

# GRAMOPHONE

## ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

*A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada*

### Barber • Rachmaninov

**Barber** Cello Sonata, Op 6

**Rachmaninov** Cello Sonata, Op 19

**Jonah Kim** *vc* **Sean Kennard** *pf*

Delos © DE3574 (53' • DDD)



Sergey Rachmaninov and Samuel Barber were both twenty-somethings when they composed their only sonatas for cello and piano. These are works of young firebrands, full of emotional urgency and heightened instrumental challenges, which are met to striking effect in the performances offered on this new recording by the cellist Jonah Kim and pianist Sean Kennard.

All the hallmarks of Rachmaninov's mature style are present in his Sonata for piano and violoncello, Op 19, from brooding lyricism and propulsive fervour to virtuoso flights. It may be telling that piano comes before cello in the work's title, since Rachmaninov, with his seemingly superhuman technique, was at the keyboard for the premiere in Moscow in 1901. So rich is the piano-writing that the danger of the cello being swallowed whole could be a significant concern. But Kim and Kennard balance their efforts judiciously, with the cellist contributing poetic vibrancy and depth amid his colleague's exceptional agility, nuance and power.

Barber wrote his Sonata – titled, also tellingly, for violoncello and piano, Op 6 – towards the end of his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music. Like Rachmaninov, the American composer was the pianist at the work's premiere, in 1933 in New York. Its three movements abound in open-hearted gestures, alternately impassioned, noble and reflective, with Brahms at times gazing over Barber's shoulder. With his pulsating vibrato and intense expressivity, Kim asserts the cello's eloquent personality throughout the varied atmospheres. Kennard brings utmost clarity and shapeliness to Barber's

pianistic utterances, which confirm that this composer was also a player of lofty accomplishment. **Donald Rosenberg**

### Liang

**Inheritance**

**Susan Narucki, Kirsten Ashley Wiest** *sops*

**Hillary Jean Young** *sng* **Josué Cerón** *bar*

**UCSD Ensemble / Steven Schick**

Albany © TROY1819 (51' • DDD • T)



Before the rise of Silicon Valley and Dionne Warwick's

1968 hit 'Do you know the way to San Jose', California was known for its Winchester Mystery House, a gaudy, sprawling mansion built by a munitions heiress to accommodate in its 160 rooms and 40 staircases the ghosts of America's gun culture and to expurgate her sins.

This opera in 10 scenes is constructed so that Susan Narucki's great set piece, Sarah Winchester's narrative of dread, hope, and madness 'Once, in New Haven, as I held my daughter to my breast', emerges not so much out of the story, which is so appropriately disembodied as to be non-existent beyond the basic contours of Winchester's life, but from the depths of accountability amplified by personal grief. In this and the following even more hair-raising scene, Narucki forces her character to experience almost impossible contrasts of beauty and pain.

While Lei Liang's opera must obviously be seen to be fully experienced, especially given the press of current events, so sensitively and imaginatively does he mix and match his kaleidoscopic sonic palette to Matt Donovan's freely evocative, numerology-obsessed libretto, the quartet of voices, the curious ensemble and the electronics that the highly charged narrative makes a deep impression even without the stagecraft. The recording captures the drama, layering the voices with the ideally captured instrumental riffs so that it's all perfectly clear and precise without being

surgical. Unless Sarah had something to do with it, it was sheer coincidence that *Inheritance* was premiered in the same year as *Winchester* starring Helen Mirren was released. **Laurence Vittes**

### Runestad

**'Sing, Wearing the Sky'**

Alleluia. Fear not, dear friend. I will lift mine eyes. Let my love be heard. Live the questions. Ner ner. Proud music of the storm. The Secret of the Sea. Sing, wearing the sky. We can mend the sky

**Kantorei / Joel Rinsema**

Naxos American Classics © 8 559892

(65' • DDD • T)



Each of these 10 works by Jake Runestad, written between 2006 and

2018, has a similar reverence for texts that touch deeply but gently on human issues and benefit from his imaginatively varied toolkit of resources. That he writes well for singers is enthusiastically proved by the all-volunteer Denver-based Kantorei choral ensemble and eight instrumentalists, and some full-blooded recordings.

In the title-track, *Sing, wearing the sky*, to a text by the 14th-century Sufi mystic Lalla, Runestad captures what he describes as 'the metaphor of dancing while feeling free or naked' with sensuous Indian abandon leading to incongruously homespun Americana, sung gloriously throughout by mezzo-soprano Kali Paguirigan, vividly scored with an exhilarating violin solo and an upsurge of energy ending in a superb climax.

*The Secret of the Sea*, to texts by Whitman, Longfellow, Hilda Doolittle and the Inuit shaman Uvavnuq, and inspired by the Sydney Opera House, where it was premiered, arises out of an Impressionistic haze and seduces with another memorable piano melody. Some heavy-duty choral work recalling *Nezsky* and Orff, intense and fragile at the same time, further charges Runestad's musical moodscape.



