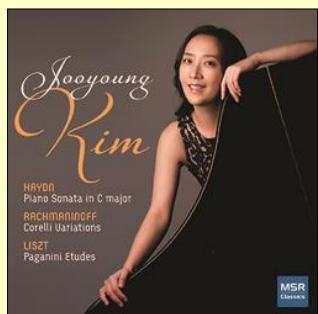


Phil's Classical Reviews

Audio Video Club of Atlanta

December, 2017



Haydn: Sonata in C major; Rachmaninoff: Corelli Variations; Liszt: Paganini Etudes - JooYoung Kim (MSR Classics)

South Korean-born pianist Jooyoung Kim, who now serves on the piano faculties of Indiana University East and Indiana University Kokomo in addition to pursuing an impressive international career, shows us what all the cheering is about in her finely-crafted performances of Haydn, Rachmaninoff and Liszt. Besides the virtuosity involved, they allow us to fully enjoy the sensual pleasure of the music on the present program, which is something I have not always experienced in other accounts, particularly of the Rachmaninoff and Liszt.

The best qualities of this young artist include as keen an understanding of the importance of rhythm as I have ever heard in any pianist, plus an outstanding ear for sonority and color. All of this comes into play in the present program, beginning with Haydn's Sonata in C major, Hob.XVI:48 which is all about changes and variations, served up with deftness and economy. Kim allows the music plenty of room to breathe, especially in the opening Andante con espressivo with its many rests and subtle rhythmic variety. The second movement, Rondo: Presto is joyfully virtuosic in its runs, chords and octaves. As an audience-pleaser and a superb warm-up for the rigors to come in Rachmaninoff and Liszt, it justifies its position at the head of the program.

Kim gives Rachmaninoff's rhythmically involved Variations on a Theme of Corelli as outstanding an interpretation as I've ever heard. Her articulation of all the variations is superbly accomplished, and she pays special attention to the expressive markings in the score, so you always know where you are in a work that is played continuously and is not divided into separate tracks in the present CD. Her beautifully sad Intermezzo, occurring midway through the Variations, serves as the perfect point of repose, mediating between the halves of this work's large-scale structure. The Coda is eloquently



"Home," Works for Solo Harp Elizabeth Hainen, harp (Avie)

Elizabeth Hainen, internationally famous harpist and soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, gives a clinic in all the wonderful things her instrument can do in "Home." The title has personal associations for the artist, including memories of those who have been dear to her. The attractive program ranges from Baroque to Contemporary and covers a variety of styles and techniques.

The Baroque is first up, beginning with Handel's exhilarating Allegro molto from his Concerto in B-flat, Op. 4/6, which is thought to have been originally written with the harp in mind, and certainly sounds idiomatic. The French follow: Rameau's enigmatic and delicately ornamented *L'Égyptienne* and Couperin's equally enigmatically titled pieces *Les Barricades mystérieuses* and *Le Tic-toc-choc*, the former perhaps hinting at a love intrigue in the haunting beauty of its brushed arpeggios, the later in a whirlwind, music-box style. In both Couperin works, Hainen employs a French technique called "*près de la table*," meaning "close to the soundboard," to produce a dry lute or guitar color.

J.S. Bach is heard from in his Preludes in C minor and C major, BWV 847 and 846, reversing the manuscript order for greater effect, and in his Prelude in D minor, BWV 926, which Hainen rightly describes as packing a real punch for its size. We also have Bach's gorgeous Largo from Violin Sonata No.5, in the arrangement by Saint-Saëns, and the Praeambulum from keyboard Partita No.5, BWV 829 in which we feel as if the very harpstrings were dancing.

Elizabeth is joined by husband David DePeters on vibraphone for *Metamorphosis 2* by Philip Glass. Despite my antipathy to Glass' music and to Minimalist composers in general, I almost found myself liking this strange work in hypnotic timbres, though, at 7:38, I found it had overstayed its welcome. What is hypnotic to one listener may only

and simply rendered, bringing the work to a satisfying close.

I had never previously liked or understood Franz Liszt's Paganini Etudes until I heard Ms. Kim's performances of Etudes 1-6, heard here. They had always seemed excessively showy and filled with empty virtuosity in the accounts I'd come across from time to time. Kim's wonderful feeling for rhythm and sonority comes into play time and again. Etude 1 with its chromatic scales and dramatic arpeggios and tremolos, sets the stage. No. 2 has octave passages and scales in tenths played with crossed hands. No. 3, the frequently encored "*La Campanella*" (the little bell) is a real charmer in this performance, concluding with a truly exciting quickening of rhythm and tempo.

