

groundwork for one of the warmer and more lyrical performances. It is more Rachmaninoff than Moussorgsky or Ravel, though perhaps that is an exaggerated way to say *tenuto*. The ‘Gnomus’ is the least punchy and most lyrical I have heard. ‘Castle’ moves right along, maybe too much, but it is refreshing in a way. ‘Ox Cart’ comes with a vocal sounding tenor tuba, and it too moves along, as if the cart were empty. ‘Catacombs’ is broadly paced, with resplendent brass. ‘Cum Mortis’ is unusually grave, with an interesting and mysterious bassoon; ‘Hut,’ like ‘Gnomus,’ is not punchy, but full and weighty. As might be expected, the ‘Gate’ is big and warm. If you would like a kind-hearted but not indulgent *Pictures*, this fits the bill, and it sits comfortably near the top of my list for the work. The performance is helped by an acoustic that suggests a good-sized wooden hall.

For Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*, De Waart chose excerpts from the two suites. They are brilliantly played, colorful, and sometimes thrilling. I wish he and Rotterdam had recorded the whole ballet.

With the exception of *Isle of the Dead*, the sound on this Decca Eloquence reissue is clear and open and plays to the strengths of the orchestras and interpretations. It is at least as good as the Philips CDs of the Rachmaninoff symphonies, and may be a bit cleaner. It is clearly better than the LPs—and that is a rare judgement for me. I always thought Philips rolled off the highs of their LPs in order to create the impression of smoothness—and the bass was boomy too.

HECHT

RAMEAU: *Harpsichord Pieces, all*
Steven Devine
Resonus 10214 [3CD] 220 minutes

Steven Devine recorded most of Rameau’s keyboard music in 2013-14 and released it as two albums of downloads. He has now added 73 more minutes of music, and everything is packaged as this set of the “complete solo keyboard works”. Most of the new material is Rameau’s keyboard reduction of ballet music from *Les Indes Galantes*. Devine has made a longer version of one piece himself by working from the orchestral score.

For the standard canon of harpsichord pieces (no ballet), I prefer some other sets to Devine’s. Ketil Haugsand (J/F 2015) reveals several levels in the music simultaneously and conveys soulful depth of expression. Bertrand

Cuiller (not reviewed) makes the music sound especially elegant with his flexible tempos. Jory Vinikour (M/A 2013) is hardly surpassable for characterization. Pieter-Jan Belder’s fastidious performance (S/O 2010) comes with a bonus of the *Pieces de Clavecin en Concerts* (with violin and viola da gamba), bringing out strong contrasts of mood. I have heard many other fine sets, as well.

Next to all of these, Devine’s performance sounds literal and ordinary. He has sensitive touch and tends to use faster-than-average tempos. He keeps things interesting, but nothing strikes me as remarkably perceptive. He does have one technical quirk that puts me off a bit. He converts many of the signed ornaments into long appoggiaturas followed by quick, short trills that sound out of character. If he had played slower and more expressive trills without delaying them, his interpretation would sound more vocal and less like autopilot of the fingers.

The best thing here is the ballet score, where he faces less competition. Kenneth Gilbert’s recording of *Les Indes Galantes* (1979, not reviewed) is also terrific, but it omits some of the 27 pieces—probably because it originally had to fit onto a 43-minute LP. Devine gives us everything, and for three pieces he brings in an assistant (Robin Bigwood) to contribute one or two extra hands where Rameau’s orchestral reduction is especially wide in range.

An aficionado of Rameau’s harpsichord music should not miss the album of two-harpsichord arrangements by Pierre Hantai and Skip Sempe, including about 1/3 of *Les Indes Galantes*. As Benjamin Katz wrote (J/F 2013), “When you hear this recording at the very least you will know something truly divine is going on.” Steven Devine’s performance is only pleasant and clean.

