

Please submit recordings for possible review in a future issue of *Bass World* to ISB, 14070 Proton Rd., Suite 100 LB 9, Dallas, TX 75244, USA

Garden Scene

Joel Quarrington, double bass
Andrew Burashko, piano
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The past 15 months have seen a flurry of recordings featuring Canadian bass virtuoso Joel Quarrington; the release of his second Bottesini CD on Naxos, a duo disc with cellist Coenraad Bloemendal, a *Trout* with Yefim Bronfman, and Marjan Mozetich's *El Dorado* with harpist Caroline Léonardell, and now this outstanding release on the Analekta label. Matched up with his two previous solos CDs and other chamber music recordings like the Mendelssohn sextet this constitutes an impressive catalogue.

Those lucky enough to have been in the Kirkpatrick Theatre at the 2007 convention at Oklahoma City University to hear Joel's ISB debut caught one of the highlights of that week, and for many one of the most impressive double bass recitals ever to grace a convention. This studio CD contains that whole program, including the encore, and the recording captures everything that made that evening so memorable.

The Erich Korngold *Garden Scene* from which the CD takes its title is from a set of pieces for violin and piano that the composer himself arranged from his 1920 incidental

music to Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. It is a very beautiful work, and the breadth of tone and color with which Quarrington imbues this recording is exceptional. His vibrato is expressive and highly varied, and convincingly conjures the scene in Leonato's garden from the beginning of Act Three. Quarrington utilizes a remarkably wide spectrum of colors in this five and a half minute work and is amply matched by the sensitive accompanying of Andrew Burashko.

The performance of Bottesini's D major *Elegy* is gorgeous; a lesson in rubato, Quarrington skillfully threads each phrase with nuance and an ardent delivery worthy of Di Stefano. The popular J.C. Bach/Henri Casadesus Concerto in C minor again demonstrates an exceptional sense of gradation and shading. Technically flawless, the articulation as varied as it is clear; the slow movement is an exceptionally beautiful performance. If one spends a moment to ponder the audacity of the Casadesus family in attributing works of their own composition to J.C. Bach, Mozart, and Handel among others, it is worth remembering that Edouard Nanny was also a member of their 'la Société de concerts des Instruments anciens' for a number of years and may well have been the catalyst for his 'discovery' of one of our most popular Concerti.

Glière's Four Pieces are justifiably among the most popular concert works for the bass today and these recordings are among the finest of this repertoire on record. Quarrington and Burashko both sparkle in the *Scherzo* and make the *Tarantella* sound effortless while ably recalling the frenzied Italian dance. The

ensemble is impeccable throughout and every detail is evident in the recording – kudos to producer Ruberto Occhipinti.

Mieczyslaw Weinberg's Sonata for Solo Contrabass, which concludes this CD, is a terrific recent addition to the concert repertoire for our instrument. The influence of Shostakovich is hard to ignore; the third movement certainly recalls 'A Soldier's Tale' to some degree and while the angular and rhythmic propulsion of much of the material has echoes in countless works, the long melodic lines, especially in the lower registers, sound unique and remarkably well written for the instrument. It is an engaging and compelling work.

This is an exceptional disc in every way, and a very welcome release of some classic and some unknown material. I am fervently hoping that Joel's recital from the 2009 convention likewise makes it to disc in the very near future.

- Review by Robert Nairn

The Dark Side of the Bass

Francesco Fraioli, double bass
Francesco Buccarella, piano
N.B.B. Records NBB23 2009

The Dark Side of the Bass features stunning performances by Italian double bassist Francesco Fraioli with Francesco Buccarella on piano. The CD includes three sonatas for double bass and piano by the composers Vilmos Montag, Hans-Peter Linde and Paul Hindemith. On the first track, the first movement (Allegro moderato) of the Sonata by Vilmos Montag, Fraioli establishes his wide range of dynamic expression and depth of lyricism. Clearly, he is very influenced by one of his teachers, Francesco Petracchi. The entire work demands a legato tone that must be maintained over the wide register and over string crossings. Fraioli's agile shifting and string crossing technique allows him to maintain the dramatic and intense lyricism that the score demands. Aided by the recording engineer's decision to utilize a close mic, he is able to clearly articulate every note of the rapid gestures while sustaining his lyricism throughout. However, it was very surprising to hear him occasionally negate his best qualities by opting to perform some of the spiccato passages very off-the-string. Fraioli's pizzicato tone is supportive, deep,



very sustained, rich in overtones, and most importantly, dark in timbre. This is especially true at the end of the first movement. Perhaps his dark, rich timbre is what inspired the title of the CD. Despite the close mic, which favors clarity of fundamental frequencies and transients of the envelope more than the overtones of the bass, I'm even more impressed at how Fraioli was able to achieve such dark timbres under these circumstances.

The Vilmos Montag Sonata was composed in 1967, but its careful chromaticism and restrained emotion will remind the listener of the conservative romanticism of the cosmopolitan French tradition of the late 19th century. In other words, if you liked César Franck's *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, you will like the Montag. The effective writing is very idiomatic and does not confront the double bassist with unreasonable and unmanageable difficulties. Vilmos Montag wrote the Sonata for his brother, Lajos Montag, a double bassist. The Sonata by Hans-Peter Linde, also written in 1967, will immediately remind listeners of the music of Shostakovich, especially the fugato section of the first movement. Also, like much of the music of Shostakovich, the Sonata by Hans-Peter Linde successfully walks the tightrope between the two extremes demanded by late 20th century audiences. It is accessible to the casual listener, yet the work can also satisfy the more sophisticated listener who also wants to analyze the work on multiple levels. Fraioli's approach on the Linde Sonata differs from the Montag. It is much more passive, careful, and in some places, even introspective in nature. The approach is cautious, carefully studied and rigorously appropriate. It is absolutely *à propos* for the mood of the Linde Sonata. There are formidable double stops in the third movement, and Fraioli executes them with poise and precision.

The final sonata on the CD is Paul Hindemith's *Sonata for Double Bass and Piano* (1949). Fraioli realizes this venerable sta-

ple of 20th century repertoire with distinctive lyricism. Both Fraioli and pianist Francesco Bucciarella eschew the traditional, misguided practice of square, mechanical and cold phrasing that has often plagued performances of the Hindemith Sonata. From the first sustained note, Fraioli shapes each note with sensitive detail drawing from his expressive vibrato and his command of the lyrical strokes in his right-hand bowing technique. The interpretation is fresh and classic all at once. The recording engineers Lorenzo Gerace and Stefano Cappelli are to be commended for their recording of the piano and double bass in an unusual space that would normally invite unwanted resonances and distortions of the sound waves. Not only did they compensate for such an unfavorable environment, they were able to allow the reverberations of the hall to appropriately color the sound of the double bass and piano. The balance of the double bass and piano in terms of volume and frequency distribution across the spectrum allowed for a unification of the two instruments as a chamber ensemble and ultimately empowered the musicians to produce a recording that is both transparent and ideal.

- Review by Jeremy Baguyos

Treble & Bass

Concertos by Ståle Kleiberg
Trondheim Symfoniorkester
Daniel Reuss, Conductor
Göran Sjölin, Double Bass
2L www.2L.no

The CD **Treble & Bass** includes two concertos by Norwegian composer Ståle Kleiberg. One concerto is for double bass and orchestra and the other is for violin and orchestra. Composed in 1999 and premiered soon after in 2000, the Concerto for Double Bass and Orchestra is unapologetically and squarely situated within the stream of 20th century composers who opted to compose with tonal constructs, rhythmic gestures that lend themselves to motivic development, clearly delineated melodic

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