Etude No. 4 is a finely conceived study in arpeggios and dynamic nuances, which Kim renders superbly here, while No. 5 evokes for some the sounds of hunting horns, and for others the call of the posthorn, both of which resonated with associations for the audiences of Liszt's day. No. 6 is a brilliant exposition of the famous Paganini theme that the whole world has long known and loved.



Beethoven: String Quartets Nos. 9, Op. 59/3 and 14, Op. 131 – Aris Quartett (Genuin)

The Aris Quartett consists of Anna Katharina Wildermuth and Noémi Zipperling, violins; Caspar Vinzens, viola; and Lukas Sieber, cello. At the urging their professor, they formed a quartet in 2009, when they were students, aged 15-18, at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts. Soon after their triumph at the ARD International Music Competition (five prizes, no less), they began a very active career in concerts and broadcasts. Still young artists, they show an amazing maturity in their recordings, leading up to the present pairing of two of Beethoven's greatest and most difficult works.

In these recordings they reveal a maturity that we sense is the real thing, rather than mere precociousness. Their blend and timing are ideal, showing an ensemble spirit without slighting the abundant opportunities for individual virtuosity that Beethoven provides throughout these two works. At

bore another. I found myself wondering what Bach and his contemporaries would have done with Glass' repeated theme that seems to go nowhere (perhaps they'd have let it morph into the kind of supported melody the baroque called an "aria").

In the middle of the program, Elizabeth gives a fine account of the spinning rhythms and plangent sounds of "Cycling Along with You" by her friend and mentor Eleanor Fell. And she brings all the sonorous richness of Debussy's dreamy "Maid with the Flaxen Hair" back to life once more.

David is heard from again collaborating with Elizabeth as percussionist and arranger in "St. Agnes and the Burning Train" by contemporary English composer Sting, a work that packs as much vividness into 2 minutes and 42 seconds as the traffic will bear. Next, *The Colorado Trail* by Marcel Grandjany, French harpist and composer who taught many years in the United States. Besides being a showpiece for the color range of the harp, it is a tribute to the immense natural beauty of his adopted homeland (along the trail, we seem to hear the strains of a western folksong!)

"Amid Flowers, Beside the River, Under a Spring Moon" by Zhe-Zhi Xie is a modern composition handsomely recalling the traditional instrumental music and songs of China. Elizabeth enhances it with her own extended effects, which include the kind of sensational rapping on the soundboard that I first noted in her earlier album *Les Amis* (see *Classical Reviews* for April, 2014). Finally, Elizabeth and David collaborate on Debussy's ever-young, ever-wise *Clair de lune* (Moonlight) from *Suite Bergamasque*.



Dvořák: Piano Trios Nos. 1 & 2, Op. 21, 26
The Tempest Trio (Naxos)

The Tempest Trio, comprising three top-flight Israeli artists – Ilya Kaler, violin; Amit Peled, cello; and Alon Goldstein, piano – are in fine form in Vol. 2 of their complete piano trios of Antonin Dvořák. These lovely, vivacious, and sometimes moving trios, products of the composer's early maturity, have usually taken second chair to the later Trios, Opus 65 and 90 (the "Dumky"). But as the present performances show us, these works need not hide

times, they seem to be risk-takers of the sort we have not often heard since the heyday of the Budapest Quartet in the 1940's and 50's, but it is always a calculated risk that serves the music well. If nothing untoward happens to this young quartet, their future is bright, and the world is their oyster, pearl enclosed.

Quartet No. 3 in C major, Op. 59/3 is the last of the "Razoumovsky" Quartets in which Beethoven opened a door on the future. It begins with a strange cadence based on a diminished F-sharp chord that his contemporaries might have taken for a copyist's error. We hear it sensationally in the present account, where it can bring goose bumps to the unwary listener. Then the music seems to wander aimlessly for a while before the composer establishes the dominant of C major. In the process, we hear strong motor rhythms from viola and cello, plus intriguing Inner voices. The music is discursive but taut (a seeming paradox) and it has a real harmonic venturesomeness that our fearless artists take in stride.

The slow movement features sensationally high-profile pizzicati in the cello that provide a contrast with the relaxed cantabile in the other strings. Eventually the cello draws the other instruments into a more somber sound world before the cantabile melody reasserts itself and the movement ends serenely.

The Menuetto Grazioso starts off flowing as if it could last forever, but a livelier and more agitated Trio introduces a new element that persists until the end of the movement when the gracious minuet is heard once more. It seems lovely, but there are darker stirrings under the surface. An exciting moment occurs when the coda to this exceptionally brisk minuet gives way without a break to a blistering quasi-fugal finale (One middle passage always gives me the impression of a swarm of angry insects). Rich harmonies to die for and high excitement prevail all the way to the end.

