

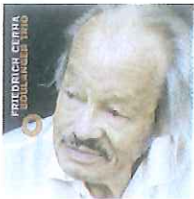
Cerha

Five Movements^a. Rhapsody^b. Three Pieces^c.
Six Inventions^d. Piano Trio - Nachtstück^a

^aBoulangier Trio (bd Birgit Erz vn cd Ilona Kindt vc

^bKarla Haltenwanger pf)

AVI-Music © AVI8553347 (59' • DDD)



Through his early studies with Josef Polnauer, a member of the Schoenberg circle, Friedrich Cerha is one of the few remaining descendants of the Second Viennese School. However, while this collection of chamber works does indeed, in terms of its motivic-developmental style and use of somewhat unfashionable forms, harken back to the early 20th century, the composer who most often comes to mind is in fact Bartók.

As with the Hungarian master, Cerha's chamber music often alternates between lyrical modality and dense chromaticism. In the Five Movements for piano trio (2006-07), Cerha even uses an 'arch' form adumbrated in the form and title ('Parabola') of the first movement. This piano trio, spritely and elegant, is the meatiest work on the disc and rewards repeated listens. Up until 2005 Cerha had never written a piano trio but his attitude to the instrumental formation softened, he says, when a piece was requested from him to mark the retirement of Bálint András Varga. From that first piano trio we have here the 'Nachtstück' (2005), in which slow, lyrical cello and violin lines discourse with delicate piano chords – a night music, again, more Bartók than Mahler.

Aside from these two trios, and despite excellent performances, the disc is disappointing. The Rhapsody for violin and piano (2001), commissioned for the Marguerite Long-Jacques Thibaud competition, is a virtuoso showcase in an atonal idiom whose *saltando* passagework and double-stopped harmonics amount to little. The Six Inventions for violin and cello (2005-06) are, likewise, for the most part vociferous, their incessantly toiling counterpoint not generating much interest for the listener, apart from the third invention, a supple duo comprised solely of harmonics. **Liam Cagney**

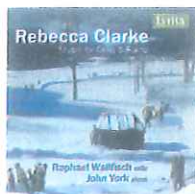
Clarke

Clarke Cello (Viola) Sonata. Epilogue. I'll bid my heart be still. Passacaglia. Rhapsody

York Dialogue with Rebecca Clarke

Raphael Wallfisch vc John York pf

Lyrta © SRCD354 (68' • DDD)



Perhaps Rebecca Clarke's time is finally approaching. It is only a few months since

the Italian viola player Diana Bonatesta and her pianist sister Arianna released their portrait of this too little-heard 20th-century composer (Acvea, 5/16). And this new release from cellist Raphael Wallfisch and pianist John York makes another fairly persuasive case for her music.

I say 'fairly' because cultivating a truly unique style is probably not what Clarke will be remembered for. There are moments in these chamber works which leave us wondering if we really need another Debussy, Ravel, Vaughan Williams, Holst. But what she did, she did extremely well, resulting in tautly structured music full of ardour and complexity.

All of which interact compellingly in the Sonata for viola and piano, played here in the composer's own cello version. It was this piece that almost won Clarke the 1919 Berkshire (USA) Chamber Music Prize. And it might have done so, had the critics been less appalled by the idea that a woman, of all things, could out-write Ernest Bloch, the eventual winner. More fool them, Wallfisch seems to be saying, by playing it with such vindictive zest. He embraces the opening's impetuosity and the impish humour of the Ravelian third movement. But what serves him best of all is his full-bodied tone which, together York's delicate pianism, locks into the music's poignancy.

It pays off, too, in the Rhapsody, an even more complex, deeply felt statement than the Sonata. Indeed, Wallfisch and York are in their element when negotiating the second movement, the work's emotional epicentre, which starts with a low growl, then grows into something of nightmarish intensity. But there are many perks here besides: the urgency they bring to the opening or the grace with which they handle the third movement's cross-rhythms.

Even to the smaller works – Epilogue, Passacaglia and 'I'll bid my heart be still' – they bring a weight that demonstrates total commitment to Clarke's cause. And, just to underline the point, York has filled out the disc with one of his own compositions. *Dialogue with Rebecca Clarke* is not a masterpiece, more a jigsaw of themes and harmonies from Clarke's Viola Sonata, mingled with some Clarke-inspired gestures from York. But it's an affectionate, touching homage nonetheless. **Hannah Nepil**

Dvořák

Piano Trios - No 3, Op 65 B130;

No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166

Busch Trio

Alpha © ALPHA238 (77' • DDD)



Naming your new trio after one of the greatest chamber ensembles of the 20th century certainly suggests noble aspirations, and yet even after the modest passage of four years the youthful Busch Trio can boast one of the most notable features of their namesake: a pooled decision to put the music, and only the music, first.

