

The five movements, arranged in a Bartókian arch, share material but in character are very diverse, its night-music-style centrepiece framed by vigorous *Allegros* bookended by quieter, more contemplative movements. There is a similar range of moods in the guitar concerto *Troubadour* (1992-93), another work Corigliano was resistant to creating. (It was Sharon Isbin who wore through the composer's reluctance, and she premiered the work in St Paul in 1993, later recording it for EMI.) A single-span set of variations 'on a troubadour-like melody', *Troubadours* is wonderfully evocative, at times even suggesting the musical character of the medieval period. Eliot Fisk is the convincingly nimble soloist here.

As always, Gil Rose elicits superb playing from the Boston Modern Orchestra Project ensembles, evident in the short opening item, *To Music* (1995), originally written for double brass quintets but expanded orchestrally. Based on the melody of Schubert's great 'An die Musik', *To Music* makes an effective concert-opener. Excellent sound, a fine album. **Guy Rickards**

## Guerra-Peixe

Symphonic Suites - No 1, 'Paulista';

No 2, 'Pernambucana'. Roda de amigos<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Raul Menezes fl <sup>b</sup>Públio da Silva ob

<sup>a</sup>Patrick Viglioni cl <sup>b</sup>Felipe Arruda bn

Goiás Philharmonic Orchestra / Neil Thomson

Naxos The Music of Brazil (8 573925 • 58')



César Guerra-Peixe (1914-93) was, as well as a prolific composer, a great promoter of

Brazilian folk music, and carried out extensive research on it. He spent time working with serial techniques but his dissatisfaction with these led him to work with folk material in his own music, which is what this recording highlights. Both Symphonic Suites date from 1955 and are structured identically, with a moderately paced opening movement and reflective third preceding rumbustious second and fourth movements.

One of the highlights here is definitely the brilliantly colourful second movement of the Suite No 1, 'Jongo', a name referring to an Afro-Brazilian dance. It is anything but a patronising picture postcard: Guerra-Peixe's compositional vocabulary is deeply informed at all levels by the dance's rhythmic structure and he is a tremendous orchestrator. The third movement is also haunting. Entitled 'Recomenda de almas' (better known in Portugal as 'Encomenda

das Almas'), this movement, with dense harmonies and mysterious solo melodies, is based on the Roman Catholic ritual of prayers during Lent for souls in Purgatory, and involved processions and costumes as well as singing.

It is also the second and third movements of the Suite No 2 that I find most impressive. 'Dança de cabocolinhos' sounds like a great machine, or locomotive, launching into unstoppable motion, while the mournful 'Aboiado' refers to wordless unaccompanied songs intoned by Brazilian cattle herders. The two suites are separated by *Roda de amigos*, from 1979. Its four movements are enchanting character pieces, portraying musician friends of the composer. Neil Thomson leads some sparkling performances from the Goiás Philharmonic, and the engineering allows instrumental detail (particularly in *Roda de amigos*) to shine through.

**Ivan Moody**

## Mozart

Piano Concertos - No 17, K453; No 24, K491

Éric Le Sage *pf*

Gävle Symphony Orchestra / François Leleux

Alpha (ALPHA866 • 59')



For his first recording of Mozart concertos, Éric Le Sage, in the company of the Gävle Symphony Orchestra and oboist/conductor François Leleux, programmes two strikingly different concertos, pairing the (mainly) bucolic G major (K453) of 1784 with the C minor (K491) of two years later.

You can tell much about an interpretation from the opening bars of K491. There's a polish to the legato strings, the wind answering in kind, and Le Sage's entry is sensitive and beautifully shaped. Compared to the rhapsody of Richard Goode or the ever-changing colours and dynamics of Leif Ove Andsnes, though, this is relatively plain. There's a certain formality to the conversation between soloist and ensemble, too, lacking the rhapsody of the great chamber orchestras – the SCO for Brendel, the Orpheus for Goode or the Mahler CO for Andsnes. The magical moment where the music switches from a major-key sojourn in E flat back to the minor (5'03'') passes for less than it can. But I very much like Le Sage's unorthodox choice of Fauré's cadenza for the first movement, which dutifully bases itself on Mozart's themes but can't resist clothing them in entirely Fauréan harmonies.

