

Dance of the Furies, where Marc Minkowski, using the 1774 score, has more edge. The choral singing from *Accentus*, though, is exceptional in its nobility and fervour: in Act 2 they are extraordinarily touching as the Furies slowly yield to the power of Orfeo's singing. **Tim Ashley**

*Selected comparison:*

Minkowski (11/04) (ARCH) 471 582-2AH2

## Hindemith

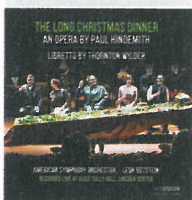
### The Long Christmas Dinner

**Camille Zamora** *sop* ..... Lucia/Lucia II  
**Sara Murphy** *contr* ..... Mother Bayard/Ermengarde  
**Jarrett Ott** *bar* ..... Roderick/Sam  
**Josh Quinn** *bass-bar* ..... Brandon  
**Glenn Seven Allen** *ten* ..... Charles  
**Catherine Martin** *mez* ..... Genevieve  
**Kathryn Guthrie** *sop* ..... Leonora  
**Scott Murphree** *ten* ..... Roderick II

American Symphony Orchestra / Leon Botstein

Bridge © BRIDGE9449 (49 • DDD • T)

Recorded live at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, December 19, 2014



Thornton Wilder was one of the most musical of playwrights yet throughout his life rejected requests to set his plays to music. So his remarkably harmonious collaboration with Hindemith for *The Long Christmas Dinner* (1960-61) is all the more welcome. A wonderful lyric opera – not a note too short, which leaves one wanting more – this artfully constructed one-act work is the jewel of Hindemith's late output.

The composer created the German-language version – which was premiered, and indeed recorded, first – alongside the English original (both are included in the booklet). I welcomed Janowski's German version a decade ago in these pages as 'a fluent, superbly paced account, sung well throughout, accompanied by some splendid orchestral playing' and that judgement rings just as true for Leon Botstein's beautifully rendered English-language version, captured at a live performance at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall last year. In many ways this newcomer scores over Janowski's studio recording – made in partnership with Berlin Radio – in atmosphere, though there is little to choose between the two casts and orchestras. Camille Zamora as the Lucias is the equal of Ziesak for Wergo and Sara Murphy's closing aria as Ermengarde here is marvellously poignant.

Ultimately, if language is the paramount concern, go for Janowski if you want German, otherwise I'd recommend Botstein. Bridge's vivid sound edges Wergo's with an

immediacy that is winning, although the German label's more manicured sound may appeal to some. I'll take both in preference, but why did Bridge put a 49-minute opera in a large multi-CD box? **Guy Rickards**

*Comparative version:*

Berlin RSO, Janowski (1/06) (WERG) WERG6676-2

## Mozart

### Die Entführung aus dem Serail

**Robin Johannsen** *sop* ..... Konstanze  
**Mari Eriksmoen** *sop* ..... Blonde  
**Maximilian Schmitt** *ten* ..... Belmonte  
**Julian Prégardien** *ten* ..... Pedrillo  
**Dimitry Ivashchenko** *bass* ..... Osmin  
**Cornelius Obonya** *spkr* ..... Pasha Selim  
**RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik**

Berlin / René Jacobs

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2214/15

(160 • DDD • S/T/T)



Hard on the heels of Yannick Nézet-Séguin's DG recording of Mozart's Ottoman

Singspiel (DG, 8/15) comes this radical version from René Jacobs, the last instalment of his survey of the major operas, begun in 1999. Elsewhere in this issue, James Jolly writes about the cycle's controversial nature and the conflicted feelings Jacobs's Mozart can arouse (see page 16). I found myself responding to this with both admiration and some annoyance.

Jacobs's intention is that music and dialogue – his own modern German paraphrase of Johann Gottlieb Stephanie's original – should create a unified continuum. Robin Johannsen's Konstanze, for example, releases the pent up feelings of 'Traurigkeit' in an outpouring of despair in her subsequent conversation with Mari Eriksmoen's Blonde, while Selim's comments on her courage, usually placed after 'Martern aller Arten', are now woven into it. The process, extended through the whole work, is helped immeasurably by performances of great conviction from a fine cast of singer-actors, though just occasionally the purely vocal challenges aren't fully met.

Maximilian Schmitt's elegant Belmonte exudes both fine feelings for Konstanze and lofty condescension towards Julian Prégardien's Pedrillo, though his coloratura can be workmanlike. Dimitry Ivashchenko's handsome-sounding Osmin is more sympathetic than most, particularly when quailing before Eriksmoen's firebrand Blonde. Yet his voice, gloriously descending to interpolated low Cs below the staff, doesn't always move fast enough in his arias, where Jacobs slows the score in places.

Johannsen, though, is a superb Konstanze, with impeccably expressive coloratura and a beautiful silvery tone reminiscent at times of Anneliese Rothenberger on Josef Krips's recording (EMI, 10/70). Eriksmoen blazes away at her top Es, while Prégardien is suave, level-headed and strikingly heroic. He and Jacobs turn 'Frisch zum Kampfe' into a real battle song, leaving us in no doubt as to who is the prime mover in the master-servant relationship, and indeed Jacobs probes and redefines the emotional interplay between the characters in ways that are constantly fresh and insightful. The Akademie für Alte Musik play with wonderful spirit and accuracy, and the choral singing is faultless.

Yet there are problems. Mozart is known to have conducted the work from a fortepiano, though none is specified in the score. How much he may have used the instrument, or indeed improvised during the dialogue, can only be conjectured. Jacobs, however, allots it a prominent role, peppering arias and ensembles with newly acquired countermelodies and using it for what he calls the 'melodramatising interventions', taken from elsewhere in Mozart's output, which form an ongoing commentary that 'musicalises' the dialogue in order to ensure the continuous flow.

The end result is overly knowing, in an allusive, postmodern way. Osmin, when drunk, reverts to a second childhood as the fortepiano traces music associated with the Boys in *Die Zauberflöte*, while Cornelius Obonya's Selim dismisses the Europeans at the end to a variant of the *Masonic Funeral Music*, indicative of his spiritual integrity. Identifying the allusion and its relevance becomes a major distraction that pulls us away from the dialogue rather than enhancing it. It threatens to undermine an otherwise fine set, and prevents it from attaining the coherence that Jacobs hopes to achieve. For all its insights, it doesn't ultimately quite have the cogency of the classic versions by Jochum (DG, 10/66), Krips or Harnoncourt (Teldec, 11/85). **Tim Ashley**

## Mozart



### Così fan tutte

**Malin Hartelius** *sop* ..... Fiordiligi  
**Marie-Claude Chappuis** *mez* ..... Dorabella  
**Martina Janková** *sop* ..... Despina  
**Martin Mittertutzner** *ten* ..... Ferrando  
**Luca Pisaroni** *bass-bar* ..... Guglielmo  
**Gerald Finley** *bar* ..... Don Alfonso  
**Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach**

Stage director **Sven-Eric Bechtolf**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**