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Prokofiev: Piano Concertos 1 & 2
Anna Shelest, piano; Niels Muus, Janáček
Philharmonic Orchestra (Sorel Classics)

Anna Shelest, a wonderful young pianist from Ukraine who isn't afraid of the most daunting challenges, joins forces with like-minded conductor Niels Muus in a Prokofiev program that demands the utmost of all concerned. This is Prokofiev, the fearless young conservatory graduate thirsting to leave his pug-mark on the world.

No composer ever arrived on the music scene as astonishingly as did Sergei Prokofiev when the 21-year old premiered his Piano Concerto No. 1 in D flat, Op. 10 in 1912. That the perceived world view was still securely in place for most Russians must have made it seem all the more shocking to Prokofiev's listeners when he performed it in a conservatory competition in St. Petersburg. The theme of the opening movement arises out of a cyclone of notes, a procedure which is heard again at the work's stunning conclusion.

Tempos in the outer movements are of two kinds: fast and faster. Of all the great piano concertos of the 20th century, this is the tersest and most succinct (at 16:47, it is actually a bit on the long side here compared with other versions I've heard, though I can't account for the difference). The slow movement, *Andante assai*, is both sublime and sinister, ending abysmally, a fact that requires even closer mutual sympathy between pianist and conductor.

Prokofiev premiered his Piano Concerto No. 2 in G minor, Op. 16 in 1916. In the turmoil of the times, which necessitated Prokofiev's travels abroad, the manuscript was destroyed in a fire and he had to reconstruct it from memory in 1923. A great deal had happened in Russia in the intervening years, and it is tempting to suggest the composer injected a lot of the suffering of those trying times into the reconstructed version. The work is in four movements, containing lethal amounts of motor rhythms and pessimism along with an eastern lyricism that seems astonishing under the circumstances. The long cadenza in the opening



Prokofiev: Sonatas, Nos. 6, 7, and 8
Peter Donohoe, pianist
(Somm Recordings)

Manchester, England native Peter Donohoe sums up years of close acquaintance with the piano music of Sergei Prokofiev in this, the third and final volume of the Russian composer's complete sonatas. He saved the best for last: the three so-called "War" Sonatas. His thoughtful interpretations stress the similarities as well as the underlying threads that unite these three powerful masterworks as well as their pronounced individual character.

The amazing thing about these sonatas is that they were sketched simultaneously in 1939. No. 6 in A major, Op. 82, was the first to be completed. Prokofiev premiered it himself in 1940. (The description "War" Sonata is technically incorrect, as Russia was then in a non-aggression treaty with Germany and would be until the Nazi invasion in June, 1941, though few Russians had any illusions about Hitler's sincerity.) No. 7 in B-flat major, Op. 83 was premiered by Sviatoslav Richter in January, 1943, and No. 8 in B-flat major, Op. 84 by Emil Gilels in 1944. The greatness of the music demands artists of that caliber. Collectively, these sonatas cover a huge range of expression with their kinetic energy, sharp accents, acrid irony, and (should it surprise us?) a lyricism that can pop up at unexpected moments, not just in the slow movements. This sort of sad, dreamy lyricism reminds us that Prokofiev was still actively engaged, as pianist and conductor, in promoting the music of his ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, which would play a major role in his legacy.

Sonata No. 6 already has the salient qualities of the set: powerful rhythms, tonal ambiguity, and a lyricism that is all the more welcome for being unexpected. The dissonance created by parallel major and minor thirds in the opening movement delays our recognition of the key signature. Staccato chords in the scherzo are succeeded in the slow movement by a surprisingly romantic waltz marked *lentissimo* ("as slowly as possible"). The mood, if not the melody, reminds me of the composer's unforgettable portrait of "Juliet the

movement, which Shelest handles with all the flair and fire it deserves, has been described as the most difficult of all piano concertos, so much so that the orchestra is required to return *in tutti* in order to match the piano at its very end. The coda at the end of the finale requires the utmost endurance from both Anna Shelest and conductor Niels Muus and the orchestra. The liner notes describe this finish as one in which “both the soloist and the orchestra dance themselves to death,” which seems like a fair assessment.

