

Chamber

Dane Gade's engaging trios • American brass from the RAM • Argerich in Lugano, 2010

Bacewicz

Piano Quintets^a – No 1; No 2.

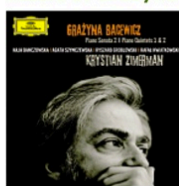
Piano Sonata No 2

Krystian Zimerman *pf*

^aKaja Danczowska, Agata Szyczewska *vms*

^aRyszard Groblewski *va* ^aRafał Kwiatkowski *vc*
DG © 477 8332GH (65' • DDD)

The challenging yet beguiling music of Grażyna Bacewicz



"A lot happens in my music," Bacewicz is quoted as saying. "It's aggressive and at the same time lyrical."

That, according to the booklet writer, "says all that needs to be said about her music".

A moot point. I came to this as a Bacewicz virgin, not knowing what to expect other than what one would anticipate from the composer's dates (1909-69) and nationality (Polish). Sure enough, her music is dissonant, involves complex tone colours, occasionally aleatory features and fearsome technical challenges. Yet all three works here fall back on Classical models, and while there are some gritty passages, I found myself drawn into the sound world with its nods to Prokofiev, Stravinsky, Bartók, Szymanowski and even Ravel.

All three works use the full sonority and dynamic range of the instruments, from the piano's crunching bass clusters in the four-movement Piano Quintet No 1 (1952) and Second Piano Sonata (1953), to the plaintive fragmented string motifs of the *Larghetto* from the Second Piano Quintet (1965). The outer movements of the Sonata make huge demands on Zimerman. He has had the work in his repertoire since the early 1970s (he recorded it in 1977 – Olympia, 12/93) and makes a convincing case for it. Though Bacewicz is unlikely to become a composer of mass popular appeal, this is a fine tribute, vividly recorded.

Jeremy Nicholas

Brahms • Mozart

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Mozart Clarinet Quintet, K581

Oslo Philharmonic Chamber Group (Leif Arne

Pedersen *cl* Elise Båtnes, Pauls Ezergailis *vms* Ida

Bryhn *va* Bjørn Solum *vc*)

LAWO Classics © LW1015 (69' • DDD)

Brahms – selected comparison:

Meyer, *Alban Berg Qt* (7/99) (EMI) 556759-2

Mozart – selected comparison:

Meyer, *Vienna Stg Sextet* (6/89^a) (EMI) 567648-2

Clarity and alertness combine in a classic clarinet quintet pairing



This is music for friends, and these Oslo musicians clearly enjoy playing together; the string quartet members seem especially well matched. In both works

Leif Arne Pedersen chooses largely to eschew the vibrato of older recordings (and, apparently, of Brahms's clarinetist, Richard Mühlfeld), allowing a gain in clarity that the string players don't always take advantage of by drawing out the sap of the inner parts. Their speeds are just sufficiently brisk to prevent the Mozart from drifting into an *Ovaltine* haze as (is this wholly unfair?) clarinet quintets are wont to do.

Pedersen is mellifluous to a fault, however, and he seems to draw the first phrase of the second movement with exquisite calligraphy rather than living within it. An intimate yet ambient acoustic elides the cello presence and draws a further veil against the close listening ear. The Norwegians play with nigh-perfect intonation, at least until the climax of the slow movement of the Brahms, but then so do Sabine Meyer and the old gold of the Wiener Streichsextett (in the Mozart) and also the Alban Berg Quartet (the Brahms). They weigh each phrase, and in leaning into the *Minuet* of the Mozart find a gentle melancholy that eludes the perky Norwegian account. The Brahms is again neatly turned but at points of transition the Norwegians tend to flick a switch where Meyer and friends open a window.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms

'Viola II'

Clarinet Quintet, Op 115 (arr viola)^a. String

Quintet No 2, Op 111^b. Zwei Lieder, Op 91^c

Maxim Rysanov *va* with ^aAlice Coote *mez*

^{ab}Alexander Sitkovetsky, ^aMariana Osipova,

^bBoris Brovtsyn *vms* ^{ab}Julia Deyneka *va* ^{ab}Kristine

Blaumane *vc* ^cAshley Wass *pf*

Onyx © ONYX4054 (81' • DDD • T/D)

Mühlfeld's clarinet swaps places with Rysanov's viola in late Brahms gems



Maxim Rysanov's latest Brahms disc, "Viola II", is a follow-up to "Viola" (1/09). That collection featured the sonatas and trios playable on the viola, while this one

mainly consists of large-scale chamber works from the composer's Indian summer. The Clarinet Quintet may have been inspired by the artistry of a specific musician – Richard Mühlfeld of the Meiningen Orchestra – but Brahms sanctioned the alternative of playing the solo part on the viola (as he would later with his clarinet sonatas). Thus the soloist is a soloist no longer, rather a voice among five similar voices. Yes, it alters the sound and feel of the work but by no means for the worse: the viola becomes truly "first among equals", even in places making the Quintet sound *more* autumnal (the adjective that's usually applied to the work). In the grand G major String Quintet, too, it's striking to note that the first viola is the leading voice almost as often as the first violin (and, indeed, the cello at the work's thrilling opening).

Although the disc is under Rysanov's name, it's 81 minutes of true chamber music-making. It goes without saying that Rysanov is musician enough to know when to take the lead and when to veil his tone to become a supporting voice; his partners match him in technical and interpretative subtlety. The performance of the Clarinet Quintet especially is certainly one to return to for such scintillating playing. The two main works are separated by a pair of songs in which the mezzo of Alice Coote forms a perfect foil to Rysanov's *obbligato* viola.

David Thresher

Debussy • Franck • Ravel

Debussy Violin Sonata Franck Violin Sonata

Ravel Violin Sonata

Jennifer Pike *vn* Martin Roscoe *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10667 (66' • DDD)

Jennifer Pike keeps the emotions in check in a fine French recital



Though it's standard repertoire, this is a recital that's full of interest. Jennifer Pike and Martin Roscoe's account of the Debussy is particularly fine; in a