

This is a fascinating record, if one perhaps chiefly for convinced admirers of Holst who agree with Colin Matthews, in his excellent insert note, that, 'There is no other composer quite like him, and if he has sometimes seemed to be eclipsed by his more gifted contemporaries he remains one of the most original and innovative musicians of the past century.'

John Warrack

## Ives The Light That Is Felt.

New

Ann Street. August. The Children's Hour. December. Down East. Du bist wie eine Blume. Evening. Feldeinsamkeit. General William Booth Enters into Heaven. The Greatest Man. The Housatonic at Stockbridge. The 'Incantation'. The Light That Is Felt. Like a Sick Eagle. Minnelied. The New River. Romanzo (di Central Park). The Sea of Sleep. September. Songs my mother taught me. Swimmers. The Things Our Fathers Loved. Tom Sails Away. Two Little Flowers. Watchman!. West London. Where the eagle cannot see.

Susan Narucki (soprano); Donald Berman (piano).

**New World Records 80680-2** (full price, 57 minutes). English texts included. *Website* www.newworldrecords.org. *Producer/Engineer* Adam Abeshouse. *Dates* March 18th-20th, 2008.

### Comparisons:

DeGaetani, Kalish (Nonesuch) 71325-2  
DeGaetani, Kalish (Bridge) BCD9006 (1982)  
Feldman, Koekkoek (Olive Music) OM011 (2006, rev. Oct 2007)

Ives's songs have been well served lately. I reviewed a programme on Olive Music with soprano Jill Feldman in October 2007, and we have had two volumes on Hyperion sung by baritone Gerald Finley, one reviewed by Stephen Pruslin in October 2005 and the second reviewed by me in February 2008. That's the last time I will mention Finley – not because his recordings are forgettable, but because I feel that comparing male and female singers in this repertoire is not very fruitful.

The 27 songs included here (there was room for more) are a good cross-section of what Ives did in this genre, from the traditional to the experimental, and from the soothing to the inflammatory. The cover photograph – immigrants to the United States standing on Ellis Island and looking towards the Statue of Liberty – suggests that an Old World/New World dichotomy will be emphasized. Indeed, Susan Narucki and Donald Berman include three of Ives's settings of German texts, but overall, yearning for the 'old country' is not a quality I associate with Ives.

New World's booklet is excellently researched, containing a selected discography and bibliography, in addition to an extended essay by the performers about the repertoire.



Susan Narucki

New World Records

The booklet also includes a dedication to H. Wiley Hitchcock, who in 2004 published a critical edition of 129 of Ives's songs. All but three of the songs included here are performed in Hitchcock's editions, rather than in the usual Kirkpatrick editions, and Hitchcock (who died in 2007) worked with the performers as they prepared for this recording, even proposing the song list. It would have been helpful, though, if Narucki and Berman had written at least a few words about what Hitchcock's editions bring to these songs.

One important song omitted on both Feldman's and Jan DeGaetani's discs is *General William Booth Enters into Heaven*. (Booth, of course, founded the Salvation Army.) Vachel Lindsay's poem at once looks back at Walt Whitman and forward to Allen Ginsberg, and Ives's setting is a virtual Salvation Army concert of booming drums, paramilitary pomp and hallelujah-ing. Narucki and Berman perform the song with the fanatical yet slightly off-kilter zeal that it seems to require.

Berman is an Ives specialist and he contributes much more to this recording than the average 'accompanist' would. Overall, I find Narucki, with her younger but more covered tone, to be an interesting alternative to Feldman and DeGaetani. Both Narucki and Feldman open their discs with *Songs my mother taught me*. Feldman is knowing and appropriately maternal; Narucki is more innocent, and feels more spontaneous than Feldman. I could live with either in these songs but I think Narucki's less calculated interpretations and Berman's authoritative playing ultimately win out. As before, though, I feel obligated to mention DeGaetani, whose singing is perhaps the loveliest and certainly the most canny of all.

The engineering is serviceable – not as atmospheric and detailed as I would like, but it is warmer than Feldman's, and for what it is worth, it captures the sound of Berman's pedalling!

Raymond S. Tuttle

## Ives Psalms.

New

*Psalms* – 14, The fool hath said<sup>a</sup>; 24, The earth is the Lord's; 25, Unto thee, O God<sup>c</sup>; 42, As pants the Hart<sup>bc</sup>; 54, Save me, O God; 67, God be merciful unto us; 90, Lord, thou hast been<sup>abce</sup>; 100, Make a joyful noise<sup>de</sup>; 135, Praise ye the Lord<sup>ce</sup>; 150, Praise ye the Lord<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>a</sup>Aleksandra Lustig (soprano); <sup>ab</sup>Julius Pfeifer (tenor); <sup>ac</sup>Kay Johannsen (organ); <sup>d</sup>Collegium Iuvenum; SWR Vokalensemble Stuttgart, <sup>e</sup>Members of Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart des SWR/Marcus Creed.

**Hänssler Classic CD93.224** (full price, 45 minutes).

English texts and German translations included.

*Website* www.haenssler-classic.de **D** *Producer*

Thomas Angelkorte. *Engineers* Doris Hauser, Martin Vögele. *Dates* March 21st and 22nd and November 26th-29th, 2007.

The Psalm settings are the most significant work from Ives's first full decade of creativity but have not received the attention that they deserve. All credit, then, to Marcus Creed for this first complete recording, which allows for a real understanding of the composer's musical development during his adolescence and early adulthood.

His father's standing as a respected if controversial choirmaster meant that Ives was well placed to try out his choral music on unsuspecting congregations. How many of the Psalms actually received performance at that time is now uncertain (five of them may have first been heard as late as the mid-1960s), though there can be little doubt that the anthem *Psalm 42* (1887) was tailor-made for a Church service in his native Danbury. Elegant and mellifluous, it at least confirms the teenager was already versed in the rudiments of composition. Dating most of the remainder depends on just how one negotiates between the often conflicting evidence of Ives's own testimony and the surviving source material, though it seems likely that several of them were written in the months prior to his father's death in November 1894. Thus *Psalm 24* vividly contrasts linear and harmonic dissonance, while *Psalm 54* elaborates on this process in music whose fiercely non-conformist spirit invokes William Billings. Partly because it deploys boys' voices, *Psalm 150* is more restrained in technique though no less evocative in effect.

Most of the rest probably date from 1898-99 after Ives's graduation, when he was still intent on earning his living as a composer and church organist. Quite how *Psalm 67*, with its fugal and polytonal elements, and *Psalm 100*, with its rhythmic intricacy and overtone resonance, might have fared in performance can only be surmised; while the alternately martial and supplicatory anthem-processional *Psalm 135* and rigorous tonal symbolism of *Psalm 14* anticipate musical developments of a decade and more hence. *Psalm 25* (1900) is a summation of the Ives idiom