In between, we have a breath-taking Scherzo of just two minutes’ duration in which the pianist’s hands fly in unison over the keyboard, and a haunting Intermezzo whose grotesquerie no less an authority than the great Sviatoslav Richter likened to Francisco de Goya’s painting “Saturn devouring his Children” – it’s that disturbing! Happily, no composer – not even Prokofiev – ever again poured as many discordant elements into a single concerto. The dynamic quality of the present performance and its sound recording bring it all out with frightening realism.



Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff: Elegiac Piano Trios
Trio Solisti
(Bridge Records) 2-CD slimline set

As we know, Tchaikovsky was prompted to compose his hauntingly beautiful Trio in A minor, Op. 50 by the death of his friend and mentor Nicholas Rubinstein. This was the first major instance of an “elegiac” trio in Russian musical history, to be followed by Arensky, Rachmaninoff, and Shostakovich, among others. Though the mood is generally somber in keeping with the occasion Tchaikovsky memorialized his dedicatee, a famous pianist, by making the piano part demanding and virtuosic. Therein lies the kernel of the problem in interpreting this work, as the piano always has the potential to overpower the strings in any piano trio.

The composer himself had hinted discretely at this when he demurred to a request from his patroness,

Young Girl.” Clashing dissonances and toccata-like rhythms in the finale require a firm hand of Peter Donohoe to prevent their spinning off into chaos.

Sonata No. 7, the most frequently-played of the three, has it all, beginning with an opening movement marked *Allegro inquieto* (“unquiet,” and how!) with its tension between dissonant rage and a quiet yearning for peace, featuring up-and-down rhythms that thump like a walloping window-blind. Contrasts between atonal and tonal technique dominate much of this sonata. The second movement is marked *Andante caloroso*, though the warmth implied in the adjective should be taken to apply to phrasing and a sense of inner communion, rather than intimacy. In the finale, aptly titled *Precipitato*, an inherently unstable 7/8 again requires the firm hand of the pianist. It ends in a sense of hard-won victory, appropriate to a “war” sonata.

Sonata No. 8, the longest of the three, was described by Emil Gilels, who frequently performed it, as “a profound work, demanding a great deal of emotional tension,” citing further “the symphonic nature of its development” and “the breadth and charm of its lyrical passages.” In the first movement, Donohoe makes much of what has been described as a “fate” motif that permeates these sonatas, giving a family resemblance to three very distinctive siblings. The most memorable movement here is the second, an *Andante sognando* that lives up to its descriptive marking (dreamlike).



Berl Senofsky in Concert at Expo '58 Brussels
With Marie Louise Bastyns, piano
(Bridge Records)

Berl Senofsky (1926-2002), born in Philadelphia of Russian immigrant violinists, was quite possibly the greatest 20th century violinist you’ve never heard of. There’s a reason for that. He was thrust into the spotlight as an international celebrity after winning the Queen Elizabeth of Belgium Competition in 1955. (To this day, he is the only American winner of the award, which had previously been bestowed on Oistrakh and Milstein – fast company!) Thereafter, he found satisfaction in areas of music other than a career as a violin virtuoso. He taught at the Peabody Conservatory from 1965 to 1996, founded a chamber music series, and began a foundation to help American artists entering international competitions.

Nadezhda von Meck, to write a trio for her house musicians, contending that "the piano cannot blend with the rest, having elasticity of tone that separates from any other body of sound." The dilemma is this: do you hold back on the piano for the sake of a smoother blend, or do you bring the other instruments up to its dynamic level, at the risk of going 'way over the top?

In this performance, the Trio Solisti, consisting of Maria Bachmann, violin; Alexis Pia Gerlach, cello; and Adam Neiman, piano, go for the second option. This was obviously a congenial approach for a group that has been justly dubbed "the most exciting piano trio in America" by *The New Yorker*, but it places a demand for endurance on the listener. The rewards, however, are commensurate, as this is one of Tchaikovsky's finest and most compelling works in any genre. It unfolds in two parts: the first (*Pezzo elegiaco*) a dignified elegy with three highly expressive melodies, and the second a set of eleven variations that develop with astonishing exuberance from a folklike melody. There's also a 12th variation (*Variatione finale e Coda*) which some critics consider a separate movement, drawing together the elements we've heard above and ending, very effectively, in a fade-out on soft funereal drum taps. There is plenty of meat to feed upon here, even for a group with the proclivities of a Trio Solisti.

