

young virtuoso who will enjoy a fine career. But the Kavenagh is a real treasure, one of the finest guitar recitals I've heard in ages. It belongs in any serious guitar lover's collection.

KEATON

**POPPER:** *4 Cello Concertos*

Martin Rummel; Mari Kato, p; Czech Chamber Philharmonic/ Tekwyn Evans

Naxos 573930—79 minutes

Martin Rummel has made a habit of recording the music of 19th Century cellist and composer David Popper (1843-1913). He has done the entire High School of cello playing (a mere 40 etudes) and more (Musicaphon 56858; N/D 2004). Now here he is with the three cello concertos plus a fourth, played with piano accompaniment though the liner notes claim that orchestra parts exist for it. Well, it sounds fine this way and I know of no other recording of it.

These concertos are not the kind of virtuosic music one might expect from a writer of cello etudes. Primarily they are music to be heard and enjoyed, with as much work for the orchestra as for the soloist, lyrical and imaginative. Rummel's readings are beautifully played and slightly more sensitively related to the orchestral accompaniments than on the previous recording by Wen-Sinn Yang (CPO 777 821; J/F 2015). Part of that is that this recording is a little richer in sound. Also, the addition of the last concerto, published in 1900 and dedicated to Alfredo Piatti, is a distinct plus, though it would be nice to hear it with orchestra.

D MOORE

**POULENC:** *Cello Sonata*; see Collections

*Figure Humaine*; see FAURE

*Organ Concerto*; see RACHMANINOFF

**PRICE:** *Symphonies 1+4*

Fort Smith Symphony/ John Jeter

Naxos 559827—68 minutes

Florence Price's time has come. Performances of her music have been springing up, including two in Boston. (I was privileged to perform in one and substitute in rehearsals of another.) Now recordings are appearing. Price (*nee* Smith, 1887-1953) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas to a mixed race couple. Because no white teachers would teach her, her music instructor mother gave her lessons in piano and composition. Florence played her first recital at 4 and produced her first piece at 11.

After graduating as high school valedictorian, she enrolled at the New England Conservatory—one of few conservatories to accept African-American students (though for a while she "passed" as Mexican at the request of her mother). At NEC, she studied piano, organ, and composition. Her main teachers were Frederick Converse and George Whitefield Chadwick. After graduating with honors in 1906, she moved back to Arkansas as a teacher, and then to Atlanta, Georgia where she taught at Clark University and married civil rights lawyer Thomas Price. The couple moved to Little Rock, where she taught music and her husband helped found the Arkansas chapter of the NAACP.

After Arkansas's racial atmosphere turned threatening in 1927, the Prices moved to Chicago, where her career blossomed. She attended the Chicago Musical College, University of Chicago, and the American Conservatory of Music, and also studied with Leo Sowerby and Roy Harris. She joined the Chicago Music Association, which became part of the National Association of Negro Musicians and won several prizes. Support came from Chicago Black Renaissance, especially Estelle Bonds, who befriended her. So did Langston Hughes and contralto Marian Anderson, who sang many of her songs and arrangements, and W.E.B. Du Bois, with whom she corresponded. After her divorce, Price supported her two daughters as a teacher, organist for silent films, orchestrator for WGN radio, plus fees for her works, including popular songs written under a pseudonym. She produced over 300 pieces, including 4 symphonies (the second one lost), 3 piano concertos, 2 violin concertos, chamber works, art songs, choral works, organ works for Black churches, spiritual arrangements, etc. At the behest of composer John Alden Carpenter, Price was inducted into the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers in 1940.

Florence Price died from a stroke on June 3, 1953 while preparing for a trip to Europe. Her music seemed condemned to die with her, partly because of her gender and race, but also because she was one of many neoromantic and neoclassical composers swept aside by the modernism that dominated classical music in the following decades. Her death left her silent until recently, when the music of several bypassed composers has reappeared in concert halls and recordings. In her case, there was a bonus when in 2009 a big collection of her scores, papers, etc. was found in an aban-

doned house being prepared for renovation. The owner learned that the house was Price's summer home, and sent material long thought lost to the University of Arkansas, which owns most of her scores and documents (though *The Oak* is at the Eastman School of Music).

