

Phil's Classical Reviews

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Ravel: Miroirs + Scriabin: Sonatas Nos. 3 and 10 – Andrew Tyson, piano (AlphaClassics)

Paradoxically, it seems that the more accomplished the performances one gets over time of the fiendishly difficult piano sonatas of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin (1872-1915) the harder it is to assign him a precise niche in the history of music. Accounts of his music don't get any better than those given in the present program by Andrew Tyson, who takes the technical difficulties in Sonatas No. 3 in F-sharp minor, Op. 23 and No. 10, Op. 70 in stride. That includes passages in the latter that the composer himself considered "unplayable." (Scriabin's left hand technique, in particular, is the most demanding of any composer.)

In his quest for ever more luminous sounds, Scriabin jettisoned many of the sandbags of received tradition, including the notions of thematic development and recapitulation. His passion was all for the increasing luminosity and spiritual ecstasy he derived from building ever more complex chord structures, including major-minor triads and his famous (or infamous?) "mystic chord," based on various types of superimposed fourths. In many of his last works, including the Tenth Sonata, it is even impossible to assign a key signature. Here we have an entire work that seems to grow, fatastically, from a single sound. The most remarkable thing about this sonata may be the composer's preoccupation with really sensational trills, which he found to



Schubert: Quartet No. 15 in G major Haydn: Quartet in G minor, Op. 20, No. 3 – Tetzlaff Quartet (Ondine)

The Tetzlaff Quartett (Christian Tetzlaff and Elisabeth Kufferath, violins; Hanna Weinmeister, viola; and Tanja Tetzlaff, cello) take a daring approach to the rhythmic and dynamic challenges in quartets by Schubert and Haydn, and the daring-do pays off handsomely. These challenges can be extreme, particularly in the case of the Schubert with its pervasively tragic mood, so much so that I would advise home listeners not to attend to this CD if their own morale happens to be at a low ebb.

It is easy to believe that Schubert was obsessed with thoughts of impending death when writing this, his last string quartet, which was unpublished during his lifetime. Certainly, its prevailing moods and extreme technical requirements would not have made it a hot item in the music market. In the opening movement, forte declarations burst upon the listener in waves separated by near-silences. There is a lot of tremolo here, which helps give this movement a real orchestral sound.

After the first fermata, while the solo violin emits a melody like a sorrowful lament, the other strings seem to listen with empathic tremolos that take on a glimmering aspect. This movement is long (19:48 in the present account), but you aren't aware of the duration because it is so gripping. There are instances



Dvořák: Symphony No. 9, "From the New World" Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Houston SO (PentaTone SACD)

Andrés Orozco-Estrada, Colombia-born, Vienna-trained, and since 2014 music director of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, once again demonstrates his sure grasp of the essential qualities that make the music of Antonin Dvořák so distinctive. Under his direction, the pungent rhythms, vivid orchestral colors, breathless tempo changes, and pulse-quickening movement in the composer's Symphony No. 9 in E minor, Op. 95, forever to be known by Dvořák's own subscript, "From the New World," come alive.

This particular symphony has been so universally acclaimed for so long (especially in the United States) that the only way for any conductor to actually mess it up would be by "mickey-mousing" with the details – getting too cute with his point-making, for instance, or telegraphing every bold rhythmic shift, every striking change in orchestration or enchanting new melody. Orozco-Estrada is much too wise to fall for anything *that* foolish. He knows when to hold back and when to "let 'er rip," in a symphony whose high degree of effectiveness is based on surprisingly simple principles.

In response to claims, which one sometimes hears even today, that he had used actual American Indian chants or Negro spirituals in his music, Dvořák replied, "I simply wrote original themes of my own and

be evocative of the sounds of insects. "They are born of the sun. They are the sun's kisses."

