Planet of the Apes. Conducted by Pete Anthony. Sony Classical SK 89666 (2001), CD.
Proof of Life. Conducted by Pete Anthony. Varèse Sarabande 302 066 208 2 (2000), CD.
Red Dragon. Conducted by Pete Anthony. Decca 289 473 248-2 (2002), CD.
A Simple Plan. Conducted by Artie Kane. Chapter III COM 0105 (1998), CD.
Sleepy Hollow. Conducted by Allan Wilson. Hollywood HR-62262-2 (1999), CD.
Sommersby. Conducted by Jonathan Sheffer and Thomas Pasatieri. Elektra 9 61491-2 (1993), CD.
Spider-Man. Conducted by Pete Anthony. Columbia CD 86681 (2002), CD.
Spider-Man 2. Conducted by Pete Anthony. Columbia CD 92842 (2004), CD.
The Nightmare Before Christmas. Conducted by J.A.C. Redford. Disney Records 60855-7 (1993), CD.
To Die For. Conducted by Richard Stone. Varèse Sarabande VSD-5646 (1995), CD.

**BRIEFLY NOTED**

By Rick Anderson

Memory Pieces. Ensemble de la Rue / William Kempster. EdlR Productions 200502, 2005.

The very fine Ensemble de la Rue has gathered an interesting and attractive program for this, its third album. By opening the disc with John Taverner’s majestic votive antiphon Ave Dei Patris filia, the group demonstrates both its unwillingness to be cowed by tremendous technical demands and its ability to communicate powerfully the emotional depth of Taverner’s music; the sopranos’ almost effortless handling of this work’s bruising tessitura is particularly noteworthy, and helps make this performance a deeply moving tour de force. The program then continues with two motets composed by the ensemble’s namesake, Pierre de la Rue: Ave Regina and Salvus Mater salvatoris. The latter, an ode to one of de la Rue’s benefactors thinly disguised as a typical Marian motet, is a long and texturally complex work, while Ave Regina uses many of the same compositional techniques within the confines of a smaller musical structure. Josquin Desprez’ richly emotional setting of Plaxit autem David follows, and is again performed with both authority and sensitivity. It is at this point, however, that the program takes a slightly startling turn into the twentieth century, with the disc’s title piece: a three-part work (with a brief prelude) by Stephen Adams titled Memory Pieces. Based on a rather surrealist text by Ania Walwicz, this composition is both physically demanding and conceptually fascinating, dealing with questions of memory both political and personal. The music is tonal, but in a somewhat slippery way, and although it is quite beautiful in its own way it does not necessarily fit comfortably alongside the works by Taverner, Desprez and de la Rue. Nevertheless, the singers acquit themselves marvelously on this fiendishly difficult piece and imbue it with a luminosity of tone that is really quite special. Recorded in the sympathetic acoustic of the Faith and Life Chapel of Augustana Faculty in Camrose, Canada, all of these performances shimmer with warmth, and the disc is heartily recommended to all collections.
Thomas Tallis. The Complete Works. Chapelle du Roi / Alistair Dixon. Signum SIGCD060, 2004.