The variations are highly imaginative, showing Tchaikovsky's firm grasp of the genre. That includes the 8th Variation, a fugue that is sometimes omitted by performers who find it difficult to reconcile with the received impression of this composer, but which the Trio Solisti wisely include here (Tchaikovsky knew what he was doing). The variations have a great variety. No. 2 turns the duple-time theme into triple-time (waltz tempo), while No. 6 is actually a full-blown waltz in the composer's grandest style. No. 9 is quiet and reflective, while No. 11, a lively Mazurka, leaps forth in decided contrast.

Sergei Rachmaninoff composed his *Trio élégiaque* in D minor, Op. 9 as a memorial to Tchaikovsky, who had been enthusiastic in encouraging the younger composer. It is modeled ostensibly on the Tchaikovsky Trio, but with important differences that say a lot about Rachmaninoff's unique methods of development and emotional expression. As in the Tchaikovsky, the piano is first among equals. In the opening movement, Rachmaninoff has four expressive markings of *meno mosso* or *piu mosso* (mostly or rather sad), and though they are out-numbered by six allegros of various markings, the basic mood is that of really profound sadness (listen to the dispirited passage that follows an open "sigh" in the cello at the 11:54 point).

The second movement is, as was the Tchaikovsky, a set of freely handled variations, though the marking "*Quasi variazione*" is more accurate. As a working-through of grief for loss, it is very effective, notably in the first pale morning sunlight that seems to break in

Whatever the reason, Senofsky made few commercial recordings, mainly for RCA and scarce as hen's teeth to come across today. So we are left to rely on other evidence to judge the range of his artistry. One such clue is this recording of a live broadcast from the Brussels World's Fair on October 6, 1958, now made available to Bridge Records by the Senofsky family and with the permission of Belgian pianist Marie Louise Bastyns, who was his partner on that occasion. This recital is important because it includes previously unrecorded repertoire of Senofsky. It reveals sure virtuosity, employed consistently in the interest of the great works of music that he plays, conveyed to the listener with a slender tone that is full of heart-melting feeling and solid musicianship.

We begin with Ravel's *Pièce en forme de Habanera*, which Senofsky invests with so much warmth, especially for a work that is usually coolly interpreted, that we understand why the Habanera, a form that is as much song as it is dance, means so much to the Spanish people. Likewise, he invests Bela Bartok's Roumanian Dances with sufficient vitality, especially in the transition without missing a beat between the final two dances, so that they stay in our memory long after hearing them. Ditto the slow, deeply felt unfolding of Sergei Rachmaninoff's mellifluous Vocalise.

Sonata No. 6 for Solo Violin in one movement by Eugène Ysaÿe, perhaps the most technically demanding of the Belgian composer's unaccompanied sonatas, has another tricky Habanera rhythm in its middle section, which Senofsky handles with ease. America's Paul Creston was a composer of many surprises, not the least of which is the amazing warmth that Senofsky brings out in Air, the middle movement of his Suite for Violin and Piano. Henryk Wieniawski's Grand Duo Concertante, usually treated in encore recitals as a piece of pastry, comes across as something more under Senofsky's bow, starting with the gentle lift-off at the very opening.

Senofsky handles the famous Chaconne from J.S. Bach's Partita No. 2 with the hand of an old master. The quiet moment, about halfway through at the 7:44 mark, was conveyed by the artist with such incredible warmth that I felt tears welling up as I listened to it. The violinist concludes with Brahms: first, the Allegretto grazioso, marked *quasi andante*) from Violin Sonata No. 2 in A, Op. 100, in which Senofsky and Bastyns bring out the world of textural, chromatic and emotional subtlety that Brahms invested in this movement. Then, we are given the perfect "chaser": Hungarian Dance No. 7.

at about 5:15 and a stirring in the strings at 11:25 proclaiming a new day of hope and consolation. The finale, *Allegro risoluto*, resolves the conflicted issues of hope and despair in the present performance better than I have heard it done before. As a *trio élégiaque*, the D minor Trio was actually preceded by a single-movement Trio in G minor of 1892, written as a character piece rather than a memorial. The composer actually seems to quote a folk-like theme that Tchaikovsky had used in the opening movement of his own A minor Trio. The present performance by the Trio Solisti comes together as a more consistently moving work than I have previously heard it on record.

