

Paul JUON (1872-1940)

Rhapsodische Symphonie op. 95 (1937-38) [43:24]

Sinfonietta Capricciosa op. 98 (1939) [29:12]

Bamberger Symphoniker/Graeme Jenkins

rec. 13-17 January 2015, Konzerthalle Bamberg, Joseph-Keilberth-Saal. DDD

CPO 777908-2 [72:38]

The music of Russian-German-Swiss composer Paul Juon is still in the *rara avis* category - even more so if you are looking for Juon in the concert hall rather than on disc. He was a student of Arensky and Taneyev and then moved to Woldemar Bargiel in Berlin. He became a teacher at the Berlin School of Music and had Philipp Jarnach and Stefan Wolpe among his student charges. He moved to Switzerland in the late 1930s. There are three violin concertos as well as two intriguing twenty-minute pieces: *Jotunheimen* (1924), a tone poem for two pianos, and *Mysterien* (1928), a symphonic poem for cello and orchestra after Knut Hamsun. Both are unrecorded as far as I can see.

The *Rhapsodische Symphonie* was written not long before Juon's death. Its two predecessor symphonies dating from around the end of the 19th century have been recorded fairly recently by the heroic [Swedish Sterling label](#) but there are two other Juon symphonies (unnumbered): a 1905 *Chamber Symphony* and a 1929 *Small Symphony* for student string orchestra. Add to these the *Sinfonietta Capricciosa* again from the late 1930s and recorded here. I first heard the *Rhapsodische Symphonie* live; unusual for a work written in the late 1930s. That was at a studio concert at Salford Quays last year courtesy of the [BBC Philharmonic and John Storgards](#).

'Rhapsodic Symphony' or 'Symphonic Rhapsody': either way these two terms do not coexist comfortably - more of a contradiction than complementary partners. It's best to ignore that aspect and concentrate on the experience of the music which is free-ranging and discursive. The Symphony is in two large twenty-two minute movements: *Commodo* and *Allegro Marziale*. The *Commodo* is eventful and opulently orchestrated by comparison with the more delicate sound-web spun in the second movement. Stark brass fanfares soon give place to a busy vertically crowded experience with ideas jostling cheek by jowl in a luxurious skein. A dreamy Mahlerian tenderness takes the high road towards the end of the *Commodo* and there are moments when Juon sounds like Miaskovsky. The *Allegro Marziale* begins with a bucolic *ländler*. This has a fugal feel, which reappears - and is mixed with Tchaikovskian flavouring. Veils of sleepy sound coil and uncoil, mesh and separate in music that suggests a sympathy with Ravel and with the more exotic realms of Russian middle-Asian exotica. This is indeed a work with rhapsodic tendencies frankly indulged as well as moments of delightful light-footed dance, skittish Korngoldian writing, silvery Straussian luxury and bell carillons. There's a tellingly magnificent peroration from the brass who seem at times on the point of quoting the *Dies Irae*. The horns are heard in full flood.

The *Sinfonietta capricciosa* - another 'unnatural' pairing - was Juon's last major composition for orchestra. This is in three movements: 1. *Moderato*, 2. *Adagio molto*, 3. *Allegro*. The *Moderato* proves a meeting place for some stirring euphoric music and for woodland reveries carried by the woodwind. The *Adagio* tends towards the static and is in marked contrast to both the first and last movements. The latter is a lively Straussian confection and by no means as light in mood as the work's title might suggest.

The performances by the Bamberg orchestra under Graeme Jenkins - a pupil of Del Mar and Willcocks at the RCM in London - seem exemplary. There's no suspicion of Juon's creations being underplayed. Audio treatment is also good with some lovely touches such as the bosky woodwind in the first movement of the *Sinfonietta*. CPO have done Juon proud and this is their first orchestral disc following their three chamber issues: Piano Sextet and Quintet [777 507-2](#); Piano Quartet and Rhapsody [777 278-2](#) and String Quartets [777 883-2](#).

The nine page liner-note by Eckhardt van den Hoogen is accessibly readable. It's in German and English.

There is a useful [Juon website](#) which is well worth a look.

Juon - no iconoclast - is unlikely to conquer your respect and affection on a first listen. However, as with all promising works there is a sufficiency of attractive and even magical episodes here to draw you back to explore and deepen your knowledge and pleasure.

Rob Barnett

Quartet Choreography: The Soundtrack

Igor STRAVINSKY (1882-1971)

Three Pieces for String Quartet (1914) [7:58]

Witold LUTOSŁAWSKI (1913-1994)

String Quartet (1964) [26:51]

György LIGETI (1923-2006)

String Quartet No. 2 (1968) [21:22]

Michael FINNISSY (b. 1946)

String Quartet No. 2 (2006-7) [19:17]

Kreutzer Quartet (Peter Sheppard Skærved and Mihailo Trandafilovski (violins), Morgan Goff (viola), Neil Heyde (cello))

Rec. 8 October 2007 (Stravinsky and Lutosławski), 26 October 2008 (Ligeti and Finnissey), The Duke's Hall, Royal Academy of Music, London

MÉTIER MSVCD92105 [72:34]

This recording arose from an exercise in exploring the physical and visual aspects of making music as a quartet. This is an aspect of music-making which is important to both players and audiences but which is often overlooked. Of course we can all enjoy the kind of virtuosity which revels in technical display, and at a more serious level we can appreciate that technical difficulty can be an integral part of the fabric of music, as for example in Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* for string quartet or his *Hammerklavier* piano sonata. The Kreutzer Quartet have here chosen works which make unusual demands in this regard, and recorded their performances on a DVD. To issue and to review them in an audio-only format may therefore seem perverse, but in doing so they are inviting judgement on the traditional criteria for performances, to answer the anticipated question: 'Yes, very interesting, but how good are the performances?'

We begin with Stravinsky's *Three pieces*. These are like shavings from the composer's workshop, very short but highly characteristic. He later gave them titles: Dance, Eccentric and Canticle, which summarise their character as successively popular, fantastic and liturgical. He later orchestrated them as the first three of the *Four Studies for Orchestra* and also reused their themes in other works. The particular challenge here is that Stravinsky specified fingerings, worked out with the Flonzaley Quartet, which, as the sleeve note says, "are exceptionally difficult and likely to produce a result that is audibly 'imperfect'". Nevertheless, it is easy for another player to tell simply by listening if "safer" fingerings have been taken" which is apparently what usually happens. So the imperfections are composed into the work. If I then go on to say that I didn't notice them in this performance, I am not sure if that is a good thing or not!

The other three works are much more recent, though two of them have established themselves as classics. Lutosławski's quartet is one of the works in which he introduced chance elements into performance, in what he called controlled aleatoricism. He originally wanted to present the work to the players as four separate parts without a score, because he wanted them to play their parts completely independently, without reference to one another except when required to do so. He later relented and allowed his wife to make a score in which the different sections, called mobiles, are isolated in separate boxes. He gave the players instructions on how to move from one mobile to another, which included signalling to other players. You can read about the technique in more detail [here](#). The work itself is made up of an introductory and a main movement, a structure Lutosławski used in many of his works. The introductory movement opens with the violin; before a series of octave C naturals on the cello come to dominate the movement but nothing is resolved. The main movement builds towards an appassionato section before dying away in high notes. This may sound daunting but in fact the work is beautiful and approachable, as are his other works.

Ligeti wrote two quartets, of which this in particular has won a high reputation. It is in five movements, like several works by his compatriot Bartók. They draw on the same material but in very contrasted ways. In the first movement there are abrupt changes of speed, in the second the same material is treated slowly, in the third it is broken up, the fourth is very compressed and harsh, while the fifth

spreads itself out. Actually, in its strong contrasts between movements the work reminds me not so much of Bartók as of Berg's *Lyric Suite*. The idiom is expressionistic but, except in the fourth movement, which is very short, it is not harsh. The visual aspects include an unnecessary page turn written into the score and several complete silences. The work is strongly contrasted and absorbing.

Michael Finnissy's second string quartet follows Lutosławski in also being written as a set of parts which exist in free relation to one another. He also claims the influence of Haydn, specifically his *Lark* quartet (Op. 64 No. 5) and you can hear snatches of this. Despite his fearsome reputation as an arch-modernist, this work is not particularly dissonant, and passages of it, such as an Adagio about eleven minutes in, are quite beautiful. However, despite listening to it three times I am unable to make anything of it as a whole. I am sorry about this, as the programme is constructed to lead up to the Finnissy through suitable earlier works.

The performances by the Kreutzer quartet are assured; and, to answer my initial question, they are very good. Moreover, the Finnissy was written for them: they are great champions of his music. The recordings are clean and clear and the sleeve-notes, by the cellist of the quartet, are helpful. There are numerous competitors for the other works, and the Kreutzers also made a previous recording of the Finnissy on an NMC disc coupled with his third quartet (NMCD180). However, this programme stands on its own even if you are not particularly interested in the visual aspects. If you are, the related DVD is still available from Métier Records (MSVDX101).

