Federico Lovato

French Music for Horn and Piano

Camille Saint-Saëns | Jean-Michel Damase | Jean-Michel Defaye | Francis Poulenc

CD aud 97.538

The Independent Friday, 29 July 2011 (Andy Gill - 2011.07.29)

This collection of pieces from the 19th and 20th centuries is intended to...

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Fono Forum September 2011 (Holger Arnold - 2011.09.01)

Hochvirtuos

In keinem europäischen Land hielt sich das ventillose Naturhorn so hartnäckig wie in Frankreich, erst 1903 verschwand das Instrument aus dem Lehrangebot des Pariser Konservatoriums. Den Übergang vom Natur- zum Ventilhorn dokumentiert die "Villanelle" von Paul Dukas in reizvoller Weise. In dem 1906 für den Wettbewerb des Pariser Konservatoriums geschriebenen Stück schreibt Dukas vor, in der Einleitung und vor der Schluss-Stretta ohne Ventile zu spielen, also die zwischen den Naturtönen liegenden Töne mittels der Stopftechnik zu realisieren. Alles in allem ist es ein hochvirtuoses Stück mit pointierter Rhythmik und allen Finessen bis hin zu einem abschließenden hohen C als Krönung. Ein ganz anderer Geist spricht aus den beiden Romanzen von Camille Saint-Saëns. Diese Stücke stehen ganz in der Tradition des "Gesangs ohne Worte" und bieten dem Interpreten die Möglichkeit, die Klangschönheit seines Instrumentes vorzuführen.

In seiner Elegie brachte Francis Poulenc die Erschütterung über den Unfalltod des englischen Hornisten Dennis Brain zum Ausdruck. Das 1958 uraufgeführte Stück ist ein düsteres, tragisches Werk, das gleich zu Beginn mit einer Reihe von Zwölftonklängen irritiert.

Neben diesen Standardwerken enthält die CD mit der Sonate von Jean-Michel Damase (geb. I928) und "Alpha" von Jean-Michel Defaye (geb. 1932) zwei im spätromantischen Geist stehende, nicht minder attraktive Raritäten. Der italienische Hornist Guglielmo Pellarin zelebriert das anspruchsvolle Programm mit delikater, schlanker Tongebung, feinem musikalischen Gespür und brillanter Technik, wirkungsvoll unterstützt von seinem Landsmann Federico Lovato.

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Hessischer Rundfunk hr2-Kultur: Der CD-Tipp, Freitag, 12.08.2011, 13.05-13.30 Uhr (Martin Grunenberg - 2011.08.12)

Der CD-Tipp

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Der neue Merker 24.08.2011 (DZ - 2011.08.24)

Französische Kammermusik und Italienisches auf dem Klavier

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Stereo 10/2011 Oktober (Holger Arnold - 2011.10.01)

In keinem europäischen Land hielt sich das ventillose Naturhorn so hartnäckig...

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kulturtipp 20/11 (24. - 30. September 2011) (Fritz Trümpi - 2011.09.24)

Hornmusik à la française

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hifi & records 4/2011 (Heinz Gelking - 2011.10.01)

Damase, Defaye, Dukas u.a.

Französische Musik für Horn und Klavier

Damase, Defaye, Dukas u.a.

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klassik.com 09.10.2011 (Tobias Pfleger - 2011.10.09)
source: http://magazin.klassik.com/reviews/revie...

Schärfe in der Süße

Schärfe in der Süße

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www.klavier.de 09.10.2011 (Tobias Pfleger - 2011.10.09)

Französische Musik für Horn & Klavier: Werke von Saint-Saens, Damase, Defaye u.a.

Schärfe in der Süße

Französische Musik für Horn & Klavier: Werke von Saint-Saens, Damase, Defaye u.a.

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Ensemble - Magazin für Kammermusik 6-2011 Dezember/Januar (Ernst Hoffmann - 2011.12.01)

Sanftes Horn

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theartsdesk.com Saturday, 14 January 2012 (Graham Rickson - 2012.01.14)

Classical CDs Weekly: Gál, Grieg, Liszt, Schubert, Pellarin

Viennese symphonies, piano warhorses and an Italian plays French music for horn and piano

The familiar (to horn players at least) nestles alongside a couple of welcome rarities in this impeccably played horn and piano recital. The horn is a notoriously difficult instrument to record well. The instrument's bell usually faces the wrong way, and it's easy to end up with too much boomy resonance. The sound on this Audite release is impeccable. Guglielmo Pellarin is principal horn of the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and his expressive, very European sound is captured close-up. Which means here that there's a lovely, breathy softness to the horn tone, especially when it's played quietly. Saint-Saëns's two Romances are unpretentious salon pieces, both exploiting the 19th-century valve horn's new-found chromatic agility.