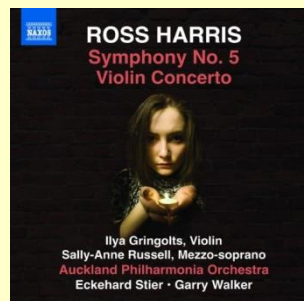


Brahms: String Quartets, Op. 51
New Zealand String Quartet (Naxos)

The New Zealand String Quartet, consisting of Helene Pohl, Violin I, Douglas Beilman, Violin II, Gillian Ansell, Viola, and Rolf Gjelsten, Cello, are back again on these pages, revealing the same careful attention to detail, ensemble, and glowing warmth I noted earlier in the decade when I reviewed their Mendelssohn quartets. Here the subject is Johannes Brahms' two String Quartets, Op. 51. As was often his wont when publishing two similar works under the same opus number (for example, the Clarinet Sonatas, Op. 120), the differences between the two works are revealing.

As he was with the symphony, Brahms was slow to complete his first two quartets, and for the same reason. It was the ghost of Beethoven that he felt looming behind his back that kept him from releasing these quartets before his 40th year, after discarding some twenty earlier attempts. Beethoven's influence is noticeable in Quartet No. 1 in C minor in the way the opening chord is identical in pitch and range to that of Beethoven's Opus 74, and in the way the first violin sings a quiet aria over the rest of the group, recalling the Cavatina in his late Quartet, Opus 130.

But Brahms was also determined to be his own man, and not merely the imitator of a great master. There are serious matters at work in the stirring, uneasy mood with which the quartet opens that are all Brahms' own, in addition to a noticeable working away at the details, so that the mood of a movement may undergo a sea-change before it is finished. Alongside this is Brahms' lyricism, notable in the balm he provides the listener in the lovely Romanza: Poco Adagio.



Ross Harris: Symphony No. 5, Violin Concerto
Sally-Anne Russell, mezzo-soprano; Auckland Philharmonic Orchestra under Eckehard Stier (symphony) and Garry Walker (concerto) (Naxos)

I'm always interested in reviewing music by composers who don't have an end date beside their names. In the case of New Zealand's Ross Harris (b.1945) his is a voice who really has something to say to the world. He isn't an easy Kiwi to crack, but the rewards are there if you are patient and bear him out.

The major work on the program is Harris' Symphony No. 5 (2013), inspired by three poems by Hungarian poetess Panni Palasti, drawn from her experiences as a young child hiding with her father during the siege of Budapest in World War II. This is a very emotional work, especially in the moments of anticipation of capture and death while taking refuge in a cellar during the bombardments, as crystallized in the poems "The Line-Up," "Candlelight," and "Lessons learned from my father." There is a hushed, quiet pathos in Harris' settings of these poems of fear of death by cruelly impersonal forces, contrasted to the faint glimmering of hope in the candles the child (Palasti herself) fashions from burnt-out ends of wax and discarded scraps of shoelace: "not a drop wasted / while the bombs / make the flame gutter / when big blasts / whip up the air / in the cellar." Sally-Anne Russell does a commendable job of conveying the various moods to us with the greatest sensitivity.

The structure of the symphony is symmetrical, beginning and ending with Adagio movements that, in Harris' finely conceived counterpoint and rich sound palette, provide an element of consolation in the face of war and its horrors. The latter moods are expressed

Quartet No. 2 is usually characterized as less “terse” and “tragic” than its opus-mate primarily for the increased lyricism and infusion of dance-like elements in the Andante moderato and the Quasi Minuetto movements. Even in its finale, the apparent conflict between theme and accompaniment can be attributed to the fact that it is based on the meter of a Hungarian dance, the Czárdás, where that sort of thing *will* happen. As in Quartet No. 1, it is remarkable how themes of different character will evolve from one another. A good example in Quartet No. 2 is the way a charming serenade intrudes on the opening Allegro non troppo at 1:22 and again at 5:15, with the effect of a welcome burst of sunshine.



