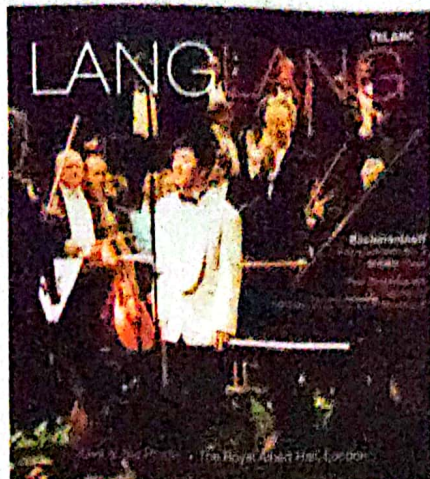


MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Ysaÿe: Six Sonatas. Hilary Hahn, violin. Deutsche Grammophon.

In every respect, the Belgian violinist-composer Eugène Ysaÿe was an artist of the first rank. Generous, good-natured, and intensely dedicated, he was a supreme master of his instrument—yet he always insisted that virtuosity should serve the composer and the music, not the performer. That seems to be the watchword in Hilary Hahn's new recording of his greatest work, the Six Sonatas, Op. 27, for unaccompanied violin. Written a century ago, each of the six was dedicated to a violinist of what was then the younger generation—in order, Joseph Szigeti, Jacques Thibaud, George Enescu, Fritz Kreisler, Mathieu Crickboom (second violin in the Quatuor Ysaÿe), and Manuel Quiroga. All are filled with rich and incredibly challenging writing, especially the flamboyant one-movement Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, subtitled *Ballade*. Hahn sees the whole landscape of these works—not just the grand line in each individual piece, but how the six fit together, just like Bach's great six. Her approach is singing, soaring, spiritual, with a light touch in the passage work, beautiful tone, and breath-takingly good intonation in multi-stops. Recorded at the WGBH studio in Boston (extra credit for those who know what "GBH" stands for), the sound is superb. Truly a disc to be cherished. **TL**

Further Listening: Ysaÿe: Six Sonatas, Op. 27 (Leonidas Kavakos/BIS); Leila Josefowicz: *Solo* (Philips)



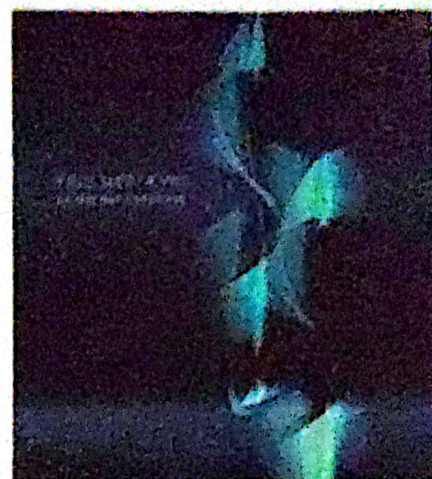
MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 3. Lang Lang; St Petersburg Philharmonic, Temirkanov. Telarc/Craft (LP).

I'll confess that Rach 3 has never appealed to me emotionally like the Second Concerto and *Paganini Rhapsody* do, and this Lang Lang recording from the 2001 Proms doesn't change my mind. It is too short on poetry. Don't get me wrong: Lang is sensitive and humorous, and some parts are thunderous and dramatic, but clarity is emphasized at the expense of the heart. I can admire and learn from a skeleton, but I'm not going to fall in love with someone because of her x-ray. For romance, I'll go with Santiago Rodriguez on Elan. But if you like Lang Lang in Rachmaninoff, here's your chance to grab it on LP for the first time. Jack Renner and Michael Bishop engineered this 2002 release, which came out a few years before Concord bought Telarc and redirected the label. Ryan Smith at Sterling Sound cut the lacquers and Optimal pressed the 180-gram LPs. The sonics were already beautiful, but the LP offers a touch more warmth. Craft Recordings has also reissued several Telarc LPs from the 70s and 80s: their *Pictures at an Exhibition* with Maazel is somehow more vivid with an even richer low end.

Stephen Estep

Further Listening: Orff: *Carmina Burana* (Atlanta Symphony, Robert Shaw, Telarc/Craft)



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

An Old Hall Ladymass. Trio Mediaeval. 2L (Pure Audio Blu-Ray + SACD).

Trio Mediaeval cemented their reputation as engaging interpreters of early music with the eight albums they made for ECM; this is their second for 2L. With their impeccable timing, elegant phrasing, and clear yet ethereal tones, they now illuminate music that sat in silence for 400 years. In the early 15th century, an anonymous scribe wrote out around 200 motets and movements from masses that had been improvised or composed over the previous 50-plus years. Trio Mediaeval selected 14 pieces from England and France, transposing them for women's voices, and created a lady mass—a mass in honor of the Virgin Mary. Catalina Vicens provides a few of her own ear-catching interludes and improvised accompaniments on the portable organ. There's a lot of reverential medieval church music out there, but these selections are uniformly beautiful and top shelf. Two living composers contribute as well. Marianne Eriksen's "Sol Lucet" is compelling, with striking motifs that ring like people calling from mountain to mountain; ornaments and vocal effects shimmer like bird song and remind me of Bulgarian women's choirs. The album ends with the hushed, reverential *Alleluia Amen* by Bang on a Can's David Lang. The sound is glorious. **SE**

Further Listening: *An English Ladymass* (Anonymous 4/Harmonia Mundi)