Well, you get the idea. Scriabin was very much a mystic, inspired by the theosophy of Madame Blavatsky and his own natural philosophy, and he came to see himself as a visionary prophet whose mission was to lead mankind from the edge of the abyss through the ecstasy and spiritual enlightenment of music, *his* music. He was certainly not a huckster, nor was he in the habit, as far as I know, of using drugs. The truth is more remarkable: he was a "natural." Together with his abhorrence for themes, it makes it difficult to determine what his music "means." (Please, folks, don't shoot the piano player: Andrew Tyson is just playing the notes he finds on the page!)

Partly because of our long familiarity with his music, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) seems easier to comprehend, though the compositional style he uses in "Miroirs," his set of five impressionistic character pieces, may actually place him closer to Scriabin than may appear at first blush. In these pieces, Ravel's techniques involve the use of slowly unfurling arpeggios and trills to conjure up the sparkling of light reflections on water and the slow billowing of a boat's sails in "*Une Barque sur l'Océan*," lightly brushed figurations to evoke the soft rustling of the wings of insects drawn to a light in "*Noctuelles*" (Night Moths), and the overlapping of repeated notes to magically convey the twilight sounds of distant churchbells in "*La Vallée des cloches*" (Valley of the Bells).

Elsewhere, "*Oiseaux tristes*" (Sad Birds) uses different means to convey the torpor of the hottest hours of summer, in which the very birds in the trees are so dispirited they cannot summon the motivation to fly or even sing. As impressionism of the highest order, this is music in which technique and mood are everything, as we discover in the present performance. By contrast, "*Alborada del gracioso*" (Morning Song of the Jester) is filled with a panic of frenzied activity based on authentic Spanish rhythms, giving

where the first violin plays 16th note triplets for pages at a time, or else accelerando passages are taken pianissimo by all four strings (*Not* easy to do. To give an everyday-life equivalent, try talking faster and faster to a friend while keeping your volume very low, and observe his/her reaction.)

The slow movement, *Andante un poco moto*, is richly detailed. It is not exactly carefree, as the darkness of the opening movement still persists. It also makes some use of a hairpin maneuver based on complete stops, after which the music resumes again on a different rhythmic and dynamic plane. The Scherzo is marked by an aggressive motif in driving triplet rhythms, while a lovely melody in the Trio seems to evoke yearning for a past or an unrealized happiness, as glimpsed from afar.

The finale is powerful and complex, a seeming dance of death based on an alternation between two rhythmic devices: a dotted 8th note followed by a sixteenth and groups of triplets. One is filled with admiration for the way the Tetzlaff Quartet members keep the tension so keen without breaking it or letting it go slack, all the way to the amazing conclusion.

The companion work, Franz Josef Haydn's Quartet in G minor, Op. 20, No. 3, is one of the most remarkable of the composer's set of six "Sun" Quartets, as ear-arresting in their own day as the Schubert would have been in its time, had there been an audience to hear it. As the Tetzlaffs express it in the course of an insightful interview in the booklet annotation, "Always when one thinks that a normal, beautiful theme might come for a change, there are breaks, general rests, whispered phrases in pianissimo."

The other thing you really notice is the warmth of Haydn's expressive writing. These players are keen to observe the elements of choler, and even rage, in this quartet, but there is also a great deal of beautiful cantilena, particularly in the role of the cello, which they rightly describe as "the most singing instrument." The emotional element is particularly

developed them whilst making full use of all the possibilities of modern rhythm, harmony, contrapuntal technique and orchestral color." He was such a prolific melodist that he preferred to write his own folk tunes, rather than borrow them. Their authentic "feel" and spontaneity speak for themselves.

Further, he laid on harmonies and textures like a visual artist. If you want to create the impression of a dawn on the prairie with gradually increasing light, just build up a foundation in the lower strings, then introduce the violins to extend the harmonies at the higher end and bring in the brass and percussion at the very end for a climax. Nothing could be simpler or more effective.

