



H. Vieuxtemps: Complete Works for Viola & Piano

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The Strad (Tully Potter - 2003.07.01)

Vieuxtemp's music is melodious and beautifully written, and were this disc its only representation I should welcome it, albeit with misgivings. As things stand, however, it is outclassed by three similar collection.

Thomas Selditz is a member of the superb Gaede Trio and his playing as a soloist has much to recommend it. His articulation is immaculate and he makes an impressive sound; the only problem is that it is the wrong sound for this music. He also commits a few minor stylistic solecisms.

He has hardly begun the well-known B flat major Sonata when he starts including in little bulges of tone, spilling what should be a silky legato. Much of the time his tone is appropriate for Brahms but inappropriate for the music of the Franco-Belgian school. When he gets on to the A string his vibrato tends to flap slightly.

His partner, Vladimir Stoupel, is the kind of pianist who likes to bunch up notes of equal value into knots, so that they become unequal, and he is also heavy-handed in places, I can hardly believe the way they steamroller the last section of the Elegie: turn to some competitors and you hear more meaningful phrases, as if they know the music better. Best of all is Thérèse-Marie Gilissen (Pavane) who glides gracefully through the two sonatas and the Elegie, magnificently partnered by Jean-Claude Anden Eynden. You will also hear elegant playing from Pierre Lénert (Syrius), who, like Selditz, adds the unaccompanied Capriccio. Another remarkably stylish contender is Roberto Diaz (Naxos), who adds yet another piece, the David-Vieuxtemps La Nult, and enjoys a vast price advantage. He, Glissen and Lénert all remind us that the Franco-Belgian style is not extinct.