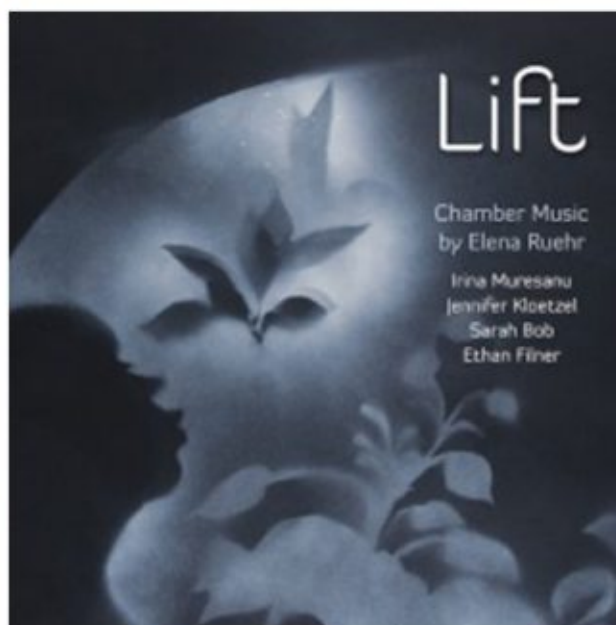
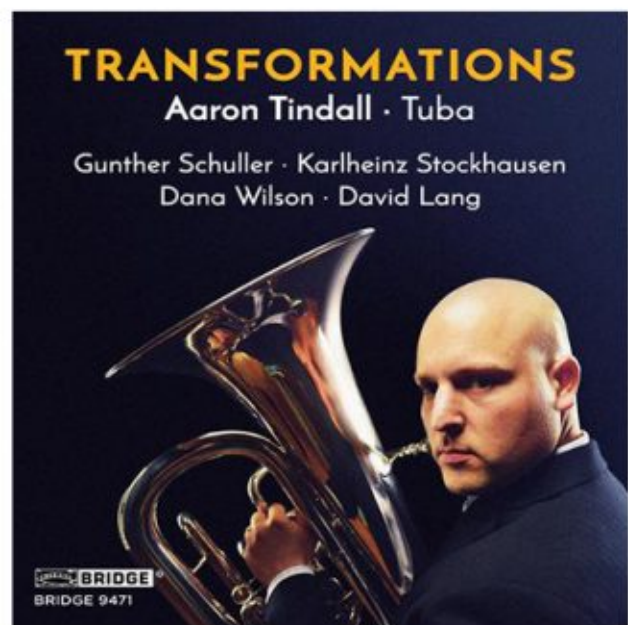
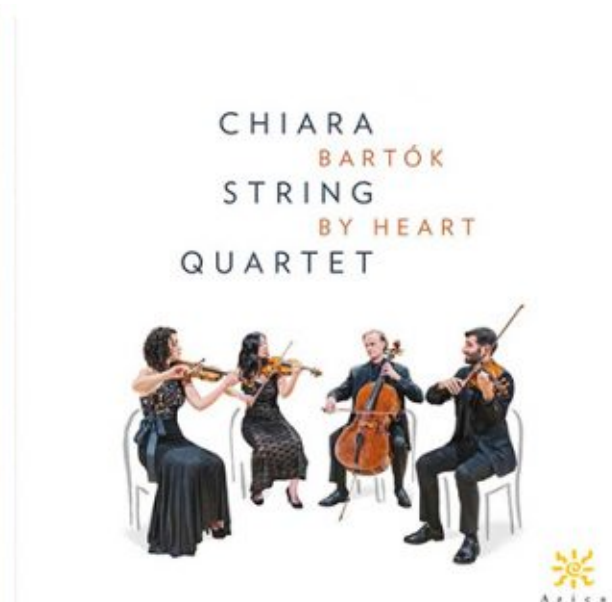
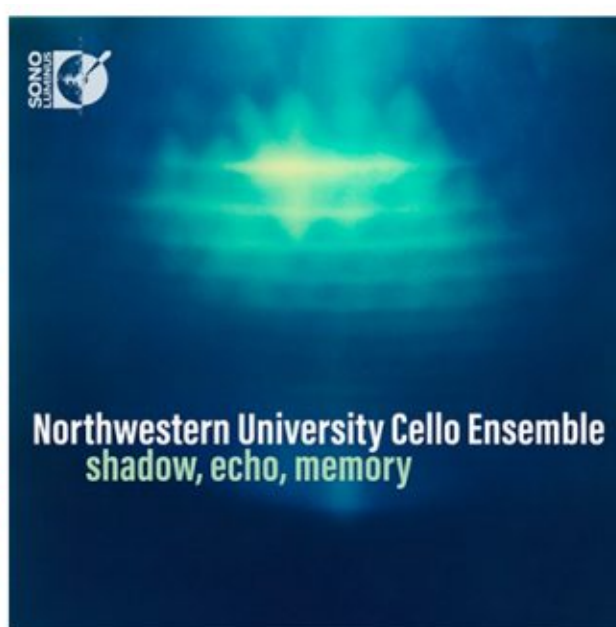


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# 13 Best Classical Music Recordings Of The Year

December 27, 2016 By [Keith Powers](#)



In the world of recordings, there are many loud voices. Operas. Boxed sets of collected works. Symphonic cycles. Here are some smaller voices — chamber settings for the most part, mainly from Boston-area composers or performers, or

with some personal connection. A baker's dozen of works captured this year.

