

Year in Review

## Our verdict is in: This was the year's best music

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*From Feist and the Roots to Radiohead, Miles Davis and Marc-André Hamelin, here are the year's greatest hits in the eyes (well, the ears) of The Globe's music critics*

It's almost 2012 - so naturally, it's time for a roundup of the best music that 2011 had to offer. Here are the Top 10 albums of the year (and the best in the classical category) according to The Globe's music critics.

### ELISSA POOLE'S PICKS

#### 1. Ann Southam: Returnings

Eve Egoyan, piano

**So different from the joyful minimalism of her earlier music, the late Ann Southam's final works for piano, written for Eve Egoyan, are spare and haunting, inhabiting a circumscribed world where the expressive resonance of even the simplest musical element is questioned, and where resolution is always possible but rarely permanent.**

2. Hector Berlioz: *Nuits d'été*; Handel: *Arias*

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, mezzo-soprano; Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan, conductor

The now-legendary Lorraine Hunt Lieberson sang Berlioz's *Nuits d'été* in public only once, in 1995, but fortunately the microphones were there to capture that luminous performance, and it has finally been released. The orchestra may not be as suave as we'd like, but the singing is in a class all its own.

3. Martin Arnold: *Aberrare*

Quatuor Bozzini

When is a string quartet not a string quartet? When it's a string quartet by Martin Arnold, which is as likely to conjure a primitive consort of stone flutes or the musical ruminations of a medieval monk. Live inside this music for a while and consciousness alters.

4. *Poesie*: Orchestral Songs by Richard Strauss

Diana Damrau, soprano; Munich Philharmonic, Christian Thielemann, conductor

Silvery sound, beautiful diction and an extraordinary range of expressive nuance give soprano Diana Damrau's captivating performances of Richard Strauss's orchestral songs – many of them written for his wife, with piano accompaniment only – the kind of intimacy we rarely get outside of chamber music.

5. Max Reger: *Piano Concerto in F Minor*; Richard Strauss: *Burleske in D Minor*

Marc-André Hamelin, piano; Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, Ilan Volkov, conductor

How often do we listen to a late romantic concerto we haven't heard a hundred times? Gone are the memory cues; gone the baggage of the canon. And who better than Marc-André Hamelin to make a formidable case for Max Reger's virtuosic, semi-modernist tribute to Brahms and let listeners decide for themselves where it fits?

6. Béla Bartók, Richard Strauss, Edvard Grieg: *Violin Sonatas*

Vilde Frang, violin; Michail Lifits, piano

Vilde Frang plays Bartok with astounding precision, but her performance is as potent as it is clear. Her instincts are also astute in late romantic repertoire, evident in her supple phrasing and tonal nuance. No wonder the music industry has its eyes on this young Norwegian violinist.