

# The final take

*Music Ambur Braid can't live without*

Soprano Ambur Braid had no preconceptions about how to play the role of Dalinda in the Canadian Opera Company's autumn production of Handel's *Ariodante*, so she was as surprised by the limping, cowed, abused character who emerged from rehearsals as audiences would be by her portrayal of damaged psychological goods still faithful to her abuser. There was nothing surprising, though, about the musical and dramatic intensity Braid brought to the role, nor the accuracy and aplomb she brought to her four high-lying solo arias. *Ariodante* was the first of three back-to-back assignments for the Terrace-BC native in Toronto this season, with the second being 12 performances as the Queen of the Night in the COC's *Die Zauberflöte* this Jan./Feb. This has become a signature role over the past year, the vehicle for her English debut at English National Opera in Feb./Mar. 2016, followed by performances for Calgary Opera (Apr.) and her German debut at Opera Frankfurt last Dec. Her third major Toronto assignment comes next May, when she moves to Tapestry Opera to create the title role of *Oksana G.*, a full-length piece by composer Aaron Murphy and librettist Colleen Murphy that tell the story of a young victim of sex trafficking whose recruiter falls in love with her. Off the opera mainstage, Braid's calendar shows broad tastes in concert repertoire—from creating Erik Ross's *The Living Spectacle* cycle for Canadian Art Song Project to recitals pairing Rachmaninoff and Sibelius (for Music Niagara) or Verdi, Mozart and Puccini (for Toronto's Casa Loma). It's an eclectic mix that needs some adept switching of musical gears, though that's the way Braid likes it: "I'm not the greatest at vegetating."

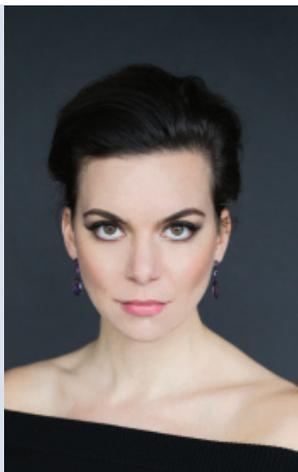
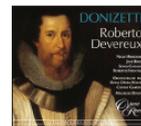


PHOTO: JENNIFER TOOLE

A massive debut album. You'll pass out, it's so good. A mentor gave it to me in 2013 and I took it as a not-so-subtle hint to work on my technique. It worked.

## Overture, Roberto Devereux



## Opera Rara: ORC 24

This is one of my favourite overtures to dance to. The tempo is fabulous and when the timpani come in, life just can't get any better. This is a fabulous recording from everyone involved.

## Your Arsenal

## Morrissey EMI: CDP 7997942



"You're the One for Me, Fatty" is the ultimate love song.

## Keep Me in My Plane WhoMadeWho



**Gomma: 120**  
One of the best albums to have on your smartphone when you walk around a city. Their songs always make me feel like I'm walking (purposefully) through a street party nobody else was invited to.

## I'm Your Man

## Leonard Cohen Sony/Columbia: 4606425

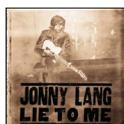


I particularly like "Take This Waltz." May this legend rest in peace. 🕊️

## Lie to me

## Jonny Lang A&M: 5406402

This was one of the first albums I ever memorized and Johnny was my first crush. The intro to the track, "Darker Side," changed my life when I heard it. It was just my favourite thing on the planet. Shut your eyes and give it a listen. Also, note that he was only 15. Call. The. Cops.



exciting. And then I wept. It was the most thrilling live performance I'd ever seen and it still amps me up.

## Hail to the thief

## Radiohead Capitol: 5845432

The lead track, "There There. (The Boney King of Nowhere)" is pure sex!



## Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris

**Columbia: 779**  
"Jackie" ("Le chanson de Jacky" in the original French version) just makes me laugh.



## David Bowie

I'll take anything by Bowie, but I especially love *Nothing Has Changed* (Parlophone: 5031308), "Cat People" (on *Let's Dance*, Virgin: 96) and *Blackstar* (ISO Records/Columbia 88875173862).



## Tupelo Blues John Lee Hooker Riverside/Universal: OBCCD5422

There's nothing not to love about this album. (PS Elvis was from Tupelo.)



## Presenting: Montserrat Caballé RCA/Sony: 8869768963



## Turangalila Symphony Messiaen

## Decca: 4784578

When I first heard this piece live at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with Jean-Yves Thibaudet playing, I was bouncing in my seat because it was so