**1. "Portraits and Tributes," composer Scott Wheeler, pianist Don Berman (Bridge Records)**

Solo miniatures, tributes to and acknowledgments of friends. These are indeed portraits: the canvas, a keyboard. Wheeler works from the personal to the universal, not the other way around. This album is a genuine way to pay homage to friends and mentors.

**2. "Partita for 8 Voices," Roomful of Teeth (New Amsterdam)**

"Partita" won Caroline Shaw the 2013 Pulitzer. Partnering with Kanye (not on this album) won her Twitter. Both well deserved. An active composer, violinist, vocalist — one of Roomful's original members — Shaw continues to add to a career that serves as a model for the next generation of musicians.

**3. "Charles Wuorinen: Eighth Symphony, Fourth Piano Concerto," Boston Symphony Orchestra with James Levine and Peter Serkin (Bridge Records)**

An echo of what was meant to be at Symphony Hall. Challenging music, led by a conductor who specializes in it, performed by a pianist who does the same. Give this as a gift to yourself — for study, meditation and, perhaps eventually, illumination.

**4. "Shadow, Echo, Memory," Northwestern University Cello Ensemble (Sono Luminus)**

Listen to the Mahler "Adagietto" and you will never believe this is 21 cellos. Don't for a minute think this instrumentation is a novelty — groups like the Boston Cello Quartet and the 12 Cellists of the Berlin Philharmonic are vigorously developing this repertory while also giving riveting performances.

## **5. "Transformations," Aaron Tindall (Bridge Records)**

You may have multiple recordings of Gunther Schuller's contrabass tuba concerto, but do you have one that includes David Lang's arranged "Are You Experienced?" for electric tuba (that's a thing) and narrator (the great late composer [Steven Stucky](#))?

## **6. "Lift: Chamber Music by Elena Ruehr," Irina Muresanu on violin, Jennifer Kloetzel on cello, Sarah Bob on piano, Ethan Filner on viola (Avie Records)**

Inventive music by a composer who never does otherwise. Ruehr pays tribute to friends (including these four musicians) and inspirations: Amy Beach, Oscar Peterson, William Bolcom, Malala Yousafzai.

## **7. "The Complete Songs of Virgil Thomson," Florestan Recital Project (New World Records)**

Can't love all of these songs (almost 80), but admire these artists without hesitation. Boston-based ensemble led by pianist Alison d'Amato and baritone Aaron Engebretson.

## **8. "Words Fail," Yevgeny Kutik on violin, John Novacek on piano (Marquis)**

Want a 2017 resolution? Follow Timo Andres and his music. The title track is his, with the composer on piano. There's also music by Mendelssohn, Mahler, Gandolfi, Auerbach and others. Recorded in Rockport's Shalin Liu Performance Center, the recording is full of ambient, warm, intimate sound.

## **9. "Strauss/Rachmaninov" sonatas, Sergey Antonov on cello, Ilya Kazantsev on piano (Bostonia Records)**

If we call this playing "Russian intensity" we'll get mail. So we just did.

## **10. "Infusion," Jason Vieaux on guitar, Julien Labro on accordion (Azica Records)**

Crazy combinations work beautifully. Music of Leo Brouwer, Piazzolla, Metheny, Roland Orzabal. Vieaux — through his arrangements, online teaching, historic founding of the guitar department at Curtis and performances — influences many musical lives.

## **11. "Andrew Norman: Play," Boston Modern Orchestra Project (BMOP/sound)**

Winner of this year's Grawemeyer Prize. Of course, Norman's music was being explored right here in Boston before international committees took note. BMOP is an musical treasure in our own backyard, not to be taken for granted.

## **12. "Ginastera: One Hundred," Oberlin Orchestra, Raphael Jiménez conducts, with Gil Shaham on violin, Orli Shaham on piano (Oberlin Music)**

Dances, solo and duo sonatas, and the angular harp concerto. You missed the Ginastera centenary, until now. Beautiful quote from the composer, remembered by his daughter in the notes: "I do not search for things; I find them."

## **13. "Bartók, By Heart," Chiara String Quartet (Azica)**


That's right, by heart. All six quartets. Even though you can't tell on the recording. Composer Gabriela Lena Frank contributes liner notes — worth it for that alone.

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