Quartet No. 14 in C-sharp Minor represents the ultimate in Beethoven's penchant for taut but discursive structures. For all its tight unity, its range of mood and expression is remarkable. Seen large, the 40-minute work appears to be a single movement in seven sections. It is played without breaks except for a short pause in the fermatas at the beginning and end of Section 6. Further, Sections 2, 3, and 6 take on the nature of transitions to the ones that follow. There is a sense of the end replicating the beginning when the slow, melancholy theme in Section 1 ("Surely the saddest thing ever said in notes," as Wagner described it) is speeded up and altered in contour to be the first theme of Section 7.

In between, Beethoven circumnavigates the globe musically and emotionally, running a controlled riot

their lights under a bushel.

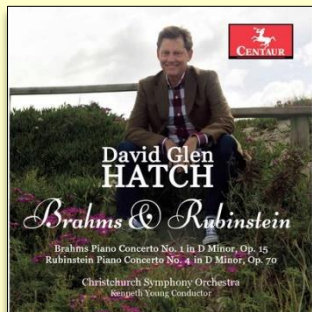
Both works tell us a lot about the aspirations of their young composer. Very broadly speaking, Op. 21 in B-flat might be characterized as the more exuberant and folk-influenced, and Op. 26 in G minor as revealing Dvořák's earnest striving for "German workmanship" in the interest of reaching an international audience. But these generalizations break down upon closer inspection. Far from merely coming across as a jolly village *musikant*, Dvořák takes pains to hold back the full exposition of the second theme by the piano in the opening movement of Op. 21, whetting our appetites as we await it. And he shows skill in the way he distributes the melody of the slow movement in G minor, *Adagio molto e mesto* (very slow and sad) among the three instruments. This movement, whose initial sadness may reflect Dvořák's grief at the fatal illness of his first daughter Josepha, conveys a mood of gentle melancholy that is eventually dispelled by the intrusion of an A major section, ending in a feeling of surprising (and welcome) lightness and clarity.

Besides containing a notable Slavic melancholy in this movement and in the Lento of Op. 26, both trios also reveal the influence of the Bohemian dances of Dvořák's heritage in their exhilarating fast movements, based on the fifth and sixth notes of the scale, a hallmark of the central European folk style. We hear this element in the strongly marked chords and decisive rhythms of the exuberant finale of Op. 26 as much as we do in the *cantabile* opening theme of the first movement of Op. 21, where it gives rise to the flowing, discursive mood we find throughout this work.

Finally, the scherzos in both trios show a sureness of handling that was well in advance of Dvořák's symphonies from this same period (1875-1876). The more sedate trio in the Allegretto scherzando of Op. 21 contrasts the shorter phrase lengths of the surrounding sections with softly syncopated music of a more lyrical nature. In the Scherzo of Op. 26 the canonical writing and quick stepwise motions in perpetual movement are interrupted by a more warmly expansive theme, introduced by the cello, that briefly changes the harmony and the strict regularity of the movement before the original restless pace and imitative writing are resumed. It is a brilliant moment, among many.

In works such as these, and even more in the Opus 65 and 90 Trios previously released as Vol. 1, the members of the Tempest Trio sublimate their strong personalities as concert headliners in favor of a cohesive approach that makes their contributions sound like more than just the sum of their parts. Dvořák being what he was, that still allows plenty of room for individual expression.

that includes whimsy, pain and revelation. The deep point occurs in Section 4: *Andante ma non troppo e molto cantabile*, with its mystery, immense variety, and contrapuntal and harmonic richness. In the present performance, strong underpinning by the cello, rich inner voices, and sensational pizzicati all place the melody in high profile. Celestial harmony prevails by the end of this section.



Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1 Rubinstein: Piano Concerto No. 4 David Glen Hatch, piano
Kenneth Young, Christchurch Symphony Orchestra
(Centaur Records)

American pianist David Glen Hatch joins forces with the Christchurch (NZ) Symphony Orchestra under Kenneth Young in what may be the most successful collaboration of Yanks and Kiwis since ANZUS. This time, the cause is music, specifically two piano concertos with large proportions and big ambitions. One of them is world-famous, the other still waiting for its moment in history – a moment which the present performance may help to define.

Hatch, who is currently listed in Who's Who in Music as one of the best piano teachers in the U.S. in addition to his international reputation as a performer, wastes no time getting settled into the opening movement of Johannes Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor, Op. 15, swimming purposefully and strongly with and against a riptide of massive orchestration that reveals the fact that this work was originally planned as a symphony. That opening movement, aptly titled "*Maestoso*," is longer in duration than most whole piano concertos of the day (24:21 in the present account). Nobody is being a slowpoke here: it just takes time, and heroic effort, for the piano to work its way through orchestration that includes particularly demanding parts for the horns and tympani. Against the dark, even tragic, mood and the impassioned outbursts of the orchestra, the piano eventually perseveres, finds its own distinctive voice, and offers balm in the form of a radiant, chorale-like second idea.

