

arrangements, Rutter's 'When the Saints' and some of the others, it seems the group is bent on becoming the Mormon Tabernacle Chamber Choir. Things get a little "lushy-gushy" when that starts to happen. So let me put my two cents in as the group contemplates its next release. Your Mendelssohn is gorgeous. Why not give us more? How about Brahms (sacred or secular), or some Bruckner motets that would be right in your wheelhouse? Why not show us what you can do in the classical mainstream, in short, and leave the spiritualized cotton candy for your colleagues in Temple Square?

GREENFIELD

### **The Earth and I**

**LAITMAN:** *The Sun Went Down; The Sky is Low; The Wind;* **PLUDE:** *October;* **CHATMAN:** *Autumn Violets; Voice of the Rain; On the Beach at Night Alone;* **DINERSTEIN:** *An Old Silent Pond;* **BARBER:** *To Be Sung on the Water; Heaven-Haven;* **MECHEM:** *Loveliest of Trees;* **FINNEY:** *See How the Arched Earth;* **EFFINGER:** *4 Pastorales;* **LAURIDSEN:** *Sure On This Shining Night;* **McCULLOUGH:** *The Eye Begins to See*

Amy Broadbent, s; Shauna Kreidler Michels, mz; Steven Combs, bar; Mark Vogel, p; Noelle Drewes, ob; Kacy Clopton, vc; Washington Master Chorale/ Thomas Colohan

Albany 1454—67 minutes

Founded just a couple of years ago, the Washington Master Chorale already sports a lush, beautiful sound that it knows how to use in lush, beautiful choral fare. That's pretty much the story of this anthology; just about everything on the program dovetails with that interpretive priority. Lori Laitman, Stephen Chatman, Kirke Mechem, Ross Lee Finney, Cecil Effinger, and Morten Lauridsen have crafted lush, lyrical music; and the Master Chorale is on hand to deliver it in lush, lyrical fashion. Once in a while a frog kicks up a fuss by jumping into water (Norman Dinerstein's 'Old Silent Pond'); or a wave of self-scrutiny causes a ruckus (when Donald McCullough's 'Eye Begins to See'). But most of the way, the music is warm and calming, with the singers creating lovely sounds to convey all that inherent lyricism.

The recorded sound is warm and a bit smudgy, which aids and abets those lyrical elements. It doesn't help diction, though, which is the one technical element the group really needs to work on. They're light on their words, which mitigates the force of the wonderful poetry chosen by the composers. You'll need the texts, and Albany supplies them in the booklet.

GREENFIELD

### **Ildar Abdrazakov—Power Players**

Rachmaninoff, Glinka, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Prokofieff, Rimsky-Korsakoff

Kaunas City Symphony/ Constantine Orbelian  
Delos 3456—67 minutes

Oddly enough, the Russian bass Ildar Abdrazakov has made his career by singing Italian and French roles. His Met debut was as Masetto in *Don Giovanni* in 2004, followed fairly soon by Escamillo in *Carmen*. He didn't take on a Russian role until 2012 (Dosithei in *Khovanshchina*), and in this current Met season he tackles a second one, Prince Igor. The Delos CD has been intentionally released to coincide with the event.

The beauty of the voice, singing in its native language, is immediately and persistently striking. The timbre is just a bit on the light side—no sepulchral Slavic low notes here—but the bass resonance is genuine and doesn't disappear even in the softest phrases. I enjoyed almost everything, but must particularly mention Abdrazakov's nimble enunciation in Farlaff's tongue-twisting Rondo from *Ruslan and Ludmila* and the lovely, expansive conclusion to King Rene's aria from Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*.

There's a world of pain and sadness in Susanin's aria from *Life for the Tsar*, so it's all the more impressive to hear the steel in the voice when Abdrazakov turns into Kutuzov from *War and Peace*. Igor's 'No Sleep, no Repose' is sung as well as you'll ever hear it. The only disappointment is the Coronation Scene from *Boris*, because the chorus sounds wan and flabby. Otherwise, Orbelian is a strong conductor, and the orchestral playing, if not deluxe, is at least adequate. Transliterated texts and translations are supplied, along with good notes.

LUCANO

### **Dinara Alieva: Pace, mio Dio**

Verdi, Puccini, Cilea, Catalani, Leoncavallo  
Czech National Symphony/ Marcello Rota  
Delos 3462—62 minutes

In S/O 2013 I reviewed Alieva's recital of Russian songs and arias. I thought the voice was sometimes warm and beautiful, sometimes pinched and strident. Now the soprano tackles more demanding fare, also with mixed results. She has the style down pat: the portamentos, the little catches in the voice, are persuasively Italian, but she misses some of the easy conversational manner that comes naturally to a native singer. She swallows a few syllables here and there, and the tone is can be tight and pinched, especially when you want it to soar freely in the upper reaches of the Puccini arias.

Best are the spinto numbers, like 'Ebben? Ne Andro' from *La Wally* and 'Io Son L'umile