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BIS recording with the SWEDISH
Chamber Orchestra under
Nicholas McGegan. Both soloists
are exceptional, and the most
obvious areas of divergence are
the orchestral accompaniments
and the solo cadenzas employed.

Unsurprisingly, McGegan's
periodist credentials secured
crisply enunciated response
from the Swedish Chamber
Orchestra, albeit sometimes at
the expense of warmth, whereas
Gábor Takács-Nagy coaxes
rapturously expressive support
from the Manchester Camerata
for Owen's brilliant playing.

On balance, however, it is
Owen's unwavering consistency
of approach and execution –
faultless agility in the formidably
difficult passagework of Mozart's
exuberant *allegros* and seamless
breath-control during the
gorgeous slow movements –
which carries the day here.
His cadenzas, too, are entirely
apposite, never inflated nor
unduly decorous, but original
and engaging, nonetheless.

These performances were
recorded in the acoustically
inviting Stoller Hall, Manchester,
venue for Chandos's ongoing
partnership with the Manchester
Camerata, and one of the UK's
best recording locations for
an ensemble of this size. And
the playing of the Camerata
itself, Northern England's best-
kept musical secret, is simply
top-drawer – lithe, alert and
unfailingly elegant under Takács-
Nagy's inspirational leadership.
A notable achievement from
every standpoint.

Michael Jameson ★★★★★

Sibelius

Violin Concerto;

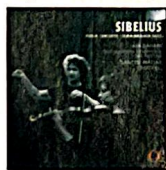
Lemminkäinen Suite

Ava Bahari (violin); Gothenburg

Symphony Orchestra/

Santtu-Matias Rouvali

Alpha ALPHA1215 80:45 mins



The times are
long gone when
Sibelius's Violin
Concerto was
regarded as an
ultra-demanding

challenge to players. Today's
technical standards are so
high that there are plenty of
violinists with the work in their
repertory, among them Sweden's



Horn of plenty:
Martin Owen and Gábor
Takács-Nagy are excellent
Mozart interpreters

Ava Bahari. The special quality
here is the beautiful tone she
draws from her Stradivari – a
personable loveliness that's
perhaps more typical of a
Guarneri sound, while Bahari's
hyper-accurate tuning and
deft virtuosity can match
anyone's. Less convincing is her
generalised approach to the
concerto's strikingly individual
sound-world; the range of
expression on offer, however
appealing, is not especially wide,
and something of the music's
brooding intensity is missed.

Santtu-Matias Rouvali's way
with the *Lemminkäinen Suite*
is an interpretative class apart,
with quality orchestral playing to
match. Sibelius's four-movement
portrait of the roistering anti-
hero of Finnish folk mythology
is an early-ish masterwork,
remarkable for its narrative flair
and spellbinding atmosphere.
Rouvali whirls us through the
opening 'Lemminkäinen and the
Maidens of the Island' rather too
quickly for the music's emotional
charge to come across, but it's
an exciting ride, nonetheless.
A dark and mesmerising
intensity is conjured in
'The Swan of Tuonela' and
'Lemminkäinen in Tuonela';
and Rouvali's perfectly chosen
tempo makes the relentless
momentum of 'Lemminkäinen's
Return' a thrilling experience.

Malcolm Hayes ★★★★★

Tuning Time

Works by Annelies Van Parys

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra/

Kristiina Poska; Jan Michiels

(piano), Antwerp Symphony/

Martyn Brabbins; Brussels

Philharmonic/Kazushi Ono et al

Antarctica AR083 60:05 mins



There is
something
brilliantly
strident about
the music of
Belgian composer

Annelies Van Parys. A spectral
composer – her musical
structures are grounded in the
acoustic properties of sound
itself – Van Parys creates music
that exudes a terrific power, both
intellectually and emotionally.

This outstanding collection of
recent orchestral music opens
with the moving but rigorously
unsentimental *Eco... del vuoto*
(2019). The work is an homage
to Van Parys's late teacher Luc
Brewaeys and includes passages
of Brewaeys's own unfinished
music as part of a shimmering
exploration of echoes and
emptiness, here performed
with great assurance by Royal
Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Two other works on the disc
are also homages of a sort; both
EUTOPIA (2024) and *Fantasia*
(2025) draw sombrely on
Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.
EUTOPIA is an eerie exploration
of the breakdown of the
European project, particularly
the rise of anti-immigrant
sentiment, and includes a
menacingly drawn-out quote of
'Ode to Joy', while *Fantasia* offers
an arresting and at times ironic
reimagining of the Ninth's finale.

The thrilling Piano Concerto
(2021-22) completes the disc.
Here pianist Jan Michiels and
the Antwerp Symphony offer
outstanding performances,
drawing out the work's bell-like
timbres and intricate textures
with clarity. A challenging but
enormously rewarding disc.
Kate Wakeling ★★★★★