

fact, I found it hard to pay attention to this; I even found it rather boring. Of course, that is partly the composer's fault, but he gets little help from this violinist.

The other five pieces are *Caprice Andalou*, *La Muse et la Poete*, a Concert Piece in G, and two Romances, in C and D-flat.

VROON

SAINT-SAENS: *Mass*; see POULENC

SAMMARTINI: *Harpsichord Sonatas*
Susanna Piolanti
Tactus 701902—65 minutes

By the package's claim, everything here is a world premiere recording. Giovanni Battista Sammartini (c1700-75) is better known as an early symphonist, but Susanna Piolanti has selected eight sonatas in major keys. Seven of these have two or three movements and were published in London in the early 1760s. The single-movement sonata is from a manuscript. It could almost pass as a Scarlatti sonata with its passages of hand crossing.

The compositional style is galant to pre-classical, with attractive melodies over relatively simple left-hand parts. This was salon music for skilled amateur keyboard players. The modulating sequences go where one expects. Nothing startling or especially memorable happens. It seems the type of unobtrusive background music to run in a restaurant or a car when nobody is really listening—"Lite Classic FM radio" fare.

Piolanti plays a modern Italian-styled harpsichord inspired by one from 1782. It has a single manual and two 8-foot registers. She has tuned it in Vallotti's temperament. Her performance comes across as more cautious and thoughtful than passionate, but that decorous approach sounds appropriate. She embellishes the music tastefully on repeats. The lively parts are lively enough without risking any mishaps.

The booklet's notes are well written (Italian and English), describing Sammartini's importance and his influence on other composers.

B LEHMAN

SAUL: *Sonatinas 1-5; Nocturnes; Bagatelles*
Ahyeon Yun, p
Enharmonic 32—63 minutes

Walter Saul graduated from Duke University and Eastman; he studied with Samuel Adler,

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Joseph Schwantner, George Rochberg, and others. He is on the faculty at Fresno Pacific University. Jack Sullivan liked his *Sonatas and Meditations* (Enharmonic 28, J/A 2014), and John Pitcher spoke highly of his 24 preludes and fugues, *From Alpha to Omega* (Tarsus 1002, J/F 2015); I enjoyed *Quiltings* (Enharmonic 29, N/D 2015), though I found the music and playing a little on the dry side. His writing is generally tonal with a few altered harmonies, and there is almost always a theme that's clear and easy to follow. On this foundation, he sometimes applies a tasteful blush of jazz. He's not interested in virtuosity, especially in the sonatinas, which are all economical and compact. Their appeal lies in their easy-going simplicity. The bagatelles and nocturnes reveal Saul's more contemplative, spiritual side; Christian themes play a large role in his music. Yun's performances are interesting and intelligent; the sound is very clean.

ESTEP

SAWYERS: *Symphony 3; Songs of Loss & Regret; Fanfare*

April Fredrick, s; English Symphony; English String Orchestra/ Kenneth Woods
Nimbus 6353—67 minutes

Philip Sawyers (1951-) is patently a composer of no small gifts. His *Symphony 3* (2015) begins in a ruminative mood, its lengthy opening theme well developed in fluent counterpoint. A double-dotted figure gives relief, followed by an almost capricious woodwind theme. Sawyers develops his material with unusual skill and purpose, working it up to the utmost rhetorical power. His processes are always audible, reminding me of the times when modern music still made sense to an attentive listener. A Brucknerian theme with the leap of an octave opens up II. The oboe takes a phrase from this for further elaboration. A thoughtful woodwind theme gets varied, its melodic strands playing out into an agitated passage. The end of the movement has a feeling of reconciliation worthy of the Mahler 10th.

