

# FF anfare

THE MAGAZINE FOR SERIOUS RECORD COLLECTORS



VLADIMIR SPIVAKOV



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1989 \$5.00

Sun-Chai Pak, tenor; Yong-Yin Han, bass; Chorus and State Symphony Orchestra of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. CPO 999 047-2 [AAD]; 62:09. (Distributed by Koch Import Service.)

This is the first "classical" music by a Korean composer I have encountered on discs, I believe; and it is surely the first such music to be recorded for discs in the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang. As one reads the notes, certain unanswered questions arise—though one can guess. Why is an ardent Korean nationalist who passionately desires the reunification of his country now a West German citizen? And why is he the darling of the North, and also of the Germans? As I said, one can guess. But that aspect of things is prudently ignored in these notes, wherein the tough ROK Army is taken to task, justifiably, while the sins of the Kim Il Sung regime are wholly out of sight and mind. But to the music: Isang Yun's style has been honed in Europe, and though there are bases in Korean thought and musical style to it, it is uncompromising material of a fairly difficult character; Yun went through a twelve-tone period, and now has his own code of composition with its own inherent logic. Unfortunately, that doesn't help to make his work at all accessible, especially given the political character of *My Land, My People*, a four-section setting of poems by Korean prisoners of conscience arranged in terms of the Korean past, present, and hoped-for future. It takes a good deal of good will to be moved by Korean utterances to music that doesn't seem to be getting anywhere much for over forty minutes. Half as long and somewhat more effective is the *Exemplum in memoriam Kwangju*, which commemorates the massacre of demonstrators in that city in 1980 by the ROK Army; here violence and mourning find more direct and palpable expression. Yun (b. 1917) did at times remind me of the Harris First and Ruggles's *Sun-Treader* now and then, but I'd hardly call him close in style to those late Americans. Sound and performances are acceptable; and for those who find solace in detailed technical analysis of difficult music, that aspect of this production deserves special praise.

John Ditsky

**ZACH: Organ Works.** See SEGER.

**ZELENKA: *Missa Circumcisionis Domini Nostri Jesu Christe* (Mass for New Year's Day).** Konrad Wagner conducting; Andrea Ihle, soprano; Brigitte Pfretzschner, contralto; Ekkehard Wagner, tenor; Matthias Henneberg, bass; Dresdner Kapellknaben; Dresdner Kathedralchor; members of Dresdner Staatskapelle. CHRISTOPHORUS CD 74550 [DDD]; 40:25. Produced by Helga Taschke. (Distributed by Koch Import Service.)

The revival of interest, over the past two decades, in the Bohemian-born Zelenka (1679–1745) may owe far more to his being unusual, or just peculiar, than to his being truly great. Especially (but not only) in obviously manneristic works like his programmatic *Hipocondrie*, he often exceeds Baroque norms of decorum and balance, to approach the realm of the outlandish. To be sure, it took more than bizarrerie to win the regard he enjoyed in his own day: although he was always second in rank (first to Heinichen and later to Hasse) at the Catholic court of Saxony, Christoph Wolff (who ought to know) says he was "among the Dresden musicians most highly esteemed by [J. S.] Bach." But if you know Zelenka (as I did) only through his *Lamentations* and the instrumental collection produced about ten years ago by Holliger and Camerata Bern, this Mass for the Feast of the Circumcision may surprise you . . . by not being so terribly surprising.

In traditional Catholic usage, New Year's Day is not only the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ but also the Octave of Christmas Day, and it carries over some of the festive atmosphere of Christmas. So this Mass is scored on a festival scale, with a generous use of trumpets and drums; in fact, a—not unpleasantly—disorienting effect comes about because the Mass is so short that the big artillery is sometimes wheeled into place (as at the beginning of the *Agnus Dei*) for only a few seconds at a time.

The Christmas connection also explains why certain sections adopt the pastoral meters and sonorities that are associated with Christmas by virtue of the shepherds' visit to the manger. Through a kind of musico-theological punning, those stereotypical pastoral conventions acquire an extra dimension from the way Zelenka uses them to highlight just those texts (such as the second *Agnus Dei* and the "Qui tollis" section of the *Gloria*) that speak of Christ as "Lamb of God." (I owe this point to Konrad Wagner's liner notes; I don't think I'd have noticed it on my own.)