**CARTHAGE**  
JAMES PRIMOSCH

**THE CROSSING**  
DONALD NALLY

**CARTHAGE**  
**THE CROSSING**

GRAMMY-winning chamber choir **The Crossing** is back fresh off the heels of two 2020 GRAMMY-nominated albums. In **CARTHAGE**, conductor Donald Nally leads the choir through pieces by composer James Primosch that confront elemental questions of Western philosophy.

**NAVONA RECORDS (NV6287)**

[www.crossingchoir.org](http://www.crossingchoir.org)  
[www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6287](http://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6287)



**YOKO HIROTA PIANO**

**SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL**  
MINIATURE PIANO PIECES

**SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL**  
**YOKO HIROTA**

Japanese-Canadian pianist Yoko Hirota stuns with impeccable pianism on **SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL: MINIATURE PIANO PIECES**. Originally recorded in 2009, this remastered edition brings out the intricacies of 20th- and 21st-century piano composition with a clarity that was previously unheard of.

**NAVONA RECORDS (NV6294)**

[www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6294](http://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6294)



**ALONE & UNALONE**  
JAMES O'CALLAGHAN

**ALONE & UNALONE**  
**JAMES O'CALLAGHAN**

With 2020 Juno Award nominee **ALONE & UNALONE**, composer James O'Callaghan brings us a scintillating dance between reality and abstraction that is sure to spark the listener's imagination. Marrying traditional instruments, ambient sounds, and the incomparable power of the human voice, the album dares the listener to grapple with solitude.

**RAVELLO RECORDS (RR8020)**  
[www.jamesocallaghan.ca](http://www.jamesocallaghan.ca)  
[www.ravellorerecords.com/catalog/rr8020](http://www.ravellorerecords.com/catalog/rr8020)



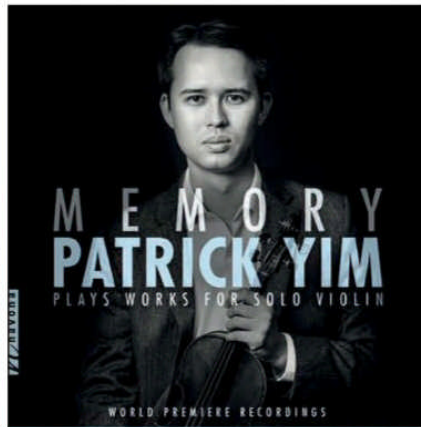
**E PLURIBUS UNUM**  
LIZA STEPANOVA PIANO

Lena Auerbach • Kamran Ince • Chaya Casterman  
Eunah Kim • Aron Elster • Erik Young Lee  
Bodie Khalighian • Pablo Ortiz  
Gabriela Lima Frank

**E PLURIBUS UNUM**  
**LIZA STEPANOVA**

An artistic response to immigration policies implemented by the U.S. government, **Liza Stepanova's E PLURIBUS UNUM** features solo piano works by American composers with immigrant backgrounds. The mosaic of the album reflects the composers' roots around the world and is an embodiment of the motto *E Pluribus Unum* – "Out of many, one."

**NAVONA RECORDS (NV6300)**  
[www.liza-stepanova.com](http://www.liza-stepanova.com)  
[www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6300](http://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6300)




**MEMORY**  
**PATRICK YIM**  
PLAYS WORKS FOR SOLO VIOLIN

**MEMORY**  
**PATRICK YIM**

The music on **MEMORY** by acclaimed American violinist Patrick Yim is linked together by the themes of memory, culture, and identity. The works, inspired by ancient tales and modern art, demonstrate that the cultures and history of the Silk Road still serve as artistic oases for new, bold, and innovative art after thousands of years.

**NAVONA RECORDS (NV6268)**  
[www.patrickyimviolin.com](http://www.patrickyimviolin.com)  
[www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6268](http://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6268)



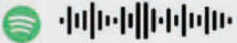
**SERGIO CERVETTI**  
**MORTAL DREAMS**  
FOUR VOCAL WORKS

**MORTAL DREAMS**  
**SERGIO CERVETTI**

Uruguayan-American Sergio Cervetti is sure to please listeners with **MORTAL DREAMS**, on which the composer again delivers electro-acoustic compositions that can be counted as some of his best in the genre of contemporary classical.

**NAVONA RECORDS (NV6313)**  
[www.sergiocervetti.com](http://www.sergiocervetti.com)  
[www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6313](http://www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6313)

**LISTENING ROOM**  
Click the camera icon while searching in your **Spotify** mobile app and scan the code below to listen to selections from these albums.



AVAILABLE NOW FOR PURCHASE OR STREAMING



Navona Records, Ravello Records, Big Round Records, and Ansonica Records are imprints of PARMA Recordings.  
[www.parmarecordings.com](http://www.parmarecordings.com)

