

Reviews

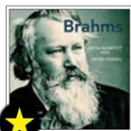
Your monthly critical round-up of performances, recordings and publications

CONCERTS

New York

THIS MONTH'S RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Our pick of the
new releases



The Artis
Quartet Vienna
perform
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Brahms
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Delicious Haydn
concertos from
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Ellen Nisbeth
plays beguiling
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LARA ST JOHN (VIOLIN) ENSEMBLE LPR NAUMBURG BANDSHELL 27 JUNE 2017

On an ideal summer night that welcomed fireflies as the evening progressed, Canadian violinist Lara St John appeared with Ensemble LPR (based at the venue Le Poisson Rouge) at the Naumburg Bandshell in Central Park. Two works showed different sides of her technique. In Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* she managed – with remarkable effect – to duplicate the sound of a lark's calls. On the final note of selected phrases she used a slight descending portamento to recreate the bird's 'sighing' sound. Elsewhere she displayed an instinctive feeling for the composer's melodic lines and their spiritual uplift.

Australian composer Matthew Hindson wrote *Maralinga* (2009) for St John, as a tribute to

Aboriginal culture. At the beginning, a string orchestra flourish ignites a long solo for the violinist – like an elaborate, premature cadenza. As the ensemble began to play gruff, chugging rhythms (a kind of heavy stomping), the timbre of St John's 1779 Guadagnini sailed over the LPR strings.

The evening began with *Starburst* (2012) for string orchestra by Jessie Montgomery, a violinist-composer based in New York. Its appealing *moto perpetuo* qualities might have emerged more clearly with a stronger reading. Whether because of insufficient rehearsal time, or from working without a conductor, ensemble attacks were not well coordinated, and intonation suffered. After the interval, Stravinsky's 'Dumbarton Oaks' Concerto fared better, and better still was Britten's evergreen *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*.

BRUCE HODGES

ANDREW OLSLEY