audite

Karol Szymanowski & César Franck: Works for Violin & Piano

aud 97.726

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Karol Szymanowski collaborated with the Polish violinist Pavel Kochanski when he wrote his Myths in 1915. These are three movements: 'The Fountain of Arethusa', 'Narcissus', and 'Dryads and Pan'. The composer and his violinist muse worked to extend the coloristic possibilities of the violin and piano duo in these works. These are some of the loveliest works written for this combination. Franziska Pietsch and Detlev Eisinger play this music beautifully, about as fine as David Oistrakh and Vladimir Yampolsky but in much better sound.

Their Franck is not as good. Pietsch again shows that she excels at lower dynamics, but like so many others, she fails to maintain the intensity needed to hold the listener's attention through this hypnotic, half-hour-long work. The only performances I know that I cannot fault in this respect are by David Oistrakh and Sviatoslav Richter and Jacques Thibaud and Alfred Cortot (acoustic recording of 1923). Pietsch's strength, which she demonstrates in the Szymanowski and which was the glory of her Prokofieff disc (Nov/Dec 2016), is her affinity for gestural music. Music that would benefit from a more sustained, belcanto style of tone production and phrasing, like the Franck, does not play to this strength.

Pietsch plays a violin made by Carlo Antonio Testore in 1751, and Detlev Eisinger plays a Bosendorfer piano.

Isabelle Faust and Alexander Melnikov are better in the Franck. Theirs is not the most mesmerizing account, but it is more sustained than the German duo's. Its disc-mate is the Concert by Ernest Chausson for violin and piano with string quartet accompaniment. It is a lovely work with an autumnal mood, characteristic of the inventiveness of the time. The scoring gives it a delicate transparency. Another thing that contributes to the transparency is the use of an Erard piano from 1885. It doesn't have the thick, assertive tone of a modern concert grand and balances the strings beautifully. Both the Sonata and the Concert were written for Eugene Ysaye, and this could account for the use of long melodic lines in the violin in both works.

Faust plays the Vieuxtemps Stradivarius violin of 1710. Good sound.

FRANCK: *Violin Sonata;*
with SZYMANOWSKI: *Myths; Romance*
Franziska Pietsch; Detlev Eisinger, p
Audite 97.726—58 minutes

with CHAUSSON: *Concert*
Isabelle Faust; Alexander Melnikov, p; Salagon Quartet
Harmonia Mundi 902254—67 minutes

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