

Phil's Classical Reviews

Atlanta Audio Club

November, 2022



Brahms: Double Concerto, Op. 102 +
Clara Schumann: Piano Trio, Op. 17
Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin; Pablo
Ferrández, cello. Manfred Honeck
conducts Czech Philharmonic (Sony)

In a live concert in Prague German violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter joins forces with Madrid-born Spanish cellist Pablo Ferrández and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra under Manfred Honeck to put across Johannes Brahms' lovely but problematical Double Concerto in A Minor, Op. 102. Then Mutter and Ferrández are joined by American pianist Lambert Orkis in a glowing performance of Clara Schumann's Piano Trio in G minor, Op. 17.

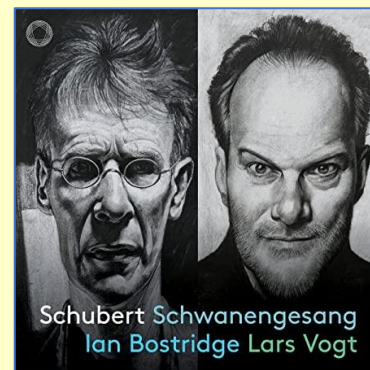
Brahms' Double Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra requires, and receives, the performances of two equally matched soloists. It is in three movements. The opening Allegro, at a timing of 18:23 in the present instance, is more than the combined durations of the other two movements and features an extended development by both soloists that may be seen as justifying its unusual length. It also establishes a principal of formal restraint versus expansiveness that will be seen to strongly characterize the work as a whole. That includes a very pregnant pause (of 11 seconds in the present instance) which is then followed by two sharply struck chords in the strings before continuing on. (What Brahms had in mind we can only surmise.)



Mozart: The "Prussian" Quartets
Chiaroscuro String Quartet
(Bis Records)

The Chiaroscuro Quartet, formed in 2005, consists of violinists Alina Ibragimova (Russia) and Pablo Hernán Benedí (Spain), violist Emilie Hörnlund (Sweden), and cellist Claire Thirion (France). They perform on gut strings with historical bows, and tend to specialize in music of the Classical and Early Romantic periods. Both facts help to account for the distinctive highly nuanced sound that is so characteristic of them and of their chosen name, which has its origin in the visual arts, referring to a discrete proportion of light and shade.

That's important here because many of the nuances we find in the three "Prussian" Quartets, K575, K589, and K590, reflect the fact that they were written to fulfill a commission from Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia. That kind of "on demand" commission was not the way Mozart typically liked to work, and these three quartets cost him, uncharacteristically, a good deal of time and effort. As the King happened to have been an amateur cellist, there was also a polite request to include a few good melodies for the cello in these quartets, which was something Mozart must have regarded as a pleasure rather than an onerous demand.



Schubert: *Schwanengesang* - Ian
Bostridge, tenor; Lars Vogt, piano
(Pentatone)

Do swans really sing, for the first and last time, a poignant song in anticipation of their own death? Whatever the truth is in ornithology, it's remarkable how often this legend occurs, and in widely separated parts of the world. So prevalent, in fact, that Schubert titled his own posthumously published song collection *Schwanengesang* (Swan Song) in the certainty that the illusion would be not be missed by his public.

The first thing that one notices about the poetic texts themselves is their uniformly high literary quality. Unlike its other famous predecessors *Die Schöne Müllerin* (The Pretty Miller's Daughter) and *Winterreise* (Winter's Journey), this is a collection of poetry set to music and not a song cycle in the sense of a continuing story by a single author. All but one of the poems in Swan Song are by Ludwig Rellstab or Heinrich Heine, both significantly better poets than the Wilhelm Müller of the earlier cycles. One consequence is that we are spared the occasional banality of Müller's heroes like the self-pitying Wanderer and the lovesick Miller who drowns himself in despair of the love of a fickle girl.

The happy result is that you can do a lot more with the poetry in Swan Song, and Schubert was quick to realize this.

At any rate, Brahms' Double Concerto was not universally acclaimed at the time of its premiere in October, 1887, and even Clara Schumann, longtime Brahms advocate though she was, found fault with an alleged "lack of brilliance" in the writing for the two soloists. Other observers found it to be "joyless" and "unapproachable." Happily, posterity has taken a more positive attitude toward this work, which now rates among the composer's best-loved.