For example, specifically the opening of the *Dumky* Trio's second movement, when the key suddenly changes at around 0'34", the Busch let the music do the talking whereas the Florestans mark the moment with some subtle but in my view unnecessary punctuation – and that's without mentioning Omri Epstein's perfectly weighted, quietly chiming chords and cellist Ori Epstein's expressive line on the new Alpha disc. The Busch also hold the tension and when, further along the line, the *dumka*'s high spirits kick in (*vivace non troppo*), violinist Mathieu van Bellen retains the quiet dynamic while Epstein plays a hopping staccato. All is as it should be, the following *Andante* letting in the sunlight, the approach like a series of narrative tone-poems, which is fairly close to Dvořák's original intentions.

The Third Trio, Op 65, is the real 'biggie' in terms of scale and tension, and while there are other versions that push for more in the way of dynamism (the Beaux Arts, Isabelle Faust et al, the Suk Trio, etc), the Busch score handsomely for fine ensemble work and an obvious rapport between the players. Just one mannerism bothered me, the pianist's halting emphasis at fig A (0'36") in the finale, which rather disrupts the flow; maybe just one 'breath' would have sufficed, but to keep repeating it is distracting.

Viewed overall these are very fine performances, the two string players perfectly matched, with articulate piano playing that never exceeds the limits of propriety. **Rob Cowan**

Selected comparison:

Florestan Trio (1/97) (HYPE) CDA67572, CDA66895 (oas)

Ives

'Con Slugarock'

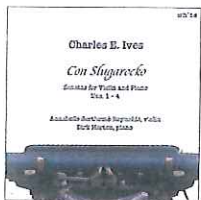
Violin Sonatas - No 1; No 2; No 3; No 4

Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds vn Dirk Herten pf

White © 2016 (79' • DDD)



The Busch Trio offer Dvořák's passionate Third and genial Dumky piano trios



The four violin sonatas that Charles Ives assembled between 1902 and

1915 have never been big hitters in the same league as his *Concord* Sonata or the perpetually undervalued First Piano Sonata. Ives wrote a selection of individual movements for violin and piano which were then grouped into four three-movement structures. If you're not careful, the four sonatas, when played back to back, can sound like a rambling digression threaded together with interchangeable material. And Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds and Dirk Herten needed to be more careful.

Their cause is not helped by a tinny, lifeless sound environment that too often allows the violin to be swamped by the piano (the suspicion that things were done on a shoestring is heightened by the lack of booklet-notes). There are at least three outstanding existing sets in the catalogue, ranging from Hilary Hahn and Valentina Lisitsa's set – consistently charming, if occasionally tipping towards raw sentiment – to the steely control of Gregory

Fulkerson and Robert Shannon. Curt Thompson and Rodney Waters pitch their tent somewhere in the interpretative middle; and in this elevated company Berthomé-Reynolds and Herten can be no one's idea of good enough.

The opening *Adagio* of the Third Sonata encapsulates many of the prevailing problems. Berthomé-Reynolds's tone is oddly monotonous while rhythms are stilted, without even a hint of Ivesian concertinaed flexibility. Where the likes of Hahn and Fulkerson sing through the opening line, Berthomé-Reynolds mumbles a sequence of disjointed phrases – a sudden leap in register equating to an abrupt gear change. To add to the charge sheet is an overly homogenised palette, which might indeed fool you into thinking that Ives's material is interchangeable. But it doesn't have to be like this – Curt Thompson's lightness of touch during the Fourth Sonata, with supple changes of colour as the material shifts focus, speaks more of a painterly sense of inner motion and narrative perspective. Philip Clark

Selected comparisons:

Thompson, Waters (9/04) (NAXO) 8 559119

Hahn, Lisitsa (11/11) (DG) 477 9435GH

Fulkerson, Shannon (BRID) BCD9024

Legrenzi

'Sonate e Balletti'

Sonate, libro primo, Op 2 – La Cornara; La Foscari; La Frangipana; La Zabarella.

Sonate da chiesa e da camera, Op 4 –

Alemanda terza, 'La Piloni'; Balletto

quarto; Corrente terza; La Forni; La Pezzoli;

Sarabanda prima. Sonate, libro terzo, Op 8 –

La Basadonna; La Cremona; La Marinona;

L'Obizza; La Squarzona. La cetra, Op 10 –

Sonata prima; Sonata seconda; Sonata terza;

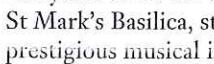
Sonata quarta; Sonata sesta. Balletti e correnti,

Op 16 – Balletto primo; Balletto secondo;

Corrente terza; Corrente nona (Ciaconna)

Clematis

Ricercar © RIC356 (78' • DDD)



Like so many

17th-century Italian musicians, Giovanni Legrenzi led a

peripatetic life. Following a conventional

enough start to his career in Italy, a brief

period was spent at Versailles before

moving to Venice; there he passed the last

five years of his life as *maestro di cappella* at

St Mark's Basilica, still one of the most

prestigious musical institutions in Italy in