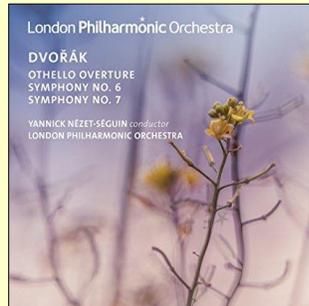
The first movement opens with an Adagio that conveys sadness, gentle melancholy and suspense. Then, the Allegro molto section falls on us with a vengeance after the stillness is shattered by a single blast from the French horn, a masterful stroke. As the booklet notes to the present CD remind us at several points, a remarkable feature of this work is the conflict between ferocity and lyricism that provides so much of the drama. In this instance we have the stirring call to action in the horn versus a cool cantilena in the flute. That horn call recurs in various guises in every movement, serving to unify the whole work and enhance its cumulative impact even as it helps move things along.

Orozco-Estrada does a superb job pacing a symphony in which rhythm, contrast, and flowing movement are everything. In the Largo a hymn-like melody first uttered by the English horn, the deeper-voiced, melancholy cousin of the oboe, spreads itself over slowly moving string basses that sound like harmonized human voices. The Scherzo, marked *Molto vivace*, is decidedly upbeat, with a real sense of urgency in its rhythms. The finale, *Allegro con fuoco* ("with fire") is given so truly stunning a performance that when the horn theme that began the work appears again, it has its maximum impact, bringing things full circle.

way at length to a quietly subdued interlude embodying the poignant realization that life and love are futile, and that one is only a fool for imagining otherwise.

evident in the Poco Adagio, where a genuine sadness is only gradually dispelled as the players work their way through it.

For fillers, we have two thrilling Slavonic Dances from Dvořák's Op. 46, one a Polka and the other a Czech dance in a snappy rhythm known as the *Skočná*



Dvořák: Symphonies Nos. 6 and 7, Othello Overture – Yannick Nézet-Séguin, London Philharmonic (LPO) 2-CD slimline

In recordings made live at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, Québec native Yannick Nézet-Séguin shows his prodigious podium skills with the London Philharmonic of which he was principal guest conductor from 2008 to 2014, in performances of works that defined the rising career of their composer, Antonin Dvořák.

The Othello Overture, first up, is the least popular of Dvořák's three overtures (the others: In Nature's Realm, Carnival) for reasons of its tragic subject. It's an excellent example of thematic transformation, as buoyant music evocative of adventure and ideal love, heard early-on, changes character as the work progresses. Once jealousy, "the green eyed monster," has made its appearance, the music gets increasingly tragic and then violent. Suspicion leads quickly to rage, murder, and despair. Sinister sounds of flickering flutes, muted horns, and quashed cymbals are used very effectively. At the end, though, tepid applause, unworthy of a truly fine live performance, shows that more than a hundred years' exposure to this grim work has not been enough for audiences to warm to it.

We are on safer ground, as far as popular appeal, in Symphony No. 6 in D, Op. 60, the work with which



Brahms: Piano Quintet, Op. 34
Schumann: String Quartet No. 1
Pressler, Pacifica Quartet (Cedille)

The Pacifica Quartet, consisting of violinists Simin Ganatra and Sibbi Bernhardsson, violist Masumi Per Rostad, and cellist Brandon Vamos, give incisive, deeply penetrating performances of major chamber works by Brahms and Schumann. The recordings were made in Auer Hall at Indiana University, where the quartet have been in residence since 2012 and where Menahem Pressler, their very distinguished collaborator in the Brahms, has taught for almost 60 years(!) From the evidence of the present recording, his pianistic skills have been undiminished by age.

The two works provide an interesting contrast. Robert Schumann, so often characterized by scholars as a figure whose reach exceeded his grasp, particularly when attempting to pour the heady wine of the new romantic music into old bottles, seems quite at home here in his String Quartet, Op. 41, No. 1 in A minor. The flow of musical ideas is easy and natural, revealing Schumann to be in full command of his material and able to mold the received classical quartet form to his own purposes.