This movement, in particular, is not for sissies. It is only to be undertaken by mature pianists like Hatch, who are at the top of their prowess. The pianist has to be able to handle high-energy rhythms without losing sight of Brahms' overall design. His tone



Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto
Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1
Massenet: Meditation from Thaïs
Kinga Augustyn, violin; Jacob Klecker,
Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra (Centaur Records)

Kinga Augustyn, Polish-born violinist who now resides in New York City, gives a fine account of the well-known pairing of concertos we all know and love by Felix Mendelssohn and Max Bruch. She brings a lot to the occasion with her considerable stylishness, and she works very closely with conductor Jacob Klecker and the members of the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra in resolving the issues of balance and dynamics inherent in pitting the lone voice of a solo violin against the robust sound of a symphony orchestra that, even in those days, might have comprised 60 or more musicians.

Mendelssohn solved the dilemma in his Concerto in E minor, Op. 64, by going back to the classical era for the clarity of his orchestral writing. He further assigned the violin the crucial role of bridging the gap between movements, especially with the cadenza to the Andante, so that the entire work unfolds as one continuous flow of lyricism. Augustyn meets the technical demands in this work with an impressive degree of poise, encompassing the rapidly descending opening passage and the arpeggiated chords in the middle of the Allegro molto appassionato with unflappable smoothness. She also shines in the Andante, where the soloist is obliged to play both melody and accompaniment with the greatest expressive beauty. And she manages the rapidly ascending and descending arpeggios in the white-hot finale with the same assurance.

Bruch's Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 26, looked back to Mendelssohn's success of two decades earlier for inspiration, even to the extent of his consulting with violinist Ferdinand David, who had given that earlier concerto its premiere. But Bruch's solutions to matters of form and balance of resources were very much his own. They included the striking innovation in which the opening movement actually proves to be a prelude to the second. The flow of the music at this point is steady, slow, and secure, with barely audible sighs in the cadenza that signal the arrival of the violin.

must be absolutely secure, his phrasing ready to change from legato to staccato in the twinkling of an eye. Hatch is master of all of this and more.

The slow movement, an incredibly tender Adagio that may have been intended as a tribute to the deceased Robert Schumann or as a portrait of his widow Clara, allows the pianist much opportunity to score quiet, but decisively stated points. Both soloist and orchestra are called upon to “take it big” in the Rondo finale in which the piano part is fully integrated with the orchestra. The theme of this finale is introduced by the piano alone. Finally, the soloist gets his one chance to impress the audience with a cadenza. Typically for Brahms, it differs from most concerto cadenzas in that it is motivated by dramatic necessity, and is not merely virtuosic. *(To be continued below)*

Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) was famous in his day as one of the great pianists and as co-founder of the St. Petersburg Conservatory. The enduring fame of his five piano concertos has been more problematical. Of them, only No. 4 in D minor, Op. 70 has even a precarious foothold in the standard repertoire. Rubinstein made himself unpopular with the Rimsky-Korsakov circle by insisting on correct German procedures in developing one’s material, rather than just throwing in new themes as the older ones get tired. We sense a healthy resemblance to Brahms in the way Rubinstein develops his themes in the opening Moderato assai, including a stately but slightly melancholy main theme of Russian folk character. In the present performance, Hatch does a superb job of handling the various thematic skeins, as well as the splendid Lisztian cadenza near the end of the movement.

The middle movement, Andante, features a lovely theme in the outer sections, enclosing a restless central episode. The finale is energetic, with driving and colorful dance rhythms and rippling piano writing giving way, briefly, to quieter music. Despite its decidedly Russian flavor and all the color, drama, and excitement which that word implies, and in spite of the gymnastic virtuosity in the piano writing, something seems missing here. I don’t know what it is, but it prevents the Rubinstein Fourth from qualifying as one of the really great concertos. Perhaps the contrasted materials don’t mesh together in a plausible way, or else we get the impression of their being manipulated by the composer. I may be wrong. If so, performances with the total commitment we get in the present account by David Glen Hatch, Kenneth Young and the Christchurch may help define this concerto’s final niche in the repertoire.

The solo playing becomes ever more flowing, rich, and expansive in the Adagio, in which Augustyn does some of her best work. In the exuberant finale, she is called upon to execute sensational double stops and high-energy rhythms with the same high degree of competence.

We even get an encore here, in the form of Jules Massenet’s always-welcome Meditation from *Thaïs*. Its serene, timeless beauty makes for a satisfying end to a program in which soloist and conductor are in no apparent hurry, but allow the lyricism of three famous romantic works to unfold easily and naturally.