The seed that eventually grew into this magnificent nine-volume boxed set was planted in 1995, when the newly-formed Chapelle du Roi presented the complete works of Thomas Tallis in a series of six concerts. It was subsequently decided that the choir would record the entire repertoire as well, releasing discs at a rate of roughly one per year. Ten years later, this box makes it possible to purchase all of the discs at once (though not, unfortunately, at any significant discount: U. S. shoppers can buy the individual discs for $16–$19 each, or the boxed set for between $160 and $230, depending on one's choice of retailer). This ambitious project not only called for a significant investment of rehearsal and recording time, but also required director Alistair Dixon to prepare new performing editions of several previously unpublished works, all of which will be made available commercially in the future through the Cantiones Press. Signum Records, now called Signum Classics, was founded especially for this recording project. The result of this tremendous investment of time, effort, and capital is a stunning musical achievement—not only in terms of scale and completeness, but in musical quality as well. The Chapelle du Roi achieves a warmth and clarity of sound that is impressive in its own right, but there is also a richness and depth to the choir's tone that is unusual in a one-voice-per-part ensemble. The unforgiving nature of this arrangement makes the group's tonal purity, for example on the psalm setting *Blessed are those that be undefiled*, all the more thrilling. Perhaps most exciting, though, is the choir's spectacular performance of the forty-voice motet *Spem in alium*, which is an unalloyed triumph. On a composition usually performed with a certain level of weightiness and bombast, Dixon elicits an unusually delicate and detailed performance from his group without sacrificing any of the composition's majesty. The only obvious quibble one might have with this set is the flimsy box in which it is packaged, and the fact that the "spine" of the box offers no title information. A library might well choose to discard the box (and accompanying seven-page booklet) altogether and simply shelve the discs individually; each comes with the full cover art and liner notes provided at the time of original release. But whether acquired individually or in the box, these recordings should be considered a standard acquisition for any serious classical collection.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Auerbach Plays Mozart: Complete Keyboard Works from Ages 5 to 9. Lera Auerbach. Arabesque Z6795, 2004.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Early String Quartets & Divertimenti. Cuarteto Casals. Harmonia Mundi HMI 987060.62, 2005.

Both of these releases feature music written by Mozart during his early childhood and adolescence. The Auerbach disc presents the entirety of two notebooks containing music composed by the young Mozart and transcribed by his father: the first, known as Nannerl's Notebook (named for his beloved older sister), consists of brief pieces composed between 1761 and 1763, when the boy was between the ages of five and seven, and the second is the London Notebook, which contains more complex and advanced pieces written by the still-prepubescent Mozart while he was under the tutelage of Johann Christian Bach in England. The recording by the Cuarteto Casals focuses on the earliest string quartets in Mozart's oeuvre, beginning with K. 80 (written in a single night when the composer was fourteen years old) and ending with K. 173, which was composed three years later.

The subject of Mozart's preternatural musical talent has been so thoroughly flogged over the course of the last two centuries that it hardly seems worth bringing up again, even at the time of his 250th birthday. And so many jaded critics have pointed out the relatively low level of sophistication on display in these very early piano works that one takes a real risk in publicly expressing enthusiasm for them. But to step back from such concerns and simply listen to these pieces, especially in graceful and intelligent performances such as Auerbach provides here, is to be amazed.
again (and perhaps ever so slightly horror-stricken) by a compositional talent that is more than just prodigious—it is something that borders on the freakish. Of course it is true that these miniatures do not begin to approach the brilliance and inventiveness of Mozart’s mature work. But the composer was five years old. Having only recently emerged from toddlerhood, the young Mozart shows himself to have a grasp not only the basics of tonal theory, but also of binary structure and of the appropriate use of suspensions, not to mention a rudimentary understanding of thematic development. And as simple and relatively unsophisticated as they are, these brief pieces really are quite enjoyable. Auerbach is reported to have recorded the contents of both Nannerl’s Notebook and the London Notebook in a single sitting, and while one may or may not wish to listen to them the same way, there is no question that her performances are charming and insightful. The same is abundantly true of the Cuarteto Casals’ accounts of the quartets and divertimenti included in their three-disc package. This young ensemble brings an admirable spirit of fun and energy to the music that manages to point up both Mozart’s musical brilliance (which, of course, would not be fully realized until later works), and his youthful exuberance. Both releases are strongly recommended to all classical collections.

