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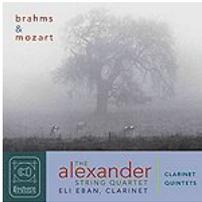


forgotten records
 forgotten records



100th birthday of Mieczyslaw Weinberg on December 8, 2019.
 Renate Eggbrecht has recorded all 3 violin Sonatas

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August WALTER (1821-1896)
 Symphony in E-flat major, Op 9 (1843) [43:56]
Joachim RAFF (1822-1882)
Traumkönig und sein Lieb in F, Op 66 (1854) [9:07]
 Marie-Claude Chappuis (mezzo-soprano)
 Swiss Orchestra/Lena-Lisa Wüstendörfer
 rec. August 2020, ZKO-Haus Zurich
 German text, no translation
SCHWEIZER FONOGRAMM [53:05]

Schweizer Fonogramm continues its exploration of little-known Swiss repertoire, some of which was believed to be lost. This release conjoins Raff and August Walter. Raff's *Traumkönig und sein Lieb*, based on a poem by Emanuel Geibel, is an orchestral lied and a relatively early example of the genre dating from 1854. It was a form in which he was to feel increasingly comfortable, composing the two *Orchesterlieder* the following year and two decades later the *Zwei Scenen*, Op 199. Unlike that 1875 work, however, *Traumkönig* is through-composed and its subject matter, the Dream King and his Beloved - and a passionate visitation made by the former - shifts between the real and dream worlds to notably erotic effect. It was dedicated to the soprano Emilie Genast with whom, the year before the work's composition, Raff had had an affair. Having broken off the relationship he was later to marry her older sister.

If the putative influence on Raff here is Berlioz, the musical means are typical of Raff's ripe romanticism. At an essentially slow tempo the nine-minute work unfolds with gauzy string cushions, the rich wind writing adding significantly to the orchestral palette, whilst the horns point the harmonies. Raff's chromaticism is ever audible and to be savoured as well as a finely calculated vocal line. The text is reprinted, in German only, as is the engraving of the 1843 publication of the poem in which there is much baring of breast to be seen. Mezzo Marie-Claude Chappuis conveys the barely-sublimated eroticism of the music with great candour.

August Walter was an almost exact contemporary of Raff but is much less well remembered. He studied with Bernhard Molique in Stuttgart - Molique's chamber music has been recorded in fine quantity in the last few years - and then in Vienna, though ever after he regretted not having pursued studies in Leipzig, where composition classes were more attuned to the zeitgeist. His Symphony in E flat major was written in 1843 and premiered two years later where it was appreciated for its qualities of 'formal perfection'. It was first heard in Switzerland in 1847 by which time Walter had been appointed Music Director of the Basel region, where he remained until his death in 1896, and is therefore the reason for the work's inclusion in a series devoted to Swiss composers.

The initial influences on the symphony are Beethoven and Weber and not Schumann or Mendelssohn. Some of the wind writing is even, in places, reminiscent of Haydn, though the music's syntax and punctuation bear an unmistakably Beethovenian cast. That said, Walter handles his material with great confidence, especially when one realises that he was only in his early 20s; the sense of formal control is unmistakable as is the music's youthful brio. I liked the hymnal slow movement and its variations. Walter characterises well, ensuring a valuable sequencing of moods, from the freshly vivid to the solemnly Beethovenian. When it comes to the restatement of the theme it emerges, to advantage, as decidedly vocalised. It would be wrong to overlook some refined, original features - this is no slavish copy - in the incisive Scherzo or the attractive slow introduction to the finale or the way the work ends with such bravado.

Given the rarity of the programming one could be willing to forgive the relatively short 53-minute playing time, though I think a sterner pen than mine would ask for more. Thinking about this series in general, it strikes me as very much the kind of territory Adriano would enjoy conducting. The recording quality itself is fine and the performances under the young Lena-Lisa Wüstendörfer, directing the relatively compact forces of the Swiss Orchestra (8-7-6-5), are engaged and engaging. Both are world première recordings.

Jonathan Woolf



Availability
 Schweizer Fonogramm

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