HAYDN ***The Creation*** • Andreas Spering, cond; Sunhae Im (sop); Jan Kobow (ten); Hanno Müller-Brachmann (bs); VokalEns Köln; Capella Augustina • NAXOS 8.557380-381 (2 CDs: 104:22)

Capella Augustina is a period-instrument ensemble having 21 strings. The size of VokalEnsemble Köln is not specified, but it makes a potent contribution; I would guess there are at least six voices on each part. Sopranos and tenors are especially fine. This performance leans to ly—conductor Mortensen is himself a well-known harpsichord player. The size of the ensemble is not stated, but it sounds like about a dozen strings, perhaps 4/3/2/2/1. Oboes and horns ring out with bright panache, and BIS gives everybody clarity and punch.

These performances are slightly livelier and lighter than the excellent ones by Andreas Staier on Harmonia Mundi, although the two discs are not quite comparable: Staier plays Nos. 4 and 11 and adds the Concerto for Klavier, Violin, and Strings in F, Hob XVIII:6. This new BIS disc is now my top choice for a period-instrument presentation of Haydn's keyboard concertos; it is also a match for the wonderful EMI disc of Leif Ove Andsnes playing a modern piano and leading the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra. Brautigam's performances finally make me, after years of fence sitting, jump down on the side of the fortepiano for these works.

James H. North