Poulenc's Elégie is one of the most disquieting pieces by this still underrated composer. The 12-note opening theme rapidly cuts into edgy staccato writing, the violence perhaps suggesting the tragic demise of the horn player Dennis Brain, to whose memory it was dedicated. The Sonate by Jean-Michel Damase makes brilliant use of the extremes of the horn's range; Pellarin's fruity low register delights here. Jean-Michel Defaye was a pupil of Nadia Boulanger; his ALPHA is occasionally dissonant and unsettling

before it lets the horn sing. A superbly executed recital, beautifully accompanied by pianist Federico Lovato.

Frankenpost Donnerstag, 2. Februar 2012 (Michael Thumser - 2012.02.02)

Druckvolle Kammerkunst

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Fanfare 01.01.2012 (Robert Markow - 2012.01.01)

Guglielmo Pellarin, principal horn in the Santa Cecilia National Academy Orchestra in Rome, turns in a program of six works by five French composers. Some of these are well known to horn players, others less so. Collectively they span the period from the late 19th to the late 20th centuries. Though some were written for the natural horn, Pellarin plays everything on a Paxman model 20M. The most substantial work on his program is Jean-Michel Damase's three-movement sonata, music that continuously engages the ear with lyricism, harmonic piquancy, forward thrust, and idiomatic exploitation of the horn's assets. The eight-minute Alpha by Jean-Michael Defaye was written in 1973 as a final exam piece for students at the Paris Conservatory. It too makes a worthy contribution to the literature, demonstrating the full range of the instrument and running the gamut of styles from moody Impressionism to jazzy virtuosity.

The Romance was a favorite genre of Saint-Saëns, and he wrote nearly a dozen of them for various instrumental and vocal combinations. Op. 36 is the well-known one for horn and piano; op. 67 is an arrangement of the fourth movement of the Suite for Cello and Piano, op. 16 (a fact not mentioned in the otherwise excellent program notes).

I particularly like the spirit of adventure Pellerin brings to his playing. It is always imaginative, full of ideas, and demands the listener's full attention. Coupled with what appears to be an innate capacity for lyricism plus technical facility and a pleasing tone, this CD can be added to my growing pile of heartily recommended horn recitals on CD.

American Record Guide 01.11.2011 (Barry Kilpatrick - 2011.11.01)

An excellent recording of Italians playing French music. Guglielmo Pellarin is principal horn of the Santa Cecilia Academy Orchestra in Rome; Federico Lovato has a thriving career as pianist, cellist, and artistic director of the orchestra I Solisti in Villa. The program offers mostly standard works, but some listeners might not be familiar with the works by Jean-Michel Damase (b 1928) or Jean-Michel Defaye (b 1932). Damase bases much of his three-movement, 15-minute introspective Horn Sonata on a melody from Wagner's Siegfried-Idyll. Defaye's 'Alpha' (1973) is dissonant and compact, demanding much technical skill but ending in a quiet brooding mood.

www.musicweb-international.com January 2013 (Jack Buckley - 2013.01.01)

If you want to know about the development of a musical instrument during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it shouldn't come as a surprise to know that French composers would be a good place to start to look. For reasons I have never been able fully to fathom, those gentlemen seem to be uncommonly well endowed with the spirit of inquiry and enterprise. What? A new development in the manufacturing of the banjo? What kind of new sound possibilities does this open up? Is this change likely to affect manufacturing long enough for me to write a piece that can be performed as soon as the ink is dry on the paper?

This spirit of enquiry often remains in the music long after the particular development of the instrument takes place – an audible act of discovery, so to speak, alive for posterity.

The German recording house, Audite, have turned their lights onto the horn. That instrument was called the French horn when I was growing up. Heaven knows why. Maybe to distinguish it from little boy blue, whom you will remember, was fast asleep under a haystack when he ought to have been blowing his horn.

Well Guglielmo Pellarin is not asleep nor under a haystack. He has been blowing his horn as Principal of the Santa Cecilia Orchestra since 2008, as readers of my dispatches from Rome will know, from the S&H Live Music section of this website. Still remarkably young and reading for a Higher Mathematics degree between orchestra and guest performances all over Europe, he has joined forces with the equally talented young pianist, Federico Lovato, to produce a disk which is as entertaining as it is informative.

Saint-Saëns is the supreme example of the enterprising spirit just mentioned. He was eighty-six when he died in 1921 and had begun to compose at the age of seven and give piano recitals at the age of eight, continuing uninterrupted until his end. Claudio Arrau told me that he had attended one of these recitals as a boy and heard pianism of incomparable refinement. As was usual at the time, Saint-Saëns had played wearing white linen gloves. Sadly, he was not enthusiastic about the then new fangled invention of recording which he thought gave no real idea of what the piano sounded like. He was right on this too, we have to concede. So we have to make do with piano-rolls of his playing, which already give some idea of what Arrau was talking about. His output as a composer is enormous and for every combination of voices and instruments, including stage-works. He was also keen to provide music for instruments in the development phase, hence his two Romances for horn and piano on this CD.

