

in the early 1990s with Alexander Baillie as soloist was the piece performed in its entirety. Turning to this welcome newcomer, we find that Gemma Rosefield is every bit Baillie's equal. She plays with disarming character and freshness; her technique, too, is enviably sure and tone beguilingly rounded. I also think that her cadenza – a good deal less protracted than Baillie's – works better in the context of a such a neatly constructed work. Perhaps there's a touch more personality about the RPO's contribution under Nicholas Braithwaite than the BBC Scottish SO's for Andrew Manze, as well as an extra skip and twinkle about the finale. Otherwise, we're talking swings and roundabouts: aficionados will naturally want to possess both versions.

The concerto is pre-dated here by the Rondo in F major from 1869, a wholly engaging, Schumannesque essay written for Wilhelm Elsner, a German-born tutor at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin (Stanford's birthplace), and a conspicuously precocious achievement for a 16-year-old. The *Irish Rhapsody* No 3 is a much later offering from 1913, one of two *concertante* specimens in Stanford's series of seven, its heartfelt and songful first section leading to a boisterous jig. Like Raphael Wallfisch and Vernon Handley before them, Rosefield and Manze do the piece proud. They also bring a comparable sensitivity and copious flair to the *Ballata and Ballabile*, a typically resourceful and charming diptych composed in 1918 for Beatrice Harrison. Admirable sound and truthful balance; another Hyperion winner!

**Andrew Achenbach**

*Vc Conc* – selected comparison:

Baillie, RPO, Braithwaite (A/07) (LYRI) SRCD321

*Irish Rhapsody* – selected comparison:

Wallfisch, Ulster Orch, Handley (11/90) (CHAN) CHAN8861

## Stravinsky

**Arensky** Nuits égyptiennes **Glazunov** Raymonda – Entrée des Sarrazins; Danse orientale. The Seasons, Op 67 – Bacchanale **Grieg** Lyric Pieces, Op 71 – No 3, Puck (Småtroll) (orch B Mantovani) **Sinding** Oriental Dance, Op 32 No 5 (orch C Piper)

**Stravinsky** The Firebird (1910 version)

**Les Siècles** / **François-Xavier Roth**

Musicales Actes Sud (P) ASM06 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Cité de la Musique, Paris,

October 2010



**Roth's period instrument band turns to Stravinsky**

*Les orientales* was a potpourri of quasi-oriental dances assembled by Diaghilev (for, among others, Nijinsky and Karsavina) in Paris in 1910 with music and orchestrations by various hands. It is played here with suitable flamboyance. And *The Firebird* was, of course, the great ballet sensation of that year. It is

played here with a difference. The intention is for it to sound as it did to those first, dazzled Paris audiences. The booklet-note describes at length how immense trouble has been taken to revive or reconstruct instruments of the period, arguing, for example, that 'Stravinsky wrote with the particular tonal qualities of narrow-bore French trumpets and trombones, the valve horn and piquant woodwind instruments clearly in mind'. All the usual 'authenticity' questions are raised about how much this really guided him. One point: the French style of horn-playing was probably then already developing what performers liked to call a silvery shimmer (something the Russians copied), and which later went out of fashion as excessively wobbly vibrato. When I heard Stravinsky conduct the *Firebird* Suite in London in 1965, he certainly did not insist on that being revived. It is not revived here, nor would one wish it to be. The beautifully played horn solo in the final movement sounds right with minimal vibrato.

What we do have is an excellently played, brightly recorded performance of the ballet, conducted with verve by François-Xavier Roth. Certainly the orchestra has a clarity which gives a well-lit quality to Stravinsky's Rimsky-Korsakovian orchestration, his model, and there is no lack of vitality with movements such as Kashchey's dance. Well worth hearing. **John Warrack**

## Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 5

**Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** / **Manfred Honeck**

Exton (P) (S) OVCL00443 (46' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at Heinz Hall, Pittsburgh, May 2006



**More from Honeck's irrepressible Pittsburghers**

Hot on the heels of Honeck's ear-popping Mahler Third comes this fiery and impassioned Tchaikovsky Fifth. Clearly what's happening in Pittsburgh demands that attention be paid. You can feel the force of Honeck's personality from the moody and atmospheric opening bars: as that lachrymose clarinet announces the all-pervasive 'fate' motif there's real sense of awareness of the keening harmony surrounding it and the tension that it engenders – properly auspicious.

With the arrival of the *Allegro con anima* and its yearning second theme, Honeck carries the rubato to almost Mravinsky-like excess while pressing the ensuing *accelerando* in marked dramatic contrast. There's plenty of visceral excitement in the *tutti*s but equally a keen sense of dynamic gradation to prevent them all from sounding exactly the same (a common failing in this movement). What