Stephen Barber

Sir William WALTON (1902-83)

Façade (1942 version) [37.27]

Carole Boyd and Zeb Soames (reciters), ensemble/John Wilson
rec. Henry Wood Hall, London, 23-24 October 2015

Interview with Dame Edith Sitwell, 25 November 1955 [27.17]

Texts not provided

ORCHID CLASSICS ORC100067 [64.44]

It is difficult to believe nowadays, but there seems to be no doubt that when Walton's *Façade* first appeared it was firmly pigeon-holed as a product of the extreme *avant-garde* movement. Ernest Newman, reviewing an early performance in London, noted that the work was then advertised by the concert promoters as having "shocked Noel Coward," although he reserved his own judgement on whether this reaction reflected on Walton or Coward. At that time, Coward was certainly viewed as the *enfant terrible* of British theatre. This reputation, too, is hard to credit when one recalls some of the products of his later years, but it can still be recaptured through a reading of his short stories. Their sense of innocent immorality and their hatred of hypocrisy and cruelty in all its forms serve to remind us of his own impoverished origins.

Be that as it may, Walton's *Façade* found itself placed in much the same class as Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with its combination of 'fantastic' poetry (delivered for much of the time in spoken voice) together with a small chamber ensemble. But in fact the iconoclasm of Walton and his mentors the Sitwells owed rather more to the French influence of *Les Six*, who in turn drew on the similar experiments with spoken voice and instruments by Satie and Stravinsky (Newman's review draws attention to the parallels between the latter and Walton). What is novel in *Façade* is the insistence on strict rhythmic delivery of the spoken texts, and it is notable that most of the early performances employed either Edith Sitwell herself or musicians – such as Constant Lambert, Peter Pears or Cleo Laine – rather than actors. Indeed, some of the notated passages, in particular the headlong helter-skelter of the 'cadenza' beginning with the words "Thetis wrote a treatise", are a real *tour de force* for any performer; the best reciter should ideally leave the listener here open-mouthed in amazement.

By the time Walton himself came to record *Façade* in his later years, the score had become established as a popular favourite, even more so in the form of the orchestral suites extracted from the whole. On that occasion, Walton employed two actors at the very peak of the profession – Paul Scofield and Peggy Ashcroft. To my mind this demonstrated that their eminence was no proof that they could master the rhythmic intricacies of the musical idiom. He also seems to have approved a recorded balance that set the voices well forward of the instruments. This, indeed, seems to have been his intention from the first, when the reciters declaimed their texts through loudspeakers in order to ensure that the audience could grasp the words – although Newman testifies that these attempts to guarantee audibility were a general failure.

In this new recording, the two reciters are engagingly portrayed on the booklet cover holding old-fashioned loud-hailers to their mouths, but the actual sound on the recording is very different. The instrumental part is exceptionally clear, well played and nuanced under the baton of John Wilson. The voices, though, placed in the same acoustic space, are relatively backward in the mix, almost as if they were placed *behind* the players. Since they commendably seek to inflect the text in a manner designed to convey understanding, this means that as soon as they drop their voices they disappear almost totally under the musical texture. Only in the opening of such numbers as *Black Mrs Behemoth*, where they are almost shouting, can their words be clearly discerned. This might just about be acceptable – a different outlook on the work, as it were – if the texts had been provided in the booklet. As it is, abstruse lines like "Heliogabalus lost his head" go for absolutely nothing. This is all the more infuriating since, so far as I can judge, both do such a good job with delivering the text. Much more than usual Carole Boyd and Zeb Soames split numbers between them, and the passage of lines from one to the other is achieved with consummate ease. Carole Boyd delivers "Thetis wrote a treatise" at a rattle of a pace, but the resultant sound is little more than a whisper. They also adopt varying accents at

different times, always appropriately and to comic effect. The words in the *Scottish Ballad* remain barely comprehensible even so.

In a work like this, personal preferences for individual reciters are bound to play an overwhelming part in any listener's enjoyment. I first got to know the work through an EMI recording on LP under Sir Neville Marriner, where the highly individual interpretations of Michael Flanders and Fenella Fielding immediately won me over with their characterful voices and delivery. Nevertheless, I remember reviewers at the time complaining about the occasional assumption of regional accents (Fenella Fielding's mock-Scots dialect being a particular target of criticism). The balance struck in that recording between voices and instruments strikes me still as just about ideal, and I find it surprising that the disc is no longer listed in the catalogue. The *Penguin Guide* recommended the Hickox recording on Chandos, although I find Susana Walton's – admittedly mild – Argentinian accent a bit too much of a good thing. The Chandos disc also includes additional *Façade* material.

Walton was an inveterate reviser of his own scores, not always to their advantage. He took a long time to determine the final shape of *Façade*, adding and deleting individual numbers over the years. Some fifty years after the first performances he devised an appendix to the score which he entitled *Façade 2*, incorporating revised versions of some of the numbers he had early excised. Although these numbers are generally less effective than those he retained, they do add further flesh to our knowledge of the work, and many modern recordings include *Façade 2* as a coupling to the main suite, even adding further Sitwell items which Walton may or may not have set to make a still more substantial offering. This disc gives us merely Walton's final thoughts on *Façade* itself, but makes up the duration of the CD with a recorded interview with Edith Sitwell recorded by the BBC in the 1950s in which she vaguely discusses the nature of her poetry with occasional reference to *Façade*. This is of interest mainly because of the incredibly sycophantic tone adopted by the interviewers Paul Dehn, Lionel Hale and Margaret Lane. Their oleaginous questions do not manage to extract anything of real interest from Sitwell, apart from her confirmation that the original performances of the score were met with incomprehension and downright hostility which threatened to turn into physical violence. She proudly claims *Façade* as a pioneering work, giving no credit to either French or German predecessors. Her scornful attack on the text of *Peter and the Wolf* – she has to be prompted as to the name of the piece – may be justified, but it seems distinctly beside the point.

Apart from the versions referred to earlier, the current Archiv catalogue only lists two other alternative recordings, neither of which include *Façade 2*: a Decca version conducted by Riccardo Chailly, again with Peggy Ashcroft as one of the reciters, and the old mono 1954 recording with Peter Pears and Edith Sitwell herself conducted by Anthony Collins. The latter, which comes in various transfers and couplings, is a period piece which nonetheless still sounds well. The Marriner disc was at one time available on a Music for Pleasure CD and used copies are currently listed on Amazon at around £9.00 despite its very short running time. In its absence, the prime recommendation for the greatest amount of *Façade* material must lie with Hickox on Chandos. The fullest of all performances of *Façade* were on a Discover CD with Pamela Hunter as the solo reciter, and an Arabesque disc with Lynn Redgrave, both of which appear to have succumbed to the deletions axe long ago. So, too, have Hyperion and ASV discs featuring the contrasting teams of Eleanor Bron/Richard Stilgoe and Prunella Scales/Timothy West, which should appeal to their respective admirers. All of these use actors rather than musicians but provide more substantial amounts of the score. All are listed at reasonable prices second-hand on Amazon. In view of this competition, the new recording, with its unusual approach to recording balance and its restriction of items to those in the original published score, must of necessity be something of an also-ran. Remastering of the material to bring the voices into greater prominence might be decidedly beneficial.

Paul Corfield Godfrey

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Rostropovich - Cellist of the Century

The Complete Warner Recordings

Mstislav Rostropovich (cello)

rec. various dates and locations

Complete contents and dates below

WARNER CLASSICS 9029589230 [40 CDs + 3 DVDs + book: 40hrs]

2017 marks the 10th anniversary of the death of Mstislav Rostropovich, and the ninetieth anniversary of his birth. To commemorate these significant landmarks, Warner Classics has released this deluxe edition of 40 CDs and 3 DVDs comprising both live and studio recordings. These have been expertly restored, with the analogue recordings remastered afresh in 24 bit-96khz from the original tapes. Warner have closely collaborated with the cellist's daughters Elena and Olga Rostropovich along the way, and have been given unprecedented access to the Rostropovich archive. The 40 CDs & 3 DVDs come in cardboard wallets, which are, in turn, housed in a cloth-bound box with embossed silver foil title and image. This superb collection collates three previously released sets: *The Complete EMI Recordings* (Including the Russian Years Recordings) (2008), *Rostropovich - The Russian Years 1950-1974* (1997) and a 9 CD set of Erato and Teldec recordings (2004).

Known as 'Slava', Rostropovich's discography was huge. In fact, he was the most recorded cellist in history. He was a larger-than-life personality, well-loved and a charismatic communicator. I was amazed to discover that he disliked the recording studio, much preferring the inspirational spontaneity of the live event. Throughout his career he commissioned numerous new works for the instrument, starting with Miaskovsky's Cello Sonata in 1948. This inspired Prokofiev to write one for him. A chain reaction began, with composers queuing up - Shostakovich, Britten, Kabalevsky, Weinberg, Tishchenko, Dutilleux, Schnittke, Lutosławskithe list goes on and on. By extending the cello's repertoire, he revolutionized playing, extended techniques and set new standards. He thus became an inspiration to a whole new generation of cellists.

