

***Beautiful Star* – American Record Guide**

LARSEN: *Ringeltanze*; **BIRD:** *Carol of Beauty*; **IVES:** *Christmas Carol*; **KING:** *Wondrous Night*; **WISHART:** *Alleluya, A New Work Is Come On Hand*; **ROREM:** *Shout the Glad Tidings*; **POSTON:** *Jesus Christ The Apple Tree*; **MARTINSON:** *O Come, O Dayspring From On High*; **MORRIS:** *'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime*; **POWELL:** *Glory Hallelujah to the Newborn King*; **PILKINGTON:** *Coventry Carol*; **MORRIS:** *Glory to the Newborn King*; **HOGAN:** *Glory, Glory, Glory to the Newborn King*; **PHILLIPS:** *Winter wonderland*; **HUFF:** *I'll Be Home for Christmas*; **WESBY:** *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*

Schola Cantorum on Hudson/ Deborah Simpkin King (PO Box 3914, Jersey City, NJ 07303; 201-918-3009; www.ScholaOnHudson.org)

Nice music, but a few too many wobbles and bobbles from the choir (especially the soprano section) to be considered a “must-have” holiday program. I’m also trying to figure out why the recorded sound is just fine on some selections (Ned Rorem’s zippy ‘Shout the Glad Tidings’ and Elizabeth Poston’s achingly beautiful ‘Jesus Christ the Apple Tree’, for example) and kind of muddy elsewhere. Could the mikes have been set a bit differently when the piano was brought on for *Ringeltanze*, Libby Larsen’s suite of six carols, and a few other selections?

Still, I enjoyed the performance. The choir oozes energy and charm, no doubt at the urging of their founding conductor, who is a choral force to be reckoned with in New York and north Jersey. The only snoozers in the mix are the final three selections – gooey arrangements of ‘Winter Wonderland’, ‘I’ll Be Home for Christmas’, and ‘Have Yourself a Merry A little Christmas’ that are delivered so deadpan that the program ends anti-climactically. The rest of the way nothing is routine, especially the three spirituals and Poston’s ‘Apple Tree’. I also like the way the conductor adds in bells, which are rung evocatively at many points in the program. There’s work to be done, but this is an ensemble worth watching. GREENFIELD