The conciseness of the Mass is exaggerated by its old-fashioned presentation on this disc. One important lesson that the "authenticists" have taught us is that every work of music has a context. The producers should have realized that the five "movements" (that is, the Ordinary) of a Mass setting were never meant to be heard without interruption as they are here: Zelenka's Mass movements should have alternated with plainchant, and/or with proper motets either in an idiom-matching Zelenka's or in a slightly contrasting style. (Several early music groups have made such programming a matter of course: see, for instance, the Taverner Choir's EMI Reflexe recordings of Taverner and Machaut.)

The music is highly enjoyable, and in places quite touching; but some of Zelenka's best effects—the simple duet textures at "Tu solus sanctus," for instance—are on a rather modest scale, and won't come off unless rendered with a deft, subtle touch that is missing here. None of the solo singers seems thoroughly at home in the Baroque vein; and the orchestral playing, though competent and steady, isn't very stylish and makes rather heavy weather of what should be tossed off lightly. A pity, for the music deserves better, and we're unlikely to be crushed in the stampede of competing versions.

Eric Van Tassel

**ZEMLINSKY: *Lieder*.** See SCHRECKER.

**ZEMLINSKY: *Symphony in Bb. Psalm XXIII*.** Riccardo Chailly conducting the Kammerchor Ernst Senff; Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra. LONDON 421 644-2 [DDD]; 55:54. Produced by Michael Haas.

This is the second major release of music by Alexander Zemlinsky by Riccardo Chailly and Berlin Radio forces. The previous offering was the long tone poem *Die Seejungfrau*, coupled with another of the psalm settings, that of Psalm XIII. If this means that Chailly is going to be Zemlinsky's champion and record all his major symphonic and choral works, we can rejoice. On the evidence of these two releases, Zemlinsky will be in good hands. The *Symphony in Bb* has already been recorded, by Edgar Seipenbusch and the Slovak Philharmonic for the Records International label (see my review in *Fanfare* 10:1). I was enthusiastic about Seipenbusch's reading of this powerful score and Chailly's by no means surpasses it, although it too is a strong contender. The Bruckner-sized scherzo holds together better in Seipenbusch; Chailly emphasizes its episodic nature. Seipenbusch in general is better in keeping with *Hauptstimme*, or main instrumental line, always clearly traceable amid the contending strands of orchestral texture. I remarked in my earlier review that the Scherzo is longer than the Adagio. That was true in the Seipenbusch reading, but not in that of Chailly, where the two movements run neck-in-neck (9:19 and 9:21). The more richly recorded strings of the Berlin Radio orchestra give Chailly the advantage in this beautiful and elegiac Adagio, which may well have been intended as a funeral offering for Brahms, who had died in April 1897 when the symphony was in the process of composition. Brahms comes more forcefully to mind in the finale, a grand passacaglia.

The setting of Psalm XXIII is the second of three psalm settings for chorus and orchestra that span Zemlinsky's creative life. Psalm XIII, previously recorded by Chailly, dates from 1935 and is therefore one of Zemlinsky's last works. It is a more original, exciting, and modern approach to psalm setting than Psalm XXIII, which dates from 1910 and has some of the massed choral-orchestral effects one associates with Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, which came out three years earlier. If it never rises to the ecstasy of Mahler, it is nonetheless a sensitive setting of the familiar psalm and especially effective at establishing the pastoral mood of its opening ("He maketh me to lie down in green pastures"). The large German Radio chorus lacks verbal clarity, a fault to be attributed to their director ("Professor" Ernst Senff) rather than to Chailly. Even following the German words, printed in the booklet, one loses one's place, since there are no clearly articulated consonants to use as a compass.

