

John Walz: A Tribute to Pierre Fournier

1-3	Martinu	Sonata No. 1 for ‘cello and piano	17:51
		1. Poco allegro	06:06
		2. Lento	05:50
		3. Allegro con brio	05:55
		<i>with Edith Orloff, piano</i>	
4-7	Vivaldi	Concerto in E Minor for ‘cello and orchestra	12:36
		<i>Orchestrated by Paul Bazelaire</i>	
		1. Largo	03:06
		2. Allegro	03:23
		3. Siciliène	03:52
		4. Allegro	02:14
		<i>with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Freeman</i>	
8-12	Couperin	“Pièces en Concert”	13:33
		<i>Orchestrated and assembled by Paul Bazelaire</i>	
		1. Prélude	02:15
		2. Siciliène	02:47
		3. La Tromba	01:38
		4. Plainte	04:58
		5. Air de Diable	01:54
		<i>with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Freeman</i>	
13-15	Martinu	Concerto No. 1 for ‘cello and orchestra (1955 version)	27:36
		1. Allegro moderato	10:25
		2. Andante moderato	09:40
		3. Allegro - Andantino - Tempo 1	07:31
		<i>with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Freeman</i>	

Notes by Roger Lebow

Bohuslav Martinu (1890 - 1959) deserves his rightful place in our standard concert repertoire. On the strength of his six masterful symphonies alone we should embrace him as one of the leading composers of the Twentieth Century. His style is a distinctive, original amalgam of Czech nationalism, French Post-Impressionism, and the emancipated rhythmic vitality of Stravinsky. This music sounds fresh today, and we can immediately identify it as Martinu.

The two pieces for 'cello on this album serve an excellent introduction to the composer's music. Martinu wrote prolifically for the instrument: three sonatas, two large concerti, two additional concerti with chamber forces, several other concertante works, and a gaggle of smaller pieces, many of them infrequently performed on these shores.

In his first incarnation of Martinu's first 'cello concerto, the composer scored the work as a concerto grosso with accompaniment of seven winds, piano and strings. He began this early version in Czechoslovakia and completed it in Paris in 1930. Gaspar Cassadó, to whom Martinu dedicated the work, played the premiere in 1931. In August of 1939 Martinu rewrote the piece for full orchestra, entrusting the first performance to Pierre Fournier. The composer created the final revision used for this recording in 1955 in response to Martinu's professed "shock at the bad orchestration" of the 1939 version. The 'cello part remained intact in this last version, but the composer lightened the orchestration considerably.

Martinu first arrived in Paris in 1923, drinking in the heady melange of local music: Ravel, Satie and *Les Six*, a vigorous community of mostly American jazz musicians, and of course, Igor Stravinsky. Stravinsky's neoclassical period pervaded, even as late as 1930. So the 'cello concerto's jaunty opening, with its homage to baroque sensibilities, is very much of its time. This theme returns throughout the movement very much like the *ritornello* of a baroque concerto. A lyrical second theme provides a wistful foil to the exuberance of this main subject. Though the expansive central *cadenza* is a technical tour de force, it also develops these two elements.

Throughout the concerto Martinu writes surpassingly idiomatic music for his 'cello soloist. Martinu was an adept violinist, and prior member of the Czech Philharmonic. He exploits not only the stratospheric range of the 'cello, but also its lower register, which is, after all, its special glory.

Martinu renders the fervent Slavic character of the *Andante Moderato* more piquant by his use of a thrillingly adventuresome harmonic language reflecting the twin influences of Stravinsky and Martinu's Parisian teacher, Albert Roussel. The wind soloists take turns partnering the 'cello in an intricate *Arioso* which, as so often with Martinu, proceeds with an asymmetrical lilt. The middle section of the movement begins with yet another *cadenza*, this even more harmonically far-ranging, its textures recalling the counterpoint of Bach's solo violin writing.

In the third movement we return to the motoric vigor of the eighteenth century. As befits a *finale*, Martinu's writing offers a prevailing caprice and lightness of character, thrown into even greater relief by a wistful slow episode that recalls the elegiac mood of the second movement.

This concerto deserves a revered place in the repertoire. It offers all one could ask for: it embraces a wide emotional range, showcases the soloist brilliantly, and offers an ingratiating and immediately accessible experience for the audience.