Having collected many Rostropovich recordings over the years, I'm amazed by the sheer size and diversity of his discography. This wide-ranging repertoire is reflected in this Warner set. I shall deal first with the commercial recordings, then discuss the live 'Russian' recordings. There's too much on offer to detail every work, so I'll pick out some of the highlights. The Schumann Concerto was a great favourite of the cellist and several live airings have done the rounds. His commercial recording with Bernstein from 1976 ticks all the right boxes for me. His rapturous engagement and poetic vision of the score, imbuing it with romantic yearning and nobility, is second-to-none. I particularly like the finale's lightly sprung rhythm. Bernstein is the perfect foil, delineating the transparent orchestral textures, and deftly contouring the twists and turns of the narrative. The recording is paired with a fervent rendition of Bloch's *Schelomo*. The Dvořák Concerto is represented seven times in the commercial discography if one includes the DVD version. Here we have three to choose from, versions conducted by Boult (1957), Giulini (1977) and Ozawa (1985). They all offer different approaches. The early Boult is notable for its classical restraint, the Giulini is romantically etched with broader tempi, with the Ozawa benefitting from wisdom and experience. Witty, good humoured and generous on lyricism, the Haydn Concertos find a true advocate in Rostropovich. Here he directs performances of both Concertos with the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields in 1975. I prefer No. 1 for its infectious charm. The energy and unbounded enthusiasm these performances generate, achieved with breath-taking virtuosity, make these two recordings one of the collection's highpoints. I'm sure Haydn would have been more than happy.

The Brahms Double Concerto is represented twice - with Oistrakh and Szell in 1969, and Perlman and Haitink ten years later. Though each interpretation is deeply satisfying, the later recording from Amsterdam is in lush sound. The splendid Concertgebouw acoustic confers more space around the instruments, and allows the music to breathe; the earlier recording sounds hard edged and

cramped by comparison. Rostropovich made quite a name for himself in Richard Strauss' *Don Quixote*, and the 1975 recording with Karajan and the Berliner Philharmonic has never been bettered, in my view. Rostropovich's Don is clad in human garb, and the sumptuous sound of the Berliners, with Karajan, one of the finest Strauss interpreters at the helm, makes for a magical experience. The composer's rarely programmed early Cello Sonata has strong appeal, with a delightful central slow movement. Here Rostropovich brings a doleful quality to his playing, which is uplifting. The finale has vitality and verve. Vasso Devetzi is the pianist. Prokofiev's Sinfonia Concertante for cello and orchestra Op. 125 is a reworking of the Op.58 Cello concerto which was composed between 1933-38. In its new form, it was dedicated to Mstislav Rostropovich, who assisted the composer with the refashioning. The cellist premiered the work 18 February 1952 with Sviatoslav Richter conducting. Of the two recordings here, the 1957 with Sargent remains a classic, and I still find it more passionately engaging than the later Ozawa version.

Listening to this wealth of treasures, I've made one or two discoveries along the way. Messiaen and Dutilleux lurk in the shadows of Renaud Gagneux's exotically scored *Triptyque*. Its panels summon up atmosphere and mystery. The outer movements are vibrant, luminous and lapidary, with the central larger movement less variegated. Rodion Shchedrin's Sotto Voce Concerto is a more sombre and brooding affair. It's also deeply personal. *The Canticle of the Sun* by Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina was written for and dedicated Rostropovich on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. He premiered it in 1998. It's scored for cello, chamber choir, percussion and celesta, with text based on Saint Francis of Assisi's 'Il cantico frate sole' (Hymn to Brother Sun). It's highly atmospheric and the textures are ethereal. The choral contributions are especially fine. The Alfred Schnittke disc (CD 24) features three charismatic performers. Gidon Kremer and Yuri Bashmet join the cellist in three works, taped in Paris, live, in 1995. This is music making at it's very best. The other works I would single out for special mention are the Dutilleux and Lutosławski Cello Concertos on CD 7. The Dutilleux ranges from reflective pondering to high-octane drama, whilst the Lutosławski charts a more expressive course. Both are visionary interpretations of rhetorical eloquence.

Thirteen CDs constitute a section devoted to 'The Russian Years'. These are live airings which span nearly half a century. The earliest is a Prokofiev Cello Sonata from March 1950 with Sviatoslav Richter, the last derives from a series of concerts given 'Back in Russia' in 1996 featuring works by Piazzolla, Ustvolskaya and Schnittke. Apparently, Moscow had a habit of taping concerts from its larger halls in the 50s and 60s, and a cache of the cellist's recordings came to light in the 1990s. Due to the diligence and foresight of Soviet archivists during Rostropovich's exile from the USSR (1974-1990), when he was regarded *persona non grata* and his recordings were withdrawn, these valuable recorded documents were miraculously saved.

The bulk of this Russian live assemblage consists of twentieth century music, much of it written for Rostropovich himself. What I particularly found compelling and exciting was that quite a lot of the music doesn't have rival versions, and I was coming new to it. Several of the recordings are world premieres, the earliest being the Prokofiev Sonata with Richter mentioned above. It's in remarkably fine sound for its age, and has all the freshness and spontaneity of music being created on the wing. There's a CD (30) devoted to world premiere performances of the Shostakovich Cello Concertos; No. 1 with Rozhdestvensky from 1961, and No. 2 set down five years later in 1966 with Svetlanov. This latter, we are told, was given in the presence of the composer on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. The Boris Tchaikovsky disc (31) particularly attracted my attention. Containing a Suite, Partita and Concerto, all three works are receiving their recorded premieres. The Partita is imaginatively scored for cello, piano, harpsichord, electric guitar and percussion. Rostropovich brings a wealth of emotional intensity to the Concerto, and surmounts its technical challenges with admirable authority. The 1967 premiere of the six-movement Yuzo Toyama Concerto is laden with a surfeit of exotic spice. Rostropovich has full measure of its richly nuanced idiom. The yearning intensity of the opening Andante is particularly alluring. The Knipper Concerto-Monologue and Tishchenko Cello Concerto No. 1 both benefit from colourful orchestrations. The Weinberg's plaintive opening movement has a

rarefied expressiveness in the hands of Rostropovich, and it's Jewish-inflected melodies are magically shaped. Rozhdestvensky's sensitive contributions are fully convincing.

So what's left? The set includes DVDs of the Bach Cello Suites and Rostropovich's collaboration with Giulini in the Dvořák and Saint-Saëns Concertos. It's regrettable that Rostropovich waited until his sixties to commit his interpretation of the Bach Suites to disc. Yet, even though his technique isn't at its peak, and intonation is wayward from time to time, his authoritative musicianship shines through. I do find the Basilique Sainte-Madeleine, Vézelay, France somewhat over-resonant though. He discusses each suite before the performance, illustrating his thoughts on the keyboard. There's the option of subtitles in English, French, German and Spanish. Welcome shots of the abbey and its environs offer added interest. Personally, I much prefer his live Supraphon cycle from the 1955 Prague Spring Festival. He was then aged 28, and his youthful energy, boldness and rhythmic vigour inform these impassioned readings. No one can pretend that the audio quality of this sixty year old mono traversal matches the 1991 EMI version but, with brisker tempi, for the sheer freshness and spontaneity of the live event, this one wins hands down for me.

Whereas the audio recording of the Dvořák and Saint-Saëns Concertos was taped at Abbey Road in April and May 1977, the filmed version was made six months later at the Henry Wood Hall in London. The Rostropovich/Giulini combination is the proverbial dream team. Everything works to perfection. Rostropovich is at his most inspired and delivers readings of penetrating insight and profound musicianship. His rich, burnished tone is ideal for these canvasses. The Dvořák's slow movement is rapturous, and Rostropovich basks in its heartfelt lyricism. If you consider the Saint-Saëns Concerto a lesser work, listen to this performance, and it will open your eyes to the wealth of ingenuity and invention that saturates the score. Giulini responds sensitively to the music, and is fully in tune both with the cellist's conception and the ebb and flow of the music. My only reservation is the Henry Wood Hall. It's one of the most unprepossessing venues I've ever come across in a filmed concert, dull and drab, you would have thought the producers could have come up with something more visually pleasing. In mitigation, the camera work is excellent.

CD 40 is a previously unpublished audio interview, from 2006, between the cellist and Jon Tolansky. The subject is Shostakovich, and Rostropovich chats about his relationship with the composer and his music. There are some musical examples given. I have to admit that I found this endeavour disappointing. Struggle as I might, because of the cellist's broken English, I couldn't make out a lot of what he was saying. The disc ends with the French poet Louis Aragon (1897-1982) reciting his 'Chant pour Slava'.

