

especially, distil more human poignancy here, the Tetzlaff bring out all the music's spectral eeriness and are properly terrifying in the Gothic-horror cataclysm of the second 'theme', where the music teeters on the edge of incoherence. After this the Scherzo, the nearest the work gets to normality, has a darting, gossamer lightness – a hint of danger in the fantasy, too, with each accent and dynamic change precisely gauged. The Trio, opening in a barely corporeal *pianissimo*, emerges as a rustic idyll half-heard through a gauze of dream.

Despite my relative disappointment at the slightly dogged finale, I shall certainly return to the Tetzlaff in Schubert's most disturbed, eccentric and enigmatic instrumental work. Some of those epithets fit the Haydn quartet, too, whose opening movement foreshadows Schubert's finale in its rapid, unsettling shifts of tone. The Tetzlaff bring to the whole work the same sensitivity and colouristic imagination they displayed in the Schubert. In the outer movements (the finale rightly taken at a robust *Allegro molto* rather than a helter-skelter *Presto*) they balance energetic directness with an acute awareness of the music's quirky, mysterious aspects. I liked the Tetzlaff's yearning inwardness in the Minuet, and the way they lean on the dissonant, climactic F naturals at the opening. The Trio and the following *Adagio* both have a floating delicacy I have rarely heard equalled, with that fastidious care for balance and creative variety of *piano* and *pianissimo* playing that are hallmarks of the whole disc.

Richard Wigmore

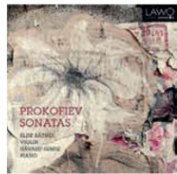
Prokofiev

Violin Sonatas – No 1, Op 80; No 2, Op 94.

Five Melodies, Op 35*bis*

Elisa Bättnes *vn* Håvard Gimse *pf*

LAWO Classics © LWC1118 (65' • DDD)



The Prokofiev violin repertoire has been very fruitfully tapped in recent times, and this new release of the two sonatas and the *Five Melodies* presents something of a dilemma. Not only have we had the Japanese violinist Lisa Oshima in a visceral performance of the First Sonata, but also Alina Ibragimova and Steven Osborne performed both of the sonatas and the *Melodies* on a 2014 Hyperion disc, featured as Recording of the Month here in August

that year. The distinguished Norwegian artists Elise Bättnes and Håvard Gimse offer a different perspective, but it is one that has firm stylistic grounding and a persuasive interpretative viewpoint of its own.

Bättnes and Gimse are recorded much more closely than Ibragimova and Osborne, but on top of that their playing has in general a sharper edge to the projection, which is by no means out of place in this music. One might, at first, question the measured tempo for the *Moderato* first movement of the Second Sonata, which adds well over a minute to the timing on the Ibragimova and Osborne disc. But on repeated listening it works, somehow bringing a touch of unease to the melody's sultriness. In fact in the entire programme, while Ibragimova and Osborne offer telling insights into the music's dynamic and emotional shading, the more forthright approach of Bättnes and Gimse has a valid point to make as well – not that they are in any way wanting when it comes to the allure of lyrical restraint, either in the sonatas or in the *Five Melodies*. Maybe this is not a decisive verdict, but I shall happily live with both versions.

Geoffrey Norris

Selected comparison:

Ibragimova, Osborne (8/14) (HYPE) CDA67514

Rachmaninov

'Pregiera'

Trios élégiaques⁹ – No 1; No 2, Op 9.

Pregiera (arr Kreisler)

Gidon Kremer *vn* Giedrė Dirvanauskaitė *vc*

Daniil Trifonov *pf*

DG © 479 6979GH (67' • DDD)



It would be very easy for Daniil Trifonov, only just 26 and with the world at his feet, to spend his time in the solo spotlight, so it's good to hear him playing chamber music. And this is a fascinating disc, bringing together Trifonov with Gidon Kremer – 70 this year – and cellist Giedrė Dirvanauskaitė, one of the founding members of Kremerata Baltica. Kremer has never stopped exploring and in the promo DG video he talks about this being the right time to be immersed in Rachmaninov: 'Playing his music is like attending a Mass. You enter a spiritual space where every emotion is allowed but the main emotion remains love, which is familiar to everyone.'

The Second Trio sets off with a quiet solemnity, the two string players duetting ardently above the steady tread of the piano. There's much to thrill here, but still more striking are the moments of stillness and the way the movement unfolds seamlessly. The *Maestoso* section (4'40"), where the strings launch into driving triplets, is truly compelling but just listen to the way the tempo relaxes again, the high-lying cello melody (6'00") played with great poise by Dirvanauskaitė.

However, I do find Trifonov makes too much of a meal of the theme for the second-movement variations. The numbers are telling: he takes 2'40"; Berezovsky takes 2'27"; Kozhukhin at the 2011 Lugano Festival a mere 1'43" – the latter two still managing to be eloquent and expressive. But matters improve greatly once the variations begin and there are many moments of great felicity, gossamer figuration in plentiful supply. The finale has all the muscle the music needs – Trifonov's considerable technique comes into its own here – but more importantly there's an urgency of expression that feels entirely natural.

Though the First Trio is a student work, it is immediately recognisable as Rachmaninov and once again these players vividly convey the music's architecture and the ebb and flow of its emotions, from a mood of the quietest intimacy to wild extroversion. There's another rarity to open the disc: Kreisler's *Pregiera* for violin and piano, based on the slow movement of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto, in which we hear to good effect the sheer range of colour in Kremer's playing, particularly potent in the lower registers.

Harriet Smith

Trio No 2 – selected comparison:

Makhtin, Kniazev, Berezovsky
(4/05) (WARN) 2564 61937-2

R Capuçon, Leviomois, Kozhukhin
(10/12) (EMI/WARN) 644701-2

'4 Cities'

Debussy Cello Sonata

Janáček Pohádka. Presto Say Four Cities

Shostakovich Cello Sonata, Op 40

Nicolas Altstaedt *vc* Fazil Say *pf*

Warner Classics © 9029 58672-4 (73' • DDD)



Anyone familiar with the alluring quasi-minimalist music of the Dutch composer