David Johnson

**ZYMAN: *Quintet for Winds, Strings, and Piano*<sup>1</sup>. *Solamente Sola*<sup>2</sup>. *Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*<sup>3</sup>.** Mirian Conti, piano<sup>2,3</sup>; Rachel Rosales, soprano<sup>2</sup>; Samuel Zyman<sup>3</sup> conducting the Chelsea Chamber Ensemble<sup>1,3</sup>. ANTILLES/NEW DIRECTIONS 91055-2 [DDD]; 48:35. Produced by Jean-Pierre Weiller-Letourneur.



Seldom has a release of new music posed such a quandary. Samuel Zyman, a young composer born in Mexico City, studied at Juilliard with Stanley Wolfe, Roger Sessions, and David Diamond—all writers of strong, adventurous music in conventional forms—and is now on that faculty himself. That information does excite interest: is this, at last, the next generation of the New York uptown school? What directions have been taken? In what directions does it point? This music is also written in familiar forms; it is thoughtful, solidly constructed, and carefully balanced. But—Holy Cow!—it sounds like it was written about fifty years ago. An earlier recording of Zyman's piano trio has been compared to Beethoven, and these pieces have been called "Brahmsian . . . with a biting edge." Fair descriptions, but haven't we been down this road before? I hear, in the music and in the critical response, Harold Shapero all over again (see: *Fanfare* 12:4, p. 274). Don't get me wrong: I like Shapero's beautifully-wrought neoclassicism, but it didn't—

lead anywhere. I like this music, too; it has all sorts of admirable qualities. But as exemplar of the current state of main-stream American composition, and as vector toward the future, it is a complete bust. I, for one, will head back downtown, to brave many less-polished gaucheries in search of a newer world.

The quintet nicely contrasts textures and colors among violin and viola, clarinet and bassoon, and piano; each has its share of the spotlight. The first movement passes from an opening tranquillo to a jaunty allegro and back again; it is followed by a rollicking fugue. *Solamente Sola* is a cycle of four songs in which a woman laments the loss of her lover; the poems were written for this music by the Mexican poet Salvador Carrasco. Words and music share a Spanish intensity occasionally recalling Lorca and Spanish classical composers of early in this century. The twenty-three-minute piano concerto (Allegro Molto, Adagio, Rondo) has the percussive attitude of Prokofiev, Bartók, or Stravinsky, but is far more staid harmonically. Accompaniment is by five strings, five winds, and timpani; Zyman's scoring turns them into a full orchestra, a feat comparable to Stravinsky's reduction of the "Bluebird" Pas de Deux from *Sleeping Beauty*. This concerto could be a repertory piece; it gets virtuoso performances from Mirian Conti and from David Smith on horn. Playing is expert throughout the disc, and Rachel Rosales sings with feeling. Recording is nearly ideal; for the quintet, strings and winds are up very close, which saves them from being overpowered by the piano but also exposes a few rough edges at hard-pressed moments. Three tracks allow access to each piece but not to individual movements or songs. Song texts are in Spanish, with English translations by the poet. Given Zyman's obvious talent and his disciplined technique, one hopes that he will find a farther country to explore. Strongly recommended, but only to the *unadventurous*.

James H. North

## Collections

### Vocal

**LUCIA ALIBERTI: BELLINI, DONIZETTI ARIAS.** Lucia Aliberti, soprano; Roberto Paternostrò conducting the RSO, Berlin. CAPRICCIO 10 246 [DDD]; 70:44.

**BELLINI: *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*:** Eccomi in lieta vèsta . . . Oh! quante volte. ***I puritani*:** Son vergin vezzosa; O rendetemi le speme . . . Vien diletto. **DONIZETTI: *La figlia del reggimento*:** Convien partir; Deciso e dunque . . . Le ricchezza ed il grado fastoso. ***Don Pasquale*:** La morale in tutto questo. ***Anna Bolena*:** Come, innocente giovane. ***Torquato Tasso*:** Fatal! Goffredo, i versi tuoi.

Well, what have we here? Lucia Aliberti made a nice Met debut last season as Lucia; everyone who saw/heard her was taken with her, except, of course, the New York critics, who seemed relatively uninterested. I missed her at the Met but I'm glad to have her on this generous recital.