Included with this lavish production is a 200 page, beautifully produced hardback book, printed on high quality paper. The text is in English, German and French, and throughout we are treated to a wealth of fascinating photographs, courtesy of the archive. Many are rare items depicting the cellist, his family, colleagues and documents. The book offers not only a biographical portrait of the artist, but useful lists of works dedicated to and premiered by the cellist, and a chronological timeline of Rostropovich's eventful life. Substantial contributions are made by Elizabeth Wilson, who studied with Rostropovich in Moscow in the 1970s, and who wrote a book *Mstislav Rostropovich: Cellist, Teacher, Legend* (Faber 2007), and Claude Samuel, a former head of Radio France who was closely acquainted with the cellist.

Stephen Greenbank

Complete contents

CD1

Camille SAINT-SAËNS: Cello Concerto No.1

Nikolai MYASKOVSKY: Cello Concerto

Philharmonia Orchestra / Malcolm Sargent

Recorded 1956

CD2

Antonín DVORÁK:

Cello Concerto

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Adrian Boult

Recorded 1957

CD3

Sergei PROKOFIEV: Sinfonia concertante

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Malcolm Sargent

Sergei RACHMANINOV: Vocalise

Alexander Dedyukhin

Recorded 1957

CD4

Cello and Piano Recital

Alexander Dedyukhin

JohannesBRAHMS: Cello Sonata No.2

POPPER • DEBUSSY • SCRIBIN

Recorded 1957

CD5

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN: Triple Concerto

David Oistrakh • Sviatoslav Richter

Berliner Philharmoniker / Herbert von Karajan

Recorded 1969

CD6

Johannes BRAHMS: Double Concerto

David Oistrakh

Cleveland Orchestra / George Szell

Recorded 1969

CD7

Henri DUTILLEUX: Tout un monde lointain ...

Orchestre de Paris / Serge Baudo

Witold LUTOSLAWSKI: Cello Concerto

Orchestre de Paris / Witold Lutoslawski

Recorded 1974

André JOLIVET: Cello Concerto No.2

Orchestre national de l'ORTF / André Jolivet

Recorded 1969

CD8

Cello and Piano Recital

Vasso Devetzi

Richard STRAUSS: Cello Sonata

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN: Variations, Op.66 & WoO 45
Recorded 1974

CD9

Richard STRAUSS: Don Quixote
Ulrich Koch
Berliner Philharmoniker / Herbert von Karajan
Recorded 1975

CD10

Joseph HAYDN: Cello Concertos Nos. 1 & 2
Academy of St Martin in the Fields / Iona Brown
Recorded 1975

CD11

Robert SCHUMANN: Cello Concerto
Ernest BLOCH: Schelomo
Orchestre national de France / Leonard Bernstein
Recorded 1976

CD12

Antonín DVORÁK: Cello Concerto
Camille Saint-Saëns: Cello Concerto No.1
London Philharmonic Orchestra / Carlo Maria Giulini
Recorded 1977

CD13

Johannes BRAHMS: Double Concerto
Itzhak Perlman
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Bernard Haitink
Recorded 1979

CD14

Marcel LANDOWSKI: Un enfant appelle • La Prison
Galina VISHNEVSKAYA • Pierre DUX
Orchestre national de France / Marcel Landowski
Orchestre national de Lille / Marcel Landowski
Recorded 1982/1983

CD15

Antonín DVORÁK: Cello Concerto
Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY: Roco Variations
Boston Symphony Orchestra / Seiji Ozawa
Recorded 1985

CD16

Krzysztof PENDERECKI: Cello Concerto No.2
Philharmonia Orchestra / Krzysztof Penderecki
Recorded 1986
Cristóbal Halffter: Cello Concerto No.2
"No queda más que el silencio"
Orchestre national de France / Cristóbal Halffter
Recorded 1985

CD17

Sergei Prokofiev Sinfonia concertante
Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH: Cello Concerto No.1
London Symphony Orchestra / Seiji Ozawa
Recorded 1987

CD18

Darius MILHAUD: Cello Concerto No.1
Arthur HONEGGER: Cello Concerto
Alun HODDINOTT: Noctis Equi
London Symphony Orchestra / Kent Nagano
Recorded 1989
Norbert Moret Cello Concerto
Collegium Musicum de Zurich / Paul Sacher
Recorded 1989

CD 19–20

Johann Sebastian BACH: Cello Suites
Recorded 1991

CD21

Baroque Cello Concertos
VIVALDI • TARTINI • C.P.E. BACH:
Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra / Hugh Wolff
Recorded 1992

CD22

Cello and Organ Recital
Herbert Tachezi
FRESCOBALDI • MARCELLO • J.S. BACH HANDEL:
Caix d'Hervelois • Rheinberger • Saint-Saëns
Recorded 1993

CD23

Renaud GAGNEUX: Triptyque
Rodion SCHEDRIN: Sotto voce
London Symphony Orchestra / Seiji Ozawa
Recorded 1994

CD24

Alfred SCHNITKE:
Concerto for Three • String Trio • Minuet
Gidon Kremer • Yuri Bashmet
Moscow Soloists
Recorded 1995

CD25

Alexander KNAIFEL: Make me drunk with your kisses
Choral Arts Society of Washington
Washington National Cathedral Choristers
National Cathedral School Lower School Chorus / Norman Scribner
Recorded 1995
David MATTHEWS: Romanza

English Chamber Orchestra / Raymond Leppard
Recorded 1990

CD26

Sofia GUBAIDULINA: The Canticle of the Sun

London Voices

London Symphony Orchestra / Ryusuke Numajiri

Recorded 1999

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH: 7 Romances on Verses by Blok

Galina Vishnevskaya • Ulf Hoelscher • Vasso Devetzi

Recorded 1974

CD27

Robert SCHUMANN: Cello Concerto • **Pyotr Ilyich TCHAIKOVSKY:** Rococo Variations

USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Recorded 1960

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN: Triple Concerto: I. Allegro, with David Oistrakh • Sviatoslav Richter

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Kirill Kondrashin

Recorded 1970

CD28

Heitor VILLA-LOBOS: Prelúdio (Modinha), with Cello Ensemble / Mstislav Rostropovich

Recorded 1962

Arthur HONEGGER: Cello Concerto • **Ottorino RESPIGHI:** Adagio con variazioni

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Kirill Kondrashin

Richard STRAUSS Don Quixote, with Lazar Dvoskin • USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Victor

Dubrovsky

Recorded 1964

CD29

Nikolai MYASKOVSKY: Cello Concerto

Alexander GLAZUNOV: Concerto ballata

USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Evgeny Svetlanov

Sergei Taneyev Canzona, with Alexander Dedyukhin

Recorded 1964

CD30

Sergei PROKOFIEV:

Cello Sonata, with Sviatoslav Richter

Recorded 1950

Sinfonia Concertante, with USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Israel Gusman

Cello Concertino, with Moscow Radio & Television Orchestra / Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Recorded 1964

CD31

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH:

Cello Concerto No.1, with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Recorded 1961

Cello Concerto No.2, with USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Evgeny Svetlanov

Recorded 1966

CD32

Benjamin BRITTEN:

Cello Suites Nos. 1 & 2

Recorded 1966 (No.1) /1968 (No.2)
Cello Symphony, with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Benjamin Britten
Recorded 1964

CD33

Boris TCHAIKOVSKY:

Cello Suite

Recorded 1961

Cello Concerto, with Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Kirill Kondrashin

Recorded 1966

Partita, with **A. Mamyko • Y. Godin • B. Tchaikovsky • A. Dedyukhin • I. Khovov**

Recorded 1967

CD34

Aram KHACHATURIAN: Concerto–Rhapsody, with Ana Amintayeva

Recorded 1964

Boris TISCHENKO: Cello Concerto No.1, with A. Tishchenko • Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra / Igor Blazhkov

Recorded 1966

Yuzo Toyama Cello Concerto, with Moscow Radio & Television Orchestra / Yuzo Toyama

Recorded 1967

CD35

Lev KNIPPER: Concerto–Monologue

Mieczyslaw WEINBERG: Cello Concerto

USSR State Symphony Orchestra / Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Recorded 1964

Fernando LOPES-GRAÇA: Concerto da camera

Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra / Kirill Kondrashin

Recorded 1967

CD36

Cello Sonatas with the composers in person

Dmitry KABALEVSKY: Cello Sonata

Recorded 1962

Karen KHACHATURIAN: Cello Sonata

Recorded 1967

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH: Cello Sonata (date unknown)

CD37

Recital of Short Pieces & Transcriptions

DEBUSSY • DVORÁK • FALLA • FAURÉ • HANDEL • MILHAUD • POPPER • PROKOFIEV

SCHUBERT • SRIABIN • SHAPORIN • SINDING • R. STRAUSS • STRAVINSKY

Alexander Dedyukhin • Vladimir Yampolsky • Alexei Zybtsev • Ana Amintayeva

Recorded 1960 / date unknown

CD38

Nikolai MYASKOVSKY: Cello Sonata

Recorded 1967

Frédéric CHOPIN: Cello Sonata • Introduction and Polonaise brillante (date unknown)