LEHMAN

RAMEAU: *Le Temple de la Gloire*
Aaron Sheehan (Apollon, Trajan), Artavazd Sargsyan (Bacchus), Marc Labonnette (Envie, Berger, High Priest), Philippe-Nicolas Martin (Belus, Guerrier), Camille Ortiz (Bergere, Erigone, Junie), Gabrielle Philiponet (Arsine, Priestess, Plautine), Chantal Santon-Jeffrey (Bacchante, Gloire), Philharmonia Baroque/ Nicholas McGegan
Philharmonia Baroque 10 [2CD] 147 minutes

It was not long ago that I reviewed the first full recording of *Le Temple de la Gloire*, an *opera-ballet* created in collaboration with the great

writer and philosopher Voltaire. Now we have this new recording. The two sets are complementary rather than competitive.

There survive, in fact, two versions of this work. It was first created in 1745 to commemorate the victory of King Louis XV at Fontenay. It did not go over with its audiences, and so the two collaborators undertook a drastic revision the following year, shifting much of its structure from the Italian lines after Metastasio to something more French. The third and final act was heavily rewritten, and the overall length was shortened somewhat. But the revised version was no more favorably received. The work was put aside, though the composer did reuse some of its dances. Nor did Rameau and Voltaire collaborate any further.

The earlier recording, under Guy van Waas (Ricercar 363; M/J 2016) was of the 1746 revision in a very fine presentation. McGegan's recording goes back to the earlier 1745 version. Rameau specialists now have a chance to study the considerable differences for the first time. The first version makes a rather good case for itself.

The basic plot of the work is the matter of who deserves immortal approval as to human greatness—admission to an imaginary Temple of Glory. After a heated discussion of the matter in the Prologue, three successive candidates each have an act. An Eastern king, Belus, is regarded as too brutal and bloodthirsty, and the god Bacchus too debauched. Only the Roman Emperor Trajan, with his rigorous commitment to duty, displays the appropriate virtue that deserves Glory. Each of the three has a lady-love in tow.

This recording is a triumph for Nicholas McGegan and his Philharmonia Baroque. It was made at performances in April 2017 in Berkeley CA, complete with audience reactions and applause. The orchestral playing can sound just a bit harsh sometimes, perhaps because of the hall's acoustics. Given Rameau's lavish inclusion of dance episodes, this production also involved the work of the New York Baroque Dance Company. (I wonder if there is a video?)

Whereas the Ricercar studio recording could get away with distributing the 14 roles among only 5 singers, the visual requirements of a staged performance required McGegan to use a fuller team of 8. Only one of them has any reputation, the admirable Aaron Sheehan. The others, many youngish in sound, put themselves earnestly into their roles; and it would be impossible to find a weak or unap-

pealing one among them. McGegan is able to give us a splendidly realized account of this 1745 version.

I was annoyed to find that the very thick booklet was allowed to float free in the wrapped album, but it is very good—rich in color illustrations from the production, with extensive notes and full libretto and English translation.

BARKER

RANZATO: *Violin Pieces*

Paolo Mora; Milo Martani, p
Tactus 881801—68 minutes

Listening to this, I think of Virgilio Ranzato as the Italian Sarasate. He was a composer, violinist, and conductor. He lived from 1883 to 1937, and I know of no other current recording of his music—which is odd. (There was at least one operetta on LP a while back.) Among his compositions are 20 operettas, songs, symphonic poems, a violin concerto, a quartet, and some pieces for his son, who was a cellist.

Here we have just a few of his “little jewels” (booklet notes) for violin and piano. These were all written between 1900 and 1925, and they are charming salon pieces that could have been by Kreisler or Elgar—or, yes, Sarasate. They often give the violinist a real workout, but they are easy on the ears of the listeners. Maybe that is why they are not played very often: they seem simple, so listeners hardly appreciate how difficult some of them are.

So this is charming and pleasant music of the kind one used to hear in restaurants. I remember hearing music like this in restaurants all over Europe. Maybe they still play his music! Unfortunately, in the USA the music we hear in restaurants is atrocious and abominable.

VROON

RAVEL: *Piano Concerto*; see GERSHWIN

La Valse; see BERIO

REIMANN: *Songs*; see SCHUMANN

REIZENSTEIN,

GOLDSCHMIDT: *Cello Concertos*

Raphael Wallfisch; Berlin Concert House Orchestra/ Nicholas Milton

CPO 555 109—56 minutes

This program is part of a series called Voices in the Wilderness, consisting of music by exiled Jewish composers. The two presented here are outstanding. The major work is the Concerto

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