

“ Ian Page catches the tempestuous side of the music with gusto ”



Ian Page

awful orchestra name that belies its quality) play with energy and tight ensemble, well led by Matthew Truscott, and take full advantage of the generous acoustic in St John's Smith Square.

Ian Page catches the tempestuous side of the music with gusto, though the opening adagio of Haydn's *La Passione* symphony is a touch ponderous on repeated listening. The Swiss soprano Chiara Skerath is splendidly dramatic and elegantly hysterical (a truly 18th-century concept) without straying from period norms. The distance from Traetta to full blown Bellini is nicely judged. Nothing is held back and the music is well chosen to show that composers at the start of the classical movement were pushing hard against the edges of their aristocratic patrons' comfort zones.

Simon Mundy

Schumann: Cello Concerto Alfredo Piatti: Concertino, Concerto No 2, Josephine Knight (cello), Royal Northern Sinfonia, Martin Yates Dutton Epoch CDLX 7371

Everything on this disc is a first recording in its own way and Josephine Knight

deserves a big hurrah for her scholarship and imaginative programme. The Schumann concerto in the 'Concertstück' original version has been edited from the manuscript in Krakow by Knight for Peters Edition. She has removed 'hundreds' of accretions, particularly accents and phrase breaks added by generations of cellists and publishers. The result is a work that is smoother and less portentous – as if later editors were always thinking of the grim last years of the composer's biography when actually it was written when he was busy and in good spirits in Düsseldorf.

Presumably both Schumann and Piatti adopted the labels Concertstück and Concertino because of the relatively short slow movements but they are still major works for the cellist. Piatti gave the first London performance of the Schumann in 1866 (Knight thinks Clara Schumann was in the audience), four years after that of his own Concertino.

Knight holds the Chair named after Piatti at the Royal Academy of Music, where he was also Professor, so there is splendid continuity here. Piatti is underrated as a composer. He did not write much, and mostly just for his own instrument, but on

this showing the quality was high – not astonishing but quite good enough to stand comparison with the top instrumentalists of that era who wrote for their own performance. The second concerto, premiered in London in 1873, is certainly worth a regular hearing. Cellists do not have a glut of good concertos from the mid-19th century and should not ignore it.

Josephine Knight has done great service by reviving these works. There were written to show off technique as well as compositional mastery and there are moments when she is stretched to the limit of hers. The Royal Northern Sinfonia provides effective if not thrilling accompaniment. Nevertheless this is a fine disc which has much more than curiosity value.

Simon Mundy



'Deserves a big hurrah': Josephine Knight

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