Haydn: “Sun” Quartets, Op. 20, Nos. 1-3
Chiaroscuro String Quartet
(Bis Records) Hybrid SACD, Surround

On the Swedish label Bis we have revealing and illuminating performances of the first three items in Franz Josef Haydn’s pathbreaking set of the “Sun” Quartets, Op. 20. Performers are the Chiaroscuro String Quartet, consisting of Alina Ibragimova and Hernán Benedi, violins; Emilie Hörnlund, viola; and Claire Thirion, cello. That they are natives of Russia, Spain, Sweden, and France, respectively, is appropriate, as Haydn was the first composer whose fame spread throughout the continent – and even as far as America. These epoch-making quartets played their part in his spreading fame.

The Chiaroscuro perform on gut-strung instruments dating from ca. 1700 to 1851, and they play them to good advantage, not merely for the sake of a period sound but also to bring out the rich harmonies and fascinating textures in the music. That is important because, as writer Tom Service points out in his insightful booklet annotation, these quartets are remarkable for the ways in which they differ from our received notions of what a proper “classical” string quartet should be. Most strikingly, they do not follow the first-movement design of theme-development-recapitulation that historians have come to associate with sonata-allegro form. Haydn was no fond advocate of “Mother may I” rules in his Opus 20, nor need he have been. More than anyone else, he was the founder of the string quartet genre that was to become

by two scherzos that interleave the songs: the first with the stirring sounds of jackboots marching to military bands and harsh sounds of brutality and oppression, and the latter with the same elements strangely subdued, like ghostly images in a cemetery. The final Adagio ends in a mood of disturbing quiet.

Harris’ Violin Concerto, which begins the program, is in five parts which gradually coalesce, rather like Five Characters in Search of a Concerto. Tentative, pointillistic sounds and bare scraps of melody in the early going at length give way to music that comes together in a more satisfying manner. Violinist Ilya Gringolts does fine work savoring the strange beauty of a seamlessly textured work that hovers tantalizingly between tonal and atonal.



Janáček + Kodály: Piano Works – Klára Würtz
(Piano Classics)

Klára Würtz, Budapest-born pianist, adds another jewel to her diadem as an internationally acclaimed concert artist with outstanding performances of intriguing – and often very moving – pieces by Leos Janáček and Zoltán Kodály. It should not surprise us that Janáček wore his heart on his sleeve, as he often did so, and there is a deeply personal, if not indeed confessional, mood in his music in the present program. But Kodály could write from the heart as well, deeply if not as sensationally, and listeners may be surprised by what they witness here of his music, especially the Four Piano Pieces, Op. 11.

The titles of the Janáček collections on this program, In the Mist and On an Overgrown Path, Book I, both contain associations of experiences that are difficult and sometimes painful to recall and relive in the imagination. In the Mist, which was described by an early Janáček biographer as “one long struggle of resignation and recurring pain, which predominates even at the end,” is actually based on fairly simple elements, such as the five-note theme heard against an ostinato figure in the first piece or the four-note sequences which undergo transformations in the succeeding Adagio molto. Much of the “mistiness” results from Janáček’s use of “black note” keys with many flats. Würtz is also keenly aware of the changes in tempi, meter, and dynamics that give the quality of an improvisation to so much of this music.

The ten pieces published as On an Overgrown Path

the centerpiece of the world of chamber music. It was his game, and he was free to follow his instincts, making things up as he went along.