Mozart Arias – Juan Diego Florez, tenor
Riccardo Minasi, Orchestra La Scintilla
(Sony Classical)

For Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Florez, this album of arias represents the fruition of a long-standing love affair with the music of Mozart, going back to his early days as a 17-year old student at Lima Conservatory. His first acquaintance with Mozart “was a magical moment for me. It almost bowled me over.” Throughout all his succeeding career as a



“Dreams,” Arias – Pretty Yende, soprano, with
asisting artists and the Orchestra sinfonica di
Milano, “Giuseppe Verdi” under Giacomo Sagripanti
(Sony Classical)

Is she really named “Pretty Yende”? You bet! This engaging young lyric soprano was thus christened and grew up in the small South African town of Piet Retief, about 200 miles from Johannesburg. She was unaware of the existence of opera until the age of sixteen, when she chanced to hear the Flower

bel canto tenor gaining acclaim for his Rossini and Donizetti, the idea of recording Mozart never slipped from his mind. Now in his mid-forties, he is more than ready to handle the most formidable challenges of this composer.

"Formidable," did we say? Well, that's undeniably true. As Florez puts it, "A singer has to be very careful of tempo and coloratura, especially in the early works. It's extremely fast and yet must be absolutely precise." Those early operas he speaks of were products of Mozart's youth when he was strongly influenced by the bel canto of the Italian baroque. The fearful demands of "*Si spande al sole in faccia*" (Sometimes a storm cloud covers the face of the sun) from *Il Re Pastore*, K208, is an early example of the demand for an athletic virtuosity, but we find this quality as much in "*se all'impero*" (If a hard heart is necessary to a ruler) in the late opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, K621, to a libretto after Metastasio.

Florez handles both these arias with impressive mastery. But it is in the mainstream of Mozart's career as an operatic composer, in such arias as "*Il mio tesoro intanto*" (Comfort my beloved) and "*Dalla su pace*" (On her peace of mind my own depends), both from *Don Giovanni*, that his smooth legato and straightforward, expressive style and warmth come into play. They illustrate his frequent contention that "Mozart is a composer whose music appeals to people directly. You don't have to be an expert to feel it." We also experience it in "*Das Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön*" (Her picture is bewitchingly beautiful) at the moment when Tamino first gazes at a portrait of Pamina, soon to be his beloved, in *The Magic Flute*.

To Florez, Mozart's greatest magic lies in the expressive power of his phrasing: "His music doesn't have so many fireworks, so many high notes and coloraturas. Instead, it bewitches us with simple lines. That's why phrasing is so crucial."

The business about not having "so many fireworks" has to be taken in an historical context. There certainly are fireworks in Mozart's tenor arias, most notably in "*Fuor del mare ho un mare in seno*" (The sea that seethes within my bosom) from *Idomeneo*, K386 and the concert aria "*Misero! O sogno o son desto?*" (Alas! Am I dreaming or awake)," K431. But these aren't the Mozart arias we know and love and sing in the shower. In the arias I cited earlier, Mozart's true genius shines forth, filled with pure light and with an inner glow. In these arias from *Don Giovanni* and *Der Zauberflöte*, and also in Ferrando's aria "*Un'aura amorosa*" (A breath of love) from *Così fan tutte*, we get the delicacy and refinement – and also the deep feeling – that make Mozart special. Having trained on 19th century bel canto earlier in his career, Florez is in great shape to convey these qualities in Mozart to us.

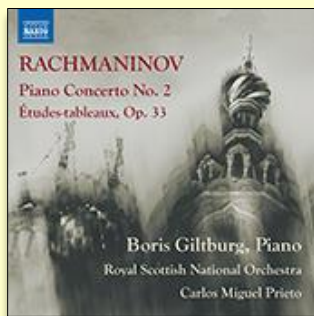
Duet from *Lakmé* in a TV ad for British Airways, and it changed her life. She reportedly told her mother, in a rush of enthusiasm: "I want to sing *that!*" A few years down the road, after receiving instruction from the best available teachers, a first prize in Plácido Domingo's 2011 Operalia Competition, and glowing reviews from critics in Cape Town, Berlin, and Paris, she is poised to storm New York with the role of Lucia di Lammermoor.

Why Lucia? As Yende explains it, the fragile heroine of Donizetti's opera of that name epitomizes the genre of women who long for escape in their dream lives, searching for a prince charming or just being able to live a life free from fear and persecution. "I wanted to widen my horizons," she says. Well, the role of Lucia will certainly do that. A heroine who is forced into a loveless marriage, fatally stabs her bridegroom on their wedding night, and then returns to the nuptial feast covered in blood, believing in her madness that she is soon to wed her true love, is the stuff that "mad scenes" are made of.