Yuri Shaporin Pieces, Op.25 (date unknown)

Alexander Dedyukhin

CD39

Astor PIAZZOLA: Le Grand Tango
Galina **USTVOLSKAYA**: Grand Duet
Alfred SCHNITTKE: Cello Sonata No.2 • Epilogue to the ballet Peer Gynt
Igor Uriash • Alexei Lubimov
Recorded 1996

CD40

Mstislav Rostropovich on
Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH
The Last Audio Interview
Recorded 2006

DVD1

Antonín DVORÁK: Cello Concerto
Camille SAINT-SAËNS Cello Concerto No.1
London Philharmonic Orchestra / Carlo Maria Giulini
Filmed 1977

DVD2–3

Johann Sebastian BACH: Cello Suites
Filmed 1991

Gaetano DONIZETTI (1797-1848)

***Olivo e Pasquale* (1827)**

Olivo – Bruno Taddia

Pasquale – Filippo Morace

Isabella – Laura Giordano

Camillo – Pietro Adaini

Le Bross – Matteo Macchioni

Columella – Edoardo Milletti

Matilde – Silvia Beltrami

Diego – Giovanni Romeo

Orchestra dell'Accademia Teatro alla Scala, Coro Donizetti Opera/Federico Maria Sardelli

rec. 28-30 October 2016, Teatro Sociale, Bergamo, Italy

DVD Video 16:9, Audio, Stereo DD 5.1

Region 0

Sung in Italian

Subtitles English, French, German, Italian

DYNAMIC 37758 DVD [83:45+ 67:11]

Olivo e Pasquale is a welcome rarity, prepared under the auspices of the Donizetti Foundation. A domineering father of Lisbon (Olivo) wants to marry off his daughter (Isabella) to a Spanish merchant she does not love (Le Bross) instead of the apprentice she does (Camillo). In this variant of an old story, the nasty patriarch Olivo is balanced by his easy-going brother, Pasquale. With the connivance of a sympathetic La Bross, the young lovers break Olivo's resistance by faking a double suicide, and all are reconciled at the final curtain.

There is nothing subtle about the story, and this production embraces its opportunities for mockery. Gestures are broad and colors are bright. The chorus wears bright red suits, except when decked out in sailor costume, pulling a ship. This is a frivolous opera, not a precursor of *Lucia di Lammermoor* or *Roberto Devereaux*.

Olivo e Pasquale is quite enjoyable, even if it is no lost masterpiece. It is full of echoes of Rossini plus prefigurations of more famous Donizetti arias and ensembles that the twenty-year old composer had not yet imagined. Donizetti was young, but no novice. Sixteen operas preceded *Olivo e Pasquale*, and this performance is of a rewrite for Naples of a work composed earlier in 1827 for Rome. The revision abandons the trousers role for Camillo, making him a tenor instead of an alto. It also drops recitative for spoken dialog in Neapolitan dialect.

The orchestra plays well, although it sometimes sounds a little thin, and Federico Maria Sardelli keeps the pace moving smartly, perhaps distracting us from lingering over the opera's weaker moments. The overture is perky, if routine, but the opening introduction is outstanding, culminating in a boisterous quintet. The opera continues mixing memorable moments with more routine fare. Donizetti was five years away from the polished perfections of *L'elisir d'amore*, for which this work was surely good practice. There are passages in the Act II duet between La Bross and Isabella which could be taken for a more mature work, with comic misunderstandings and misplaced, but still soaring, passion.

The singing in this production is lively and enjoyable. There are three good tenors – one romantic, one dignified, and one a clown. There are two basses for a double-buffo combination. But the big duet between Olivo and Pasquale in Act II disappoints, partly from being ordinary, and partly because of the Olivo (Bruno Taddia), who needs more bottom to his voice, and has a tendency to bark. As Pasquale, Filippo Morace has more authority and a smoother voice. Both singers make an excellent job at being silly. Laura Giordano puts on a fine show in her acrobatic rondo-finale as Isabella. Silvia Beltrami, singing the conspiratorial maid Matilde, left me wanting to hear more.

Donizetti enthusiasts will find this recording to be a lively and enjoyable performance of a virtually unknown work from the Master's second tier. These are rare, and should be celebrated and cherished. Novices to bel canto comedy should begin instead with *L'elisir d'amore* or *Don Pasquale*.

Richard Kraus

Before the Ending of the Day - Music for Choral Evening Prayer

The Exon Singers/Richard Wilberforce

Jonathan Vaughn (organ)

rec. 28 & 29 July, 2016, St Peter's, Wyndham Square, Plymouth. DDD

Texts & translations included

All works except the Voluntary commissioned by The Exon Singers

*World premiere recording, § Commissioned for this recording

RUBICON CLASSICS RCD1004 [60:47]

The Exon Singers is a chamber choir based in Devon. We've reviewed several of their recordings in the past. This present CD has been issued to mark their 50th anniversary in 2016. A key date in the choir's calendar is their annual Festival which takes place each summer. The Festival takes place in the Devon market town of Tavistock and also in Buckfast Abbey, the Benedictine monastery nearby. Since 1997 the Festival has featured a composer-in-residence and those composers, and others, have written pieces for the Exon Singers. A selection of these pieces comprises the programme for this CD.

The choir numbers 25 (9/5/5/6) and they make an excellent sound. The ensemble is disciplined yet flexible and there's a good balance between the sections. The repertoire that they sing here must be challenging to sing but the performances are as assured as they are committed. I enjoyed listening to the choir very much. The singers' cause is helped by the fact that they've been most sympathetically recorded by producer Tim Oldham and engineer Phil Rowlands. The acoustic of St Peter's church is very pleasing and there's a natural glow to the sound. The balance between the choir and the organ has been well judged.

A good example of the quality of the recording comes in the unaccompanied psalm setting by David Briggs where it seems to me that the choir is ideally presented. Briggs' through-composed setting is gorgeously harmonised in eight parts. The piece that follows by David Goodenough is described as a psalm setting in the track list but in fact only two lines from Psalm 133 have been set. It matters not; what *does* matter is that this is a very good piece which features rich choral textures and has an independent, very interesting organ part.

I've come to admire the music of Matthew Martin very much and his 'Te lucis ante terminum' is an excellent example of his work. The melodic line, later harmonised most inventively, flows like plainchant and the organ part enriches the piece. I was delighted to find two pieces by Francis Jackson, the distinguished former Organist of York Minster who will celebrate his 100th birthday later this year. 'A Hymn to God the Father' was composed for the Exon Singers' 2005 Festival. It's for unaccompanied SAATB choir and it's a fine piece. I admired the wonderful harmonic writing and the way that the music flows seamlessly. The other piece, another setting of 'Te lucis ante terminum', was written a few years later when Jackson had just entered his tenth decade. There's no sign of the passing years dimming his creative spirit. The three verses feature different combinations of voices and everything is set against an inventive, flowing organ part. This fine piece was subsequently included in the important publication *Choirbook for the Queen* compiled to mark Her Majesty's diamond jubilee.

Howard Skempton's 'Ave Virgo sanctissima' was also included in that compilation of choral pieces. Apparently the inspiration was the setting of the same text by Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599). Skempton wrote the piece for the Exon Singers' 2007 Festival. It's a choice example of his slow-moving style. The music is serene and lovely and the present performance is expertly controlled by the choir. The Marian theme is picked up later in the programme in what is, in effect, a triptych of anthems. I've heard and been impressed by some orchestral pieces by Joseph Phibbs in the past but to the best of my recollection I've not encountered any choral music. His 'Salve Regina' is a fine piece; its harmonies are arresting no matter whether the dynamics are loud or soft. Gabriel Jackson's 'Ave Maria', which I've heard before, includes trademarks of his vocal style: luminous textures and 'Scotch snap' rhythms. The soft ending, which features first one and then two solo soprano voices over hushed chordal writing

for the choir, is especially appealing. The close harmonies of Gareth Tredler's 'O Virgo splendens' are radiant. I liked this piece very much, not least the beseeching tenor solo towards the close.

Richard Wilberforce has been Conductor and Artistic Director of the Exon Singers since 2012 (his predecessor was Matthew Owens, Director of Music at Wells Cathedral.) His set of Preces and Responses is very interesting; the music is quite exploratory at times. I was intrigued by his response to 'My Soul, there is a country'. It would be a challenge to emulate Parry's masterly setting of Henry Vaughan's words in his *Songs of Farewell*. Instead Wilberforce sets the text as a festival hymn. The tune is big and confident, reflecting Anglican hymnody very successfully. I suspect the tune, though an admirable one, is too long – and perhaps a bit too complicated – for congregational use. However, perhaps recognising that, Wilberforce has included music for two sets of four lines which, though the words are different, act as a kind of refrain. I could envisage a congregation successfully picking up and enjoying that part of the piece. The piece as a whole is stirring

The whole programme has been designed – very skilfully – as a kind of Evening Prayer without spoken words. Thus Wilberforce's hymn is appropriately placed as the last bit of singing. All that remains is for the organist to play us out. Jonathan Vaughn, the Assistant Director of Music at Wells Cathedral, has already provided several splendid accompaniments during the programme. David Bednall's *Fanfare-Processional* gives him his moment in the sun. This is a splendid, arresting conclusion – and it's just the right length too.