**Ludwig van Beethoven.** Piano sonatas. Fazil Say. Naïve V 5016, 2005.

Since his first recording in 1998, the Turkish piano prodigy Fazil Say has been one to divide critics. While audiences typically eat up his flamboyantly virtuosic performances, the press has at times sniffed at what some believe to be an unnecessarily strident and even shallow approach to the repertoire. Say’s take on three of Beethoven’s most beloved keyboard works is not likely to change any minds on either side of the divide. He begins the program by quite emphatically putting the “passion” in the F minor “Appassionata” sonata, swinging the syncopations and pushing the dynamic range to its expressive limit, at times playing so softly that you strain to hear and at others attacking the keyboard with wild abandon. The result is certainly exciting; whether or not one finds it compellingly musical is a different question. His approach to the C major sonata no. 21, op. 53 (“Waldstein”) is similarly bold, but interestingly, Say’s take on the Sonata in D Minor, No. 17, op. 31 (“The Tempest”) is more restrained. It is this performance that most unambiguously rewards the listener who has not been bludgeoned into insensibility by the previous two; here Say’s technical virtuosity and his musical intelligence combine to shed new light on the subtle shadings of Beethoven’s expressive genius. Regardless of its overall merits as a listening experience, this disc will serve most classical collections well as a vivid example of bravura piano technique.

**All My Heart: Deborah Voigt Sings American Songs.** Deborah Voigt; Brian Zeger. Angel 57964, 2005.

Soprano Deborah Voigt can claim the unusual distinction of being almost as respected for her recital performances as she is for her operatic work, which has been reliably top-notch since her debut in the mid-1980s. However, she has made her biggest impact as an interpreter of Germanic works, especially those of Richard Wagner, and as a facility for German opera does not necessarily translate into a similar talent for American art song, one might be forgiven for approaching this recording with a bit of trepidation. The program on *All My Heart* includes songs by Charles Ives, Leonard Bernstein, Ben Moore, Charles Tomlinson Griffes, and Amy Beach—a broad stylistic range, to be sure, one that requires flexibility and delicacy as well as the courage of one’s musical convictions. Happily, Voigt brings all of the above to this recording, and although her voice is every bit as rich and powerful as one would expect, she also does a good (if not entirely perfect) job of subordinating its power to the needs of the song. She is perhaps least consistently convincing on the Ives material: when one sings Ives with too straight a face, one runs the risk of becoming the butt of Ives’ humor. This is a particular danger with such obviously light and whimsical fare as “The Circus Band” and “The Side-Show,” both of which are presented here in a rather heavy-handed manner. Her take on “At the River” is much more satisfying, however, and she
displays more consistent grace and subtlety on the eight Ben Moore songs. Voigt also displays a real affinity for Amy Beach’s three settings of Robert Browning texts. She seems most comfortable on the fulsome Griffes songs, though not all listeners will find her full-throated approach agreeable. One might wish that the microphone had been set a bit closer to the singer, but the sound is clear and clean and nicely approximates what one would expect to hear in a good seat in a recital hall.

Thelonious Monk Quartet with John Coltrane. At Carnegie Hall. Blue Note 35173, 2005.

The story behind this release is almost as wonderful as the music. In 1957, John Coltrane’s drug use had become such a problem that he was fired by Miles Davis. He spent much of that year in Thelonious Monk’s combo, trying (without much early success) to learn Monk’s notoriously strange and difficult compositions and working out his various personal demons onstage at the Five Spot, where Monk had an ongoing engagement. The fact that none of these performances was ever recorded has been a matter of garment-rending regret in the jazz community ever since. However, in November of that year the Thelonious Monk Quartet (which included bassist Ahmed Abdul-Malik and drummer Shadow Wilson) recorded two half-hour sets as part of an all-star benefit concert at Carnegie Hall that also featured Chet Baker, Zoot Sims, Billie Holiday, and Ray Charles, among others. These concerts actually were recorded, by Voice of America—but as luck would have it, the tapes were lost. Almost fifty years later, a supervisor in the recording lab at the Library of Congress was going through some old tapes that were slated for digitization, when he noticed a set of ten-inch acetate tapes in boxes labeled simply “Carnegie Hall Jazz 1957.” Handwritten on one of the boxes was the legend “T. Monk.” This was exciting enough, but the real import of his find did not sink in until Appelbaum began listening and recognized Coltrane’s unique saxophone sound. What Appelbaum had found was not just a previously unknown Monk recording, but the holy grail of Monk recordings—beautifully recorded and in pristine condition.