There has long been disagreement about what sort of tempo Mozart had in mind for the *Larghetto*: the players here opt for a relatively fast reading and they clearly believe in it, with a litheness of phrasing and good sense of line. Brendel and Goode are at the other end of the scale, interpretatively, both producing a graver effect; Andsnes, occupying a middle ground, seems to me to get it just right. In the variations that form the finale of this concerto I would have liked more vivid characterisation, and the final lurch into 6/8, while suavely done, perhaps lacks an underlying element of angst.

In the G major Concerto Leleux sets up the orchestral *tutti* to good effect, enjoying the mock-martial dotted rhythms, the tempo nicely judged. But once Le Sage joins the fray, I feel he's trying to do too much with the music: the graceful theme is perhaps a little too self-consciously considered (from 3'21''); Maria João Pires, by comparison, is much simpler-sounding and there's an impishness lurking just below the surface, a quality that the bassoon then picks up to fine effect. Their respective approaches to the first-movement cadenza are telling: Le Sage more given to rhapsodic musing, Pires playfully pert. Ironically, whereas the slow movement of K491 seemed too fast, this one is a little sluggish, characterful notwithstanding. Things work better in the finale, in which Mozart conjures a theme with martial elements from the opening movement and whose ensuing variations are a veritable masterclass in pearlescent ease and a good helping of wit. **Harriet Smith**

*Piano Concerto No 17, K453 – selected comparison:*

Pires, COE, Abbado DG 439 941-2GH (2/96)

*Piano Concerto No 24, K491 – selected comparisons:*

Brendel, SCO, Mackerras Philips 462 622-2PH (1/00)

Goode, Orpheus CO Nonesuch 7559 79489-2 (2/00)

Andsnes, Mabler CO Sony Classical 19439 85451-2 (5/22)

## Mozart

'Violin Concertos, Vol 2'

Violin Concertos - No 1, K207;

No 2, K211; No 5, 'Turkish', K219

Francesca DeGo *vn* Royal Scottish National

Orchestra / Sir Roger Norrington

Chandos (CHAN20263 • 68')



The traditional view is that Mozart's Third Violin Concerto, K216, represents a huge leap forward in inventiveness after the more modest charms of Nos 1 and 2. Fair enough. But it seems to me that the gulf

between the preceding concertos and No 5, K219, composed the month before Mozart's 20th birthday, is at least as wide: in scale, sophistication, technical virtuosity, and in its seraphic, harmonically subtle *Adagio*, music that, to quote Mozart biographer Maynard Solomon in another context, 'transforms loveliness into ecstasy, grace into sublimity'.

It's a challenge, of course, to make the ultra-familiar No 5, especially, sound fresh. Yet the youthful Francesca DeGo and the seasoned, ever-questing Roger Norrington, on his last recording, achieve that in spades. 'Take your time to relish these speeds, even though they may be new to you', writes Norrington in his engaging booklet note. The unusually broad tempo for the *Allegro aperto* ('open') first movement of No 5 lends the music an added dignity, even grandeur. But as on her previous Mozart concertos album (10/21), DeGo's playing creates a spirit of delighted, sometimes whimsical improvisation. Semiquaver runs are an invitation to ever new flights of fancy. With no sense of micro-management, articulation and dynamics are never predictable, repeated phrases never mere repetitions. DeGo's spontaneous touches of ornamentation – often where you don't expect them – made me smile. And Norrington and the 25-strong RSN0 keep the accompaniments buoyant, and gleefully seize on every opportunity for operatic dialogues with the soloist. This is chamber music writ large.

Tempos for No 5's *Adagio* and minuet finale are also controversial: the former a flowing two-in-a-bar, the latter unfolding at leisure, *con amore*. I wondered at first whether the minuet was just too expansive. But DeGo's tonal purity and fastidious grace of phrasing won me over; and the slashing 'Turkish' episode, uninhibitedly dispatched by soloist and conductor, makes even more of a shock contrast than usual. As for the *Adagio*, Norrington and DeGo take a similar mobile tempo to Giuliano Carmignola – a violinist much admired by DeGo – in his superb period-instrument recording with Abbado (Archiv, 9/08). But with her lighter, more delicate touch she finds even more poetry and expressive variety in the music, including a hint of rarefied playfulness. Norrington ensures that no felicity of Mozart's rich inner part-writing escapes the ear. The floating transition back to the recapitulation (from 4'16"), exquisitely handled by both soloist and conductor, is a spine-tingling moment.

