

are best heard together as a cycle. And that is how Osborne plays them, making a virtue of their emotional complementarities.

Osborne plays the variations of Op. 109 with refinement, letting them grow to majestic proportions before returning to the cantabile simplicity of the theme. And he takes Beethoven's marking 'con amabilità' as his cue for the first movement of Op. 110, playing with such restraint that it feels as though lost in a dream – then letting the earthy energy of the drinking song crash in as a rude incursion. The rest of this Sonata comes in carefully-calibrated *chiaroscuro* as Beethoven's colourings modulate from subfusc greys to a final blaze of light. After a mighty and full-blooded account of the Op. 111 *Allegro*, he gives both the jazziest performance of the variations I have ever heard, and also one of the most heart-stopping in their ultimate finality. Beethoven, after all, saw this work as his farewell to the piano sonata. *Michael Church*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Brahms

### Complete Works for Organ

Adriano Falcioni (organ)

*Brilliant Classics 94460 60:41 mins*



Brahms's output for the organ – the product of youth and (relative) old age with nothing in between – fits

easily onto a single disc. Adriano Falcioni's latest recording joins fellow 'completists' Werner Jacob (Philips), Kevin Bowyer (Nimbus) and Robert Parkins (Naxos). His chosen instrument is the 1904 Rieger organ installed in Amelia Cathedral just two years after the posthumous publication of Brahms's swansong: 11 chorale preludes bestowing a last nod to his life-long fascination with the music of JS Bach; and, for the most part, confronting notions of mortality intensified by his own declining health and the recent death of Clara Schumann.

Falcioni's are forthright readings, though he misses some of the panache Parkins brings to the early works. The A flat minor Fugue on a rather Lisztian subject is appropriately ruminative, but the A minor Prelude's 'phantasticus' nod to Buxtehude sounds a touch muted.



Perceptive Beethoven: Steven Osborne gives telling performances

And in the Op. 122 chorale preludes Parkins's greater spaciousness allows Brahms's chromatic and contrapuntal densities to register with less congestion. Falcioni nonetheless steers a coolly observant path through the harmonic thickets of 'Mein Jesu, der du mich', and negotiates the radiant Bachian serenity of 'Schmücke dich' with eloquent directness. 'Herzlich tut mich erfreuen', however, hides its rejoicing behind gauze, while in the first version of 'O Welt', the poignant undertow of farewell falters. Parkins on Naxos has the edge. *Paul Riley*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

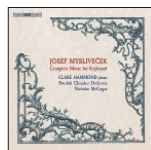
## Mysliveček

### Complete Keyboard Works

Clare Hammond (piano);  
Swedish Chamber Orchestra/  
Nicholas McGegan

*BIS BIS-2393 (hybrid CD/SACD)*

*76:38 mins*



The Czech Mysliveček was between 1765 and 1780 one of the most successful

opera composers in Italy – clearly a touchstone stylistically and personally for the young Mozart. These two concertos and two sets of solos comprise all his extant music for the keyboard. Unfortunately, the First Concerto, after a jauntily operatic opening, does not really deliver on its initial promise. The slow movement is elegantly poised and the finale offers a certain amount of folk-inflected melody, but as a whole the lack of development is disappointing.

The Second Concerto has more substance with a wide-ranging first movement and a gem of a *Larghetto* whose minor-key expressiveness has clear parallels with Mozart.

The first set of solo pieces is expert and, like many 18th-century collections, unmemorable. The second, misleadingly described as 'Six Easy Lessons', is a quite different proposition. The pianistic demands are considerable and there are some movements of real originality, notably the *Minuetto* of the third 'Lesson' with its soulful minor-key Trio and the cumulatively brilliant variations of the final 'Lesson'. Clare Hammond takes this repertoire seriously and with a strong sense of ornamental nuance. In the concertos, Nicholas McGegan and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra accompany with verve. The boomy ambience of the recorded sound, though, is at the expense of orchestral detail. *Jan Smaczny*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★

## Saariaho • Salonen

**Colombi:** Ciaccona a basso solo;  
**Salonen:** Yta III; Knock, Breathe, Shine; Sarabande per un coyote;  
**Saariaho:** Dreaming Chaconne; Sept papillons; Spins and Spells; Petals

*Online ODE 1294-2 59:02 mins*



Wilhelmina Smith (cello)  
*American cellist Wilhelmina Smith is a notable champion of contemporary composers and has worked previously with Finnish modernists Kaija Saariaho and,*

especially, Esa-Pekka Salonen. Here she performs a stunning recital of two halves, featuring solo music by each spanning the mid-1980s to 2010: three pieces by Salonen and four by Saariaho are divided by Italian Baroque composer Giuseppe Colombi's short *Ciaccona*.

The placing is not happenstance. Either side of *Ciaccona* lie the Finns' rich contributions to cellist Anssi Karttunen's 2010 *Mystery Variations* project of 30 commissions based on this seminal early work. Where Salonen's *Sarabande per un coyote* pushes Colombi to and from dissonant, strummed chords into jagged peaks and troughs, Saariaho's *Dreaming Chaconne* deconstructs him through a shimmering spectral gauze. It's a compelling contrast, and one which encapsulates the composers' differing yet not unrelated soundworlds. Salonen's opening *Yta III* (1986) announces an extrovert – even brash – presence that relaunches with even greater intensity in the ensuing *knock, breathe, shine*. Written in 2010, this dramatic work draws on an astonishing array of colours and textures through three movements traversing realms of melancholic yearning and discursive, swelling and subsiding polyphony.

Smith exudes seemingly effortless control through its virtuosos demands, as through Saariaho's equally challenging, equally nuanced *Petals* (1988), *Spins and Spells* (1997) and the exceptional *Sept papillons* (2000). Rustling, scraping, tapping, singing; bow and fingers sinuously tease apart and refashion the very stuff of sound into tapestries in which delicate refinement and sonorous depth are tempered by sudden, tautly abrasive outbursts. *Steph Power*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Schubert

**Schubert:** Piano Sonata No. 21 in B flat; 4 Impromptus;  
**Liszt/Schubert:** Ständchen  
*Sony 19075841202 82:08 mins*



There may be a clue to the very-very-good-or-horrid phenomenon that is Khatia Buniatishvili in her stream of consciousness notes for this release. She writes about the feminine side