. His beauty of tone and immaculate diction make an eloquent alternative to the irreplaceable Régine Crespin with Decca. *HC*

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BACH

Partita no 4, Italian Concerto, Chaconne

Federico Colli (piano)

Chandos CHAN20079

The Italian joins a new breed of pianists taking Bach's keyboard works to the heart of their repertoire. His liner note weightily considers the transcendent in Bach, yet his playing of the Partita, especially its vivacious dance movements, and the Italian Concerto is all lightness and brilliance. Contrast comes in the form of his dark, ruminative account of Ferruccio Busoni's transcription of the Chaconne from the D minor Violin Partita, closer in spirit to post-Lisztian style than to the baroque. *HC*

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BERNARD RANDS

Chains Like the Sea

Johannes Moser (cello), BBC Philharmonic, cond Clark Rundell

NMCD253

Born in Sheffield in 1934, Rands has long been an American resident and, after a brilliant start, somewhat neglected here. His avant-garde manner developed into a finely crafted, lyric, rather Italianate expressivity, exemplified by these three works. The Cello Concerto for Rostropovich (1996) is palpably a large accomplishment. In the Chains Like the Sea diptych (2008) and Danza Petrificada (2010), the often turbulent Rands deftly seeks abstract equivalents for verse by Dylan Thomas and Octavio Paz. *PD*

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BEETHOVEN, CHOPIN

Piano Concerto No 4;

Sonata No 2, Ballade No 4

Warner Classics 0190295552152

These live recordings from the 2018 Leeds piano competition show the brilliance of the winner, 20-year-old Lu, in no uncertain terms. Given the conditions, it's not surprising that his efficient playing of the Beethoven lacks that sublime work's inner warmth and improvisatory magic. But his Chopin sonata is masterly in its grandeur and lyricism, and the Ballade is a delight. *DC*

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MUZIO CLEMENTI

Keyboard Sonatas

Sandro De Palma (piano)

Naxos 8.573880

The excellent De Palma, playing a modern instrument, shows how much Clementi, disparaged by Mozart, lauded by Beethoven, moved with his times. He frames two early sonatas (Op 1, No 3, written when Clementi was just 19, and the fecund Op 8, No 2, of 1782) with two of his final examples, Op 50, Nos 2 and 3 ("Didone abbandonata"), published in 1821. Beethoven these aren't, but they run deep, thrillingly exploring idiom and aesthetic. *SP*

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