Quite apart from its demand for high notes, velocity, and sheer endurance, Yende was at first hesitant to take on the role of Lucia because she didn't feel that it was congenial to her own lyric soprano. She actually found the "Mad Scene" easiest of all because it is written mostly in a voice which corresponded to the warmth of her own middle register, and she worked diligently on her coloratura and her high notes, with the stunning results you will hear in this program.

And speaking of high notes, the high end of the coloratura range is positively stratospheric in the Shadow Aria, "*Ombre légère*," from Giacomo Meyerbeer's *Dinorah*. Yende's obvious affection for this aria has as much to do with its delicious melodies as it does the psychology of the scene in the opera: "Imagine if you had the chance to talk to your shadow – and it answered back!"

Other highlights in a very intelligently chosen program of arias and scenes in which the heroines seek refuge from unbearable reality in dreams and actual madness include Juliette's "*Ah! Je veux vivre*" from Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*, where the heroine dreams of experiencing the innocent joy of first love; the Sleepwalking Scene, Amina's "*Ah! Non credea mirati*" (Ah! I never thought to see you die so soon, o flower) from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, and Linda's daydream of yearning, "*O luce, di quest' anima*" (O light of this soul) from Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*. We are also given Alaida's highly melodramatic scene in which she is compelled to renounce her lover, "*Sono all'ara*" (They stand before the altar) from Bellini's all-too rarely heard *La Straniera*. A surfeit of delights for lovers of bel canto and coloratura arias, served up in Pretty Yende's distinctively warm tones.



Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 2, Études-Tableaux, Op. 33 – Boris Giltburg, piano; Carlos Miguel Prieto, Royal Scottish NO (Naxos)

It's always a treat to experience a new album by Boris Giltburg. The Moscow-born Israeli pianist who impressed me so much in his performance of Sergei Rachmaninov's Moments Musicaux and Études-tableaux, Op. 39 (see Classical Reviews for June, 2016) has done it again. This time, he shines forth in the same sort of brilliance and darkling beauty in the composer's Second Piano Concerto and his Études-tableaux, Op. 33.

Passion plus insight characterize Giltburg's account of Piano Concerto No. 2 in C minor, Op. 18, so much so that his performance of this overly-familiar work stands out even in exceptionally fierce competition. "To play the opening of Rachmaninov's Second

Piano Concerto," writes Giltburg, "is a singularly powerful experience. You wait for silence – the piano starts on its own, there's no need to maintain eye contact with anyone – and when the hall seems to have disappeared, you let the first chord sound, as quietly and distantly as possible, and be answered by a low F, like the clapper of a giant bell beginning to ring. Seven more chords follow, each louder than the previous one – there's a growing sense of tension, even of dread at the implacable approach of that sombre tolling. As the crescendo reaches its highest point, four heavy notes dissolve into rolling arpeggios, and the way is paved for the entrance of the main theme."

And *what* a theme that is! The piano, playing in its lowest register against what seems to be a gigantic orchestra, must bide its time before it can fight its way through and have its own crack at the very lyrical, emotionally intense main theme. In realizing the taut and lean, but nevertheless visceral interpretation at which he aims, the pianist plays both with and against the orchestra, meeting each climax without flinching. The music may become agitated, even unstable, but we never lose sight of the mood, firmly established by the piano, of deep poetic reverie tinged with sadness.

That mood is most pronounced in the second movement, Adagio sostenuto, one of the most remarkable in the entire literature, with a poignant theme that will crawl around inside the listener's head for some time afterward. The piano's interaction with other instruments – flute, oboe, violas, and most importantly, the clarinets – serves to deepen its own melancholy, pensive thoughts. In the finale, pianist and orchestra rouse themselves to ever-greater heights to meet the successive challenges in a work that ends, ecstatically and triumphantly, in a stunning fortissimo climax – punctuated by the composer's familiar four-note motto that scans with his name.

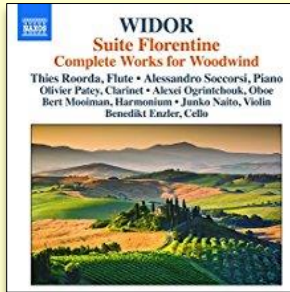
The Études-tableaux, Op. 33, are as economic, austere, and "chiselled" (in Giltburg's estimation) as the concerto was long-limbed and expansive. As do many other pianists, Boris restores Nos. 3 and 5, which Rachmaninov unaccountably withheld from publication, for very good reasons which he explains in his booklet notes. No. 3, for example, seems to be a descent into gloom after the gradual brightening after rain of No. 2. (as the composer left no subtitles, pianist and listener are free to add their own associations.) Giltburg does a splendid job working through these études-tableaux, imparting a clear feeling of unity within diversity, as he builds up to the furious conclusion of No. 9, a final word that can brook no argument.

