



PICCOLO CONCERTOS
 JEAN-LOUIS BEAUMADIER,
 PICCOLO,
 PRAGUE RADIO SYMPHONY
 ORCHESTRA, VAHAN
 MARDIROSSIAN, CONDUCTOR
 Skarbo © 2019

Jean-Louis Beaumadier is a leading piccolo soloist, known for his impressive virtuosity and playfulness of style. With this in mind, the relative simplicity of Florentine Mulsant's Op. 72 concerto which opens the disc is somewhat disarming; the music, written for Beaumadier in 2017, is charming, gentle, singing and has an air of mystery created through bitonal harmonies. The spell-binding opening movement held my attention throughout; this is by no means easy music, but Beaumadier makes light work of the cadenza-like passages, phrased with elegance and personality. It is immediately apparent that he is a musician first and foremost; the piccolo is simply his chosen tool with which he communicates his ideas. The second movement has a playful vivacity, allowing the piccolo's bright and sparkling character to come to the fore.

As one might expect from Beaumadier, the fireworks are never far away. The ever-popular Liebermann concerto is full of spirit and energy, while Andersen's *Moto Perpetuo* is an impressive display of stamina, clarity of articulation and precise finger technique. Occasional gaps for breathing and minor imperfections of ensemble demonstrate that the recording's polish is not the result of editing trickery; this is an honest recording that captures Beaumadier being himself and projecting his passion for the music and considerable skill as a performer.

Beaumadier is a prolific recording artist but this CD represents something of a milestone. Beaumadier has consistently demonstrated a commitment to the creation of new repertoire for his instrument, and this CD brings together some fascinating new works by French composers, with many of them recorded here for the first time. Most notable is perhaps Damase's Concerto for Piccolo, written for Beaumadier and first performed after the composer's death, thanks to the dedication of Véronique Poltz, who constructed the orchestral parts from the composers' manuscripts. Damase's work is full of characteristically twisting and at times jazz-inflected melodic lines, making use of the full range of the piccolo, both in terms of pitch and expression.

In addition to Mulsant's work mentioned earlier, the disc also includes a concerto written by Poltz herself in 2018 and *Touch the Sky* by French composer Régis Campo. The new works are varied in style and enjoyable; Campo sets the solo piccolo against reflections and imitations in the orchestra, creating a memorable and captivating soundscape in four movements. Poltz's

concerto is constructed of two short movements; the first features an extended piccolo cadenza before the orchestra enters in a dialogue of solo lines, while the last begins with a march-like precision before capturing the fantasy one might expect in a film score, all happening in a little over one minute.

Throughout the disc, the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra under Vahan Mardirossian provides a warm, supportive and rich accompaniment to the solo piccolo, with impeccable ensemble playing and some enjoyable solo moments occasionally coming through the accompaniment textures. Beaumadier's piccolo tone is never shrill, and the recording has been balanced and mixed very well, creating an overall warmth of sound which is very appealing.

In summary, this is an enormously enjoyable disc with much to offer, both in terms of musicianship and repertoire.

CARLA REES



FRAGMENTS
 THE JUNIPER PROJECT
 ANNA ROSA MARI, FLUTE
 EIRA LYNN JONES, HARP
 Divine Art © 2018

It was a real pleasure to listen to this recording. Much of the music I've performed before; works like Bernard Andres' *Algues* and Alan Hohvaness' *The Garden of Adonis* were a welcome group of movements that I hadn't heard, and the Andriessen could be programmed much more often, soaring through gorgeous lines between the two instruments. I think my favourite work was Witold Lutosławski's *Three Fragments*, as this little set brought another flavour to the programme of works here. I find much of the repertoire for this combination can become soporific, leaning toward very watery moods and colours ... beautiful, but often lacking in depth and drive. Anna Rosa Mari has a beautiful tone, uses her range liberally and, at times, has a wonderfully husky voice that gives a sensuous quality to the duo's performances. *The Entr'acte* by Ibert ticked along vibrantly with a raucous feel in comparison to the rest of the works. The technical demands seemed effortlessly handled, offering pristine interpretations together as a duo. Mari and Jones are extremely accomplished as musicians in their own right, and together they've created an appealing recording for their duo.

LISA NELSEN