The opening movement begins slowly and somberly with a warm melody that acquires the character of a song and closes gently. The energetic, galloping Scherzo with a sighing Intermezzo section reminds



Wagner: Symphonies in C major, E major (fragment) – Jun Märkl, MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony (Naxos)

What, *symphonies* by Richard Wagner? You bet! And not bad work for a twenty year old, either. The Symphony in C major was the product of the years 1832/34 when Wagner (1813-1883) was still a fledgling composer who very much had as his role model Beethoven, who died in 1827 but whose memory was still green. Having said that, it is also remarkable how much of his own exuberant personality he injected into these early works.

This symphony, which had quite a success when it was premiered in Leipzig in December, 1832, clearly shows the influence of the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies in its strong rhythmic drive, its dynamism, and its off-beat syncopations. The funereal tread of what passes for the slow movement, *Andante ma non troppo, un poco maestoso*, will remind listeners of the famous Allegretto in Beethoven's Seventh, and the ritards in the scherzo will recall their use in the corresponding movement of the Beethoven. But the fire and the feeling of rhythmic bounce in this work are all Wagner.

I'd heard this work some years ago, and was not terribly impressed, probably because the conductor and orchestra were not up to the level of excellence that Jun Märkl and the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Orchestra display here. One thing

Dvořák finally broke through to international recognition in 1880 at the age of 39. Even here, the composer was loath to abandon the Bohemian folk milieu that had nourished him, a fact notably evident in his use in the Scherzo of the rhythm of the Furiant, a wild dance in duple-triple metre: ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two, ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three. From the beginning of the opening movement, where dance music in 3/4 time inundates the listener, we know we are in for a celebration of high spirits and the joy of nature. The ample brass (4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones and a tuba) are used to accent the dance rhythms rather than to make the music more portentous (Dvořák was Bohemian, after all, not German.) In the finale, however, he does make use of the formal design, and even the opening theme, of Brahms' Second Symphony – clearly a gesture of homage rather than theft.

The influence of Brahms is evident, once again, in Symphony No. 7 in D minor, Op. 70. This time, it is the taut, concise, well laid-out structure of Brahms' Third Symphony that was important for Dvořák. He discovered in the process that he could write serious music without relying so excessively on his native folk culture. The scoring is absolutely brilliant, as is revealed in the charming interplay of the woodwinds in the second movement, marked *Poco Adagio*, just before the dramatic entry of the brass brings us back to the mood of foreboding drama with which the symphony began.

The predominant darkness of the opening movement ("seriousness" might be a better word) is often contrasted by music more redolent of the joy and bustle of life, which is ever ready to burst forth. The second movement, *Poco Adagio*, contains a wealth of inspired melodies, plus a radiant horn solo adding warmth to the music. The Scherzo features a fast-driven, demonic Furiant in its outer sections, with an idyllic Trio section for contrast. The very emphatic finale, driven by the considerable nervous energy of its momentum, proceeds fiercely and inexorably to its end, with a sunny

us of Mendelssohn, the work's dedicatee. The Adagio features a typically gracious Schumann love melody, preceded by a recitative between cello and violin. The finale is animated and witty, a perpetual series of running notes in the course of which Schumann does a lot of clever things to the melody – upside down, in counterpoint, with gypsy inflections and even a bagpipes-like drone accompaniment near the end. There seems to be nothing this composer cannot do to his material.

By contrast, Brahms worked long and hard for several years on the ideal form in which to cast what eventually became the Quintet for Piano and Strings in F minor, Op. 34, frequently drawing on the advice of his friends. It started off as a string quintet with a second cello as the fifth wheel. Joseph Joachim, after playing through the work, found it brimming with masculine vitality but lacking in charm and difficult to perform unless it were done with great energy. Brahms subsequently revised it as a sonata for two pianos, in which form it is still performed today. He then called on Clara Schumann for an opinion, and she suggested that the warmth provided by strings would be better suited to the tones and nuances in the music.