This disc has been received rapturously by the jazz world, and rightly so. Not only is the sound quality of these tapes remarkably high, but the performances sparkle as well. Coltrane’s tone is warmer and less vinegary than usual, and his solos on “Bye-Ya” and the wonderfully knotty “Evidence” are especially fine. Monk sounds a bit subdued, but not unpleasantly so, and the rhythm section of Wilson and Abdul-Malik gives the two soloists a strong but fluid foundation with which to work. It is unfortunate that the bass wasn’t miked a bit more closely, and even more unfortunate that the final version of “Epistrophy” is incomplete. But there is no question that this disc should find a home in every jazz collection.

Matt Renzi. The Cave. Fresh Sound New Talent FCNT 226, 2005.

Saxophonist Matt Renzi leads a piano-less trio on this album, a fact which, along with his well-established penchant for discursive free improvisation, may deter some potential listeners from giving The Cave a fair hearing. And indeed, those who do not want to invest any effort in their listening or who simply cannot bear the sound of small-ensemble jazz without middle-register chordal support will probably not find much to enjoy here. But Renzi’s approach to improvisation is refreshingly selfless and musical, and his interaction with bassist David Ambrosio does quite a bit to fill up the harmonic space that usually exists between a saxophone soloist and the rhythm section. (Drummer Russell Meisner fills out the trio with robust but sensitive playing of his own.) Highlights come early on this program, with “Stand Clear (of the Closing Doors),” on which Renzi and Ambrosio play a subdued but lyrical head in lovely counterpoint before going off on separate but linked improvisatory paths; there are moments near the middle that recall the similarly intuitive interactions of Bill Evans and Scott LaFaro. When Renzi switches to clarinet on “Stones for Sand” and Ambrosio plays a subdued but lyrical head in lovely counterpoint before going off on separate but linked improvisatory paths; there are moments near the middle that recall the similarly intuitive interactions of Bill Evans and Scott LaFaro. When Renzi switches to clarinet on “Stones for Sand” and Ambrosio picks up his bow, the resulting tonal blend is eerily beautiful. Renzi’s use of multiphonics on “In Circles,” while admirably restrained, comes across as less a musical statement than a parlor trick, but his gentle and tasteful use of slap-tonguing later in the same piece is both technically
impressive and musically effective. The album ends with an extended three-part suite entitled “Three Stories,” which draws on musical themes Renzi absorbed during a recent period of extended travel. The prospect of a thirteen-minute jazz suite may be daunting, but Renzi and crew make the time go by quickly by keeping things lyrical and disciplined. This is a lovely album that increases in apparent depth with repeated listenings.

**Gato Libre.** Strange Village. Onoff/ Muzak MZCO-1073, 2005.

Forget everything you thought you knew about trumpeter Natsuki Tamura, whose previous work has been a wild amalgam of spiky experimental jazz and equally forbidding jazz-rock fusion. His wife, pianist Satoko Fujii, has also created some fairly difficult (though always intelligent and usually very rewarding) music in the past. As Gato Libre, however, Tamura, Fujii, classical guitarist Kazuhiko Tsumura and bassist Norikatsu Koreyasu have made a record of surprisingly soft and lyrical beauty that at times borders on flat-out impressionism. For this recording, Fujii plays accordion instead of piano, and while the group’s music does not generally lack a rhythmic pulse, the lack of a drummer leads the musicians to play with a feeling that suggests the progress of steadily windblown clouds more than it does that of an inexorably advancing machine. While there are moments of free improvisation, as on the faintly tango-flavored “Dance,” those moments are not necessarily among the album’s most compelling; for the most part this music seems to be fairly thoroughly composed and is the better for it. In addition to whiffs of haughty postmodern tango, listen for the occasional subtle incursion of Eastern European folk music (as on the relatively sprightly “Welcome Party”) and a probably unintentional reference to a Christmas song (in the head to “Welcome Party,” which draws startlingly on the melody to *Oh Come, All Ye Faithful*). This album is yet another interesting turn in what has already been a fascinating, if sometimes baffling, musical career for two of the more idiosyncratic figures in modern jazz.

