

American Record Guide

Independent critics reviewing classical recordings

Nathan Faro reviews

Miguel del Aguila ORCHESTRAL WORKS CD

Augusta Symphony/Guillermo Figueroa/ Dirk Meyer

"...lush lyricism from the violin and sweeping, mysterious grandeur from the orchestra...chilling and effective ..."

"attractive and crowd-pleasing music..."

US \$7.99
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and the piano music. Reicha seems to have used the latter just for composition exercises and teaching. Why record it?

REPP

RESPIGHI: *Quartet*; see CASADESUS

RIES: *Piano Pieces, all*

Susan Kagan, Vasily Primakov
Naxos 506043 [6CD]

We reviewed some of these when they were issued individually; now they are boxed together. Carl Bauman was very positive about this pianist's authoritative playing (July/Aug 2006, Nov/Dec 2010, May/June 2011). He even used the word "wonderful" about the pianist. That Ries was a pupil of Beethoven is obvious from his music. That he was only a pupil and not a peer is also obvious.

Primakov plays only in the two-piano pieces.

VROON

RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF: *Russian Easter*;
see FRANCK

ROBIN: *Crop Circles; The Blade of Hours; Tic-tac; Poems of the Dawn and Night; 3 Nights; Zenith*

Delphine Haidan, mz; Sarah Nemtanu, v; Victor Julien-Laferriere, Francois Salque, vc; Romain Descharmes, p; Savoie Orchestra/ Nicolas Chalvin; French National Orchestra/ Jean Deroyer, Marin Alsop

Brilliant 96569—61 minutes

The works of Jean-Baptiste Robin (b. 1976) have garnered much attention in the last several years. He is also the resident organist at the Royal Chapel of the Palace of Versailles and has performed around the world. Robert Delcamp favorably reviewed his organ pieces on Brilliant 95479 (N/D 2017). This is the first album devoted solely to his orchestral and chamber works without organ.

Robin's works are tonal, colorful, and impressionist, yet vibrant and lively. Many of his compositions are related to the passage of time and incorporate the pulsing, ticking sounds of a clock. To this end, his works lean into symmetrical structures and circular melodies. He marks his signature as an organist with a predilection for rich harmonies and, in the orchestral works, massive chordal textures of great dramatic power over static pedal notes. This is most effective in the dramatic curtain-raiser *Crop Circles* (2012). Swirling,

rising figures quickly become a terrifying maelstrom propelled forward with relentless energy and intensity redolent of Honegger and Roussel. *The Blade of Hours* (2019) is likewise suffused with dramatic tension and vitality as it depicts the inexorable march of time. *Zenith* (2020) for two oboes and strings shelves the intensity for more restrained melodic interplay.

The brief song cycle *Poems of the Dawn and the Night* (2001-18) for mezzo-soprano and piano sets the composer's own text in subdued, atmospheric settings. The cello duet *Three Nights* (2014) is a tribute to Dutilleux and brings out the tension between angular rhythms and flowing lyricism. The best of the chamber works is *Tictac* (2019), a zany, hyperkinetic sonatina for violin and piano emulating the windup mechanism of a clock.

I'm very glad to have gotten to know Robin's music. It is breezy and entertaining but also substantial, well-crafted fare for performers and listeners alike. The performances and sound are excellent. Liner notes are in French and English—but we are missing texts and translations for the song cycle!

FARO

RONTGEN: *Quartet*; see GRIEG

ROSSINI: *String Sonatas (quartets)*

Nicola Guidetti, fl; Alessandro Simoncini, v;
Demetrio Comuzzi, va; Luca Simoncini, vc
Tactus 791806—66 minutes

Recorded at Ferrara in January 2012 but apparently not released before, this album presents 4 of the 6 4-part sonatas Rossini wrote over the summer of 1804 while staying at Conventello near Ravenna, a short distance from the Adriatic Sea. If you want to believe him, the entire set was composed and copied over 3 days. Written for 2 violins, cello, and bass, they were performed then with the 12-year-old native of Pesaro playing second violin. The set was first published for standard string quartet by Ricordi of Milan in 1826, then arranged by Friedrich Beer after he changed his name to Berr for flute, clarinet, horn, and bassoon and published in 1828 by Schott. An alternative to this instrumentation was flute, violin, viola, and cello offered for 1, 2, 4, and 6, which constitute this program, though numbered 1 through 4 somewhat deceptively.