Why did it take so long to find anything like universal acceptance? My guess is that the very layout of a double concerto, requiring both instruments to take a crack in the opening movement at the themes and their development, might have tended to make Brahms' early audiences impatient, and they did not have the advantage available to home listeners of more recent times, of access to quality sound recordings to help revise their opinions. Also, Brahms' melodies in the opening are lyrical and expressive enough for modern tastes, but they aren't the heart-on-sleeve variety his audience might've expected. The close intermodulation of voices in the second movement (Andante) and the striking way the cello melody sets the emotional direction in the finale (Vivace non troppo) might have served to change the attitudes of contemporary listeners if they'd chosen to stick around and listen for such musical balm.

And balm there is, in abundance. Brahms calls for his soloists to play in octaves, with stunning effect, in the opening Allegro and the finale, on all four stopped strings, creating the illusion of additional voices. In said finale, Vivace non troppo, high gypsy-inspired rhythms are the order of the day as both violin and cello engage in a spirited rush to the finish.

And speaking of Clara Schumann, her Piano Trio in G minor, Op 17, is heard here in a gracious performance in which Mutter and Ferrández are joined by pianist and longtime Mutter collaborator Lambert Orkis, and are heard to best effect. The slow movement, a gracious Andante, is at the heart of the work. We have here discretely poignant music in which the three voices are all well characterized. The work is in three movements: Allegro Moderato, Andante, and Allegretto. The middle movement, in

In the end, Mozart delivered the goods, *and how*. Normally, six string quartets were held to constitute a "set," so that three would have been considered short measure. But, as the world would soon discover, these three works contained much more musical substance than one would customarily have expected to find in a "complete" set of six.

The "Prussian" Quartets were also larger in scope and longer in duration. For the sake of space, I'm going to confine my comments to K590 in F Major, the last of the set and the last string quartet Mozart would ever live to compose. Clocking in at 37:32 in the present performance, it is also no doubt the longest, being chock-full of musical substance.

K590 poses a quandary for the performers in its very opening, in which the first bar is marked *piano* and the second *forte*. Does this constitute a crescendo? Certainly not. As a few other performing quartets have discovered, the apparent dilemma can be resolved by blooming slightly in the opening bar and then playing more strongly than might have been expected in the second. It works like a charm, allowing the resulting figure, which conveys a sense of joy, to serve a dual role as both a pickup and a downbeat. Mozart repeats this procedure again in the phrase structure of the Minuet, where the effect is deliciously asymmetrical.

This Menuetto is distinguished by the evolution of a fairly conventional theme into one with a highly chromatic, smartly driven transition. Generally speaking, all the movements in this quartet are distinguished by their immense beauty, an equilibrium amongst the instruments, and the cantabile nature of the cello part, which stands out in this movement (as it was intended to).

Throughout their account of K590, and K575 and K589 as well, the exceptional balance cultivated by the members of the Chiaroscuro Quartet serves to pay handsome dividends.

Included here are the original fourteen songs in the first publication of Swan Song: *Liebesbotschaft* (Love Message), *Kriegers Ahnung* (Soldier's Foreboding), *Frühlingssehnsuch* (Longing for Spring), *Ständchen* (Serenade), *Aufenthalt* (Resting Place), *In der Ferne* (In the Distance), *Abschied* (Farewell), *Der Atlas* (Atlas), *Ihr Bild* (Her Image), *Das Fischermädchen* (The Fisher-Maiden), *Die Stadt* (The City), *Am Meer* (By the Sea), *Der Doppelgänger* (The Double, or Fearsome Apparition), and *Die Taubenpost* (The Pigeon-Post).

A glance at the titles will indicate that these songs of foreboding, sadness, love, longing, and the anticipation of happiness cover a wide emotional range, offering many possibilities for our interpretive artists, English tenor Ian Bostridge and German pianist Lars Vogt, natives of Wandsworth, London and Düren, North Rhine-Westphalia, respectively. There is much in all of these songs for a singer to cherish and make his own, and Bostridge is quick to put his stamp on their interpretations. He is assisted immensely by Vogt's incisive accompaniments, a sure sign that both these artists have worked together productively in the past.

