



GAPPLEGATE MUSIC REVIEW

30 APRIL 2015

Hlif Sigurjonsdottir, Dialogus, Music for Solo Violin MS1551

Of all the configurations that modern chamber music has to offer us, the unaccompanied string performance is one of the more esoteric. The solo violinist, for example, has the many resources of double stops, ways of articulating and resultant sound color at her or his disposal. It is often music that poses a challenge to the composer and the artist. Yet of course when all goes well it gives us very rewarding music. Yet one does not often encounter new music in this vein, as compared to, say, the string quartet or solo piano oeuvres.

Violinist Hlif Sigurjonsdottir provides us with an absorbing unaccompanied program on her *Dialogus, Music for Solo Violin* (MSR Classics 1551). We are treated to six contemporary works by composers not well known to me. Lurking somewhere behind the scenes often enough is the spectre of J. S. Bach and his seminal works for unaccompanied violin. Not in terms of imitation but as a father figure and foundational presence. The music has a contemporary modern flair, to be sure, yet often enough there are Bachian roots in the way the melodic development freely unwinds, in the use of double stops to bring out harmonic implications, things like that. Now and then we get folkish strains that bring other traditions into the picture, so this is not monolithic in compositional intent. And every composer has his or her own distinctiveness so that the program maintains interest and generates appreciation throughout.

The composers represented are Jonas Tomasson, Runa Ingimundar, Karolina Eiriksdottir, Hrodmar Ingi Sigurbjornsson, Alfred Felder and Merrill Clark. The various compositions date from 1983-2012. Each work enjoys its world premiere recording here. Many of the composers are Icelandic, as is Ms. Sigurjonsdottir, so we get a welcome chance to explore some very worthwhile music from a country we hear too little from in the releases available to us in general.

Every work poses a interpretive puzzle that Ms. Sigurjonsdottir solves and realizes with poetic grace and, as needed, considerable technical abilities. She would seem the ideal medium of these works, all of which are substantially intricate in their compositional schemas without having the goal of showing off the violinist in a burst of virtuoso fireworks. The music in that way is pure melodic-structural depth, by no means easy to play but directed toward a purely musico-expressive result. Hlif gives us a detailed and beautiful reading of these works. Concentrated, focused and impressively linear and often contemplative, or alternately stirring.

The more I listen to this one, the more I find to appreciate. The music does not set out gratuitously to please so much as it makes a cohesive, impactful impression that stays with you long after the performances are done. Very worthwhile music in peerless performance! Highly recommended.

<http://classicalmodernmusic.blogspot.com/2015/04/hlif-sigurjonsdottir-dialogus-music-for.html>

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