By contrast with his first 'cello concerto, Martinu's Sonata No. 1 is slender in proportions (barely half its duration). However, this major work excels both in its expression and in its formal construction. Martinu completed this sonata in Paris on May 12th, 1939. Czechoslovakia had fallen to the Nazis. This sonata embodies the furor of the painful storm soon to engulf Europe and the western world. Indeed the sonata possesses a roiling gravity absent from the sunnier concerto, or indeed from any of his Parisian works. The piece premiered in Paris one year later, on the 19th of May 1940, in a performance by Pierre Fournier and the noted Czech pianist Rudolf Firkusny. The Germans, poised to enter Paris as the work premiered, captured the city shortly thereafter. This was Martinu's last work played before the capital fell. The composer soon fled the city, first to the south of France, then to the United States, where he remained until the end of the war.

Bleak news from home may have inspired Martinu to give the first movement of his sonata its particularly Czech flavor. In contrast to the first movement's activity and strife, the *Lento* reveals an introspective and solemn discourse between piano and 'cello. Even the finale, where one might expect the mood to lighten, begins with strife and remonstrance, changing only mid-movement to the more desperately optimistic tone that eventually prevails. In later years, recalling Fournier and Firkusny's stirring account of the sonata, Martinu would write, "The view of those present was that it was the

last greeting, the last ray from a better world. For some few moments we grasped what music can give and how it can make us forget reality.”

Antonio Vivaldi’s “*Cello Concerto in E Minor*” comes to us as a gift from Paul Bazelaire (1886-1958) who orchestrated one of Vivaldi’s most popular ‘cello sonatas. Paul Bazelaire ranked among the best known pedagogues of his day. Indeed Pierre Fournier, to whom this album is dedicated, studied with Bazelaire. Today we remember Bazelaire chiefly for his transcriptions, including both this Vivaldi concerto as well as the Couperin suite on this album. Even those schooled in “historically-informed” performance will grant that these are tasteful and extremely skillful translations, and only the most curmudgeonly musical Luddite could listen to these accounts with ungladdened heart.

Vivaldi composed prolifically for the ‘cello: nine sonatas (about a tenth of his total sonata output) and 27 outstanding concerti (only a few of which are in use today, mostly by students). The “red priest” (Vivaldi was celebrated for his hair, as was that other volatile redheaded composer, Hector Berlioz) had a reputation for extravagant, arrogant, egotistical behavior. During his lifetime (1678 - 1741), Vivaldi’s music struck his audiences as startlingly modern. Another century’s critics might have called him avant-garde; and true enough, all of his concerts were new music concerts.

By contrast with his violin concerti, the expressive impulse behind this music is not overtly virtuosic. The spirit of opera inspires this concerto, rather than the dawning age of the great ‘cello virtuosi. Vivaldi wrote over 50 operas (though he characteristically bragged that he created twice that number), and his vocal music sensibilities manifest themselves in this delightful concerto.

The great J. S. Bach counted François Couperin (1668 - 1733) among his inner circle of correspondents, and regarded Couperin’s music highly. We knew less of Couperin’s music until recent years because the music he wrote for harpsichord translates less well into piano transcription than did the many works of Bach. Nor have modern orchestras included his chamber works in concert as readily as contemporary ensembles present the Brandenburg Concerti, for example. The recent early music revival has happily boosted Couperin’s reputation, and modern recordings of his works abound. But before Paul Bazelaire transcribed the several movements collected as *Pièces en Concert* in the mid 1920s, few had heard Couperin’s music since 1750.

Bazelaire extracted *Pièces en Concert* from several suites in a large collection published in 1724 (though likely written over a period of several years), entitled *Les Goûts-réunis*. The title refers to the “reunification” of French and Italian musical styles, which for a quarter-century had each clamored for the attention of the Parisian musical public. Couperin had himself composed many pieces in both French and Italian manner, but the composer intended this collection to unite the French and Italian styles into a single coherent collection. In *Pièces en Concert*, the *Prélude* and *Plainte* are in the French style, the others Italian.

Couperin did not specify the instrumentation for this music (another collection from the same period might, he wrote, be played on harpsichord, with or without violin, flute, oboe, viola da gamba, or bassoon), though it would not have been played on the ‘cello. Couperin’s era considered the ‘cello to be a lumpen poor relative of the viola da gamba, which reigned supreme in the instrumental pantheon. Today we find the ‘cello extremely presentable, I’m happy to say, and Bazelaire’s transcription makes a valuable addition to the ‘cello repertoire.

