

The impact of Norwegian music on Delius's own works is also a touch deeper than I, for one, had given credit to – not least in one of his most iconic, 'English' works, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, which quotes a folksong previously set for chorus by Grieg. The Norse connections and atmosphere of *Paa vidderne* ('On the mountains', after Ibsen's poem) and *Eventyr* are well attested although the latter's 'Once Upon a Time' subtitle is more suggestive of fairy-tale and children's stories. It is anything but and provides a fine climax to a programme that opens with Delius's charming 1889 orchestration of Grieg's *Norwegian Bridal Procession* (1872).

The programme is filled by orchestral versions of two of his *Songs from the Norwegian*, sung radiantly by Ann-Helen Moen (the disc's high spot, for me), the popular *Sleigh Ride*, officially titled *Winter Night*, and incidental music to Gunnar Heiberg's satirical play *Folkeraadet* ('The People's Parliament', 1897). The use in the last of pre-independent Norway's 'national anthem' was hugely controversial and led to the music's withdrawal (although it was recycled later in the *Norwegian Suite*). The Bergen Philharmonic play with élan, Davis clearly knows his Delius and Chandos's sound is superb. Recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Dukas

L'apprenti sorcier^a. Velléda^b. Polyeucte^c

^bChantal Santon sop ^bJulien Dran ten

^bJean-Manuel Candenot bass-bar

Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth

Musicales Actes Sud © ASM12 (56' • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^{ab}Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice, April 12, 2011; ^cAbbaye de l'Epau, Le Mans, May 31, 2012



Last year's release of Debussy's *La mer* and *Première Suite* by François-Xavier Roth and his Les Siècles orchestra proved to be refreshing and revelatory in terms of colour, texture and characterisation. There are those who might be suspicious of orchestras that want to turn the clock back to the cusp of the 19th and 20th centuries in an attempt to recapture the sonorities of a bygone age. But Roth does it with such verve and stylistic insight as to disarm naysayers. His conducting here of Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, a brilliant piece of narrative music and a lesson in effective orchestration if ever there was one, is full of humour and sparkle, using the period timbres of his wind instruments

to lend the sound a warmth that does not, however, preclude a brilliance of sheen. The interpretation positively lives and breathes the sorcerer's panic-stricken frustrations with his errant broom.

The other two pieces on the disc, if much rarer than *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, throw a thoroughly favourable light on other areas of Dukas's small oeuvre. The cantata *Velléda*, submitted for the Prix de Rome in 1888 but beaten into second place by the setting by Camille Erlanger, testifies to the same Wagnerian sympathies that imbue the overture *Polyeucte*. *Velléda* is a tale of doomed love between a Roman general and a priestess of Gaul, sung radiantly here by the tenor Julien Dran if with rather less secure intonation and diction by the soprano Chantal Santon.

Geoffrey Norris

R Ford

Salomé Fast^a. Comma^b. Chain^c.

Westron Wind^d. The Disk^e. Al-Fatiha^f.

Liedje voor Annette (for music box)

^aJacqueline Horner-Kwiatek sop ^bDerek Bermel cl

^cRebecca Wexler va ^kKoen Kaptijn tbn ^bGuy

Livingston pf ^rRon Ford ^aprepared pf ^enarr ^aNaures

Atto narr ^oFarandole Quartet; ^aAsko Ensemble /

Stefan Asbury; ^cRoyal Concertgebouw Orchestra /

Reinbert de Leeuw; ^vHolcoring Orchestra /

Jurjen Hempel

Attaca © CD2013 136 (64' • DDD)



US-born but resident in the Netherlands these last three decades, Ron Ford has latterly been active as a recording producer and arts administrator – to the extent that he largely ceased composing several years ago. This conspectus of his work, drawn almost entirely from the 1990s, suggests his creativity – while not overly individual – is far from without interest.