The combination of piano and string quartet proved the best solution in the end, though there remained a certain edginess that is never quite dispelled. The forceful running passages in a rather dark opening *Allegro* are a preview of things to come. The slow movement, a lyrical *Andante*, provides a respite from the tumult of the opening movement, even though it is still tinged with melancholy. The driving rhythm of the Scherzo builds to an heroic march, grand but with a take-no-prisoners mien accentuated by a ceaseless syncopated undercurrent.

The final movement, perhaps the most remarkable of all, begins very quietly with deep chromatic notes rising from the strings like sounds from a dark pool or a fissure in the earth – an incredible moment that is well captured here by the Pacifica. Thereafter, a section of sobbing

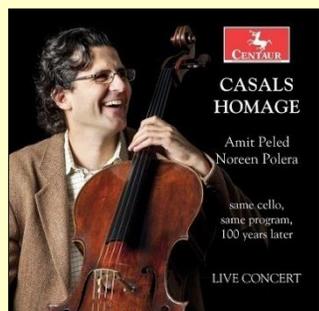
that does strike me about this youthful work, however, is the fact that the four individual movements, highly effective as they are, do not hold together as a unified narrative that tells a story.

The Symphony in E major is actually more promising in that respect. The leaping theme in the strings in the opening *Allegro con spirito*, the only completed movement, is highly engaging, and the composer shows surprising maturity in the ways he brings up the brass and percussion. At some point, Wagner put the work aside with only this movement and an incomplete slow movement, *Andante cantabile*, and he never returned to it. After his death, it was orchestrated by his associate Felix Mottl, who wrote a few modest bars by way of completion where the *Andante* broke off. This "ending" would not satisfy a scholarly mind, as it seems more likely Wagner was slowing to a brief pause at this point before going on to a second section.

Why did Wagner give up on the symphony after so promising a start? Opinions vary. My guess is that he took stock of himself at this point in his career and clearly realized two things: 1) that he had good material, and 2) its ultimate destiny was *not* in the symphonic genre. About this time, he was writing an essay, by way of a manifesto, in defense of German opera, and his creative juices must have already been flowing in the direction of his first operas. The rest, as they say, is history.

secondary idea, first heard in the cellos, by way of contrast. In the coda we finally get the expected key resolution (D major), following a monumental struggle that Nézet-Seguín and the LPO take for all it is worth.

strings over piano chords is followed by faster music in the body of the movement, and the mood shifts unpredictably from buoyancy to pleading and then almost savage restlessness before the movement builds to a climax.



“Casals Homage: same cello, same program, 100 years later” - Amit Peled, Noreen Polera (Centaur)

The present recital by Israeli cellist Amit Peled resonates in musical history in more ways than one. Peled, currently a professor at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, took this richly varied program from an actual recital that Pablo Casals performed at Peabody during his American visit in 1915. Hence also the title of Peled’s 20-city U.S. tour 100 years later, “Homage to Pablo Casals.” It was, additionally, Peled’s opportunity to show his proficiency on the Goffriller cello that had been played by Pablo Casals and was personally given to him by the maestro’s widow, Marta Casals Istomin.

Why all this particular interest in Pablo Casals? Well, that great Catalan cellist did his colleagues and audiences the service of rescuing the cello itself from its limited role as a supporting instrument, one that helped realize the deeper harmonies in a larger body of strings, and showed the world that it had an eloquent solo voice in its own right, capable of the most beautifully exalted cantilena.