**Maria Schneider Orchestra.** Live at the Jazz Standard: Days of Wine and Roses. ArtistShare 0017, 2005.

More than most, Maria Schneider’s big band deserves to be called an “orchestra”—not only due to the complex richness of its sound, but because of the highly sophisticated and deeply musical way that Schneider makes use of its impressive resources. In 2004 Schneider won a Grammy for her *Concert in the Garden* album, and the ensuing acclaim led her to reissue this, her first live recording, which had its first release in 2000 (and was originally packaged with a bottle of wine, making it impossible for fans in some states to receive copies through the mail). The program is a pleasing mix of early Schneider compositions and jazz standards, the latter seemingly chosen for their capacity to sustain lush and innovative arrangements. They include the title track, probably Henry Mancini’s most widely known composition (after the *Pink Panther* theme, that is) and a richly inventive setting of “Over the Rainbow” that opens with an alto saxophone variation on the original melody rather than the familiar tune itself. Charles Pillow is playing a bit sharp here, but the arrangement itself is ravishing. Schneider’s own “Bird Count” is a bebop-inflected blues composition that builds thrillingly from a piano-trio opening section into densely-arranged full-band counterpoint before exploding into a joyful shout and then subsiding into a round of solos. On her setting of Ivan Lins’ “Comencar de Novo,” Schneider’s more contemplative side comes out as she gives harp-like lines to the piano and gradually adds both instrumental density and harmonic tension. Although this is clearly the work of a younger and somewhat less experienced composer and arranger, *Live at the Jazz Standard* also shows that the success of *Concert in the Garden* was no fluke: Maria Schneider is a major talent, one whose best and most productive years may actually still be ahead of her. Highly recommended to all jazz collections.

**French Preservation New Orleans Jazz Band.** Jumpin’ in Irigny, Volumes 1 and 2. Jazz Crusade JCCD-3110 and JCCD-3111, 2005.
Trombonist Big Bill Bissonnette established the Jazz Crusade label in 1960, and his little company could hardly be more aptly named: Bissonnette has been a tireless crusader on behalf of traditional New Orleans jazz ever since, organizing bands and recording the work of others for a small but international audience of similarly-inclined jazz fanatics. The international nature of his project is illustrated nicely by this two-disc series of live recordings made in December of 2004 at the Hot Club of Lyon, a jazz club located in Irigny, France. The band is a local ensemble that includes Jean-Pierre Alessi (alto and tenor saxophone), Henry Lemaire (banjo), Joel Gregoriades (bass), and Clody Gratiot (drums); on these recordings Bissonnette is featured as guest trombonist and singer, along with cornetist Fred Vigorito. Everyone’s playing is exquisitely tasteful—energetic and inventive, but never frantic or rushed. Alessi plays in a style strongly reminiscent of the early recordings of Lester Young, with lots of rich, fruity vibrato; Gregoriades is the band’s secret weapon, a clever and melodically inspired bassist who never draws attention to himself but constantly enriches the band’s harmonic and rhythmic mix. Lemaire is a very fine banjo player in the Manny Sayles mold, but should have tuned his instrument a bit more carefully in preparation for this performance, as is most painfully clear on an otherwise fine rendition of “Mama’s Gone Goodbye.” The sound quality on both discs is quite good, although there are occasional minor editing problems (such as the awkward transition between the first two tracks of the second disc). Comprehensive New Orleans jazz collections should own just about everything released on the Jazz Crusade label, but this one can probably be considered an optional purchase for most libraries.

Atomic Platters: Cold War Music from the Golden Age of Homeland Security.
Bear Family BCD 16065 FM, 2005.

The German Bear Family label has long distinguished itself as a world-leading curator of classic American and European folk, bluegrass, country, and pop music. Its boxed sets of vintage recordings by such eminent figures as Hank Snow, the Stanley Brothers, Bill Monroe and Wanda Jackson are legendary—not only for their exhaustiveness, the beauty of their packaging, and the depth of their annotation, but for the consistently high sound quality that comes from insisting on using master tapes as source material wherever possible.

