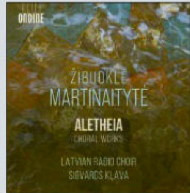


Choral & Song

CHORAL & SONG CHOICE



A potent and powerful set of new works

Composer Žibuoklė Martinaitytė's is a distinctive voice, says *Christopher Dingle*

Žibuoklė Martinaitytė

Aletheia; Chant des Voyelles; Ululations; The Blue of Distance
Latvian Radio Choir/Sigwards Kļava
Ondine ODE-1447-2 59:39 mins

These works go beyond words. This latest release from the superlative Latvian Radio Choir and conductor Sigwards Kļava explores the choral music of New York-based Lithuanian composer Žibuoklė Martinaitytė.

Specifically, it presents four unaccompanied works, written between 2010 and 2023, that dispense

with text. Having spent her formative years under the oppression of Soviet rule, music's ability to express what words cannot is paramount in Martinaitytė's creative explorations of identity and place. Especially so for *Aletheia* (2022), written as Russia launched its attack on Ukraine. Its deep emotions elicit a wall of choral sound within which there is living movement, Martinaitytė connecting with 'the truth that can only be

This is a stunningly sung hour of immersive listening

expressed directly through pre-verbal communication'.

Written a year later, *Ululations* sadly makes a natural partner to *Aletheia*, giving voice to the consequent mourning. Initially dolefully elegiac, the female singers' coruscating outburst to halt the men's rhythmic insistence is an extraordinary moment. *Chant des Voyelles* (2018) sustains a contrastingly positive sense of simply being, while the more quizzical *The Blue of Distance* (2010) ebbs and

flows, objects drifting in and out of focus.

The extensive conceptual and technical

challenges are negotiated with deceptive ease by the choir. While it is natural to present these four works together, their individual potency may be enhanced still further in a mixed programme. Nonetheless, this album presents a powerfully compelling, stunningly sung, hour of immersive listening to a distinctive and important musical voice.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



Superlative sounds: Sigwards Kļava directs the brilliant Latvian Radio Choir

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JS Bach • Handel

JS Bach: Weihnachts-Magnificat;
Handel: Utrecht Te Deum
Nuria Rial (soprano) et al; RIAS Kammerchor Berlin; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin/Justin Doyle
Harmonia Mundi HMM902730
56:33 mins



For his first Christmas at Leipzig in 1723 Bach performed his newly composed

Magnificat. This earlier of two versions, in E flat as opposed to the more familiar D major, includes four additional vocal pieces intended specifically for the Christmas festival. Other important

distinctions between this version and the other include the presence of recorders instead of flutes and adjustments to the melodic material.

Just over ten years earlier Handel wrote a *Te Deum* celebrating the Treaty of Utrecht which, in 1713 brought to an end the War of the Spanish Succession.

Both pieces are generously scored for trumpets, drums, woodwind, strings and continuo and, under Justin Doyle's supple direction soloists, the RIAS Kammerchor Berlin, variously in four, five, six and seven strands, and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin enliven the music with stylistic aplomb. Among the alluring moments in the Bach are Nuria Rial's 'Quia

respexit' with Xenia Löffler's limpid oboe partnership, Roderick Williams's 'Quia fecit' and Marie-Sophie Pollak's 'Et exsultavit'. The backbone of Handel's *Te Deum* is a sequence of wonderfully varied choruses containing comparably varied vocal textures. Alex Potter's solo introduced by oboe and violins and leading to a short four-part vocal a cappella and five-part chorus is rewarding.

The booklet contains full texts, though among otherwise fulsome details of the instrumental personnel, there is no mention of recorder players. Probably the oboists. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Elgar

Part-Songs – There is sweet music; The Fountain; Death on the Hills; Serenade; Good Morrow; The Shower etc
Proteus Ensemble/Stephen Shellard
Avie AV2716 56 mins



Beyond his grandiloquent masterpieces, Elgar wrote a substantial number of

part-songs, produced throughout his composing life and acting as a running commentary on his creative inspiration while in the English countryside or on his frequent visits to Italy. Some are charming personal offerings for family and