This is a most interesting programme of recent liturgical music. Every piece is well worth hearing. The music is technically challenging but Richard Wilberforce and his excellent choir are fully up to the task and they serve the various composers very well indeed. As I've mentioned, the recorded sound is very persuasive. It only remains to say that the notes by Graham Wood, one of the basses in the choir, offer introductions to each piece that may be short but tell you all you need to know.

This is a fine way for the Exon Singers to mark their first five decades.

John Quinn

Contents

- Howard SKEMPTON (b 1947)** Ave Virgo sanctissima (2007) [2:56]
- Richard WILBERFORCE (b 1984)** Preces (2016)* § [1:43]
- Matthew MARTIN (b 1976)** Te lucis ante terminum (2013)* [2:45]
- Francis JACKSON (b 1917)** Te lucis ante terminum (2008)* [3:57]
- David BRIGGS (b 1962)** Psalm 121: I will lift up mine eyes (2006) [3:49]
- David GOODENOUGH (b 1968)** Psalm 133: Behold how good and joyful a thing it is* (2003) [2:51]
- Francis JACKSON** A Hymn to God the Father (2004) [5:06]
- Brian CHAPPLE (b 1945)** Safe where I cannot lie yet (2012)* [3:57]
- Robin HOLLOWAY (b 1943)** Splendour of the Father's Glory (2014)* [3:30]
- James BURTON (b 1974)** Magnificat (2015)* [3:59]
- Toby YOUNG (b 1990)** The Lord's Prayer (2014)* [3:21]
- Joseph PHIBBS (b 1974)** Salve Regina (2010)* [4:50]
- Gabriel JACKSON (b 1962)** Ave Maria (2004) [6:38]
- Gareth TRESEDER (b 1985)** O Virgo splendens (2016)* § [4:25]
- Richard WILBERFORCE** My Soul, there is a country (2016)* § [2:31]
- David BEDNALL (b 1979)** Fanfare – Processional [Voluntary] (2010)* [4:18]

Enrique-SORO (1884-1954)

Danza fantástica (1916) [4.29]

Tres aires chilenos (1942) [10.18]

Andante appassionato (Version for orchestra) (1916) [4.32]

Sinfonía romántica (1921) [36.59]

José-Luis Domínguez (conductor)

Orquesta Sinfónica de

rec. Teatro CEAC Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, 22-25 September 2015

NAXOS 8.573505 [56.15]

This is an excellent discovery, which will give many hours of pleasure. Hats off – not for the first time – for making this unfamiliar—and very enjoyable music readily accessible.

Soro is not well-known outside Chile, but was a major figure in the development of the musical culture of his homeland. His father was Italian, but when very young, Enrique was supported by the Chilean government to study at the Milan Conservatory. Some of his early works were performed in Paris. He was clearly a precocious talent – by the age of 21, when he returned to Chile, he had composed more than 70 works. In Chile he worked as composer, conductor and teacher – he had charge of state school music education and for eight years was director of the National Conservatory.

The present CD gives a cross-section of his orchestral works, though none from his final years, when his music took a melancholic turn as he wrestled with the death of his wife and his own vivid awareness of mortality.

The major work here is the *Sinfonía romántica* of 1921. It was apparently the first Chilean symphony, but its interest is not simply historical – it is a significant work in its own right. On paper it looks quite conventional, with the four usual movements in their usual order. Yet the voice is distinctive, from the stern opening bars which then lead to a rather dark passage before becoming more elegantly pastoral. The highlight is perhaps the intense Adagio, very much dominated by rich string tone, with significant and lovely solos for flute and oboe. If the last two movements are more conventional, they are never dull but full of interesting and distinctive passages.

The most striking of the remaining works is the lovely *Andante appassionato*, which seems to have had a place in the composer's heart in the way that *The Holy Boy* did for John Ireland. Given its beauty, one can hear why. It was originally written – following a dream about love – for piano. At different times, Soro developed it for different ensembles and instruments – as well as the orchestral version, it has (among others) versions for string quartet, cello and organ.

Tres aires chilenos draws on Chilean folk music for its structures and rhythms, though the themes are original. Soro was not 'another folk-inspired composer', like so many from the early twentieth century. His music rarely uses these resources, and is perhaps more universal than that.

Danza fantástica is a rousing piece which would be a terrific wake-up concert opener if enterprising conductors outside Chile were to take it up.

Performances throughout are excellent, idiomatic and committed to the music. This is a fine disc – perhaps we might hear more from him. It is extraordinary, given the excellence of these works, that the recordings of the *Sinfonía romántica* and *Andante appassionato* are world premieres.

Michael Wilkinson

Rococo - Musique à Sanssouci

Gottfried (Godfrey) FINGER (1660-1730)

A Ground [03:18]

George Frideric HANDEL (1685-1759) (attr)

Concerto doppio for recorder, bassoon, strings and bc in c minor [09:42]

Johann Gottlieb JANITSCH (1708-1763)

Quadro for recorder, oboe, violin and bc in G [14:16]

Johann Gottlieb GRAUN (1703-1771) (attr)

Concerto for recorder, violin, strings and bc in C (Graun WV Cv,XIII,96) [09:05]

Johann Joachim QUANTZ (1697-1773)

Sarabande in G - Double I & II for recorder solo [02:56]

Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714-1788)

Sonata for transverse flute [recorder] and bc in e minor (Wq 124 / H 551) [06:06]

Sonata (Trio) for bass recorder, viola and bc in F (Wq 163 / H 588) [11:03]

Ernst Gottlieb BARON (1696-1760)

Concerto for transverse flute [recorder] and lute in d minor [08:08]

Johann Joachim QUANTZ

Vibace alla francese for recorder solo in B flat [01:28]

Johann Christian SCHULTZE (c1680 - 1740) or Johann Christoph SCHULTZE (1733-1813)

Concerto a 5 for recorder, strings and bc in B flat [12:48]

Dorothee Oberlinger (recorder), Alfredo Bernardini (oboe), Makiko Kurabayashi (bassoon), Hiro Kurosaki (violin), Nils Mönkemeyer (viola), Axel Wolf (lute)

Ensemble 1700

rec. Klaus-von-Bismarck-Saal, WDR Funkhaus, Cologne, Germany September 2016 **DEUTSCHE**

HARMONIA MUNDI 88875134062 [79:05]

The term *Rococo* is not often used in connection to music. There could be several reasons for that. Firstly, the term was originally used for a tendency in the visual arts, especially in France, and is not easily applicable for other branches of culture. Secondly, the term was invented in the late 18th century, and at that time the period known as *rococo* was mostly assessed negatively. In *New Grove* we read: "The derivation of the term (*rocaille*, 'shellwork') is *post facto* and pejorative, like most critical descriptions of the style. The term seems to have originated around 1796–7 as artists' jargon in the studio of Jacques-Louis David, where (...) it was used 'to denigrate the painting produced during the reign of Louis XV, when Mme de Pompadour was an arbiter of taste'."

How problematic the use of this word is to describe a musical period is demonstrated in the *Wikipedia* article on *rococo*. It says that in Germany "it was referred to as *empfindsamer Stil* ("sensitive style"). It can be characterized as light, intimate music with extremely elaborate and refined forms of ornamentation." However, that is a rather inapt description of the *Empfindsamkeit*, which is rather extreme in its expression of often strongly contrasting emotions. "Light music" the *Empfindsamkeit* is most definitely not. In music which can be called *rococo* - especially written in France in the second quarter of the 18th century - pastoral elements play a key role, and that element is largely absent in the music of the German sensitive style.

Then why did Dorothee Oberlinger use this term as the title for her recording of German music from the mid-18th century? Her starting point is the construction of the palace in Sanssouci. "Sanssouci - Brandenburg's answer to Arcadia - was formally inaugurated in May 1747, sixteen months after the end of the Second Silesian War, and was a kind of temple to the Muses for the Rococo age, a *maison de plaisance* whose denizens lived lives that Voltaire described dismissively as a *siècle de petitesesses*: a century of trifles. Contemporaries turned to the refined, the complex, the ornamental and the delicate, a predilection also found in music, where sensibility and the *galant* were privileged and feelings were preferred to the mathematically based art of counterpoint that had typified the earlier age."