That realization had been growing for some time, going back at least as far as J.S. Bach’s unaccompanied cello suites. As Peled shows us in Cello Suite No. 3 in C major, BWV 1009, the instrument possesses

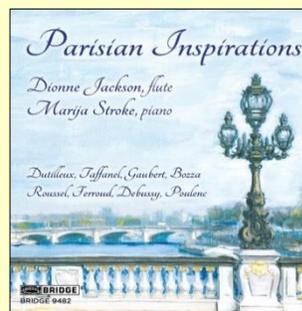


“Heroic Proportions,” Organ Recital by Felix Hell: Bach, Barber, Franck, Stewart, Willan (MSR Classics)

Every now and then comes an organ recital that is perfectly satisfying in every respect. This is one occasion. Here we have one of the great young organists of our time playing an engaging program consisting of two staples of the literature, a fine transcription of a work for strings, and two works of recent vintage that already have the label “modern classic” stamped on them. Superb sound recordings allow us to optimally hear every contrapuntal strain and nuance.

The organist is Felix Hell, an artist who has been much in demand, giving hundreds of solo recitals on three continents, including some 850 in his native Germany and 500 in the United States. The organ is the J.W. Steere & Son Opus 665 of the St. Mark Lutheran Church of Hannover, PA, first installed in 1914 and rebuilt in 1958 and 1995. (The booklet is filled with information on its history and specifications). Of special interest is the fact that this instrument was fitted with a new console and additional ranks of pipes in 2010, and now consists of four manuals and fifty ranks.

So much for “specs.” Every organ has them. The important thing is the glorious quality of the sound we hear throughout this organ’s entire registration, plus the exceptionally



“Parisian Inspirations,” French music for flute and piano - Dionne Jackson, Marija Stroke (Bridge Records)

A couple of very talented U.S.-based artists, flutist Dionne Jackson and pianist Marija Stroke, give a program of music by French composers that is as enlightening as it is unfailingly buoyant and charming. We are served up delectable dishes by Dutilleux, Taffanel, Gaubert, Bozza, Roussel, Ferroud, Debussy, and Poulenc. Some of these composers are very familiar names, others are not. All were figures who studied at the Paris Conservatory, taught future generations of flutists and composers, or did both.

We have here the composers and works of music at the heart of the “modern French flute school,” a concept that resonates with flutists and connoisseurs of the instrument right down to the present day. An assorted lot, they were, by and large, not narrowly associated with compositions for the flute. Paul Taffanel and Philippe Gaubert, for example, were notable conductors, and Eugene Bozza is best-known today for his many chamber works for all sorts of wind ensembles. And, of course, Claude Debussy, Albert Roussel, and Francis Poulenc were notable in virtually every genre.

The pieces heard on this program were often written as conservatory test pieces to measure the progress of a student, or else they were

remarkable athleticism in its ability to play wonderful cascades of scales and sequences of arpeggios over a pedal point. Double stops at the close of the Prelude and in the concluding Gigue allow Peled the opportunity to show off the splendid vivacity in Bach's music. In the present performance, he pays special attention to the element of rhythm, which makes this music come alive. In this particular suite all the dance movements, with one exception, are noticeably upbeat, even the usually staid Allemande, indicating that Bach intended this music to have great popular appeal.

The exception to the upbeat nature of the dance movements in this suite is the quiet, passionate Sarabande, with its extended left-hand positions and stressed beats that add depth and gravity to this moment. The other Bach piece on the menu is the equally eloquent and moving Aria from the Pastorale in F for Organ, BWV 590, heard here in Pablo Casals' arrangement, of which the manuscript was passed on to Amit Peled by his own American teacher, cellist Bernard Greenhouse.

The middle of the program is given to three pieces by Gabriel Fauré that show, among other things, a great facility for vocal-like melody. That is especially true of the poignant *Élégie* with its cadenza-like figurations and the heart-stopping moment in the score in which, after a pause, the cello and piano change roles of solo and accompaniment. The pianist here is Peled's frequent recital partner Noreen Polera, whose rapport with him becomes more pronounced with every opportunity we have to hear them. The *Sicilienne*, with its lilting melody, and the appropriately fluttering *Papillon* (Butterfly) add further charm to this part of the recital.