She is indeed interesting. The middle of the voice is slightly covered and has the same full-cheeked chipmunk sound that Callas occasionally had, but it's very appealing. At its worst it sounds like Sylvia Sass, and her poor diction, especially in the middle voice, is even more reminiscent of the Hungarian soprano. The top of the voice is bright, radiant, and secure, with more metal in it than velvet. She sounds young, and her technique doesn't always obey as it should—there's no trill, for instance, and passagework isn't spotless. Every so often Aliberti also sings the wrong notes—not off-key, mind you, but the wrong notes, as if she were still learning the music, which is probably the case. She also does some very intriguing things with rubato which some might find misguided; I find them interesting. I like her use of *pianissimi* throughout and I've been listening to this again and again since I got it—a good sign.

The choice of arias here is indicative of a mind at work. All sixteen minutes of the "Qui la voce" scene are given and it's a very moving portrayal, capped with a rousing Eb. The *Bolena* scene does not erase memories of Callas but it brings them back comfortably—Aliberti doesn't copy Callas (the way Suliotis and Sass sometimes did) but the color of the voice, as hinted at above, is terrifyingly close at times. She doesn't push the bottom of her voice at all, and while this can cut back on excitement, it will invariably lengthen her career. Not a bad trade-off. Both *Regiment* selections (not placed together, as neither are the two *Puritanis*—brainless programming) are oddly telling and successful for such a dark-hued voice. The *Torquato Tasso* scene is a well-performed, moody gem (Caballé recorded it too, with much less inner heat), but the *Capuleti* aria doesn't seem right and the little snippet from the finale of *Don Pasquale* doesn't give us any further information. The recital ends with "Son vergin vezzosa," and it's terrific.

This is far from perfect. In my heart, I wish that Aliberti had waited another six months or until the music were more comfortably under her belt and her technique were more solid—which I'm somehow convinced it will become. When Elena Suliotis began to record, people bought her albums because she sounded so much, and behaved so much, like Callas. Aliberti is Aliberti—a whole new soprano—and worth hearing. Sound is excellent, as are accompaniments. Italian texts and three-language bio only; one cueing point per selection.

Robert Levine

**FIAMMA IZZO D'AMICO: OPERA ARIAS.** Fiamma Izzo D'Amico, soprano; Alberto Zedda conducting the Munich Radio Orchestra. EMI ANGEL CDC 7 49233 2 [DDD]; 52:46. Produced by Theodor Holzinger.

**DONIZETTI: *Maria di Rohan*:** Havvi un Dio. ***Don Pasquale*:** So anch'io la virtù magica. **VERDI: *Emani*:** Emani! Emani, involami. ***La traviata*:** Ah, fors'è lui . . . Sempre libera. **PUCCINI: *Turandot*:** Tu, che di gel sei cinta. ***La rondine*:** Chi il bel sogno di Doretta. ***Suor Angelica*:** Senza mamma. ***Madama Butterfly*:** Un bel dì vedremo. ***Manon Lescaut*:** In quelle trine morbide. ***La Bohème*:** Donde lieta usci. **MASSENET: *Manon*:** Adieu, notre petite table. **CILÉA: *Adriana Lecouvreur*:** Io son l'umile ancella.

This is a distressing and disheartening release. We have here a young soprano in her mid-twenties, seemingly thrust headlong into the midst of an international career—highlighted most recently by a nationally broadcast Metropolitan Opera *Bohème* singing opposite Plácido Domingo and now the release of this aria disc (actually recorded two years ago) on EMI—but apparently lacking the resources to cope with such an enormous burden. There is virtually no evidence here of musicality, and little to suggest that words can be used to express anything specific ("Un bel dì" is absolutely startling in this regard!), but, on the other hand, the singing itself is so fraught with uncertainties that the question of musicality is moot. Violetta's big scene from the first act of *Traviata*, the longest excerpt on this disc, tells all, and sadly: the voice seems hollow and unsupported almost throughout; high notes are often desperate; consonants and even words are simply omitted, presumably as a means of overcoming technical hurdles: what passes for a trill sounds more like a seventeenth-century *trillo*; the solo violin line that takes Alfredo's interjections is conducted as if it were a violin concerto; and, to top it all off, the laugh before the first statement of "Sempre libera" is perhaps the worst example of an overdub I've ever heard. In most of the selections the voice is without presence and frequently swamped by the orchestra; everything sounds pretty much alike from one selection to the next (one of the arias does pretend to be sung in French—someone obviously thought there needed to be one item *not* in Italian); and—sad