Finally, we have two very satisfying encores: Rachmaninov's arrangement of Fritz Kreisler's gently lilting waltz *Liebseleid* (Love's Sorrow), which allows us to enjoy the Russian composer's rare warmth and humor, and the jaunty "Polka de W.R.," long attributed to Rachmaninoff himself but now considered to be the work of one Franz Behr (1837-1898) and to have been arranged by the "Rach" in 1911. A fortuitous ending to a compelling program.

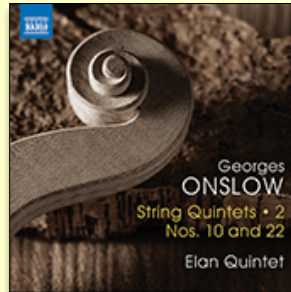
Dear Reader:

The following section is written for justice, pure and simple. It is dedicated to the proposition that the history of music is not written by the Three B's alone, nor by Russian symphonists. It is also written in glowing notes by names you may never have encountered, either in the concert hall or your own home listening library. They toiled, often for many years, in the vineyards of music, as composers, teachers, performers, and theorists. This is the story of a few of them. Some were as new to me as they will probably be unfamiliar to you. All had something important to say. Happy listening!

Phil Muse



Widor: Suite Florentine
Complete Music for Woodwind
(Naxos)



Onslow: String Quintets Nos.10
& 22 – Elan Quintet
(Naxos)



British Music for Violin and Piano
– Clare Howick, John Paul Ekins
(Naxos)

The worldwide brotherhood of organists will keep alive the name of Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937) for the sake of his ten organ symphonies, a genre he created himself. Other than that, his music has suffered a benign neglect. But, in an exceptionally long life, he did quite a lot in the name of music. He succeeded César Franck as professor of organ at the Conservatoire National, where he taught many famous students, in whom he strove to revive the authentic tradition of performing the works of J.S. Bach. He worked closely as an advisor to organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll in developing powerful new organs with a wide of range of symphonic colors. In a France where the musical climate could be decidedly nationalistic and anti-German, particularly after the debacle of the Franco-Prussian War, he remained a passionate advocate of Wagner's enriched harmonies and he conducted the first-ever Paris performances of Bach's Mass in B minor and Saint Matthew Passion.

Ever hear *anything* by George Onslow? Believe it or not, I hadn't. Not until the other day when the Naxos lady kindly included the present CD in my reviewer's care package. Yet in his day (1784-1853) Onslow, the son of an English father and a French mother, was regarded by such as Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann to be a very important composer. A possible explanation for his obscurity today may lie in the fact that, being the scion of a well-connected family, he was under no pressure to be a success with the public and was free to follow the natural bent of his genius.

That led him to devote his major effort to chamber music, a genre that he explored with freedom and originality. The very fact that he composed 36 string quartets and 34 string quintets (in sheer volume more than the total number of chamber works of all kinds by Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms combined) makes it difficult for posterity to come to grips with him. A further complication may be the fact that most

Two fine young Britons – Clare Howick, violin; and John Paul Ekins, piano – give us a recital of British music that has to qualify as a welcome "sleeper." Not only is there a lot of music in this album that you are unlikely to have come across before (including what are claimed to be no fewer than five world premiere recordings) but we are given an extraordinary amount of lyrical charm per square mile, all of it played with taste and commitment.

That lyricism is the birthright of the English. When in perplexity, they always reach back into their folksong tradition. It is a source of their strength. Instead of wasting energy trying to come up with the big blockbuster of a theme that classical composers are popularly supposed to agonize over, they content themselves with simply discovering all the interesting things one can do with simple, easily grasped melodies. It works!

We find this quality in Sir Edward Elgar's Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 82. While there is nothing particularly imposing

And, oh yes, Widor began the epochal project for the American publisher Schirmer of editing Bach's organ works, an effort that was brought to completion after his death by his pupil Albert Schweitzer. He also assisted in the creation of the Conservatoire Américain, in which many American composers were to study under another former Widor pupil, Nadia Boulanger. True to his conviction that an artist should never marry, he avoided matrimony until the grand old age of 76 (though it has been suggested that he waited so long, not because he disliked women but, *au contraire*, he liked them too much!)

The present CD is devoted to Widor's complete woodwind music, another area of intense interest for this multi-faceted figure. Suite Florentine, first up in the program, originally for violin and piano, is heard in Widor's own arrangement for flute which places great expressive and virtuosic demands on the flautist. It is laid out in four characteristic movements, entitled Cantilena, Alle Cascine (a park in Florence), Morbidezza, and Tragica. In spite of the dire-sounding titles of the two last-named movements, the overall impression is of sunlight, graciousness and lyricism.