Here, as much as with his decision to have no truck with recording, his artistic accomplishment depends more on the resistance to change than with embracing its possibilities. Heinrich Stölzel is usually credited, around 1814, as the inventor of the horn's valves, which permit the instrument to play all twelve notes of the chromatic scale without using a hand inside the instrument's bell to alter the pitch. Traditional composers – Saint-Saëns among them – remained suspicious of the new valves and preferred what they continued to refer to as the natural horn. In fact, the valve horn could also produce the notes in the same old (pre-valve) way. Mr Pellarin often does so. What did make a difference was how the composer conceived his piece. There is no question that Saint-Saëns gives the horn player a wake-up call, asking him to use his hand and not the valves to alter the pitch.

Both Romances for horn (or cello) and piano are clearly conceived with the intimacy of the Paris salons in mind. Charm and elegance are to the fore and Saint-Saëns is a master of both. So are both these players. Pellarin enjoys a challenge as well as letting you hear that it costs him no effort to make this fine sound. Federico Lovato (a cellist as well as pianist) delights us in the matching fluency of his playing, recalling Arrau's impression of the composer's pianism. The Op.67 is more musically adventurous than the Op.36, which relies on an extremely open simplicity. These boys have rather a good line in the take-it-or-leave-it stakes.

In a curious bit of programming, sandwiched between these two Romances is the sonata of Jean-Michel Damase, a pianist/composer born in 1928. There is, however, a connection with Saint-Saëns. Damase too

is on record as saying he prefers sincerity over innovation for the sake of innovation. The sonata, in three brief movements is a fine exploration of the horn's possibilities, making it an ideal vehicle for Pellarin's talent. I had momentarily forgotten what an enormously wide range the horn has. Much the same goes for its expressive chromatic colourings. Damase begins in the bass register and Pellarin is one of the few players who can deliver a melody here without making it sound as though the instrument is farting. The golden steadiness of tone takes on extra glitter in the chromatic passages. The sonata is entirely tonal. In the opening allegro he quotes the main theme of the Siegfried Idyll, which makes an appearance again in another surprise context in the finale's allegro vivo. In between, the andante is a canon with variations, somewhat recalling the finale of the violin sonata of Franck, who had been the teacher of Damase's teacher. The demanding piano part of the sonata is delivered with aplomb by Lovato.

Jean-Michel Defaye (b.1932) is out of that fertile Nadia Boulanger nest, and largely known as a composer of film music. His ALPHA for horn and piano is effectively a horn cadenza with piano accompaniment, making it, in that sense, the most exploratory piece on the disk. Pellarin's muted echo effects are so beautifully placed that the listener is convinced that there are two horn players. This again is a top-to-bottom exploration of the instrument's range and exploring is what Guglielmo Pellarin does best.

Francis Poulenc was one of music's most outstanding playboys. That is what he did with music: he played with it in the most intriguing, challenging and witty way. It is one of music history's great tragedies that there are not more composers like him. He only wrote what he wanted to write. No problems with cash: the family's pharmaceutical company kept him well oiled. Many of the pieces were written in friendship and admiration of particular players, most of them in his last period. The wind quintet with piano was one such jewel. I remember how young horn players whom I had invited to participate in this quintet would almost invariably say to me, something along the lines of. This horn part is perfectly written for this instrument; I only wish I were a better horn player. The masterly sonatas for flute, clarinet and oboe, all with piano, also belong to this period.

The Elégie for horn and piano was written in memory of Dennis Brain, after he died in a car accident in 1957. The piano provides the background for the horn's meditative and sometimes militaristic homage to the great player. Shades of the last post come from the horn with some exquisitely placed muted tones from Guglielmo Pellarin. Evidently this is a tribute which both the composer and these two players have felt deeply. For me, it is the most moving piece here.

A nice musical lollipop forms a final encore. When I was writing poetry, the villanelle was one of my favourite structures, where the poet is restricted to only two rhymes and a recurring line which is required to pop up as a refrain in specified places. The trick is to make the familiar line sound shockingly new by virtue of its new context, as it does somewhat in Dylan Thomas's Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night or even better in Elizabeth Bishop's One Art. Needless to say, I wrote nothing to set alongside these masterpieces. Paul Dukas (he of The Sorcerer's Apprentice) wrote a villanelle for horn and piano. A nice bit of sorcery it is too. Pellarin has some fun passing between the pastoral sections, where he changes the pitch with his right hand in the bell and the helter-skelter très vif bits where he uses the valves. The fun is neatly and unobtrusively passed on to the listener.

There is an excellent note on this repertory in the CD's accompanying booklet by Knut Andreas, in German, which I have shamelessly and joyously made use of in these notes. The translation of Dr Andreas's notes is beautifully done in English by Viola Scheffel – very useful if your German is as shaky as mine.