Galant is probably the best word to describe the largest part of this disc. It also is more easily compatible with the recorder than the music of the *Empfindsamkeit* which needs instruments with a wider dynamic range and more capabilities to create various colours than the recorder. Among the most popular instruments of the *Empfindsamkeit* were the transverse flute, the violin and the clavichord. The use of the recorder - or rather a whole battery of recorders, as Oberlinger plays no fewer than nine different instruments - is one of the most notable features of this disc, especially as this instrument was on the brink of disappearance in the mid-18th century. It is true that among amateurs it was still quite popular, but it seems unlikely that much of the repertoire recorded here was intended for amateurs.

The disc opens with a piece by Gottfried Finger who for a considerable period of time worked in England and is therefore also known as Godfrey Finger. A *Ground* was included in a collection of *Airs anglois* published in Amsterdam in 1704. It links up with the rich English tradition of writing *grounds*, but is not part of what we probably could call the musical *rococo*. The same goes for the next piece, an interesting double concerto for recorder and bassoon which has been found in the archive of the Berlin Singakademie where it is attributed to Handel. If it is from his pen - which is anything but sure - it must have been written by a very young Handel, well before his departure to Italy. It doesn't sound very Handelian to my ears, but that is also because we usually hear instrumental works from his English period, which include so many references to vocal works. This concerto reminds me of Telemann's concerto for the same scoring. Whether it is from Handel's pen or not, it is a fine work and both recorder players and bassoonists should be happy about it.

Johann Gottlieb Janitsch is one of the lesser known composers in the programme whose oeuvre has not been truly explored. He was born in Schweidnitz in Silesia (now Swidnica in Poland) and was educated at the bass viol. After having been a law student in Frankfurt an der Oder where he also played a major role in local musical life, he joined the chapel of Frederick, then still Crown Prince of Prussia, in Ruppin, later Rheinsberg. It is here that he started a series of weekly concerts on Fridays, the *Freitagsakademie*. It is likely that his chamber music was written for performances during these concerts in which both professional and amateur players participated. When Frederick became King of Prussia and moved his court to Berlin, Janitsch continued his Friday academies there. Not only his own music, but also music by his colleagues was performed during these concerts, the kind of music Dorothee Oberlinger has recorded. That certainly goes for the chamber music and concertos by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, who accompanied Frederick the Great when he played his flute, but whose compositions were not really appreciated by his employer.

Janitsch was especially famous for his quartets. His colleague Johann Wilhelm Hertel considered them "the best specimens of the genre". They were models of contrapuntal technique; this form also frequently appears in the oeuvre of Telemann and Fasch. The *Quartet in G* - called *Quadro* by the composer - is for recorder, oboe, violin and basso continuo. Apparently the flute part is referred to as *flauto*, and Dorothee Oberlinger writes that "it is now generally assumed that Janitsch's *flauto* was an alto recorder". The fact that this quartet is dominated by counterpoint makes it well suited for the recorder.

In the case of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach the recorder is more problematic. The *Sonata in e minor (Wq 124)* was originally intended for the transverse flute and having heard it several times with that instrument I find it hard to get used to a performance with a recorder, beautifully as Oberlinger plays it. That is entirely different with the other sonata, originally scored for bass recorder, viola and basso continuo. The bass recorder is a remarkable choice anyway as this instrument was mostly played in a recorder consort, not as a solo instrument. The curiosity of this scoring explains why Bach later adapted it as a sonata for two violins and basso continuo.

Johann Joachim Quantz could not be omitted here. He was Frederick's flute teacher, composed numerous sonatas and concertos for the transverse flute and is the author of a treatise on the flute which is still frequently used by interpreters of 18th-century repertoire. Lesser known - except

probably among flutists - is his study material, such as the pieces for flute solo played here. It is known that he played the recorder; Oberlinger refers to the fact that he came from the circle of the *Stadtpfeifer*. Whether these pieces were intended for the recorder is impossible to say; they sound well on it, though.

Ernst Gottlieb Baron is almost exclusively known as a luteist and composer of music for his own instrument. He played the theorbo in Frederick's court chapel. His oeuvre is small and includes the *Concerto in d minor* for flute and lute; it is a nice piece and is well played here, but in the slower parts I would have preferred the more sensitive sound of the transverse flute.

The two most remarkable pieces are the concertos by Johann Gottlieb Graun and Johann Christian Schulze, as these are definitely intended for the recorder. Graun was one of the main members of Frederick's ensemble and a much celebrated composer of instrumental music. However, it is not entirely clear whether he is the composer. It could also be his brother Carl Heinrich; they usually signed their compositions just with 'Graun', without their Christian name. The *Concerto in C* is the only piece by the Grauns which has a recorder part. This could well have been written with a specific player in mind. It is a relatively conservative piece; the violin part is considerably more virtuosic than the recorder part and includes double-stopping.

A *Concerto in G* is often attributed to Johann Christoph Schultze (c1733-1813), and that would make this piece the latest solo concerto for recorder of the 18th century. The attribution to Schultze is not that inconceivable, considering the theatrical character of the middle movement and the fact that this Schultze was a composer of music for the theatre. But Michael Schneider - who recorded this concerto (CPO, 2010) - and the musicologist Steffen Voss believe that this attribution is historically untenable, and that Johann Christian Schultze (c1680 - 1740) is the real composer. He was an oboist in the Prussian army and later violinist in the court chapel in Berlin. The track-list includes an error here: Johann Christian Schultze is mentioned as the composer but with the dates of Johann Christoph.

The concept of this disc doesn't entirely convince me and I am sceptical about the use of the recorder in some of the pieces. However, the repertoire is first class and the programme includes some pieces which are hardly known, such as the concerto attributed to Handel and the quartet by Janitsch. Dorothee Oberlinger is one of today's finest recorder players. Over the years I have heard many of her recordings and I have always rated them highly. That is no different here. She produces a beautiful tone and fully explores the features of the respective recorders: soprano, alto, tenor and bass recorder as well as the voice flute. She is supported by her own Ensemble 1700 which includes some of the best players on their respective instruments: Hiro Kurosaki (violin), Alfredo Bernardini (oboe), Makiko Kurabayashi (bassoon) and Axel Wolf (lute).

Recorder aficionados won't hesitate to add this disc to their collection, but you don't need to be one of them to really enjoy it.

Johan van Veen

Émile Pierre RATEZ (1851-1934)

Chamber Music – Volume 1

Dans la Foret op.5 [4:58]

Douze Pieces Pittoresque op.8 [28:13]

Souvenir du Village op.9 [5:13]

Deux Pieces op.38 [7:02]

Sonate pour Alto and Piano op.48 [16:23]

Marcin Murawski,viola, Hanna Holeska,piano.

rec. December 2015, April 2016, I.J.Paderewski Academy of Music, Poznan, Poland

ACTE PRÉALABLE AP0358 [61:59]

Chamber Music – Volume 2

Sonate for piano and alto op.18 [12:50]

Caprice-Valse – duo for flute, alto and piano op.13 [3'24]

Deux pieces for flute and piano op.42 [6'12]

Intermezzo for flute and piano op.50 [3:11]

Sonatine for flute and piano op.61 [7:58]

L'Aegipan for piano op.72 [4:21]

Fantaise iberique for alto and piano op.51 [8:45]

Japonerie for alto and piano op.57 [10:56]

Piece Romatique for alto and piano op.70 [4:41]

Ewa Murawska (flute)

Marcin Murawski (viola)

Hanna Holeska (piano)

rec June 2016, I.J. Paderewski Academy of Music, Poznan, Poland.

ACTE PRÉALABLE AP0366 [62:24]

Unusually, I began to listen to this CD before reading the booklet notes about the composer. It was not long before I began to think that the spirit of Saint-Saens was hovering over the music. In fact, I was not far off the mark, because Ratez was a pupil of Massenet. He spent the last 43 years of his life as director of the Lille Conservatoire and before that he was a violist in The Opera Comique.

His dates suggest that he might have come under some influences from Debussy or Ravel, but if he did so in later life, it is not evident here. In fact he spent the last 43 years of his life as head of the Conservatoire in provincial Lille, on the border with Belgium, and so he might have managed to avoid the modernistic goings on in Paris.

The first work on Volume 1 is the 5 minute 'Dans la Foret' Op.5, a charming, memorable piece which the violist has transcribed from its original format for English Horn or oboe. I don't know whether the difficulties presented in doing this have resulted in the balance between the instruments being a little odd during the first minute or so; perhaps it is just the viola playing quietly but it is sometimes almost covered by the piano. However, this peculiarity vanishes abruptly at 1'10" in.

The second work on the disc is the 28 minute long 'Douze Pieces Pittoresque' op.8 – its twelve pieces last between 1 minute and 5 minutes. They flow easily by, grateful on the ear, some having more-or-less picturesque titles such as 'Le Coeur de Poete' or 'Joyeux Retour', and as the booklet note says, they make a welcome expansion of the 19th century viola repertoire.

The principal other work present is the more formally titled 'Sonate pour Alto and Piano and' op.48. The notes claim that in composing it, Ratez was joining with other composers – Bowen, Reger, Enescu and others, who were exploiting the capabilities of the viola. As a player in a professional orchestra for many years, one would expect Ratez to know the instrument well, and so it proves, for in this piece all the registers of the instrument are fully exploited. Do not expect to hear any influences of Reger, though!

