



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Bonis: *Entre Soir et Matin*. Sandrine Cantoreggi, violin. Sheila Arnold, fortepiano. AVI.

Mélanie Bonis was born into a conservative middle-class family in Paris in 1858, in an era when proper women were discouraged from becoming musicians. Yet her genius could not be contained, and by the age of 16 she was enrolled in César Franck's composition class, where her fellow conservatoire students included Debussy, Ravel, and Satie. As she began her professional life, she shortened her name to Mel, in order to disguise her gender. Stylistically, she was not as daring as her classmates, looking backward instead to the French romantic style of Fauré. This 2-CD collection of chamber music displays a supremely elegant and heartfelt manner. The preponderance of the program here is music for violin and piano, but there is also a flute trio and a cello trio, as well as an especially lovely work for cello and piano. Much of the material is constructed of extended and intertwined lyricism, and the young musicians on this recording deliver it with beautiful technique and relaxed pacing. Perhaps Bonis will join the ranks of previously neglected female composers who are currently undergoing revivals, such as Louise Farrenc, Florence Price, and Grażyna Bacewicz. On the basis of this splendid recording, she certainly deserves to. **PB**

Further Listening: Fauré: Piano Quintets (Nash Ensemble/CRD)

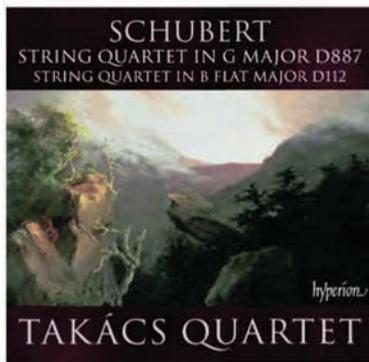


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Takács Assad Labro. Takács Quartet. Yarlung.

This release Yarlung Records hits the trifecta—engaging unfamiliar music, committed performances, and spectacular sound. Clarice Assad is a Brazilian-American composer/pianist, who moves effortlessly between classical, jazz, and popular idioms. She accompanies her own scat singing on two selections (*Luminous* and Milton Nascimento's *Cravo e Canela*) while *Constellation* for violin and piano features a touchingly songful slow movement. Completely different is the slashing, angular *Clash* for bandoneón and string quartet. Bryce Dessner's quasi-minimalist *Circles* is scored for the same forces, and Julien Labro, the album's featured bandoneón virtuoso, contributes *Meditation No. 1*, an eight-minute reverie for this instrumental grouping, as well. Kaija Saariaho's *Nocturne*, for solo violin, fits the program's aura of anxious melancholia. The Takács Quartet is approaching their semicentennial, and although only the cellist remains from the original ensemble, the group's intensity and technical fluency is intact. Yarlung's sonics are revelatory. Balances are believable, and although the recorded perspective isn't immediate, Assad's first vocal entrance on the Nascimento piece made me jump. I listened to the program as a 24/88 WAV file; a DSD version, CD, and vinyl options are also available. **AQ**

Further Listening: Piazzolla *Cien Años* (Mosalini)



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Schubert: *String Quartets*. Takács Quartet. Hyperion.

Topic for later consideration: Why do we hear less chamber music on the radio and in concert halls than we used to? For now: Kudos to the Takács String Quartet! Formed in Budapest in 1975—with one of the original members, cellist András Fejér, still playing—and based in the U.S. since 1983, the group has recorded widely, if not particularly adventurously (note the exception reviewed by Andrew Quint in this issue), for Hungaroton, Decca, and Hyperion, and continues to play at a very high level. The main work here is the vast and astonishing G Major Quartet. Composed in 1826, it is close-kin to the Quintet in C, D. 956, having the same expansiveness, the same three key-area first movement exposition, and speaking things utterly new to the language of chamber music—like the unearthly crescendos on long notes, and the Brucknerian tremolos played, seemingly, on a single hair of the bow. You sense, to paraphrase Stefan George's "Rapture," that you really are feeling the air of a different planet. The Takács foursome make the whole piece interesting, similarly the early B flat quartet, with a welcome unanimity of gesture and attack. Excellent sound, too... heavy breathing and foot-tapping included. **TL**

Further Listening: Schubert: *Death and the Maiden Quartet* (Takács/Hyperion); Schubert: *Quartet in G* (Takács/Decca/2003 recording)