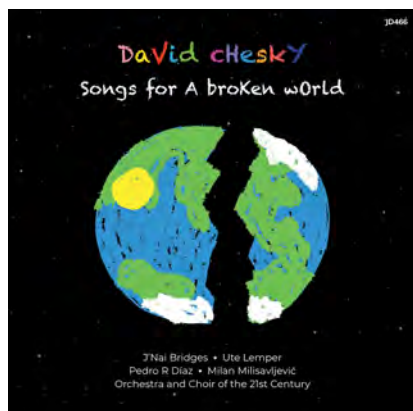


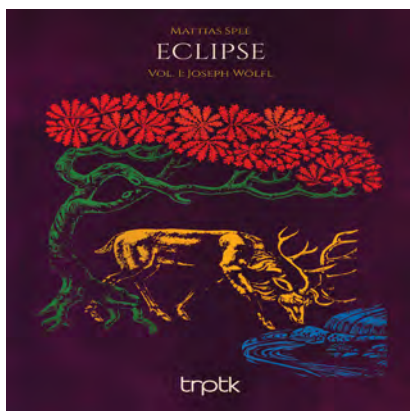


MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Chesky: *Songs for a Broken World*. Chesky.

What attracted me to David Chesky's *Songs for a Broken World* was the fact that three of its six movements honor Sophie Scholl (1921–1943), one of my heroes. Scholl played a key role in “The White Rose,” a resistance group formed by German students opposed to the Nazis during World War II. The staircase at the University of Munich where she tossed anti-Nazi leaflets down to the atrium below is, for me and many others, hallowed ground. For this act of courage, she and her brother Hans were guillotined. Chesky's heartfelt cycle touches on other examples of human-made broken-ness in our time: Vietnam (“Remembrance for the Victims of the Vietnam War”), the Middle East (“Sacred Child of Aleppo”), Covid-19 (“For Our Own”). Its impressionistically layered textures and hypnotically slow unfolding create a dreamscape of mourning through which we can, if we choose to, perceive what Beethoven called “a plea for inner and outer peace.” And perhaps recognize our duty to fix what is broken. Outstanding work from orchestra and chorus, from Lemper in “The Names of the White Rose,” and from Diaz and Milisavljević in “For Our Own.” Excellent sound. **TL**

Further Listening: Chesky: *The Venetian Concertos* (Chesky)

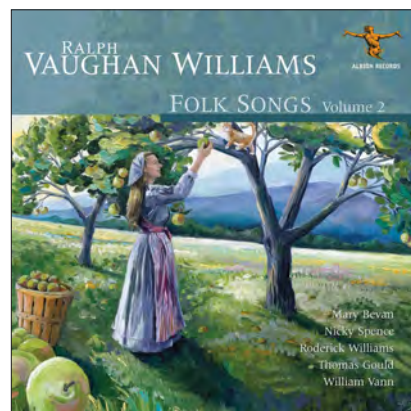


MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Eclipse: Vol. 1: Joseph Wölfl. Matthias Spee. TRPTK.

Joseph Wölfl (1773–1812) was a highly respected pianist in his day, even competing in a piano duel with Beethoven that ended amicably (unlike Daniel Steibelt, who got his ass handed to him). His father worked for the same archbishop as Leopold Mozart and Michael Haydn, and young Joseph took lessons from Leopold. Wölfl's music is more harmonically adventurous than Wolfgang Amadeus' and more refined than Beethoven's, though he has a penchant for moments of stillness as does Beethoven. Wölfl is one of the most interesting composers of this era; his classical textures contain romantic innovations, all balancing each other out. And he avoids facile writing and twee gestures that Mozart too often relied on. Mozart could be more inspired at his best, but Wölfl turned every opportunity for a cliché into a chance to invent something with character. There are two sonatas here (one with an outstanding fugue), three intermezzos (one of which is a cliff-hanger), a set of variations, and a plaintive gentle waltz that closes the recital. Spee plays with eloquence, and his handling of counterpoint and inner voices is enviable. I only want more fire, especially in the sonatas. Creamy sound from TRPTK. **Stephen Estep**

Further Listening: Luisa Imorde: *L'Affaire d'honneur* (Mozart, Beethoven, Wölfl/Berlin Classics)



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Vaughan Williams: *Folk Songs, Volume 2*. Bevan, Spence, Williams, Vann. Albion.

At the last century's turn, several prominent British musicians went about collecting and preserving dozens of English and American folk songs. Ralph Vaughan Williams created accompaniments for 80, and Albion is releasing all of them, including 53 never before recorded. The singers—Mary Bevan, Roderick Williams, and Nicky Spence—have crystal-clear diction and personality in spades. William Vann is a superb pianist, especially in the tricky yet graceful accompaniment to “The Tree in the Wood.” Even when Vaughan Williams writes strings of meandering chords, as he was wont to do, Vann gives them direction rather than going on autopilot. Folk aficionados will recognize many songs—“Fair Margaret and Sweet William,” “Barbara Ellen,” “I Will Give My Love an Apple”—and the hilarious “Farmyard Song,” which the singers could barely get through without cracking up at Bevan's animal noises (and possibly the 29 instances of the word “cock”). Violinist Thomas Gould accompanies two songs for a nice palate cleanser in the middle of the program where proceedings move slowly. The booklet has lyrics and notes about the people who sang them for the collectors. Not all the settings are top-shelf Vaughan Williams, but they're still a breath of fresh air. **SE**

Further Listening: John Jacob Niles: *I Wonder As I Wander* (Tradition)