Ludwig van Beethoven is heard from in an imaginative set of variations on the familiar duet "*Bei Männern*" from Mozart's Magic Flute. Also, George Frideric Handel in the Sonata in G minor, a 19th century arrangement of his oboe concerto in the same key. The glorious Largo, in the form of a Sarabande, is the main item of

quick response that permits Felix Hell to introduce the second fugal theme in J.S. Bach's great "St. Anne" Prelude and Fugue, BWV 552 or the superbly contrasted sections in César Franck's *Pièce héroïque* with the greatest assurance – plus a split-second timing that virtually takes the listener's breath away. Felix is very much in his element in the fugal section of the Bach, playing up its infectious rhythms in a way that gives us the impression that the fugue, and the instrument itself, are actually dancing!

Franck's *Pièce héroïque* opens dramatically with an angry outburst of nervous energy and a section marked by driving, marching rhythm. We next have a moment of most anxious prayer, and then a rocking figure on the pedals and a steady progress towards an overpowering, monumental conclusion.

Samuel Barber's famous Adagio for Strings is up next in an organ arrangement by William Strickland. The familiar stepwise progress towards an ecstatic climax and a tantalizingly unreachd goal comes across well here, though the final fadeout at the end is replaced by softly pulsating chords as the organ, unlike a body of strings, cannot execute a true diminuendo.

This is a unified recital and not just an organ miscellany, and the quality of the offerings does not fall off appreciably when we leave the big names on the program and turn to more contemporary works. Eric R. Stewart's Sonnetto, which Felix Hell premiered on this very organ at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, is rich in texture, melody and harmony. Mystery, beauty, and persuasion hold equal sway here. Stewart develops his material to create the impression of a four-movement sonata in the space of a single movement. In the third section, which functions as the "scherzo," a dramatic call and response which first appears in the highest register is answered in the pedals.

The recital concludes with a large-scale work of the greatest flair, the Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue by English-born Canadian organist

specially commissioned for the "prix concours," the final exam for honors. Consequently, the emphasis for the performer tended to be on the greatest flexibility, particularly in rapid motion between the extremes of the flute's range and complete facility in changing registration. The requirement for flutter-tonguing in Bozza's *Image* for solo flute is but one example of the great technical demands these composers required. Another is the smoothness needed for the continually changing meter among three, four, and five beats per measure in the Jade movement of *Three Pieces for Solo Flute*, with its evocations of Chinese traditional music, by the short-lived Pierre-Octave Ferroud (1900-1936).

Incidentally, it was Ferroud's death in a motor accident that encouraged his friend Francis Poulenc to sound a more serious, even religious, note in his own music. That may account for the sadness, unusual for an opening movement, that we find in the *Allegro malinconico* of his *Sonata for Flute and Piano*. Elsewhere, Rousset's highly imaginative *Joueurs de flûte* (Flute Players), evoking famous flute-playing figures from mythology and literature, requires all of the imagination and flexibility of tone that Dionne Jackson invests in it in the present recording.

Who haven't we mentioned? Why, Claude Debussy of course. His *Syrinx* for solo flute (1913) was epoch-making in its use of a highly ornamented whole-tone scale as the means of going beyond what the composer deemed the outworn harmonic language of his day. As Jackson capably demonstrates for us, Debussy opened a new world of colorful, expressive harmony in less than three and a half minutes. Great recorded sound, thanks to producer and engineer Adam Abeshouse, captures all the facets in a glowing recital in an absolutely true and flawless perspective.

interest here. Camille Saint-Saëns' muscular Allegro appassionato and Casals' spiritually uplifting "Song of the Birds," to a traditional Catalan melody, conclude a memorable program.

Healey Willan (1880-1968). Richly chromatic and filled with intense drama, it builds to a climax of ...well, "heroic proportions" in Felix Hell's interpretation.