Sadly, this was to be the last hurrah for Lars Vogt. He roused himself from a sick-bed to give a veritable clinic of what a skilled accompanist can do in a lieder recital, serving to help define, in collaboration with the vocalist, the curve of the song and its often-subtle changes in mood and character. This was a highly productive collaboration by two great artists that has to qualify as one of the premier performances of Schubert's *Schwanengesang* that you are likely to hear anywhere.

It was also to be Lars Vogt's own "swan song," as he did not live to witness the album's release this past September 23rd. A consummate artist, he will certainly be missed by his colleagues in the world of classical music.

which the voices are chromaticized, is particularly striking. The opening movement segues into the second, which is labelled a “Romance,” and it in turn segues into the third following an imitation drum roll, a smart way of handling the transition. A cello melody at 1:25 helps set the emotional direction in this movement. Listening to this Trio for the first time, I was struck by the way in which all the parts were so well developed. That is a compliment both to Clara Schumann and the trio of artists heard in this excellent Sony release.



Frédéric Chopin: Piano Concerto No. 1, 10 Mazurkas – Margarita Höhenrieder, piano. Riccardo Minasi; Orchestra La Scintilla (Solo Musica)

You just can't take a good piano concerto for granted. I remember hearing Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor for the first time many years ago on an LP record my mother played for me, so long ago I can't even remember the performer. (Was it Brailowsky? Iturbi? Rubinstein? Only the best for my Mom!) What I did remember vividly is the way the piano and orchestra seemed to actively converse with each other. This was quite different from the almost adversarial way the orchestra and soloist talked to each other, for example, in Beethoven's big concertos, and it marked something quite new in music, although at the time I was too young to understand just what it was.

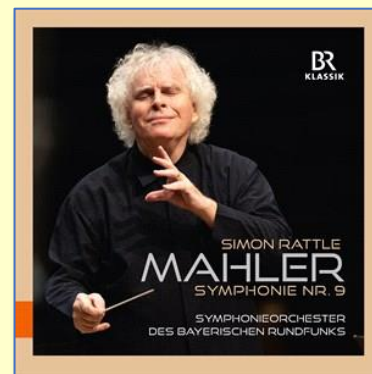
The answer to that question is addressed very satisfactorily in the course of a powerfully compelling account of Chopin's E Minor Concerto. Margarita Höhenrieder, a native of Munich who studied in her home city at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater where she is now a professor



Echi d'Opera (Echoes of Opera), music of Weber and Verdi. Nikolai Pfeffer, clarinet; Markus Stenz conducts the ORT Orchestra della Toscana (Novantiqua Records)

Nikolai Pfeffer (born 1985, Fulda, Germany) studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz in Cologne and at Indiana University in the United States. I could list the famous artists/teachers under whom he studied, but you could look it all up on his website, as well as a list of the prizes he has won. His main calling-card to the world remains the glorious sound of his clarinet, dark or bright in tone color as the music requires and with a bloom that matches the opera-inspired program on the present release by the Italian label Novantiqua. This is a great choice of listening for opera buffs and for people who think they might enjoy the music of the opera but aren't quite sure.

We begin with the famous Overture to *Der Freischütz* (roughly translated “The Free Shooter” or “Demon Huntsman”) by Karl Maria von Weber (1786-1826). with its lush romantic sound and even, in the famous “Wolf's Glen Scene,” an eerie evocation of the supernatural, a



Mahler: Symphony no. 9
Sir Simon Rattle, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BR Klassik)

This is the performance by the Bavarian RSO of Gustav Mahler's last completed symphony, No. 9 in D Major, as it was given on November 26 and 27, 2021 in the Isar Philharmonie under its recently-designated principal conductor Simon Rattle. It marked both a new chapter in the history of the proud old orchestra and also a continuity with the past, as the English conductor's predecessors (Mariss Jansons, Lorin Maazel, and Raphael Kubelik) had all been noted Mahlerians, as had the recently deceased Bernard Haitink, whose death the previous month was duly commemorated at this time.

In a sense, all of this seems appropriate the moment you begin listening to the Mahler Ninth. There is an unmistakable valedictory mood in this symphony that is positively awesome. It seems almost superfluous to say that the great issues of human life, including love, death and redemption, are present in this work, but it is even so. One detects a mood of sadness and resignation throughout the

while pursuing an active career as concert pianist, carries on a lively conversation with Riccardo Minasi and the Orchestra La Scintilla. That rapport and the resulting chemistry are particularly noticeable in the opening movement. That's important because the orchestra is much more than set dressing in this particular concerto, where it presents the predominant thoughts in the opening movement, and the piano takes them up as subjects of its own ruminations.

