

pricy penthouse apartments as they did the flats of folk aficionados around the world. Subsequently, his commercial profile may have waned somewhat, yet *AMzer: Seasons*, his 24th album, is, in its own way, just as uncompromising as any of that groundbreaking earlier material. Its lyrics are poems related to nature and the seasons: they range from Japanese haikus to verse from a Breton teenager's verse.

Musically, it's based on themes built from Stivell's harp improvisations, elaborated by vocals, flutes and percussion. His harp has been, as he puts it, 'deconstructed-reconstructed,' so as 'to make listeners think of anything but a harp: the sound of an acoustic bass, of an electric guitar... of other sounds totally distorted and experimental.' The results are challenging, then, but certainly could never be accused of lacking integrity.

KEVIN BOURKE

TRACK TO TRY *Postscript*

Jitka Šuranska, Irén Lovász & Michal Elia Kamal Three Voices

Indies (48 mins)

★★★★★

Power trio of one Czech, one Hungarian and one Israeli

This album was recorded live at the wonderful-sounding Folk Holidays Festival in the Czech Republic, a place for sharing music in a relaxed setting. The three voices of the title belong to female singers from the Czech Republic, Hungary and Israel: Jitka Šuranska, Irén Lovász and Michal Elia Kamal. They each begin with a few lines of a characteristic song of their own but then join up to work on songs that each of them brought to the party. Accompanying instruments include violin, mandolin, *santur* (zither) and accordion, while the arrangements – which were devised in just a couple of days – are good. The Czech song 'Fuč Větríčku' (Blow, Little Wind), featuring only simple violin accompaniment is definitely the standout track though.

While Šuranska and Lovász have refreshingly pure voices, Kamal has a heavy vibrato, which I find hard to take. It also means the voices don't blend as well as they might. One of the Hungarian songs, 'Hej, Jancsika, Jancsika', is one of Hungary's most popular folk songs and begins well but outstays its welcome. As does 'Hava Nagila', another warhorse, which feels

like nine minutes of vibrato torture. It was probably fun if you were there.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Fuč Větríčku*

Tantž Vöytek (The Bear)

Tantž (42 mins)

★★★★★

Klezmer maniacs grin and bear it

Klezmer has a rebel soul and this is certainly not absent in Tantž's debut album. The fact that they have

taken their time releasing their first album has paid off in the tight delivery, responsive playing and creative improvisation – all evidence of extensive touring, festival appearances and high-profile gigging, as well as top-notch musicianship. This recording draws you in from the start with a short *doina*-like introduction giving way to strong bouncy rhythms, setting the tone for the raucous affair to follow. The music is a mixture of classic tunes from the klezmer repertoire with original material. Influences of reggae, rock and jazz are filtered through a keen understanding of klezmer styles to give birth to something entirely new.

This is not the first time anyone has pushed the boundaries of klezmer, but I have not heard anything quite like this. Screaming clarinet, pounding drums, maniacal fiddle, tasty guitar and groovy percussion combine to ensure there is always something to captivate the listener, whether it is the surprisingly refreshing renditions of staples such as 'Hava Nagila' or the trippy arrangements of tracks like 'Ibrik'.

TOM NEWELL

TRACK TO TRY *The Klezmer's Freilach*

Wör Back to the 1780's

Appel Records (47 mins)

★★★★★

Just don't look at the title, apostrophe pedants...

Joannes de Grujters played Antwerp's *carillon* (an instrument consisting of several tuned bells)

in the 18th century. He compiled a manuscript collection of 194 tunes. The musicians of Wör – a Flemish five-piece who play saxophones, bagpipes, violin, accordion and guitar – thought that if this music sounded good back then, perhaps it would today. They arranged



Flemish band Wör

Tom Rabelios

a de Grujters tune, were very pleased with the results, and so searched for more. Wör found collections gathered by other carillon players, books from the Di Martinelli family, musicians and lawyers from Diest, and tunes gathered by dancing masters in Brussels and Ghent. From these 18th-century sources, they have selected 13 dance tunes ranging from the stately 'Zerezo' and the almost ghostly 'Scherenheuvell' to the frantic and jazzy 'Imperiael'.

The clamorous tenor of Pieterjan Van Kerhoven's pipes is complemented by Bert Ruymbeek's droning then rippling accordion and Fabio Di Meo's saxophones. Jeroen Knapen plays a percussive guitar, while Naomi Vercauteren's violin skips about the melodies like someone dancing. These are dance tunes, essentially simple, but Wör's arrangements are finely textured, their performance exuberant. Wör make going back to the 1780s an attractive notion.

JULIAN MAY

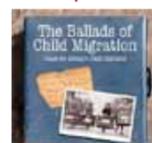
TRACK TO TRY *Imperiael*

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Ballads of Child Migration: Songs for Britain's Child Migrants

Delphonic (59 mins)

★★★★★

Songs highlighting a shameful era of UK history

There's an impressive list of musicians here; the songwriters include Jez Lowe, Julie Matthews &

Chris While, Boo Hewardine, John McCusker and John Doyle. And there are turns from O'Hooley & Tidow, Mike McGoldrick, Andy Cutting and others. I was hoping to hear traditional

songs of the child migrant experience but apparently there are none – although O'Hooley & Tidow's 'Why Did I Leave Thee?' draws on the words of Frederick Hudson, who was shipped to the colonies as cheap child labour in the name of philanthropy. He returned after a year in 1864, one of the lucky ones who escaped drudgery and terrible dislocation.

