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American classic: Lori Sims in concert

seems dominated by Sims's right hand, in contrast to Hough's crisper, more ambidextrously equal articulation (Hyperion).

By contrast, Sims positively devours the Barber Sonata, yet is smart enough to remember to chew well and savour the music when appropriate, such as in her straightforward and well-sustained *Adagio mesto*. Her perky, characterfully accented Fugue and delightfully *leggero* Scherzo count among the best on disc, while the *Allegro energico*'s opening pages have rarely conveyed such a combination of ferocity and longing. The close-up and somewhat strident recorded sound becomes steely and monochrome in loud moments but often works towards the music's advantage in Griffes's *Roman Sketches*, where you can fully absorb the inner workings of Sims's subtle *legato* pedalling in 'The White Peacock', plus the washes of dissonant colour in 'Nightfall'. I still lean towards David Alan Wehr's suppler, more translucently engineered interpretations on Connoisseur Society. Barry Ross's thoughtful and informative booklet-notes add value to a disc that ought to generate positive attention on behalf of Sims's accomplished artistry.

Jed Distler

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### 'The Valley Sings'

**Copland** Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever  
**J Fitzwilliam A Rose** of Sharon **Fryer** Coventry Carol. Missa brevis - Kyrie. The time draws near  
**Hedges** Bagpipe. Bread Dough. Iceberg. Shield.  
**Water Lundergan** The Dark Hills. A noiseless, patient spider. When I heard the learn'd astronomer  
**Panaiotis** Arise, my love **J Russell** O cool is the valley now. Rain has fallen **Schickele** After Spring  
**Sunset Sipple** God's Grandeur. Pied beauty. Thou art indeed just, O Lord **Tstontakis** Dead in the cold, a song-singing thrush. I dreamt I saw a little owl. Love me, I love you **SH Warren** Purpose of a Cat  
**Kairos - A Consort of Singers / Edward Lundergan**  
MSR Classics © MS1427 (63' • DDD)



#### Choral music created and sung in the Hudson Valley

Something in the air or hills north of New York City has inspired an unusual number of composers to write choral music. Or it just could be that Kairos, a vocal ensemble based in New York's Hudson Valley, has been an active promoter of music by composers from the region. Whatever the case, Kairos's new disc, 'The Valley Sings', captures a bounty of fragrant and stirring music to captivating effect.

But listen quickly, in many cases. Of the 24 selections by 11 composers on this recording, more than half run less than two minutes. It isn't possible to gauge much about the composers' individual styles, which embrace English choral, American folk and other traditions. What can be said is that the music is largely tonally based and words are set with exceptional skill.

Several pieces (or collections) stand out. John B Hedges shows an adventurous personality in five selections based on riddles from the *Exeter Book* (and he has an appealing solo as tenor in the last, *Iceberg*). Peter Schickele's *After Spring Sunset*, a cantata on Japanese poems, reveals the serious and lyrically generous side of the composer who unearthed the satirical wonders of PDQ Bach. The Valley's most renowned composer, Aaron Copland, makes a brief appearance with a lovely creation, 'Thou, O Jehovah, abideth forever'.

The 18-member Kairos sing each work with a keen sense of balance and interplay under artistic director Edward Lundergan, who is also represented as composer of three radiant pieces that say what they need to say in little more than a minute apiece.

Donald Rosenberg

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