

*THE BOSTON GLOBE SUNDAY, DEC 12, 2004**Richard Dyer's picks***By Richard Dyer
GLOBE STAFF**

The classical record business may be beginning to find its footing again. Artists still want to record their work -- one musical website in Germany is listing up to 1,500 classical releases a month -- and music lovers still want to hear recordings. Now the issue is finding new ways to make connections between producers and public; the "record store" most music lovers grew up with barely exists anymore. No single pair of ears can possibly listen to more than 10,000 new CDs a year, but here, in no particular order, are some this listener wanted to hear more than once; there is a strong local accent again this year.

1. Handel: Arias and "Lucrezia." Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, mezzo-soprano; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Harry Bicket, conductor (Warner Classics)

The world's most compelling classical vocalist sings arias from Handel's "Theodora" and the cantata "Lucrezia" to follow up on last year's remarkable pairing of Bach Cantatas with Emmanuel Music (Nonesuch).

2. William Bolcom: Songs of Innocence & of Experience. Vocal soloists, University of Michigan Choral and Instrumental Ensembles, Leonard Slatkin, conductor (Naxos)

5. Rachmaninoff Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2.

Krystian Zimerman, piano, with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa, conductor (Deutsche Grammophon)

The self-critical Polish pianist finally approved this memorable collaboration years after the performances were recorded mostly live in Symphony Hall; plans to record the other two concertos and the "Paganini" Rhapsody are on hold.

6. Jennifer Higdon: City Scape/Concerto for Orchestra. Atlanta Symphony, Robert Spano, conductor (Telarc)

Two striking works by one of America's most-discussed young composers, in lively performances led by one of her major advocates, conductor Robert Spano.

7. Bach: Orchestral Suites. Boston Baroque, Martin Pearlman, conductor (Telarc)

Boston Baroque's latest CD, notable both for chipper performances and the quality of the recorded sound.

8. Mahler: Symphony No. 3. Lilli Paasikivi, mezzo-soprano, London Philharmonia Choir, Tiffin Boys' Choir and Philharmonia Orchestra, Benjamin Zander, conductor (Telarc)

The fifth installment of Zander's ongoing Mahler cycle with the Philharmonia, led with intense involvement, but also with unwonted

The greatest work to date by a major American composer, finally recorded after nearly 20 years.

3. Charles Ives: Unknown Works, Vol. 2. Donald Berman, piano (New World Records)

This album is a work of scholarship and imagination by Berman, who performs music in a wide variety of styles -- from conventional to far out -- by America's most visionary composer.

4. Alban Berg: Violin Concerto; Benjamin Britten, Violin Concerto. Daniel Hope, violin, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Paul Watkins, conductor (Warner Classics)

The British artist is best known in this country as the new violinist in the Beaux Arts Trio, but here he plays two major 20th-century violin concertos; the Berg is recorded for the first time in a newly corrected edition with the notes Berg intended.

spaciousness. The recording also includes a bonus disc with Zander's lecture on the work.

9. Beethoven: Complete Piano Sonatas. Seymour Lipkin, piano (Newport Classics)

The distinguished American musician played the Beethoven cycle in the Gardner Museum a few years ago; his recording exists both in three CD boxes and on a single MP3 disc that includes not only his performances but the printed music.

10. Schumann: Fantasy, Kreisleriana, Kinderzenen. Annie Fischer, piano (BBC)

Not a new recording, but a first release for these memorable broadcast performances by the late, great Hungarian pianist and favorite of Boston audiences, Annie Fischer, an artist who hated making records in the studio.