As a conservatory professor, Widor was occasionally called-upon to write examination pieces for students of the various woodwinds. The Rondo for Clarinet and Piano and the Trois Pièces for Oboe and Piano, both heard here, serve that purpose admirably, with reedy flavors you can almost taste. The last-named work, in three movements titled Pavane, Elégie, and Pastorale, is particularly flavorful in its evocation of happiness and sunlight. Perhaps the work you are most likely to encounter in flautists' recitals is the Suite for Flute and Piano, Op. 34, which is both melodious and virtuosically challenging in equal measures.

of his quintets were written for an unusual ensemble of two violins, viola, cello, and a double bass in lieu of a second cello – a happy arrangement that enriched their harmony. It also gave them more of a symphonic dimension, which Onslow discovered quite by accident when the double bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti was asked to fill in for a second cellist who failed to appear at one of his Paris concerts.

In these recordings, we have the sparkling performances of the Elan Quintet, consisting of Benjamin Scherer, Quesada and Lelia Lancovici, violins; Julia Chu-Ying Hu, viola; Dmitri Tsirin, cello; and Matthew Baker, double bass. As the present CD is listed as Volume 2, are we to presume a complete multi-year survey? That's a daunting task, even for musicians of such obvious enthusiasm! But as they show us in the present CD, there's an awful lot of delectable music to be found in Onslow.

Quintet No. 10 in F minor, for example, has noticeable traces of Beethoven in the *sturm und drang* of the outer movements, including an unprepared jump of a third from A-flat to E in the last movement. The Andante has poise, grace and warmth in equal measure, while the impetuous Menuetto strikes a precarious balance between the stable and the unpredictable as chromatic scales push the music in all directions before the movement regains its footing.

Quintet No. 22 in E-flat major is the better-behaved, more relaxed and possibly more lyrical of the two. A succession of gestures, including very playful pizzicati, takes the place of a slow introduction. Onslow's penchant for tossing a chromatic melody around among the players in a light-hearted way is quite evident in the Scherzo. The Adagio relies on tenor-range melodies for its effectiveness and strikes a surprisingly mournful mood in the central section. The *Allegretto*

about any of the composer's themes, the uses he puts them to make this deeply expressive work one of the jewels of its genre. In the fiery Allegro movement, everything stems from the first four bars, including a tranquil second theme and an enigmatic third one. The tenderly expressive melody of the slow movement, Romance, was said by Elgar's wife to reflect the tranquility of the woods adjacent to their cottage in Brinkwells, Sussex. The final movement is broad and soothing. There is no evident appeal to patriotism in this sonata, the more remarkable as it was written in 1918. The Great War must have seemed far away in the seclusion of west Sussex.

By contrast with the Elgar sonata, which is the one major work on the present program, all the other selections are short characteristic pieces or choice excerpts from larger works. Frederic Delius, for instance, is represented by "Lullaby for a Modern Baby" from Five Piano Pieces, in which an additional melody, written on a separate staff, was meant to be hummed by the pianist or (as here) played by a muted violin. For its lilting sway and eastern flavor, Delius' Serenade from *Hassan* (arr. Lionel Tertis) is one of the few pieces on this album you might have heard elsewhere.

Otherwise. This CD is a real voyage of discovery. Frank Bridge, for instance, is nowadays remembered if at all mainly for the Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge by his celebrated pupil Benjamin Britten, but he himself had a strong artistic profile and a fine sense of workmanship. It is heard here in no fewer than eight pieces, four of them premiere recordings. They include such as Lamentation d'amour, its minor-key theme reinforced by double-stopping at the emotional climax; Moto Perpetuo, with its relentless stream of semiquavers shaded by shifts of dynamics and mood; and an elegant and eloquent Serenade, later arranged for string orchestra. Gondoliera, with its

Our performers are up to the task. Remember their names: Thies Roorda, flute; Alessandro Soccorsi, piano; Olivier Patey, clarinet; and Alexei Ogrintchouk, oboe. Bert Mooiman on the harmonium; Junko Naito, violin; and Benedikt Enzler, cello, add their voices to those of flute and piano in the sonorously rich Serenade, Op. 10 that concludes the program.

grazioso finale is a gentle pastorale with a dramatic second subject. It ends in lively fashion, a real playtime for strings!

languid violin melody set against arpeggiated piano figures, is another high point.

John Ireland was noted in his day for his popular light music. A most attractive Cavatina and a very mischievous Bagatelle show how accomplished he was in a species of music that can actually be more difficult to write really well than is the more serious stuff.

Finally, the long-lived Cyril Scott (1879-1970) is heard from in pieces as diverse as the elegant and contemplative *Vesperae*, two Sonnets, one for muted violin over a distant bell-like accompaniment; Bumble-Bees, where muting and double-stopping replicate a swarm of the apian creatures; and The Gentle Maiden, based on an Irish air of the same name.

A dashing Mazurka by Elgar closes the program in grand style.