Even by Bear Family standards, Atomic Platters is an eye-poppingly attractive set. Presented in a large (12" x 12" x 2") box, it includes five generously-packed audio CDs, a DVD, and a large and handsomely hardbound book containing extensive notes on all of the discs’ contents as well as a long essay on Cold War-era American popular culture, all presented in both German and English. What the discs contain is a fascinating collection of songs, radio spots, and public-service announcements issued during the 1950s and 1960s, when Cold War tension was at its height. There are songs with titles like “Krushchev and the Devil” (by Jay Chevalier), “Bert the Turtle (The Duck and Cover Song)” (by Dick “Two Ton” Baker), and “Great Atomic Power” (by the Louvin Brothers). Artists represented include black gospel quartets—the Golden Gate Quartet’s “Atom and Evil” is one of the set’s most beautiful songs—as well as rockabilly guitar pickers, old-time brother duos, comedy acts (Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan are here singing “A Russian Love Song”), and others far too numerous to mention. Sprinkled throughout the musical offerings are public-service announcements issued by celebrities of the time, all of them exhorting American citizens to vigilance and preparedness in the face of the twin threats of Communism and the Bomb. The audio portion of the set also includes the entirety of two spoken-word albums of the period, If the Bomb Falls and The Complacent American. On the DVD can be seen nine vintage short films promoting anti-Communism and civil defense.

The weakness of this set lies not in its content, but in its presentation. While the music and spoken-word material collected here is of great interest and potential utility to research collections, it is unfortunate that compilers Bill Geerhart and Ken Sitz chose to present the material with such an attitude of snide and overweening condescension. If Cold War paranoia looks funny
to us now, with fifty years of safe distance between ourselves and our benighted progenitors, it may be because we forget how close the world actually came to nuclear war during that period, and how rational the fear of such a calamity was (even if responses to that fear were often less than rational). Approaching a culture or time period with the intent to ridicule it rarely yields much in the way of useful insight, and that approach is what keeps the critical and explanatory content of Atomic Platters from offering much more than comforting reassurance to those who share the compilers' facile scorn for Americans of the 1950s and 1960s. (The more timely political subtext of this set is made obvious by its subtitle.) The content itself, though, is a treasure trove, and this set should find a home in any library collection supporting programs in cultural studies or popular music.

Massacre. Killing Time. ReR/Fred Records ReR/FR010, 2005.

When a band called Massacre releases an album called Killing Time, one might be forgiven for thinking that he knows what to expect: either an unrelieved hour of horrific, ear-splitting noise, or maybe a suite of sulphurous death metal. But when this album was first issued in its original (and much shorter) form in 1981, the most surprising thing about it was its relative approachability. The word “relative,” however, is key. Guitarist Fred Frith, bassist Bill Laswell, and drummer Fred Maher were all stars of what was then a thriving avant-garde art and music scene in downtown New York, and all were graduates of the ear-splitting noise school. Frith had made a name for himself in the 1970s as a member of British bands the Art Bears and Henry Cow, and more recently by performing concerts during which he would lay his guitars flat on the table and drop things on them to produce various kinds of otherworldly racket. Laswell had dabbled in noise as well, but was also involved with the funk crowd and the nascent hip-hop scene. Fred Maher, with Laswell, was half of a recently-formed experimental funk ensemble called Material. Together as Massacre, the three created a sound that was jagged and strange, but quite listenable and at times thrilling in its juxtaposition of weird noises and conventionally compelling rhythms. The trio’s debut album was recorded partly onstage in Paris and partly in Brooklyn’s OAO Studio and originally released on the Celluloid label. Unfortunately, a meddling engineer added reverb and increased the tape speed somewhat, subtly but noticeably changing the sound of the album. Those problems remained on earlier CD reissues, but are corrected on this remastered and expanded version, which was overseen by Frith and includes two previously unreleased tracks as well as several outtakes and one live track that was originally issued as part of a Frith solo album. (One of the previously unreleased pieces is a hilarious deconstruction of the Shadows’ surf-rock classic “F.B.I.”) This music remains as fresh and exciting today as it was 25 years ago, and is a vital document of a wonderful and all-too-brief period in New York’s musical history.