Shipping off kids continued, shockingly, right up to 1970, and the liner notes provide a solid introduction and context. But, well-made as they are, some songs fall short. Opener 'Small Cases Full of Big Dreams' weighs more towards sentiment than destiny; the title alone reads a bit like a Hallmark card. Others feel over-literal, too clearly commissioned from without rather than created from an inner emotional core. John Doyle's 'Liberty's Sweet Shore' takes a widescreen view that the ballad form provides, but the best is McCusker's instrumental, 'Leaving All We Know', which gets to the interior experience of forced exile in greater depth than any of the album's lyricists.

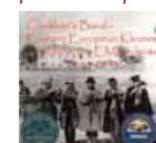
TIM CUMMING

TRACK TO TRY *Leaving All We Know* by John McCusker

Chekhov's Band: Eastern European Klezmer Music from the EMI Archives 1908-1913

Repair Records (80 mins)

★★★★★

The klezmer that came in from out of the cold

This is a fascinating disc, bringing a wealth of unknown recordings to light. It's the product of years of research

by discographer Alan Kelly and clarinettist and klezmer specialist Joel Rubin into the archives of the

Gramophone Company, which became EMI in 1931. Up until World War I, Russia was booming. In 1902 Russia was generating over 50% of the Gramophone Company's profits on sales of records. Whereas only a handful of European recordings of klezmer music were previously known, it's now thought that between 350 and 400 were actually produced; 24 of them are available here.

The title, *Chekhov's Band*, comes from the offstage klezmerim that are mentioned in Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*, first performed in 1904, so very close to the period of these recordings. A revelatory discovery is the clarinettist Titunshnayder, who sounds very much the equal of the celebrated Naftule Brandwein. There are seven tracks of Titunshnayder here, all recorded in Odessa in 1912. While most of this repertoire is new, it's interesting to hear a different version of the tune Naftule Brandwein recorded as 'Der Heisser-Yartar Dance', coming from Vilnius in 1913. A great resource for klezmer researchers and musicians and it comes with a brilliant 40-page booklet of detailed notes.

SIMON BROUGHTON

TRACK TO TRY *Spring (Bulgarian Dance)* by Titunshnayder

Festival Flamenco Gitano

ACT Music (2 CDs, 84 mins)

★★★★★

Das flamenco

Imagine a time before the kaleidoscopic wonder of world music was available at the

click of a mouse. Then imagine witnessing the multi-sensory spectacle of live flamenco exploding into your life. This re-release attempts to capture something of that impact, with two of the earliest live performances of flamenco in 1960s Germany. The performers are all good, without including anyone of especial renown, and the shows were built around a wide range of different styles or *palos* showcasing the three fundamental elements of flamenco: *cante* (voice), *toque* (guitar) and *baile* (dance). The first CD was recorded at night after a show in Berlin in 1965 and the players' tiredness is evident. To their credit they still produce some emotional performances, most audibly in Ramón Moreno's voice on 'Fandangos Naturales'; and the last drops of energy are wrung out on 'Por Fiesta'.

As if to compensate, the second CD, recorded in Stuttgart the following year, is overflowing with vigour. So much so that, with several unrestrained *rumbas*, they sound at times like a slightly inebriated Gipsy Kings. The sense of celebration is contagious but the lack of light and shade is wearying. Whether these recordings really merit a 50th anniversary re-release is doubtful. While there is some historical interest here, it is more of a milestone in Germany's awareness of flamenco than in the story of flamenco itself.

JO SETTERS

TRACK TO TRY *Fandangos Naturales* by Ramón Moreno & Vargas Aracelli

The Ultimate Guide to Scottish Folk

ARC Music (2 CDs, 152 mins)

★★★★★

Not just the usual suspects

The third in a series of *Ultimate Guide* collections, following Spanish and Irish editions, this two-CD set

traces the development of Scottish folk music from Sir Jimmy Shand's strict-tempo dance band playing to Lau's experimental style. Largely traditional in its sources, with songwriters Karine Polwart and the late Michael Marra also represented, it was compiled with assistance and knowledgeable liner notes from broadcaster, musician, composer and performer Mary Ann Kennedy. Her insight into the Scots and Gaelic traditions has helped to produce a good, at times exhilarating listen. Piper Gordon Duncan's 'Just for Seamus' magnificent in its fiery musicality; Martyn Bennett's 'Nae Regrets' is a marvellous, groundbreaking meeting of tradition, technology and heart; and Paul Mounsey's 'Passing Away' is superb in its eloquent marriage of musical longing and historical documentation.

Alongside widely known older names – Dick Gaughan, Dougie Maclean, Capercaillie, Aly Bain, Archie Fisher – the young tradition is represented by Skipinnish, Breabach and Mischa MacPherson. And it's good to see lesser-feted and sometimes overlooked artists including Ossian, Mick West, Gaelic singer Ishbel MacAskill, and composer Blair Douglas acknowledged as well.

ROB ADAMS

TRACK TO TRY *Kansas City Hornpipe* by Fred Morrison

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