



Schulhoff - Smit - Gál - Raphael - Tansman

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This appositely programmed flute recital focuses on a quintet of composers whose lives were disrupted, and in two cases ended, by the onset of National Socialism. All five were Jews: Günter Raphael's father had converted to the Lutheran faith, but the composer was still fired from his position at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1934.

Erwin Schulhoff's bright and breezy Flute Sonata dates from March 1927 and was premiered in Paris the following month by René Le Roy with the composer accompanying. It is in most senses a very Francophile work – aerial, light-hearted, with a crisply supportive role for the piano. There's something Poulenc-like about the bittersweet Aria and much savoir faire in the handling of the witty Rondo finale. The Dutch-born Leo Smit also spoke a decidedly French vernacular in much of his music. The Flute Sonata proved to be his last completed work, finished a couple of months before he was shipped East and murdered in Sobibór. It very much defies the circumstances in which it was written. Its airy nonchalance and brash, rhythmically sprung finale – élan to spare – frame the slightly impressionist slow movement that was the last to be written.

Hans Gál's music has won increasing admiration over the last decade or so. The Three Intermezzi are late works, composed in 1974 and form a contrasted trio. The first is a romantic reverie with hints of familiar Gal concerns in Schubert and Brahms. There's a Ländler to occupy the central Intermezzo and a cleverly worked-out finale. Raphael's Flute Sonata was written in 1925 and its opening shows the youthful composer's command of Elysian long-breathed Francophile lyricism. This extrovert, high-spirited and auspicious work marked the 22-year old's promising development. Thematic material is cleverly parceled-out and he draws out the flute's Arcadian and avian qualities alike very adeptly indeed. Finally, there is Alexandre Tansman's Sonatine written in the same year as Raphael's own flute piece. Tansman goes in for terpsichorean vernacular via the Foxtrot and Ragtime, scrunching down via a mordant Notturmo, and leaving the stage with a carefree finale.

Well recorded, Anne-Catherine Heinzmann and Thomas Hoppe prove assiduous and sensitive guides to this repertoire.