



## Listen to This | John Fleming, Times performing arts critic

### James MacMillan

**Album:** *James MacMillan: Seven Last Words from the Cross* (Naxos)

**In stores:** Now

**Why we care:** This is one of a spate of recent releases of works by MacMillan, who turns 50 in July. He will conduct the Florida Orchestra next season in his *The Sacrifice: Three Interludes*. A pair of stellar pieces by the Scottish composer, *The Confession of Isobel Gowdie* and *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, a percussion concerto, were previously performed by the orchestra.

**Why we like it:** *Seven Last Words*, which sets the last seven sentences uttered by Christ on the cross, and three other choral pieces by MacMillan are given fine performances by the Dmitri Ensemble, conducted by Graham Ross.

**Reminds us of:** Bach's Passions

**Download this:** *It is finished*

**Grade:** B+



### The Soloist

**Album:** *The Soloist: Music from the Motion Picture* (Deutsche Grammophon)

**In stores:** Now

**Why we care:** Beethoven is the favorite composer of Nathaniel Ayers, the onetime Juilliard student who spent years on the streets of Los Angeles and is the subject of the movie *The Soloist*. Thus the soundtrack consists entirely of extracts of works by Mr. B with the exception of one cue from a Bach cello partita.

**Why we like it:** Sure, a purist would argue that it makes more sense simply to listen to great Beethoven recordings, but it's interesting to hear how producer Dario Marinelli chopped and channeled the music to fit the film.

**Reminds us of:** Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*, which is excerpted the most

**Download this:** *Sister* (Triple Concerto)

**Grade:** B



### Thomas Lanners

**Album:** *Ned Rorem: Piano Works, Volume 2* (Centaur)

**In stores:** Now

**Why we care:** Lanners, a professor of piano at Oklahoma State University, lived in St. Petersburg from age 11 through 18. But this release is of more than local interest. Rorem is acclaimed for his art songs, but his piano music is much less well-known. With this recording and the previous volume, Lanners has recorded nearly all the composer's output for solo piano.

**Why we like it:** Lanners is an excellent, expressive interpreter of Rorem, whose piano music ranges from the fiendishly difficult *Eight Etudes* to the glamorously romantic *Song & Dance*. Curiosities include *Sixty Notes for Judy*, a 60th birthday present to Judy Collins.

**Reminds us of:** Rorem's amazing versatility

**Download this:** *Barcarolles*

**Grade:** A