The piano's discourse in this opening movement is more intimate than heroic, exhibiting a lot of metrical and rhythmic freedom. Its embellishments are quite delicate and tastefully applied. Chopin also entrusts thematic and contrapuntal roles to the woodwinds, especially the bassoon, and allows them, to enter into dialogue with the piano on a number of occasions. Refined harmony, tasteful ornamentation and expressive cantilena are the order of the day, in this movement as elsewhere.

And that, mind you, is only the opening movement, marked *Allegro maestoso (and how!)* The second movement, a Romanza further described as a Larghetto, casts an undeniable spell that seems evocative of an enchanted moonlight scene in a garden. The finale, *Rondo-Vivace*, is characterized by a vivacious Polish dance, the Krakowiak, wending its way through piano and orchestra with absolutely flawless grace and with rousing syncopations that must simply be heard to be appreciated.

For want of space, I haven't said anything about the 10 Mazurkas, Polish dances raised to the level of high art by the composer's skill and Höhenrieder's

Continued in next column ==>

lively struggle between good and evil, and even a happy ending. The sound of Pfeffer's clarinet makes its wonted presence felt in this account of an old concert favorite, as it does also in Weber's Concertino for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 26. Colorful, idiomatic, and extremely challenging, this work has long been prized by clarinetists like Nikolai Pfeffer, who really brings out its lyrical qualities in this performance.

The rest of the program is all Giuseppe Verdi, consisting of the Overture to *La Forza del Destino* (The Power of Fate), a clarinet solo from Act III of the same opera, and handsome clarinet fantasias on themes from *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto* by two of Verdi's Italian contemporaries Donato Lovreglio and Luigi Bassi, respectively. In the days before the development of modern sound recording, these fantasias served the purpose of keeping Verdi's operatic music alive for his public while they waited, more or less impatiently, for the next revival to be staged. Nicolai Pfeffer's deeply affectionate accounts of both these *fantasias da concerto*, enhanced by his own orchestrations, will leave you with no doubt of what all the shouting was about in Verdi's day!

Continued from previous column

artistry. Don't miss them, as the final confirmation of one of the year's most glorious piano releases. Listen, for instance, to the compelling mood of mystery in the G Minor Mazurka, Op 24, No. 1, or the delicious insouciance of the A Minor, Op. 17, No. 4, and you'll be hooked!

symphony, beginning with a slow, syncopated rhythmic motif like a heartbeat and then a sighing figure in the strings in the opening movement, which, like the finale, is cast in a slow rather than lively tempo.

That finale is, in fact, an Adagio marked *Sehr Langsam und noch zurückhaltend*. The last-named adjective may be variously taken to mean "cautious," "reserved," "restrained," or "looking back." This is the very antithesis of the upbeat, optimistic sort of animal that a symphonic finale is supposed to be, and it may be taken, as many observers have done, to reflect Mahler's mood at this moment in his life when he had experienced the untimely loss of his beloved daughter Anna Maria and received the diagnosis of his own ultimately fatal heart condition. All this came on top of setbacks in his professional career as a conductor. (In fact, he did not live to conduct the premiere of the Ninth Symphony on June 26, 1912, the honors being taken by Bruno Walter).

The highlights are all here in the present account by Simon Rattle and the Bavarian RSO, including the slow march in the opening movement marked *Streng, wie ein Kondukt* (Solemn, like a Funeral Procession), the impudent Rondo-Burleske that passes for the scherzo movement, and the slow fading of daylight as a metaphor for the renunciation of life itself in the final movement, the last passage of which is marked *ersterbend* (dying away). Much of the effectiveness of all this is enhanced by the noticeable bloom in the strings and brass that Rattle coaxes from the orchestra in the present performance.