To take the works in disc order: *Salomé Fast* draws on extracts from the biblical narratives of Matthew and Mark via a setting (in the now defunct West Aramaic language) the starkness of whose vocal writing finds contrast in appropriately lurid colouring as evoked by the ensemble. *Comma*, intended as a theatrical interlude, provides a moment of reflection before *Chain* – a sequence of elaborating and often conflicting variants for wind band with antecedents in similarly hard-hitting ensemble pieces by Andriessen. *Westron Wind* is less a setting of than a paraphrase on the medieval text, its rhythmic deftness recalling its balletic origin, and emphasises a more subtle dimension in Ford's music –

SU 4151-2

Il Violino Boemo
Benda / Gurecký / Jiránek
Lenka Torgersen – violin, Václav Luks –
harpsichord, Libor Mašek – cello

SU 4160-2

Zelenka - Tuma
Zelenka – Sanctus, Agnus Dei
Tuma – Stabat Mater
Collegium 1704, Václav Luks

SU 4170-2

Johannes Brahms / Violin Sonatas
Jana Vonášková – violin
Irina Kondratenko – piano

SU 4145-2

**Ravel / Shostakovich
Complete Piano Trios**
Smetana Trio

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Turning back the clock: François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles shines a new light on Dukas, with 'verve and stylistic insight' (review on page 31)

the Hungarian Leó Weiner (1885-1960) executed, in Haselböck's opinion, 'just as Liszt himself would have done it'. The arrangement of the *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H*, on the other hand, by the Austrian Rainer Bischof (b1947), though still largely typical of Liszt, includes parts for vibraphone and woodblock. These are impressive performances; but while Liszt's organ conceptions seems to lend themselves to such colourful and imaginative treatments, I can't say they overwhelm in the same way that a performance on a great cathedral organ does (or, indeed, by a great pianist – Liszt made piano versions of both works). Completing the disc is Liszt's own organ version of his tone-poem *Orpheus* which, as the discursive booklet-notes say, benefits from an organ that 'has been designed in the French and German traditions and thus enables an optimal registration of the Liszt works recorded here'. A super disc.

Jeremy Nicholas

Mahler

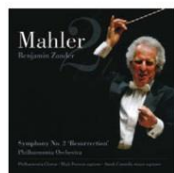
Symphony No 2, 'Resurrection'

Miah Persson *sop* Sarah Connolly *mez*

Philharmonia Chorus and Orchestra /

Benjamin Zander

Linn ② CKD452 (90' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Benjamin Zander's continuing exploration of Mahler's symphonies with the Philharmonia Orchestra for Telarc was highly regarded on two fronts: first, for his practically slavish devotion to the scores, and second, for his verbal commentaries, included on a bonus CD in the package. But since 2009, when the Cleveland-based label announced that they would stop producing their own recordings, Zander's Mahler cycle went silent, apparently in a search for a label with comparable devotion to audio quality.

With the Glasgow-based Linn Records, the project is back in business, even if the continuity is less than seamless. Zander's fidelity to Mahler's markings remains remarkable. So too does he handle timbral contrasts supremely well, particularly in balancing vocal soloists Miah Persson and Sarah Connolly within the overall texture. But no one would confuse the sound quality here with Telarc's earlier releases.

Where Telarc's goal was evidently to create a pure, immediate sound, this Mahler Second takes an acoustical step

backwards into the hall. Compared with Zander's earlier recording of, say, Mahler's First (4/06) – recorded, as with this outing, at the Watford Colosseum – Telarc's close-mic transparency is replaced with a setting that carries the original resonance of the hall like so much extra baggage. The opening cello lines lack rhythmic bite; elsewhere brass players strain to be heard at all.

Whether the difference was due to a variance of preferences between the labels or to differences between the emotional character and musical requirements in the two works themselves, it remains rather hard to hear these two recordings sequentially as part of the same cycle. On the other hand, the move to Linn has in no way hindered Zander's verbal discourse – and in fact has arguably opened new possibilities. By altering the format from a bonus CD to a free download on the Linn website, Zander is no longer constrained by length. In fact, his talk, running at more than 100 minutes, is longer than the symphony itself. Ken Smith

Mahler

Symphony No 6

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Video director Ute Feudel

