

PAUL NEUBAUER LIVE FROM MUSIC@MENLO

*Schubert, Brahms, Salon Music
Juho Pohjonen, Gilbert Kalish, Wu Han,
piano, Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano*
Music@Menlo LIVE



There are not enough superlatives to express how fine these performances are. Throw away all those tired old viola jokes. This is some of the finest string playing I have ever heard. Maestro Neubauer is a phenomenal musician of great artistry combined with impeccable, effortless technique. The playing of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata would be the 'pick' of any Schubertiade. Brahms's 2nd Viola Sonata and Zwei Gesänge for Voice, Viola and Piano demonstrate profound music making of the highest order. The opening of the sonata is supremely tender and beautiful. Neubauer exhibits a magnificent tone with an infinite palette of colours. In the salon pieces we have Schulenburg's Puszta-Märchen, Valdez's Serenade du Tzigane and an Anonymous Canary. Here, our master musician 'out-gypsies' the gypsies.

Neubauer was appointed Principal Violist of the New York Philharmonic at age twenty-one and has appeared as soloist with over one hundred orchestras. The recording is drawn from live performances at the Music@Menlo Festival. This CD is one to treasure.

REQUIEM

*Compositions by Boris Pigovat
Donald Maurice, viola, Vector Wellington
Orchestra, Marc Taddei, conductor*
Atoll ACD 114



Boris Pigovat's Requiem The Holocaust makes a powerful statement in this superb live recorded performance. Occasional passages remind one of the Rite of Spring or Shostakovich, giving the reader some idea of the sound world; however the composer has created his own unique voice. Marc Taddei conducts in a most artistic and masterful fashion and the Vector Wellington Orchestra respond brilliantly with Donald Maurice as an outstanding soloist.

The recording comes from a Concert of Remembrance on the 70th Anniversary of Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass). On that night synagogues were ravaged and burned, Jews beaten, raped and murdered and sent to camps in an attempt to make Germany and Austria 'Judenfrei' (Jew free). Many important organisations collaborated on this anniversary project but there were two substantial donations of symbolic importance; one from the German Embassy and one from the Embassy of Israel.

The composition has an emotional gravitas which goes far beyond the medium of the music itself. Other profoundly atmospheric works follow; Pigovat's Prayer for viola (Donald Maurice*) and piano (Richard Mapp), Silent Music for viola (*) and harp (Carolyn Mills) and Nigun with the Dominion String Quartet (solo violin – Yuri Gezentsvay). All are excellent performances.

SHONERT

Plays the Jewish Classics and Gershwin
Faust Records FR 52-2331

There are 17 tracks of Jewish inspired music on this CD. They range from well-known violin works by Ravel (Kaddish), Achron (Hebrew Lullaby) and



composed by Shonert himself. The highlights are the folk inspired pieces which are musically and brilliantly played in a very improvisational manner. Shonert's melismatic Jewish Dance and his bumble-bee like Dance in the Desert are fine examples. Rosinkalech mit Mandlen, a Jewish Lullaby is magical and a very sensitive, beautiful and ephemeral atmosphere is created. Shonert's violin solo The Wind is a 21st century nod to Wieniawski. The final track is incorrectly described as Bloch's Baal Shem; however it is only the first piece of the suite, Nigun which is played. Whilst the pitch throughout is reasonably secure, sometimes notes are not quite centred; however this is still a very entertaining disc.

VOICES FROM THE PAST

Béla Bartók's 44 Duos and Original Field Recordings
Transposed For Two Violas
Claudine Bigelow & Donald Maurice, vias
TANTARA RECORDS TCD0213VFP



What a very special 2 CD set this is. These are absolutely fascinating discs. The booklet alone is worth the price of the production. Not only do we have very sensitive performances of the duos but we hear the original field recordings (with translations in the liner notes) that Bartók made in the early 20th century. Even with my rusty Hungarian, I can still make out the words being sung on these magnificent historic recordings which really express the spirit behind the music. What a treasure. Bigelow and Maurice have made wonderful transpositions of the duos which sound very beautiful and effective for two violas. The first disc places the field recordings side by side with Bartók's compositions. The second is a straight out performance. Information includes About The Field Recordings, Bartók and Kodály, Pedagogy and Poetry, The William Primrose Edition, Decisions Made For This Recording and Credits. The duos date from about 1931 and are flanked compositionally by the fourth and fifth string quartets (1928 and 1934). But why write more about it? Go and buy the set. You won't regret it!

FRANCK, BLOCH, KREIN

*Violin Sonata, Poème Mystique,
Berceuse*
Zina Schiff- violin, Cameron Grant- piano
MSR Classics 1508
www.msrrcd.com



A world premiere recording of Julien Krein's Berceuse(1928) is an absolute delight. Very exotic sounding with a languid, dreamy opening, it could have been written by Gershwin. A contrasting Szymanowski-esque middle section follows, with the beautiful opening atmosphere returning to round out the piece.

The Poème Mystique, Ernest Bloch's Violin Sonata No.2 (1924) is also given a very fine performance with the dramatic tension and release in the various sections well in evidence. It is less so in César Franck's Sonata of 1886. However the interpretation does develop throughout the performance. The implicit romantic Sturm und Drang of the second movement is not fully conveyed; it never sounds driven yet certain passages require it.

A very lovely pure violin sound is presented in the noble opening of the third movement while the finale is a very lyrical and meditative presentation of Franck's masterful canon.

As ever, Schiff and Grant's ensemble work is excellent and technically impeccable. The recorded sound is also first class.

Andrew Lorenz