Dvořák: Poetic Tone Pictures
Leif Ove Andsnes, piano
(Sony)

Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes describes these Tone Pictures by Antonin Dvořák as “the great forgotten cycle of the 19th century piano music.” After listening to his performances of these utterly charming pieces, I’m inclined to agree with him although I’m not sure they were solely intended as a cycle, to be performed in their entirety in a recital program. They might just as well have been aimed at the domestic market, at educated, talented amateurs who wanted “something more” to challenge their technique and grasp of good music. In Dvořák’s day a composer had to keep this market in mind if he wanted to eat regular meals while he waited for his latest opera to be staged or symphony to be published. Of course, Andsnes, who made his debut as far back as 1987, has all the experience of a distinguished career to bring to the piano bench when assaying these long-forgotten miniature masterworks, and he can draw on his extensive knowledge when interpreting them, but they need not be considered the sole province of the highly skilled professional. They are delicious pieces for everyone to enjoy.

There are 13 items in these delectable Tone Pictures: Twilight Way, Toying, In the Old Castle, Spring Song, Peasants’ Ballad, Reverie, Furiant, Goblins’ Dance, Serenade, Bacchanale, Tittle Tattle, At the Hero’s Grave, and On the Holy Mountain. All are presented by Andsnes in terms of their undeniably persuasive charm and his own well-honed skill in characterization. The Old Castle, for instance, has a poignant aspect to its subject, mostly expressed in terms of nostalgia for times past and a certain sense that we are treading on holy ground. We have much the same mood in At the Hero’s Grave, plus a sense of reverence for one who made the supreme sacrifice for his country. The Furiant is well-characterized as a fiery Bohemian dance in alternating 2/4 and 3/4 measures, while Goblins’ Dance has a surprisingly warm, almost nostalgic, mood midway through the demonic proceedings (Whatever did Dvořák have in mind? Maybe it was a memory of happier times, before the goblins took over the house.) In the last analysis, Poetic Tone Pictures may be just what the world needs now, at a time in history when we could all do with a little levity.



“The Brahms Connection” Sonatas by Brahms, Fuchs, Herzogenberg. Dmitri Maslennikov, cello
Sabine Weyer, piano
(Quartz Music)

Reading left to right, pianist Sabine Weyer and cellist Dmitri Maslennikov are the featured artists in a stunning release on the spanking new Quartz Music label from the United Kingdom. Maslennikov has been wowing audiences from St. Petersburg to New York, with a side-trip to China in 2012. (That’s appropriate as his rich cello tone is as wide as the Beijing freeway!) And audiences on three continents have been impressed by Weyer’s warmth, precision, and probing intellect, all of which is on display here. This artist, who is currently professor at the Conservatoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, constitutes an unbeatable hand in collaboration with Maslennikov in one of the very best albums for cello and piano that I’ve ever heard in four decades as a reviewer.

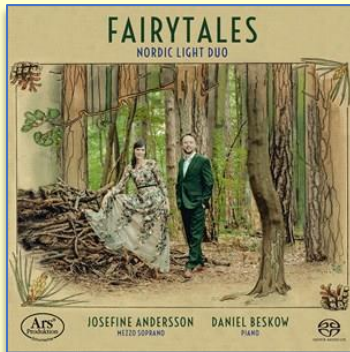
We are given three sonatas, by Johannes Brahms and two of his contemporaries, Robert Fuchs (1847-1927) and Heinrich von Herzogenberg (1843-1900). Both drifted into Brahms’ sphere and had his earlier work for cello and piano to serve as a benchmark. But, as we shall see, they both had ideas of their own, which contribute to making the present album an exceptionally rich offering.

Fuchs’ Sonata in D Minor, Op. 28 opens with a Molto Moderato in a reflective mood, with the piano’s bright tone effectively contrasted with the cello’s deeper, more authoritative voice. The succeeding Scherzo is in a rather impudent mood as if it were striking an attitude. An Adagio characterized by deep feeling is followed by a striking finale marked *Allegro non troppo ma gracioso*, contrasting meditative and rousing moods before ending in an authoritative manner.

Brahms is represented by his well-loved Sonata No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 38, a long-familiar work that is taken by Weyer and Maslennikov with a freshness and enthusiasm as if they’d just discovered it. The opening Allegro non Troppo is genial and affectionate, with an underlying mood that is both probing and ruminative, an interesting contrast that tells us a lot about Brahms.

Finally, Herzogenberg’s Sonata No. 1 in A Minor, Op 52 is in three movements: an impassioned Allegro in which the texture gradually lightens, an Adagio with a nice degree of voice

separation and a noticeably probing mood led by the cello, and a driving Allegro Moderato. The incredible intensity of this performance makes us wonder if these artists had to take their instruments into the shop for repairs afterwards!