The opening movements are the key to understanding Haydn's purpose. Even to the non-scholarly listener, they sound "different," and even "wrong." There is no pre-ordained structure at work here. As Service implies, "form," in this context, is a verb, not a noun. There's no first theme in the opening of No. 1 in E-flat major, just "an aggregate of ideas, all of which are pregnant with possibility." The Moderato of No. 2 in C major plays like a chain of pearls, with the second violin and viola providing a two-part accompaniment underneath the tune played by the cello. You don't have to be well educated musically to sense a departure from one's usual expectations. In the opening Allegro con spirito of No. 3 in G minor, there are pauses at weird moments, as if the musicians were at a loss as to how to proceed. Of course, Haydn knew how, and the seeming "wrongness" comes out right in the process of texture turning into musical material.

The other thing you notice about the "Sun" Quartets is their expressiveness, a quality that endears them to listeners. The eruptive arpeggios played by the cello in the opening of No. 1, and its mournful soliloquy in the succeeding Minuet, are examples. Another is the real sadness in the Poco adagio of No. 3, which is only gradually dissipated as Haydn works through it. The Chiaroscuro Quartets are exceptionally keen to all these nuances, making us eager to hear what they will do when BIS releases Quartets 4-6 in the set.

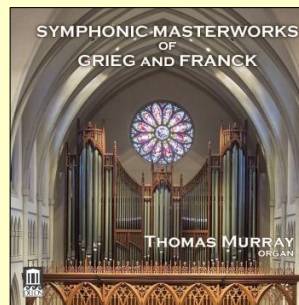


Saint-Saëns: Symphony no. 3, "Organ," Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, La muse et le poète – Michael Stern, Kansas City Symphony (Reference Recordings) Hybrid SACD 5.1 & stereo

For the benefit of all you audiophiles out there, this is a High Density Compact Disc (HDCD) and a "Prof" Johnson 24-bit recording in stereo and Surround. For you truly rabid audiophiles, that is all you need to know. For those who want to know more about the music and the performances, this is a rich offering of music by one of the great French symphonists of the romantic era, and the performances bear this out.

are more overtly autobiographical, though it may sometimes be dangerous to see in such a piece as "Our evenings" the increasingly strained relations, under a surface of domesticity, between the composer and his wife following the deaths of their three daughters and his repeated infidelities. We are on more secure ground in The Madonna of Frydek, with its evocations of organ music and the happy singing of religious pilgrims that Janáček recalled from his earliest years. The last three pieces, "Unutterable Anguish," "In Tears," and "The barn owl has not flown away," relate to his anxiety and sorrow at the death of his youngest daughter, and are painful to hear. The last-named title refers to the folk belief that the cry of the owl was a portent of death, which could be averted if it were driven away. Its cry – here realized by a minor third, followed by a triplet – is contrasted by a chorale inviting renewed hope and life, though at the end death, the sound of the owl, has won out.

In interpreting the piano pieces by fellow countryman Zoltán Kodály, Klára Würtz draws on the same qualities she showed in the Janáček, including a well-centered tone, precise attack, and sensitivity to nuances in dynamics, mood, and tempo. The three selections from Piano Pieces, Op. 11 include two popular songs from the Szekely region, enfolding a piece inspired by a poem by Paul Verlaine, "*il pleut dans la ville*" (It is raining in the village) with staccato chords set against running figures in quarter notes. There follows an imaginative Meditation on a Motif of Claude Debussy (from the opening movement of his String Quartet), and then – the rousing Dances of Marosszék, in which the theme appears in various guises, some in *parlando* phrasing and pastoral mood, others in heightened tempo, ending in a hectic coda.



Symphonic Masterworks of Grieg and Franck
Thomas Murray, organ (Delos Productions)

American organist Thomas Murray, at the Gloria Dei Organ of St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston, TX, presents a program that is bound to cause a stir among fellow organists and aficionados of the organ for its innovation. But actually, the practice of performing symphonic music on the organ goes back to an earlier time in our history when most people lived in rural areas and towns too small to support an orchestra or an opera house and the radio and recording media were, at best, in their infancy. In

Camille Saint-Saëns wrote three major works for the great Spanish violin virtuoso and composer Pablo de Sarasate: namely, his Violin Concertos 1 and 3 and the Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 28, heard here is a more-than-capable performance by violinist Noah Geller, assisted by the Kansas City Symphony under Michael Stern. With its languid Spanish melody that gains momentum as the work progresses, and with the rich backdrop provided by the orchestra, this has long been a concert hall favorite.

