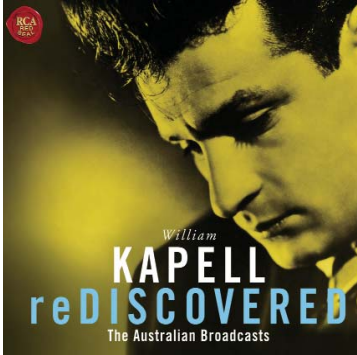


# Classical Currents

BY KEVIN C. MADIGAN

## William Kapell • *Rediscovered - The Australian Broadcasts* (RCA Red Seal)



Maverick pianist William Kapell undertook a lengthy concert tour of Australia shortly before his untimely death at the age of 31. The year was 1953. Known for his mastery of the Russian repertoire, Kapell was eager to branch out into other, more adventurous musical territories. We get a glimpse of what his career might have become by these exciting recordings of radio broadcasts from that tour, which have only recently come to light.

They are the last concerts he ever played, and included in this double CD are pieces by Kapell that have never been available before, among them Claude Debussy's "Suite bergamasque," Chopin's "Barcarolle," and a wistful rendition of "God Save the Queen."

This music comes from an unlikely source: a retired department store salesman and avid fan from Melbourne by the name of Roy Preston, who recorded and then preserved on acetate disks Kapell's performances when they were transmitted on Australian radio. So while the quality of the sound may at times be less than perfect, it's worthwhile just to hear the piano master at the peak of his talent, playing with joy and enthusiasm. The

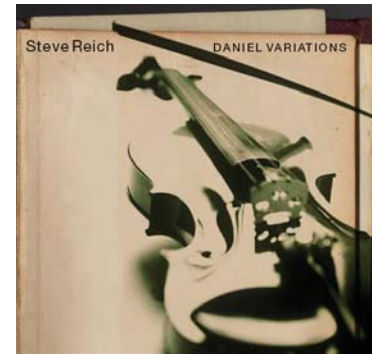
producers of this release have taken great care in restoring and remastering the material, with splendid results.

Known for his obsessive work methods and fierce discipline, Kapell greatly influenced subsequent young American pianists such as Van Cliburn and Leon Fleisher.

## Steve Reich • *Daniel Variations* (Nonesuch)

The unstoppable Steve Reich, a pioneer of minimalist music, delivers two new compositions on this Nonesuch release. The first one is the title piece and is a tribute to journalist Daniel Pearl, murdered by Islamic terrorists six years ago in Pakistan. The work was co-commissioned by the Barbican Center in London, where it was first performed in 2006 as part of events honoring Reich's 70th birthday. It comprises four movements and contains texts from the Biblical book of Daniel as well as segments of Pearl's own words. Sopranos and tenors sing the parts, and the score requires a string quartet, pianos, clarinets and a variety of percussion instruments. The effect is stark and mesmerizing. "Daniel Variations" is performed by the Los Angeles Master Chorale and conducted by Grant Gershon.

The second composition is "Variations for Vibes, Pianos and Strings," performed by the London Sinfonietta and conducted by Alan Pierson. In his liner notes, Reich describes this piece as "the most modular I have done in some time, combining both older and newer elements of my music."



## Ahn Trio • *Lullaby For My Favorite Insomniac* (Sony BMG Masterworks)



The Korean sisters who make up the Ahn Trio give new meaning to the words *chamber music*. Not content with following the same path as their perhaps more staid predecessors, the Ahn Trio shows on this record what it means to be fearless, brash and innovative. On their fourth release, Maria (cello), Angella (violin) and Lucia Ahn (piano) take on Rodgers & Hart, Astor Piazzolla and David Bowie with equal poise.

You can tell these three talented musicians have been playing together since infancy. Trained at Juilliard in New York, the trio first came to public attention in 1987 when *Time Magazine* put them on the front cover for an article called "Asian Whiz Kids." Since then they have garnered plenty of praise for their unique approach to music. Angella told the magazine *Artvoice*: "Our main goal is to add people to our audiences, people who normally would not go to classical concerts."

**Worthy of Mention:** Violinist Nigel Kennedy takes on *Beethoven: Violin Concerto; Mozart: Violin Concerto No. 4 & Horace Silver: Creepin' In* (Angel). *The Complete Symphonies of Prokofiev / Onf / Rostropovich* (Warner Classics) is a box set, naturally. Pianist Murray Perahia's *Bach Partitas 2, 3 & 4* (Sony BMG) is simply majestic.

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