Owing partly to its history and partly for other reasons, the set has been recorded many ways, including with string orchestras. Consult

our Index for a variety of options. Salvatore Accardo and friends recorded the original scoring for Decca in 1978, and that album was re-released as part of a 2-disc set with Bottesini on Eloquence 4825103 (not reviewed) in the autumn of 2016 for Accardo's 75th birthday. A decade ago Dux in Warsaw issued a recording of the original scoring with Polish players on modern instruments (Mar/Apr 2014). Our editor said "go for it".

These are modern instruments and sound pleasant. Our flutist has appeared here before playing flute sonatas of Haydn (May/June 2015) and Madrid Quintets of Boccherini (Sept/Oct 1998), both on Dynamic. He also recorded with pianist Marco Ricciarelli an album of Paris Conservatory pieces on Fabula 29914 (not reviewed), a sub-label of Ermitage. All four players are presented to us clearly and equally. They take turns nicely and do their stunts flawlessly. As an alternative to hearing the original version, this rendition of most of the set ought to satisfy your ears, especially if you'd like to hear a fine viola.

GORMAN

RUBINSTEIN: *Piano Pieces, opp 16, 28, 51;*
3 Caprices
Sergio Gallo
Naxos 574300—72 minutes

Anton Rubinstein was held in low esteem by fellow composers because he wrote the tuneful, amiable music regular people liked to hear in the late 1800s rather than "music of the future". A crowd-pleaser, Rubinstein had great success as a traveling virtuoso performing his own works. His music looks back to Mendelssohn and Chopin as his models—this is obvious in the Opus 16 and Opus 28 pieces as well as Opus 21 *Caprices*. Whatever they lack in originality or depth, they compensate with affable charm and fizzy good spirits. Rubinstein is never thorny or challenging—his works please you at once or not at all. The slightly later Opus 51 (1857) was admired by Tchaikovsky, and it's easy to hear why: several pieces anticipate Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky's late style. Certainly Rachmaninoff knew the first piece, 'Melancholy', which sounds much like his own moody Opus 23 preludes. The fifth piece, 'Passions', contains sequences of heavy layered chords pouncing (and pounding) all up and down the keyboard reminiscent of Rachmaninoff's mature style and Rubinstein's own mighty Concerto No. 4, which Rachmaninoff certainly knew as well. I

think Rubinstein is an undervalued composer and exerted more influence than is generally acknowledged.

Gallo's technique is pristine and flawless—sometimes in the Opus 51 he makes things sound almost *too* easy. The piano sounds great as well. This is at least the 12th CD of Rubinstein's piano music on Naxos and I've collected most of them. Let's hope Naxos carries on and perhaps one day gives us a piano integrale of this prolific composer.

WRIGHT

Ruvo: *5 Cello Sonatas*

Scott Kluksdahl; Hedi Salanki, hpsi
Centaur 3954—42 minutes

Giulio de Ruvo is a mysterious Baroque composer. We don't have any specific dates for his life-span. These cello sonatas were published in 1703, dedicated to the Pugliese Duke of Bovino in Naples. Sonata 5 has been previously recorded by Gaetano Nasillo on Arcana. That CD, recorded in 2014, also gave us a little Romanella and two Tarantellas, which may also be found with a second Romanella on Elinor Frey's "Voce del Violoncello" Passacaille CD (Nov/Dec 2013, p 145).

These little sonatas are interesting to hear. Formally, they vary, written in 3 to 6 movements of varying nature. They are pretty pieces, and interesting to hear as predecessors to Bach's much more famous sonatas.

Cellist Kluksdahl has a Master's degree from the Juilliard School and has had a varied career already, including a number of recordings, mainly of contemporary music. It is nice to hear him in this old genre. Salanki, his female partner here, hails from Hungary, but also came here to the Juilliard School, where she earned a Doctorate. She is now a Professor and Director of Chamber Music and Piano programs at the University of West Florida. This is a lovely recording!

D MOORE

RZEWSKI: *The People United Will Never Be Defeated;*

KURBATOV: *3 Last Minuets;*

BEETHOVEN: *Variations in A*

Vadym Kholodenko, p
Quartz 2149—74 minutes

Like the Lewis Spratlan album "Invasion", which I reviewed in the last issue of ARG, this disc is dedicated to Ukraine in its fight against Russian invaders. As was the case with the