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# THE ARTY SEMITE



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## Little Midsummer's Night Music

benjamin Ivry

Even as summer winds down, classical CD releases continue apace.

A pellucid live performance on DVD from [VAI Music](#) of Mozart's "The Magic Flute" from the 1964 Salzburg Festival is one of the season's best choices. It's conducted by the Hungarian Jewish maestro István Kertész, who died in a swimming accident at Herzliya beach in 1973. In Salzburg, Kertész already possessed the required wisdom for Mozart's profound score. The American Jewish coloratura soprano [Roberta Peters](#) incarnates a nightmare Jewish mother as the berserk Queen of the Night.

Another Jewish diva of a different genre is Hungarian pianist Márta Kurtág, wife of the composer [György Kurtág](#). An unsurpassed interpreter of her husband's music, which she has recorded for the [Budapest Music Center \(BMC\)](#) label, Mrs. Kurtág is one pianist unimpressed by commercial considerations. She studied Beethoven's rambunctiously finger-busting "Diabelli Variations" for a half-century before recording the piece in 1999, and that thrilling, soulfully sonorous recording is only now available on CD from [BMC](#).

Moving away from the keyboard, the online CD vendor [ArkivMusic.com](#) has reprinted a program of modern [guitar music](#) played by Todd Seelye titled "Sheer Pluck," after an amusingly quirky work by American Jewish composer Milton Babbitt, which is a highlight of the CD. "Sheer Pluck" also includes the uncompromisingly inventive, yet graceful, "Five Intermezzi" by Berlin-born Jewish composer [Ursula Mamlok](#).

Listeners in search of Old Testament exotica will want to hear another [ArkivMusic.com](#) reprint, of Arthur Honegger's biblical oratorio, "King David," led in 1961 by the underrated Greek-born Jewish conductor [Maurice Abravanel](#) and starring the dulcet-toned Israeli soprano [Netania Davrath](#). As a deliciously wicked Witch of Endor, [Madeleine Milhaud](#), the wife — and cousin — of French Jewish composer Darius Milhaud, is a delightfully fiery spirit.

So is the violin virtuoso [Ida Haendel](#) in her soaring 1957 live performances of concertos by Beethoven and Sibelius conducted by the ardent podium giant and Auschwitz survivor [Karel Ančerl](#), which have just been released for the first time ever by the Czech label [Supraphon](#) and are must-hearing not just for summer, but for all seasons.

Watch Roberta Peters bring down the house in the "The Magic Flute," at the 1964 Salzburg Festival:



Roberta Peters as the Queen of the Night.

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