**SPECIAL EDITION**

# MCA Record

© 1989 MCA Records

Fall 1989

Worldwide Circulation

## EAST-WEST CONSPIRACY!

### Art & Electronics Brings USSR into the Digital Age

MOSCOW—The latest development in the Global Village is the Soviet-American joint venture Art & Electronics, a new record label devoted to digitally recording the Soviet Union's finest soloists, conductors, and ensembles. Art & Electronics releases, recorded at new state-of-the-art studios in the USSR are available in the U.S. through MCA Classics.

### 150th Birthday

### Mussorgsky Celebrated in a Jubilee Concert

Composer Modest Mussorgsky, whose 150th birthday was celebrated



AEC/AED-68003

in a Jubilee Concert recorded by Art & Electronics. Includes Pictures at an Exhibition; Night on Bald Mountain; Dawn on the Moscow River; and others. Svetlanov conducts the State Academy Symphony Orchestra.

### A&E Artist Repin Captures Queen Elisabeth!

BRUSSELS—17 year old prodigy Vadim Repin beat out a field of 52 other contestants—all but one of whom were older than he—to win the Queen Elisabeth international violin contest, the world's most prestigious competition for the fiddle. Young Repin is to record Brahms and Bach violin sonatas for Art & Electronics.

### Barry Douglas Takes the Gold!

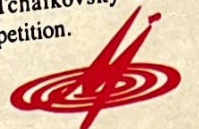
## Melodiya Recordings Available on MCA Classics CDs and Cassettes



MLC/MLD-32102  
BRAHMS—Piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor

The electrifying recording of the actual performance that brought Irish piano master Barry Douglas First Prize at the 1986 Moscow

Tchaikovsky Competition.

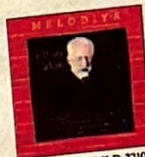


МЕЛОДИЯ

### Tchaikovsky and Scriabin on Melodiya

TCHAIKOVSKY  
Symphony No. 3 in D Major and Francesca da Rimini with The USSR Symphony Orchestra, Evgeni Svetlanov, Conductor.

SCRIABIN  
Symphony No. 2 in C minor with The USSR TV & Radio Large Symphony Orchestra, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Conductor.



MLC/MLD-32100



MLC/MLD-32103

**MCA CLASSICS**

### Also available on Melodiya/MCA Classics:

LYAPUNOV—Three Symphonic Poems with The USSR State Academy Orchestra, Evgeni Svetlanov, Conductor.  
MLC/MLD-32105

SHOSTAKOVICH—Quintet No. 7 & Quartet No. 14 with The Shostakovich Quartet and The Borodin Quartet.  
MLC/MLD-32106

An Anthology of Russian Choral Music, M. Glinka Choir of Leningrad.  
MLC/MLD-32104

### Also available on Art & Electronics:

Armenia: The Tragedy, the Music-Traditional Armenian Folk Songs  
AEC/AED-68002

Sacred Choral Music: State Chamber Choir  
AEC/AED-68004

Gubaidullina: Cello, Bayan & Strings Partita  
AEC/AED-68005

15th Century Piano Works: Alexei Lyubimov, Piano  
AEC/AED-68006

To order by phone toll free:  
J&R Music World: The Classical Outlet  
1-800-221-8180.  
In New York: (718) 417-3737.  
Phone order hours:  
Mon.-Fri. 8 am-8 pm; Sat. 9 am-6 pm;  
Sun. 10 am-4 pm.



AEC/AED-68001  
Russian violin virtuoso Sergei Stadler plays the complete Bach Partitas



ORIGINAL MASTER RECORDING  
**ALTERNATIVES**



Highlights from the Moscow Festival of Avant-Garde Music  
AEC/AED-68000

ALTERNATIVES—Highlights from the Moscow Avant-Garde Music Festival featuring the works of Schnittke, Gubaidullina, Ligeti, and others.