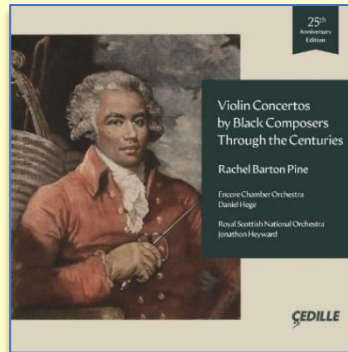


“Fairytale” presented by the Nordic Light Duo: Josefine Andersson, mezzo-soprano; Daniel Beskow, pianist (Ars Produktion)

The Nordic Light Duo consists of Swedish pianist Daniel Beskow and mezzo-soprano Josefine Andersson. Their program “Fairytale” (in German *Märchenhaft*, in Swedish *Sagolikt*) was inspired initially by the fairy tales and fables written and illustrated by Elsa Beskow (1874-1953), who was the great-grandmother of the pianist. Though he was born too late to have any personal recollection of Elsa, her memory has been kept alive by the fact that these well-loved children’s books have never gone out of print in the Scandinavian countries, where they are still very much a part of many people’s childhood, his own included. (Curiously, his recital partner Andersson even bears a certain resemblance to Elsa Beskow’s illustration of “Queen Water Lily” on pages 38-39 of the Fairytale booklet!)

Here we have a choice program of accompanied songs and piano pieces by romantic composers from Germany and Scandinavia that are calculated to recall the spirit of the fairy tales that have been so much a part of the experience of childhood for so many listeners, and not just in the Nordic countries.

There are of course a good many songs by German and Austrian composers that the world knows and loves. These include such favorites as *Heidenröslein*, *Fischerweise*, *Die Forelle*, and *Kennst du das Land* (all by Franz Schubert), *Das Veilchen* (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart), *Des Sennen Abschied* (Schumann), and *Italien* (Fanny Mendelssohn).



“Violin Concertos by Black Composers through the Centuries” Rachel Barton Pine, violinist (Cedille Records)

Violinist and Chicago native Rachel Barton Pine marks the 25th anniversary reissue of her 1997 recording of violin concertos by Black composers over the past three centuries. Not only is bringing to light forgotten masterworks a special cause that is dear to Ms. Pine, but there’s some damned great music on this album in which she demonstrates unusual rapport with her collaborators, the Encore Chamber Orchestra of the Chicago-based CYSO under Daniel Hege, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Jonathon Heyward.

The program is the same as what we could savor on the 1997 release, which was Rachel’s first-ever concerto album, but with one exception: namely, a “Black” composer who turned out not to be black at all! Of that, more later...

The composers whose handiwork is on display here are Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges (1745-1799), José White y Lafitte (1836-1918), Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912), and Florence Price (1887-1953). All have something vital to say to us. Bologne was known in his day as “the Black Mozart,” and the firm, graceful lines in his Violin Concerto in A Major do indeed remind us very much of that great composer, though he was in fact Mozart’s elder. Noted in the France of his day as a master of the rapier as well as the violin, Pine surmises that “some of the more extreme demands he places on the bow arm must have been inspired by his prowess as a fencer!”



Schumann: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2, re-orchestrated by Mahler. Marin Alsop conducts ORF Vienna Radio SO (Naxos)

Schumann re-orchestrated by Mahler? The idea really isn’t so far-fetched. After all, the main criticism we’ve heard about his four symphonies, from his day down to our own, is that he was not a natural-born symphonist and that he employed thick orchestrations to cover up that fact. Mahler, on the other hand, was a genius at the art of orchestration, even in moments when he didn’t have much to say (which, let’s face it, happens on occasion to every composer). His own art involved using exactly the right instrumentation for every moment in a given score, as well as either lightening the orchestration or making it more substantial depending on his purpose at any particular moment.

In spite of the “thick orchestrations” rap, Robert Schumann’s symphonies all have all had more than enough musical substance to have remained in the standard repertoire of orchestras around the world from his day to ours. Would they stand to have even greater audience appeal were we to employ Mahler’s re-orchestrations? Marin Alsop, conducting the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra on the Naxos release, seems to think so. Let’s see how it all works out.