The same cannot be said for *La muse et le poète* (the muse and the poet), Op. 132, a late work for violin, cello and orchestra. Curiously, it combines elements of a double concerto and a symphonic poem. Geller and cellist Mark Gibbs labor, not without success, to win more friends for a work that has been neglected despite its abundance of gracious melody and rich scoring. The violin, the voice of the Muse, is tenderly lyrical at first, while the cello, representing the poet, is more earthy and forceful on its initial entry. With Saint-Saëns' customarily sure hand and instinctive sense of what makes an effective duet (he was an opera composer, remember) the music gets warmer and more expansive as the instruments reach an accord.

The main event is, of course, Symphony No. 3 in C minor, Op. 78, known to all the world as the "Organ" Symphony for the dramatic role played by the organ, performed here by Jan Kraybill. It opens, like Cesar Franck's Symphony in D minor from the same period, with a brief, mysterious Adagio that gives way to a restless, impassioned Allegro section in which Saint-Saëns displayed his knowledge of all the instruments of the orchestra, on most of which he was proficient himself. The mood changes with the entrance of the organ at the opening of the Adagio molto, with the promise of peace, consolation and heart's ease after the unrest of the opening movement.

The two movements that constitute the second half of the symphony are dramatically contrasted to those of the first half, though they serve a similar purpose. The scherzo is marked "Allegro moderato – Presto," with scintillating scales and demon arpeggios in the piano adding to the frenzy of a brilliantly scored movement. Then the organ is heard from again, making an even more dramatic entrance than it had earlier as it breathes an air of confident grandeur and majesty (appropriately marked "*Maestoso*"). Following a pastoral interlude for flute, oboe, English horn, and clarinet, the music drives on, culminating in a series of exultant fanfares. All the families of the orchestra give a fine account of themselves here, in a work written specifically with that purpose in mind.

those days church organists often supplemented their meager incomes and had the great satisfaction of serving others by presenting programs of the great new music of the day in organ transcriptions.

Today, the emphasis in putting together a program such as Murray presents here, transcriptions of the Holberg Suite of Edvard Grieg and the D minor Symphony of César Franck, is somewhat different. In arrangements by Richard Ellsasser and Calvin Hampton, respectively, the aim was to create a version entirely idiomatic to the organ medium. The purpose, particularly in the case of the Franck, was to explore the full kaleidoscope of nuance and color made possible by the registration of a great organ.

Murray realizes these artistic aims superbly in the present program. Grieg's Suite "From Holberg's Time" benefits, particularly in the Sarabande and the moody and deeply touching Air, from the dark registration that Murray employs here. The Prelude is not as fast as we are accustomed to hearing in the familiar string orchestra version (an organ is inherently a somewhat slower medium than a body of strings), but the Rigaudon has all the verve and *joie de vivre* that we could desire, with a more somber episode that seems to still feel the tidal pull of the Air.

The Franck symphony seems even more idiomatic in its arrangement for organ, as Murray's choices of registration fit its changes of mood to perfection and even seem to make the composer's use of cyclic form, where the themes heard in the conflicted opening movement are fully realized in the triumphant finale, even more evident than in the symphonic version we are used to hearing. You can hear and judge for yourself: while there is certainly no justification for scrapping the symphonic version of this great work in favor of the organ, the performance we have here recalls for us the fact that, until the very last years of his life when he wrote such "legacy" works as the Violin Sonata in A and the Symphony in D minor, Franck was known almost exclusively as the greatest organist and organ composer of his day.

Niceties such as the "faith" motif that emerges from real anger and conflict in the opening movement development (and is later heard triumphantly in the finale) come across with the greatest clarity here. So does the unusual sound of the *cor anglais* (English horn) stop, whose biting, reedy timbre helps create something of the feel of a slow medieval French dance in the Allegretto. Using stops that have been carefully selected to replicate the sounds of strumming harp and pizzicato strings in the orchestral version, Murray conveys a sense of chromatic searching and probing in this movement that helps set us up for the experience of an overwhelmingly joyful finale.