Price's music is richly romantic and often modal or pentatonic. Orchestral textures are full and warm, but not dense or heavy because of her emphasis on melody. Much of her work combines the spirit, style, and sound of Dvorak and, at the encouragement of Chadwick, an infusion of the American South, African-American blues, hymns, jazz, and spirituals. Her use of popular materials likens her to Aaron Copland and Charles Ives, but Price's sound is less brilliant and sharp than Copland, less modernistic and Yankee than Ives, and her blending of materials is different from both.

In 1932, Price won two composition prizes from the Wanamaker Foundation: First for her Symphony No. 1 and Third for her Piano Sonata. Frederick Stock programmed the symphony with the Chicago Symphony in 1933, making it the first piece by an African-American woman to be played by a major American orchestra. Stock became a strong advocate, unlike Serge Koussevitzky, who helped many American composers but paid no heed to Price's solicitations.

It is easy to hear what impressed the Wanamaker committee and Stock. The First Symphony is a substantial and congenial work. Listening to it is pulling up an "easy chair" and relaxing, and it invites rehearsals. Its strongest "classical" influence is Dvorak's *New World Symphony* followed perhaps by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. Annotator Douglas Shadle writes that I "combines a brooding agitation reminiscent of Johannes Brahms's orchestral music in minor keys...and a flair for the grand gesture akin to William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony*". I agree but hear its overall tone as closer to Dvorak than Brahms. The first movement is basically made up of busy, relatively fast, but leisurely and syncopated material plus a dreamy lazy summer day "ballad". The music is linear in the way it passes ideas through its full textures at various tempos. The most striking and touching movement is the Largo Maestoso, which begins with an old-fashioned Salvation Army-style chorale played by a brass choir and repeated like a rondo theme. Some of the structuring resembles a call-and-response church service. III is a dance movement Price often called a Juba, defined by Shadle as "an

antebellum slave style characterized by complex body percussion (foot stomping, chest patting) and syncopated melodies". IV is a *perpetuum mobile* in the form of a jig.

The Fourth Symphony is similar in tone and bluesy style, but more compact and intricate as it plays with smaller figures, still in linear fashion. Shadle's description of the first movement as kaleidoscopic is a good one. The short slow movement recalls the wistful Largo in Dvorak's *New World Symphony*, with the cello replacing the English horn but in a less starring role. It works with small figures passing among the winds, almost like variations in places. III is a Juba in ABABA form. A is rhythmic and syncopated in an angular sort of way. Shadle describes B as "a long, sinewy melody...underpinned by pizzicato strings...in musical language [that] strongly evokes Duke Ellington's 'jungle style,' which had become his signature by this time". The Finale is a Scherzo, alternating lively sections of exuberance with sharp punches and stabs. After a solo bassoon says enough is enough, the orchestra regathers and rushes to the conclusion.

These are excellent performances—possibly the best I have heard of Florence Price's music. Conductor Jeter has a good feel for it, the Fort Smith Symphony acquits itself in stellar fashion, and the sound is natural. Shadle's notes supply a fine introduction to Price and the two symphonies. I look forward to more such recordings.

HECHT

## PURCELL: *Songs*

Anna Dennis, s; James Akers, g; Julian Perkins, hpsi; Sounds Baroque

Resonus 10235—67:29

This release is titled "Sweeter than Roses: Songs by Henry Purcell", but it actually has more varied contents, and not just by Purcell.

It is certainly true that we are given 12 of his individual songs (many from theater scores). But we also have two songs by Henry Lawes (1596-1662) and instrumental pieces by two foreign composers active in England in Purcell's time.

One of those is the pioneer guitarist Francesco Corbetta (1615-81), whose four-movement Suite in C is played by Akers. The other is Giovanni Battista Draghi (1640-1708), who was a sometime competitor with Purcell. Perkins plays Draghi's six-movement Harpsichord Suite in E minor. These are perhaps pleasant novelties, but they are not at all on

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