Symphony No. 1 in B-flat is popularly known as the “Spring” Symphony although Schumann did not use the name itself because he distrusted the use of “program music” as a limited concept in a major work and dropped the following descriptions from the printed

A special feature of this program is that it includes a number of choice songs by Scandinavian composers Hugo Alfven, Peter Erasmus Lange-Müller, Emil Sjögren, Wilhelm Stenhammar, and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger. The beloved Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, a great song composer, is represented by *Killingdans* and by two wonderful piano pieces, *Sommerfugl* (Butterfly) and *I Dovregubbens Hall* (In the Hall of the Mountain King) from the Peer Gynt Suite, the last-named in a stunning account by Beskow that would make a resounding highlight in any program!

Another welcome feature of this program is the six "Flower Songs" set to music by Jean Sibelius, best-known as the creator of great, towering symphonies. He shows himself well adept in the smaller form in his settings of such lyric poems as *Die Anemone*, *Die beiden Rosen*, *Die Sternblume*, *Die Primel*, *Der Dornbusch*, and *Das Schicksal der Blume* (The Fate of the Flower).

Josefine Andersson is described in the booklet annotation as a mezzo-soprano, though from the evidence of my ears she appears to be more a lyric soprano. However you label her voice, it would seem ideal for the choice selection of songs she embroiders and enhances so beautifully with her interpretations.

José White y Lafitte had the distinction of being Georges Enescu's teacher, which is fame enough for any man. But his Violin Concerto in F-sharp minor of 1864, a work not in the least inferior to those of French contemporaries such as Lalo and Saint-Saens, deserves the exposure it receives on the present album. Rachel Barton Pine sincerely hopes that "my fellow violinists will embrace it and share it with audiences everywhere." (It is still notoriously difficult for any violin concerto to break into the standard repertoire, but *this* one certainly deserves a chance.)

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Romance in G Major for Violin and Orchestra features the transparent scoring, color, and easy melodiousness of his three cantatas on Longfellow's epic poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. Rachel's fervent hope that it will become programmed more often seems reasonable enough.

Finally, Florence Price, Little Rock native who moved to Chicago in 1927 and was for many years part of the rich musical ferment in that city, had the distinction of being the first African American woman to have a composition played by a major symphony orchestra and was noted for her prowess as an organist and her compositions in all genres. Her recently discovered Violin Concerto No. 2 was a real find. In preparing to present a work without a long performance tradition, Rachel Barton Pine and Jonathon Heyward fortunately had access to Price's "priceless" manuscripts and made some educated guesses, with the gracious results you can hear for yourself.

Oh, yes, that "Black composer who really wasn't" that I mentioned earlier was the Chevalier de Meude-Mompas, whose Concerto No. 4 in D Major in the 1997 album has been replaced here by the Florence Rice Concerto I just discussed. The racial confusion can be attributed to the fact that Meude-Mompas *Le Noir* was a gentleman retainer in the court of Louis XVI, and was accustomed to riding in the company of his fellows, all on black horses! His music holds up very well on its own merits. ==>

score once they had served their purpose as scaffolding for his four movements: 1) Beginning of Spring, (2) Evening, (3) Merry playmates, and (4) Spring in full bloom. Nevertheless, some evocative principle is certainly in effect, and it behooves us to keep that fact in mind. The opening fanfares and the general high-energy nature of the first movement would seem to benefit most from Mahler's re-orchestration which lends even more brio to the score than we've been used to hearing. Is it achieved at the expense of (ironically) making the allegedly thick orchestration of the original even thicker? Maybe "robust" would be a better, kinder word to describe the re-orchestration of this movement heralding the arrival of spring.

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, though not as popular as the "Spring" Symphony, is perhaps the more significant of the two for its darker mood and seriousness of purpose, which is attributable in part to the fact that Schumann composed it after a period of serious illness, and the noticeably deep feeling in the third movement, marked *Adagio espressivo*, may surely be taken as a tribute to the loyalty of his wife Clara. The Mahler re-orchestrations in this work, particularly in the hauntingly beautiful *Adagio*, add to its effectiveness more certainly than they did to the "Spring." Both works on this program benefit from unusually fine accounts by Marin Alsop and the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra. For my money these really committed performances are of even greater significance than are the Mahler re-orchestrations.

Continued from the previous column:

If you're interested, the 1999 album is still available on the internet through Amazon and other vendors, and you can judge the Meude-Mompas concerto for yourself.

