

rules; Lubimov's performance has settled into 9-to-5 routine. No ad lib viola here, but Marianne Henkel makes a decent job of the flute cameo in 'Thoreau' – albeit lacking the momentous anti-momentum of a structure winding itself down that Lubimov achieved in 1995. **Philip Clark**

'Moldau'

Dvořák American Suite, Op 98 B184 **Glinka** Nocturne **Khachaturian** Oriental dance. Toccata **Lyadov** A Musical Snuffbox, Op 32 **Liszt** Le rossignol, S250 No 1 **Prokofiev** Romeo and Juliet – Morning Serenade; Montagues And Capulets **Smetana** Má vlast – Vltava **Tchaikovsky** The Nutcracker – Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy **Walter-Kühne** Fantasy on Themes from Tchaikovsky's 'Eugene Onegin', Op 81 **Xavier de Maistre** *hp*
Sony Classical © 88875 04904-2 (61' • DDD)



Xavier de Maistre last graced these pages in October 2013 with a stunning disc of

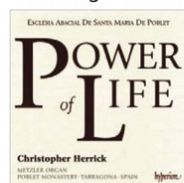
Mozart. His performance of the Piano Concerto K459 sticks in the memory. His new disc is a solo recital bound by a common Slavic element. It opens with 'Vltava' from *Má vlast*, the first of several 'how does he do it?' transcriptions, this one by Hans Trnček (1858-1914). He follows this with Henriette Renié's transcription of Liszt's transcription of Alyabyev's 'Le rossignol', a once-popular piano encore. Halfway through comes the now ubiquitous *Fantasy on Themes from 'Eugene Onegin'* by Ekaterina Walter-Kühne. De Maistre is a kind of Hamelin of the harp: the agility, the ease with which the most astonishing technical challenges are surmounted, the conversational phrasing and evenness of rapid passagework instantly amaze. But it is also his depth of tone and variety of colour that beguile.

Yet something doesn't quite work. A succession of virtuoso showpieces offers diminishing musical returns: despite the artist's assertion that this album 'includes rather more rough edges' than earlier albums in his quest to 'provide a more faithful account of all the colours and contrasts I was keen to recreate', everything is so peerlessly executed that it is hard not to believe one is listening to some fabulous musical automaton. 'Montagues and Capulets' lacks essential pomp and bluster; there is more fun to be had, surely, from Lyadov's *Musical Snuffbox*; and Dvořák's *American Suite* gains nothing by being transferred from the piano. The exception is Glinka's Nocturne, which de Maistre invests with exquisite tenderness and which, tellingly, is the only

harp original of the programme. Superb recorded sound. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Power of Life'

Dupré Ave maris stella **Monnikendam** Toccata No 2 **Mozart** Andante and Variations, K501 **Petralli** Allegro festoso **Saint-Saëns** Rhapsodie sur des cantiques bretons, Op 7 No 3 **Shearing** Amazing Grace **Stamm** Rapsodia alla latina **Takle** Power of Life **Villa-Lobos** Bachianas Brasileiras No 5 – Aria (Cantilena) **F Wagner** Trionfo della vita, Op 76 **Walton** Orb and Sceptre **Warlock** Capriol Suite – Pieds-en-l'air **Christopher Herrick** *org*
Hyperion © CDA68129 (67' • DDD). Played on the Metzler organ of Poblet Monastery, Tarragona, Spain



It may not go under the title of 'Organ Fireworks' but this latest offering from

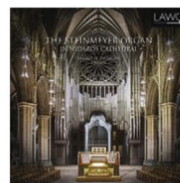
Christopher Herrick has all the usual ingredients. It features a tremendous instrument and a programme combining tantalising rarities (the title piece by Mons Leidvin Takle is not the best of these, while Dupré's *Ave maris stella* sounds like a trial run for his Op 20 Variations) with exuberant transcriptions (including William McKie's splendid retelling of Walton's *Orb and Sceptre*), local flavour (Hans-André Stamm's flamenco *Rapsodia alla latina*) and one or two hidden gems (what a superb piece of organ music Mozart's K501 makes).

Herrick has no hesitation in setting the stringy reeds of the chamade-only Batalla manual ablaze, while a Zimbelstern intermittently waved across the face of Saint-Saëns's *Rhapsodie sur des cantiques bretons* has more the character of a lit sparkler than a tinkling of tiny bells. Add to this Herrick's brisk speeds and a refusal to indulge in the sentimentality of George Shearing's lovely take on *Amazing Grace* or Warlock's 'Pieds-en-l'air', and the disc has the high-octane feel of a full-blown fireworks party. There is more than enough here to excite anyone with a taste for spectacular organ pyrotechnics.

Something, however, holds me back from recommending it unreservedly. Do I detect the merest whiff of sloppiness in the recording? A rather sour aftertaste is left as Franz Wagner's *Trionfo della vita* drifts away into the acoustic smoke, and there is a definite wobble as Petralli's outrageous *Allegro festoso* is extinguished. Add to this an unenticing booklet and Herrick's own factual but impersonal notes, and the impression is of something put together a little too hastily to match the supreme quality of the 'Organ Fireworks' discs. **Marc Rochester**

'The Steinmeyer Organ in Nidaros Cathedral'

Draagen Improvisation on a Folk Tune from Hornindal **Dubois** Douze Pièces nouvelles – In Paradisum **Dupré** Tombeau de Titelouze, Op 38 – Placare Christe servulus **Eben** Sonntagsmusik – Moto ostinato **Gigout** Six Pièces – Grand chœur dialogué **Grieg** Peer Gynt, Op 46 – Morning **Handel** Water Music, HWV348 – Hornpipe **Hovland** Toccata over Kjærlighet er lysets kilde **Howells** Six Pieces – Master Tallis's Testament **Karg-Elert** Hommage à Handel, Op 75b **L Nielsen** Organ Fantasy, 'Nidarosdomens klokke' **Reger** Zwölf Stücke, Op 59 – Benedictus **Sandvold** Adagio, Op 9 **Widor** Conte d'avril, Op 64 – Marche nuptiale **Magne H Draagen** *org*
LAWO Classics © LWC1075 (80' • DDD/DSD)



With a specification that runs to 146 stops and an amazing 36 couplers, the 1930

Steinmeyer organ in Trondheim is one of the largest cathedral organs in Europe. It was substantially rebuilt a year ago, a few months after the appointment of Magne Draagen as Director of Music. He demonstrates the instrument in a programme highlighting various unique features, to which he draws attention in his own booklet-notes.

The recording does him proud, capturing the almost inaudible Echo division in Ludwig Nielsen's otherwise unremarkable Organ Fantasy based on the Nidaros Cathedral chimes, vividly detailing the broad dynamic sweep of Reger's 'Benedictus' and capturing the climax of Dupré's 'Placare Christe servulus' with ground-shaking intensity. Draagen can be excused for bringing certain stops and features out to play more for reasons of aural display than musical integrity; Widor's 'Marche nuptiale' gets a burst of the harp-like Celesta for no good reason; pedal chimes and a host of mutations go even beyond Karg-Elert's registration directions in the astonishing *Hommage to Handel*; a strangely distant Tuba makes its presence felt in the Handel Hornpipe; and, perversely, the English Solo division with Willis pipework is highlighted in Gigout's *Grand chœur dialogué*.

With so much aural colour to play with, Draagen's own improvisation shows remarkable restraint in its Grieg-like 3'40", while in Eben's 'Moto ostinato', the lovely *Adagio* by Arild Sandvold and, particularly, a discreet account of 'Master Tallis's Testament' we hear this fine organ and intelligent player at their very best.

Marc Rochester