

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

Vol. 7, No. 2 Winter, 1998

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
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or no thematic material of substance for the soloist.

Recorded in 1997, this work features Růžicková in her 70th year. She is somewhat overshadowed by the bass instruments in the recording balance, and her 1932 Pleyel surprisingly does not effectively cut through the engineer's mix. Her, or Krása's, registral changes are kept to a minimum and are used predominantly for shifts in dynamics. The playing is smooth overall with a few noticeable hesitant moments on repeated intervals toward the beginning of the first movement. Otherwise, she sounds comfortably at home with modern music from mid-century central Europe; indeed, she can boast having worked with many notable composers of the period. However, as a harpsichordist in concert, she - or any other soloist - would feel somewhat perfunctory in the last movement.

Kevin Malone

Schnittke: Concerto grosso No.1;
Pärt: Tabula rasa;
Górecki: Harpsichord Concerto
Eleonora and Natalya Turovsky
(violins), Catherine Perrin
(harpsichord)
I Musici de Montréal (Yuli Turovsky,
conductor)
Chandos Chan 9590

Górecki's *Harpsichord Concerto* is certainly a concerted work in the explicit sense of the word: the harpsichord and string orchestra are clearly polar opposites in the first movement. But I have trouble calling it a concerto, with any of the implications of the word, none of which are either confirmed or challenged. Each of the two movements is just over 4 minutes in duration, and the limited scope of writing suggests this work to be a divertissement.

In the first movement, the harpsichord plays constantly running compound octaves against sustained lyrical octaves in the orchestra, a truly arresting opening texture. After a brief bridge passage, there is a return to this texture with extensive chromatic development in the solo part.

The second movement was a let-down for me, a predictable Prokofiev and Poulenc pastiche/reference without their wit or detachment to pull off the thumping square metrical rhythms. Unlike the first movement where Górecki communicates some captivatingly simple material, the second movement settles into a sort of vulgar minimalist twoness, missing a

good opportunity to actually invent some interesting material. Instead, we are given rather samey textures sporting thematic robes.

Schnittke passed away in August of this year, the world losing one of its most communicative polystylistic composers. The *Concerto grosso No.1* of 1977 for prepared piano, two violins and strings is an excellent example of this socially-conscious style of composition, though the composer fails to inform the audience through his title that there is, in fact, a solo harpsichord part even greater in significance than the prepared part. Both are played by the same player, and it is clear that the part is conceived more for a harpsichordist than for a pianist (though Schnittke himself has toured as the keyboard player). Ultimately, the harpsichordist functions as a continuo player, and not so much as a prominent soloist. The music often falls into 4-bar square phrase groups, but there are also extended passages of great expression and originality throughout its half-hour duration.

Catherine Perrin plays with an excellent combination of precision and flexibility. She makes the first movement of the Górecki breathe, subtly parsing the phrasing into digestible note groups without messing with the tempo. In appropriate contrast, she maintains a purely percussive approach in the second movement, tightly pounding the chords without any note spreading. In this digital recording, the attacks of both keyed and bowed string instruments are captured beautifully; sustain of the orchestral sound, however, is less well defined. The harpsichord is somewhat swallowed up in the balance with the string orchestra, appropriate in the *Concerto grosso*, but not so in the *Harpsichord Concerto*.

The make of harpsichord is not listed in the accompanying notes with this Chandos recording, but this is not so surprising given that this is not early music. The date of composition for the Górecki piece is omitted as well.

Kevin Malone

GERAINT JONES 1917 - 1998

Geraint Jones died in May this year at the age of eighty. He was born in Porth in South Wales on 16 May 1917, educated at Caterham School and afterwards at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was a Sterndale Bennett scholar.

He made his debut in 1941 in London at the National Gallery Concerts, organised by Dame Myra Hess, and was becoming known during the war years and afterwards as an organ recitalist specialising in the works of JS Bach. In addition he soon began to take an interest in the German and other European organs of Bach's day and of earlier periods. Some of his earliest recordings were made at Steinkirchen near Hamburg. His main interests apart from Bach were with the music of Sweelinck and Buxtehude, and he played a good deal of 20th-century organ music as well.

In 1968 he recorded a series of programmes for the BBC under the title *Historic European Organs*, and these were broadcast in the autumn of 1969. The twelve programmes were made at Herzogenburg's Augustinian abbey (3), the Johanniskirche in Lüneburg (2), the abbey at Rot-an-der-Rot (3), the Silberne Kapelle at Innsbruck (2) and at Uithuizen, Holland (2). Apart from the composers already mentioned, the music of Pachelbel, Froberger, Frescobaldi and the Gabriellis was also heard to great advantage in these programmes.

Geraint Jones organised the Lake District Festival, which ran from 1960 to 1978, and from 1972 to 1977 he directed the Salisbury Festival. He also directed the Kirkman Concert Society where he gave young players a chance of involvement.

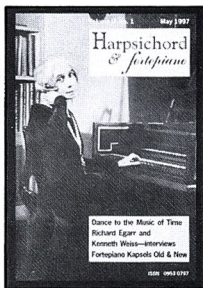
As a conductor, Jones' operatic interests were also wide. He conducted Purcell's *Dido* at the Mermaid Theatre in London in the 1950s, and also recorded it, along with other masterpieces such as the Italian version of Gluck's *Alceste* (1767). His orchestra was led by his wife, Winifred Roberts, and they and the group of Singers which he founded often gave fine performances of much 17th- and 18th-century music.

Gwilym Beechey

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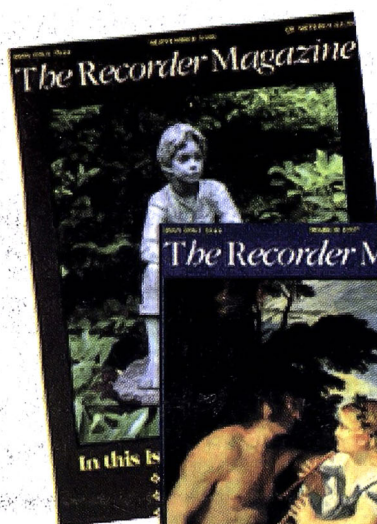


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