Some of the music on Volume 2 bears higher opus numbers than works on Volume 1 do, and so I wondered whether Ratez' style might have undergone a degree of modernization, given the presence on the compositional stage of such giants as Debussy and Ravel. But no, the works presented here show an easy fluidity so typical of the lighter works of Massenet and Saint-Saens. Of course, we are not given any excerpts from his operas or ballets, so making a fully considered statement is not really possible, but I suspect that his training at Massenet's hands and subsequent professional life as a violist in the *Opera Comique* followed by 43 years at the head of the Lille Conservatoire, resulted in an ingrained musical conservatism that felt neither inclination nor need to branch out.

The work with the most intriguing title is his op.72 *L'Aegipan*, which, as we all know, is a mythological goat-legged faun. It is the only work for solo piano on the disc and supposedly represents the creature prancing through a forest, pausing thoughtfully now and then, before resuming his wandering. At 4'20: it is a typical genre piece.

It is followed by, for me, the most memorable piece on the disc, the 'Fantaisie Iberique for Alto and Piano' which in its nine minutes manages to incorporate Spanish rhythms and hazy languor. Another work in which Ratez takes us to exotic lands is the 10'56: 'Japonerie for Alto and Piano', but I have to say that it is pseudo-Japanese froth seen through conservative European eyes – in fact I would never have guessed that it was in any way supposed to represent Japan.

The principal other works present are the more formally titled 'Sonate for Piano and Alto' op.18 and 'Sonatine for Flute and Piano' op.61. The latter is a true 'small sonata' lasting as it does a mere 7'58: and once again demonstrates its composer's ability to write fluently in a relatively light style.

On the evidence of this discs, there is little doubt that Ratez' muse was not one that inspired cerebral or adventurous composition, but, as I said in my review of the first CD, everything on this disc is attractive music to listen to, and demonstrates the not-to-be-sniffed-at characteristic of grateful, sometimes quite memorable melody.

These world premiere recordings are good, with well balanced instruments in a natural acoustic. To my ears, though, in the viola sonata, the instrument sounds rather bright, almost harsh when playing in its higher registers. This is not, perhaps, quite so noticeable in the other pieces where the viola appears, and is not noticeable at all in the lower reaches of the instrument, where the familiar dusky tone is apparent. The booklets are of splendid quality with full composer, artist and work information.

Jim Westhead

Dmitri SHOSTAKOVICH (1906-1975)

Symphony No. 1 in F minor, Op. 10 (1925) [32:52]

Scherzo for orchestra in F-sharp minor, Op. 1 (1921) [5:13]

Theme and Variations for orchestra in B-flat major, Op. 3 (1922) [15:25]

Scherzo for orchestra in E-flat major, Op. 7 (1924) [3:56]

Five Fragments for orchestra, Op. 42 (1935) [11:00]

Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg/Gustavo Gimeno

rec. June 2016, Philharmonie Luxembourg

Reviewed as a stereo DSD64 download from [NativeDSD](#)

Pdf booklet included

PENTATONE PTC5186622 SACD [68:33]

Valencia-born Gustavo Gimeno, former principal percussionist with the Concertgebouw, began his conducting career in 2012, when he was appointed assistant to Mariss Jansons. Three years later he became music director of the Luxembourg band, with whom he is now recording for Pentatone. I must confess Gimeno is new to me, but I see John Quinn [reviewed](#) his debut concert with the CBSO in November 2014. In a generally positive piece, he expressed the hope that the Spaniard would return to Birmingham soon.

Now here he is, in a programme of early Shostakovich, including the First Symphony. Vladimir Jurowski and the Russian National Orchestra recorded this – and the Sixth Symphony – for Pentatone in 2004. Despite the fact that [Chris Howell](#) only gave that release a cautious welcome, I chose it as my key comparative here. (I listened to the stereo DSD64 download, which is also available from [NativeDSD](#).) That said, these accounts of No. 1 face stiff competition from the likes of Kirill Kondrashin (Melodiya/Aulos), Bernard Haitink (Decca) and, most recently, Mark Wigglesworth ([BIS](#)). The latter, coupled with Nos. 2 and 3, was a Recording of the Month.

Shostakovich only hit his symphonic stride with the Fourth, composed in 1935-1936. And while the Second and Third seem little more than Party pieces, in the right hands – Sir Mark Elder's in the former, Wigglesworth's in the latter – they emit a raw energy that's quite compelling. The First, Shostakovich's graduation piece – completed when he was just 19 – is a strange hybrid, with echoes of Tchaikovsky at one extreme and nods to Stravinsky at the other; as such, it's a work that needs the strongest advocacy if it's to succeed in performance.

Haitink and Wigglesworth both spring the first two movements very well indeed; that's essential if the composer's nascent wit – in the symphony's first half – is to make any impact at all. Alas, Gimeno and his orchestra, elegant and surprisingly supple, don't quite get there. Indeed, one senses they're not terribly comfortable with this score, and that's not a good omen. Yes, there *is* a hint of satirical edge in the first two movements – played *attacca* – but it's blunted by Everett Porter's full-cream recording. Musically and sonically, Kondrashin and Haitink are more vivid and volatile, and that gives the music essential drive and character.

The symphony's second half – the final movement especially – is a motley affair. The work's direction of travel may not be very clear, but it does have its moments – that *Petrushka*-like passage driven by the snare drum, for instance. And while the sound is a little too cosseting for my taste, the presence and impact of key instruments – notably the piano, tamps and the bass drum – is pretty impressive; ditto the firm, nicely scaled *tuttis*. I'm less enthusiastic about the playing which, in the symphony at least, seems only fair to middling. Then again, the orchestra never really gets to grips with the piece in the first place.

Of course, the presence of a top-notch ensemble is no guarantee of success, but a seasoned maestro certainly helps. Take Wigglesworth, for example; he draws strongly idiomatic performances from the less-distinguished BBC NOW and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, with whom he's recorded all the Shostakovich symphonies. That said, the old Russian orchestras – their brass sections especially – brought something unique to these works. The RNO, formed in 1990, are a world away from their

gruff forebears; the downside is that they don't sound much different from most top-flight international ensembles these days.

I never felt the RNO were at their best under Mikhail Pletnev, their first principal conductor, so I was curious to hear how they'd respond to Jurowski in the Op. 10. Immediately I was struck by the snap and crackle of this performance, helped in no small measure by the crisp, analytical Polyhymnia recording. Really, the contrast between the Gimeno and Jurowski readings couldn't be starker; at last the composer's emerging 'voice' is audible, and the craft of this teenage creation is laid bare in a way that makes the Spaniard's traversal seem almost bland by comparison.

Jurowski's strong pulse and emphatic outlines are most welcome; in turn, that ensures a taut, incident-packed performance; he can't disguise the work's weaknesses, but at least he can minimise them. As for the RNO, they play with thrilling edge and alacrity, the young composer's boldness – and occasional rudery – nicely caught. Most important, though, is the sense of coherence, of purpose, that Jurowski brings to the score. In short, this is a most desirable First, made all the more so by its coupling, a fine Sixth that includes an unusually austere account of the *Largo*. The playing and sound in the latter are beyond reproach.

With the exception of the *Five Fragments*, which dates from 1935, Gimeno's fillers are all very early works. That follows the pattern set by his first Pentatone release ([PTC5186613](#)), which couples the rarely heard Vienna version of Bruckner's First Symphony (1865-1866) with the Four Orchestral Pieces of 1862. Such programmes allow one to hear composers in their formative years; they can also offer intriguing pointers to their mature works.

Shostakovich's Op. 1, an orchestral Scherzo, was destined to be the third movement of a piano sonata he was writing for his composition teacher, Maximilian Steinberg. It's not surprising that Glazunov approved of the result, for it could easily be something he'd written himself. Still, it's a most attractive little number, especially when played with such verve. As for the Op. 3 Theme and Variations, thought to be a compositional exercise, it's a rather charming piece in which the young Shostakovich shows he's firmly in control of his material and its transformations. The recording has wonderful detail and a full, rounded bass, which add to the pleasure of these performances.

The real gem, though, is the Op. 7 Scherzo, which has its origins in an unfinished piano quintet. Dominated by an irrepressible piano part, it has a bounce and brio that left me wreathed in smiles. Now this is more like the quirky, mischievous composer we know from his later works. Gimeno and his players really seem to be enjoying themselves, and that shows in this easeful and stylish performance. But it's the now enigmatic, now skein-like *Five Fragments* that catapults the listener into another world entirely. Given such beautifully nuanced playing and ear-pricking sound, I feel like a churl for panning the first part of this programme. Marina Frolova-Walker's detailed liner-notes are a welcome bonus.

Gimeno makes amends for a dull symphony with some terrific fillers; caveats aside, this could be the start of a most rewarding partnership.

Dan Morgan