The symbiotic partnership between DeGo and Norrington, underpinned by a shared delight in the unexpected, likewise animates the two earlier concertos. In the

first movement of No 1 Norrington takes Mozart's *moderato* qualification to heart. Yet spaciousness goes hand in hand with frolicsome mischief – a touch of drama, too, in the plunge to F minor in the central development, where DeGo's boldly gestural playing contrasts with the withdrawn *pp* favoured by most players. No 1's impulsive *Presto* finale goes like the wind, enlivened by DeGo's added scampering scales and rude orchestral interpolations, duly played up by Norrington. Like Carmignola, DeGo opts for Franco Gulli's cadenzas throughout: aptly scaled and to the point, even if Gulli's lavish use of double-stopping has no parallel in Mozart's own writing.

The rather old-fashioned opening movement of No 2 has a crucial spring in its step, with DeGo maximising the colour contrasts between strings and the comic potential of Mozart's wide leaps. And the serenading slow movements of both concertos combine a vernal innocence with the spirit of spontaneous improvisation that informs the whole delectable album. If you think you've heard these concertos once too often, this could be just the tonic.

Richard Wigmore

## Nordin

Emerging from Currents and Waves

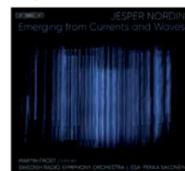
Martin Fröst c/ Swedish Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Esa-Pekka Salonen

BIS (BIS2559) • 70'

Recorded live at Berwaldhallen, Stockholm,

August 31, 2018



Here is plenty to occupy those prone to speculating on the future of orchestral music. Swedish composer Jesper Nordin (not to be confused with the Danish conductor of the same name) has created a work for which it's hard to think of a precedent: a clarinet concerto embedded into a larger piece (surrounded by what could clumsily be described as a prelude and an epilogue, though together they are longer than the three-movement concerto they enshrine) that makes use of a self-developed technology by which soloist Martin Fröst and conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen 'play' live electronics in real time. Thus no two performances of *Emerging from Currents and Waves* can ever be the same – apart from the re-playable one captured here.

In basic terms, Salonen can record, play back and freeze bits of the orchestra he is conducting while he is conducting it. Fröst, equally, also makes use of a gesture

instrument or 'gestument' in addition to his own clarinet – a movement-sensitive device that marshals a separate flock of 16 sampled clarinets just as Salonen's gestument can the live-recorded orchestra.

In each case, the electronic elements are mined from the very material the acoustic orchestra is playing live. So you never feel as though the electronics are an add-on, which is the work's key strength and the technique's biggest potential. The orchestra seems suddenly more immersive, overwhelming and dynamic while never not sounding like an orchestra. The gestument clarinets resound in a manner that springs off the idea of a soloist letting loose in a cadenza, while the conductor's gestument allows him to whip it into instantaneous, trippy little gestures that boggle the ear.

The question, then, is whether the means trample on the ends – whether the work makes an irrelevance of all that technical wizardry and stands alone, even for those who don't know how it was built. On that point, my personal inner jury is still out. Some of the big, tapestry-like structures aren't possessed of the constantly beguiling qualities of large structures from, let's say, Anna Thorvaldsdottir, while there is some sense that without the single-mindedness of a composer specifying exactly what should be played and how, the music can seem a little generalised and directionless.

Then again, perhaps therein lies the immersive quality that comes across no-holds-barred. There are sounds to marvel at here, not least the glassy, fluid first taste of the gestument clarinets in the first movement of the concerto and, elsewhere, the haunting sounds of brass-like lurs, reverberating in their echo chambers. Either way, Nordin has hit upon a technique and a device – or at least refined them from various precedents – that have huge potential. **Andrew Mellor**

## Pettersson

Viola Concerto<sup>a</sup>, Symphony No 15<sup>b</sup>, Fantaisie<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ellen Nisbeth <sup>b</sup>c/ <sup>ab</sup>Norrköping Symphony

Orchestra / Christian Lindberg

BIS (BIS2480) • 68'



With this release, only four of Allan Pettersson's symphonies remain for Christian Lindberg to record: Nos 3, 8, 10 and 11, all of which Leif Segerstam set down for BIS, as he did the iconic Seventh and the main work here, No 15 (1978). Lindberg's account of the Fifteenth was