You could describe the scherzo as the calm between two storms. Most of it could be a modernized *style galant*. Its ambiguity between pulses of two and three is done with no end of charm. There's a touch of self-parody before the end when the lower brass tries to navigate the charming music. IV follows *attacca*. Its theme is 12-tone, but with perceptible tonal loyalties. The excellent notes by both the

composer and conductor elaborate on how Sawyers bridges this gap. A fugal development leads to optimistically ascending chord progressions. It's great to hear harmony that actually moves a piece along, instead of what sounds like random pitches under a random string of notes posing as a theme. Near the end a chorale adds an upbeat climax, the symphony ending on a resonant G natural. The orchestration of the music is superb. Its inevitability makes me guess that Sawyers simultaneously conceives of line and color. Terrific music like this renews my faith in the symphony as a genre.

The *Songs of Loss and Regret* commemorate WW I, setting words by Gray, Housman, Morris, Owen, Tennyson, and from the Apocrypha. Their vocal line is tonal, modal even, but they're less line-by-line reflections than music catching the overall emotional range of a poem. The Gray (from 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard') sounds a bit Elgarian; its emotional urgency overwhelms Gray's simplicity. On the other hand, the musical translation of Housman's 'Shropshire Lad XL' seems exactly right in its yearning beauty. Soprano April Fredrick projects this intensely felt music with drama, yet tenderness. It's memorable music and her artistry makes it more so. The fanfare would be a good curtain-lifter anywhere. It's a vigorous piece, whose voicing recalls the fluency of Dukas's *Peri* fanfares.

The performances and conducting of all these works are convincing. The notes include texts.

O'CONNOR

SCARLATTI: *Sonatas*

Luke Welch, p

Luke Welch 0—37 minutes (800-BUYMYCD)

This brief, self-produced program comes from a young Canadian pianist who studied at the University of Western Ontario and in Rotterdam. The performances are fine, with lots of pedal and (often) nicely singing and connected bass lines. Sometimes I think the interpretations could have a little more personality—for instance the busy 16th-note passages in K 146 (G) could press a bit, thereby heightening their comedic character. But the full-bodied approach to piano sound certainly offers a refreshing alternative to a number of Scarlatti piano CDs that have come my way recently. The production is good, the piano recorded appropriately.

HASKINS

SCELSI: *Chemin du Coeur; Dialogo; Violin Sonata; Trio*

Markus Daunert, v; Giovanni Gnocchi, vc;
Alessandro Stella, p

Stradivarius 33808—63 minutes

One of the neat things about the order of this program is the juxtaposition of the first two pieces. The meditative 'Chemin du Coeur' for violin and piano gives way to the 'Dialogo' for cello and piano in such a way that the Dialogo seems a continuation of the Chemin because the cello part starts in such a high register and in the same mood at first.

Then the more lively and formal three-movement Violin Sonata takes over happily for a good 25 minutes. And I mean good. Then the cello comes back in for the more violent and dissonant Piano Trio of about the same length and shape as the sonata but more aggressive in nature. The cello seems closer to the microphone than the violin here, though as a cellist I can't complain too much about that.

This is the earliest music of Scelsi that I have heard. The first two pieces were written in 1929 and 1932 when he was in his 20s. The larger works are not clearly dated; though the sonata, like the shorter pieces, has a distinctly romantic atmosphere, and the trio comes closer to the atonality of some of his later works. All these pieces are worth bending an ear to.

This is Volume 8 of Scelsi on Stradivarius. (Volume 7 was S/O 2017.) I have six volumes of his music on Mode records, most made in the early 2000s. But these pieces seem to be new recordings. The playing is sensitive and full of conviction.

D MOORE

SCHEIN: *Chorale Masses; Sacred Concertos*

Rheinische Kantorei/ Hermann Max

MDG 6020169—44 minutes

The program is divided into three sets, each consisting of a mass or mass movements and a sacred concerto based on the same Lutheran chorale. Including a sacred German concerto by Johann Hermann Schein (1586-1630) in each section carries the excitement of Italian style through the program. It seems strange to hear a Lutheran chorale as the subject for a Latin mass. Actually, Luther derived two of the chorales on this program from Latin plainchant. Texts and notes are in English.

Schein evokes the mood of a lamentation when setting 'Christ, Unser Herr, Zum Jordan Kam' with viol consort. His understanding of