

This is the first recording of Nos 1 & 3 (and the 1943 *Adagio and Scherzo*), though there are YouTube postings of both – the Chilingirian's performance of the Third was much praised by the composer. But these are outclassed by this new recording from the Villiers. Naxos's sound, engineered by Michael Whight, is beautifully balanced and the best these works have enjoyed. Highly recommended.

Guy Rickards

Hvoslef

'Chamber Works No III'

Bel canto^a. Inventiones I-III^a.

Kirkeduo^b. Kvartoni^c. Sextet (Post)^d

^aHilde Haraldsen Sveen sop ^cFrode Thorsen recs

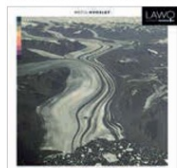
^dGro Sandvik fl ^eDiego Lucchesi cl ^fIlene Channon

hr ^gRicardo Odriozola vn ^{acd}Einar Røttingen pf

^bKarstein Askeland org ^bEgil Haugland,

^{cd}Stein-Erik Olsen gtrs

LAWO Classics © LWC1117 (65' • DDD)



LAWO continues its series devoted to the chamber music of Ketil Hvoslef (Vol 1 was

reviewed in 4/15) with this most diverse instalment yet. Other composers might have grouped the trilogy that constitutes *Inventiones* (2007) as a single 'violin sonata', but Hvoslef pointedly emphasises the conceptual differences between the three pieces – hence the unfolding from gestural to linear discourse in 'I', the rolling back and forth (like a bottle on a bus, as the composer describes it) in 'II', then the listless Mozart allusions in 'III' that lead to an outcome of surprising resolve.

From opposing duos to unlikely ensembles. *Kvartoni* (1974) combines (wordless) soprano, recorder, guitar and piano, making a virtue of this disparity through a purposeful if understated interplay that keeps listeners guessing as to what, in the event, proves a scintillating conclusion. By contrast, *Bel canto* (2005) is a rondo for violin and piano of real simplicity whose main theme deftly overcomes antagonism prior to its songful final statement. Nor is Hvoslef fazed by the unlikely pairing of *Kirkeduo* (1990), using the organ's delicate upper register and guitar's vibrant strumming in music where opposites audibly get along. Finally, *Sextet (Post)* (1980) collates flute, clarinet, horn, guitar, violin and piano for a lively debate whose only negative aspect was the winding-up of the commissioning body (hence 'Post').

As before, the commitment of these Bergen-based musicians has done Hvoslef proud, with Ricardo Odriozola's detailed

booklet-notes incorporating wry observations by the composer. There should be another two or three instalments before this worthwhile series is concluded.

Richard Whitehouse

D Matthews

Complete Piano Trios^a.

Journeying Songs, Op 95^b

^bGemma Rosefield vc ^aLeonore Piano Trio

Toccata Classics © TOCC0369 (75' • DDD)



Is it a British thing? Confronted with composers who write fresh, communicative music, rooted but not trapped in tradition, we...well, we don't neglect them exactly.

David Matthews recently published his Op 143 (*A Song for Max* for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano), and this first recording of what he calls 'my trio of piano trios' is the latest of a series of discs from Toccata Classics devoted to his chamber music. But if we don't neglect them, it can certainly feel like we don't always cherish them as we should.

And we really should. Try the *Adagio* of Matthews's Second Trio, of 1993. Over a measured accompaniment on the piano, violin and cello sing and climb and soar; a long, glorious melody that simply builds and builds. It's almost Schubertian in its cumulative poignancy. Matthews is a romantic. You don't have to read the booklet-notes (in which he explains that he conceived the piece as a memorial to a loved one) to sense that.

True, that movement isn't entirely typical. Matthews tends, like Haydn, to write concise, energetic movements, crammed (again, like Haydn) with ideas. And again, you don't need to know the specific sources of his inspiration – which range from a West Highland seascape in the Second Trio to a deadpan portrait of Hans Keller in the scherzo of the First – to respond to this music. It rewards repeated listening, with Matthews's lyrical gift never far from the surface (and very much front and centre in his *Journeying Songs* for unaccompanied cello, sensitively performed here by the Leonore Trio's cellist Gemma Rosefield).

The Leonore Trio have clearly lived with this music; their playing is alert and stylish, unafraid to let the melodies soar. 'Their performances seem to me definitive,' says Matthews. Not wanting (or needing) to gainsay the composer, I'll only add that the recorded sound is lucid and natural. Richard Bratby

Mozart

'Violin Sonatas, Vol 3'

Violin Sonatas - No 12, K27; No 16, K31; No 17, K296; No 23, K306; No 32, K454; No 36, K547

Alina Ibragimova vn Cédric Tiberghien vn

Hyperion © 2 CDA68143 (104' • DDD)



If you are going to play Mozart's fragile childhood sonatas 'for keyboard with

violin accompaniment' on modern instruments – always a risky proposition – this is the way to do it. Avoiding the twin traps of over-inflation and simpering coyness, the symbiotic partnership of Tiberghien and Ibragimova respect the music's innocence while relishing every tiny opportunity for mischief and humour. If the ear is naturally drawn to Tiberghien's limpid, subtly coloured pianism in these keyboard-dominated works, Ibragimova ensures that her discreet contributions always tell, not least in the scampering opening *Allegro* of K31, where the keyboard is egged on by little whoops of delight from the violin.

When Mozart embarked on his first mature duo sonatas in Mannheim in 1778, he was surely intent on surpassing a recent set of sonatas by Joseph Schuster that he had pronounced 'Not bad' – something of an accolade from Mozart. While Schuster's violin parts were adventurous for the time, Mozart goes a stage further and makes the two instruments virtual equals. Both the sonatas of 1778 included here, K296 and K306, are Mozart at his most coltishly exuberant, and get performances to match. Tiberghien, with his crystalline sonorities and pinpoint clarity of articulation, and Ibragimova gleefully savour their jousting dialogues and rapid role-reversals in the fast movements. The opening *Allegros* of both sonatas combine the requisite swagger (on one level, this is high-class show-off music) with a roguish twinkle, while the singing eloquence of the *Andantes* (where Ibragimova uses vibrato sparingly and expressively) underlines the essential vocal nature of Mozart's inspiration.

With the B flat Sonata, K454, of 1784, written for the Mantuan virtuoso Regina Strinasacchi, the violin's emancipation is complete, in music that often sounds like a finely wrought double concerto without orchestra. Again, the players compel the ear with their rhythmic vitality (the outer movements kept supple and airborne), their quick-witted banter and