

ALBUM/DVD REVIEWS

Superb 'Tre Voci,' sublime Craig, buoyant Vishneva

**Kim Kashkashian, Sivan Magen,
Marina Piccinini, 'Tre Voci'**
ECM New Series

The three "voices" on this transfixingly beautiful recording — violist Kim Kashkashian, harpist Sivan Magen, and flutist Marina Piccinini — met at Marlboro Music in summer 2010, and their effortless interplay is typical of the musical rapport that festival often produces. The trio's unusual instrumentation made its debut in Debussy's mysteriously beautiful sonata, the middle work on this release, which contains some of the composer's most imaginative chamber textures along with a furtive sense of melancholy. Takemitsu, for whom Debussy's works were critical, extended the French composer's innovations in "And then I knew 'twas Wind." Here the surfaces become more sinuous and less tangible, time is extended, and the piece plays like a series of enigmatic images. Even sparer and more restrained are the rustlings in Sofia Gubaidulina's "Garden of Joys and Sorrows," which balances a series of pitches from the natural harmonic series against the stabbing dissonances of minor intervals. The performances are all superb — precisely calibrated despite the dreamlike cast of the program as a whole.

DAVID WEININGER

*Kim Kashkashian, Sivan Magen, and Marina Piccinini perform
Debussy's Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp with Musicians
from Marlboro at the Gardner Museum on Oct. 19.
www.gardnermuseum.org*

Ian William Craig: 'A Turn of Breath'
Recital Program

As I struggled to find words suited to describe "A Turn of Breath," the latest album by Canadian composer/performer Ian William Craig and the first to be released by the burgeoning California label Recital Program, the one that came to mind repeatedly was *palimpsest* — strictly speaking, a manuscript in which rubbed-out portions remain vaguely legible; more generally, something that has been altered or reused, but still betrays evidence of its origin.

It's not a precise fit, but it seems to suit Craig, who uses open-reel tape decks (and maybe other arcane devices) to layer strands of reedy, churchly tenor and falsetto voice, occasional instruments



like acoustic guitar and harmonium, and found-sound ambiences. Bending his circuitry, Craig renders the music muzzy and indistinct; his sound can call to mind a worn-out tape from your childhood, a shortwave transmission from overseas, or a 78 rpm shellac from which distant voices emerge amid the crackles, awash in ethereal luminosity.

Craig's pieces, most of which range from three to six minutes in length, can sound like high lonesome folk songs ("Red Gate with Starling") or bedroom-recording soliloquies ("Rooms"). The most ambitious compositions, like "Second Lens" and "The Edges," evoke troubadour ballads preserved on metal platters, launched into deep space, and then carried back on unstable waves.

Purple, I know. But little else conjures the modest sublimity of Craig's achievement. Recital Program pressed only 500 LPs, including 125 colored-vinyl copies with a 22-minute bonus CD-R. Tarry and you'll miss out on one of the year's most magical recordings.

STEVE SMITH

PROKOFIEV: "Romeo and Juliet"

Valery Gergiev; Mariinsky Ballet and Orchestra
Mariinsky DVD and Blu-ray

The star of this Mariinsky Ballet DVD/Blu-ray two-disc set is one of the great ballerinas of our time, Diana Vishneva, and she's the reason to buy it. Her Juliet is giddy, buoyant, luxuriant, and irrepensible, with the charisma of a silent-movie heroine. It's a performance to compare with Alessandra Ferri's on the 1984 Royal Ballet DVD, and from a dancer who's not well represented on video.

The rest of this production, with Leonid Lavrovsky's original 1940 choreography, seems stuck in the Soviet era. The dancing achieves the level you'd expect from the Mariinsky (formerly the Kirov); the acting ranges from arch and stiff to melodramatic. Vladimir Shklyarov is a sweet, callow Romeo who at times seems more like Vishneva's son than her boyfriend. (He was 28 to her 36 when the video was made last year.) The balcony scene is done at floor level, with no balcony; neither Paris (Yuri Smekalov) nor Friar Lawrence (Pyotr Stasyunas) appears in the final scene at Juliet's tomb. Stasyunas, who plays Lord Montague as well as the friar, makes no impression in either role; Nikolai Naumov is even less prepossessing as the Duke of Verona. Pyotr Williams's set looks like an Italian travel poster.

Then there's Mariinsky Theatre artistic director Valery Gergiev, arguably the world's most famous conductor, in the pit. Eschewing pretty and poetic, he gives us Prokofiev that's passionate and even brusque, more like his 2011 "Romeo and Juliet" CD recording with the London Symphony than his Mariinsky Orchestra set from 1991. It's breathless and often breathtaking stuff, but more interpretative finesse would have been welcome.

JEFFREY GANTZ

