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conducting (Naxos ***)

Corey Dargel Other People's Love Songs (New Amsterdam ***1/2)

Were the great 19th-century songwriters (Schubert and Schumann) alive and working today, would they compose for operatic voices? Maybe not. Might they echo current rhythms, forms and urban sounds? Rather likely. Such is the best way to hear these two invigorating, innovative but immediately approachable discs by current composers.

The title cut on David Lang's *Pierced* disc is a concerto that sounds like an urban funeral train surrounded by car accidents. Lou Reed's unflinching lyrics about a drug overdose in the Velvet Underground song "Heroin" are reset in a deeply insinuating, slowed-down melody sung with detached, uninflected purity by Theo Bleckmann, with only a Bach-like cello accompaniment. Other works have this eerie spareness, but more often Lang is full of stark musical juxtapositions and pop-music punchiness. All are absorbingly well performed.

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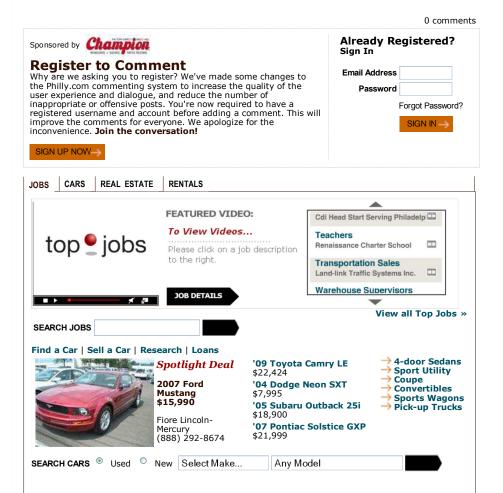
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