- *Roger Lebow*

Reviews

John Walz: A Tribute to Pierre Fournier

John Walz possesses not only musicianship; he also possesses showmanship. He plays the cello with a... flair that is hard to match, and that remains his legacy when the concert is over....

Walz imposes his presence. There is something romantic about him.... He has a fine lyrical sense, balancing shading with warmth. And he has a fine dramatic sense, marking contrast and dynamic changes with a skill that shows a knowledge of the piece’s structure.

- *Jean-Pierre Barricelli*

...the pianist Edith Orloff, the cellist John Walz... play with warmth, expertise and unanimity.

- *New York Times*

Orloff’s firm, articulate command of the brilliant keyboard part might have easily overshadowed less fluent string players. Fortunately, Walz’s generous, warm timbre and eloquent phrasing engaged the listener’s ear....

- *Los Angeles Times*

His radiant, full tone and flawless technique were matched by an extraordinary degree of expressivity. [Walz] savored every note and every phrase, but his playing never lost its momentum and sense of purpose.

- *Los Angeles Times*

John Walz sparkled as the soloist.... His performance combined singing warmth with emotional restraint, clean virtuosity with intelligent, propelling accents.

- *Los Angeles Times*

Artist's Notes

In 1965, when I was 12 years old, my mother gave me a recording of the Vivaldi *'Cello Concerto in E Minor* and the *Pièces en Concert* by Couperin. I was especially excited by this LP because I was learning the Vivaldi concerto at the time. The artist on this recording was the great French 'cellist, Pierre Fournier, accompanied by Karl Munchinger and the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra. I still have this record, and I treasure it. One year later, I heard Fournier in person for the first time. He performed the Dvorak 'cello concerto with Zubin Mehta conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic. It was an evening I'll never forget, and one that changed my life forever. I remember the sheer beauty of Fournier's sound, his profound respect for the music, and the depth of his musical expression. In 1973, I had the privilege of playing for him in Phoenix, Arizona, and was thrilled that he made it possible for me to study with him. I went to Geneva, Switzerland for master classes the following summer, and thus began a long and cherished relationship with this great artist. I worked on virtually all the standard repertoire with him, including the Martinu, Vivaldi and Couperin on this album.

I dedicated my 2006 concert tour to Fournier in honor of his centennial. I chose works either written for him or closely associated with him. In addition to the recitals, we also performed the Martinu *Concerto No. 1* with Paul Freeman and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. As I traveled around Europe and the United States doing these programs, I met so many musicians who remembered Fournier with the greatest of admiration. Over and over I heard colleagues say, "If I had to choose just one 'cellist to listen to, it would be Fournier." There is no greater tribute.

- *John Walz*

Producer's Notes

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John plays a Johann Adam Martin 'cello made in 1765 in Markneukirchen, Saxony. Interestingly for the Martinu works on this album, Markneukirchen (in the country of Germany today) lies just over the border from the present day Czech Republic. John uses a bow by Emil Ouchard, made in Paris ca. 1920. Edith Orloff plays New York Steinway Concert & Artists piano number 430, a hybrid of sorts. It was made in New York, and has that characteristic "New York" linearity of tone, control, and size. But it has the Hamburg Steinway lacquer finish, which may contribute to that extra sparkle in the tone, especially in the treble. Additionally, this piano has a lighter action than traditional New York Steinways, which makes it more like the German pianos.

For the Martinu sonata we chose an Austrian AKG C-24 stereo microphone with the original brass surround CK12 tube. We used Yarlung-Records-designed interconnects with a flat silver ribbon suspended in air for the dielectric, customized vacuum tube preamplifiers, no mixer, and recorded directly to two tracks sampled at 176,400 samples per second at 24 bit depth.

We are grateful to Jan Kotzmann for engineering the Prague recordings, and to Maestro Paul Freeman for conducting the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

Engineers Steve Hoffman, Kevin Gray and I worked at AcousTech Mastering at RTI in Camarillo to convert these high resolution tracks to CD Audio.

Bob Attiyeh, *producer*



Paul Freeman



Edith Orloff



John Walz

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4-7 **Vivaldi** **Concerto in E Minor for 'cello and orchestra**
Orchestrated by Paul Bazelaire
8-12 **Couperin** **"Pièces en Concert"**
Orchestrated and assembled by Paul Bazelaire
13-15 **Martinu** **Concerto No. 1 for 'cello and orchestra** (*1955 version*)

Martinu Sonata with Edith Orloff, piano.
All orchestral tracks with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra,
conducted by Paul Freeman

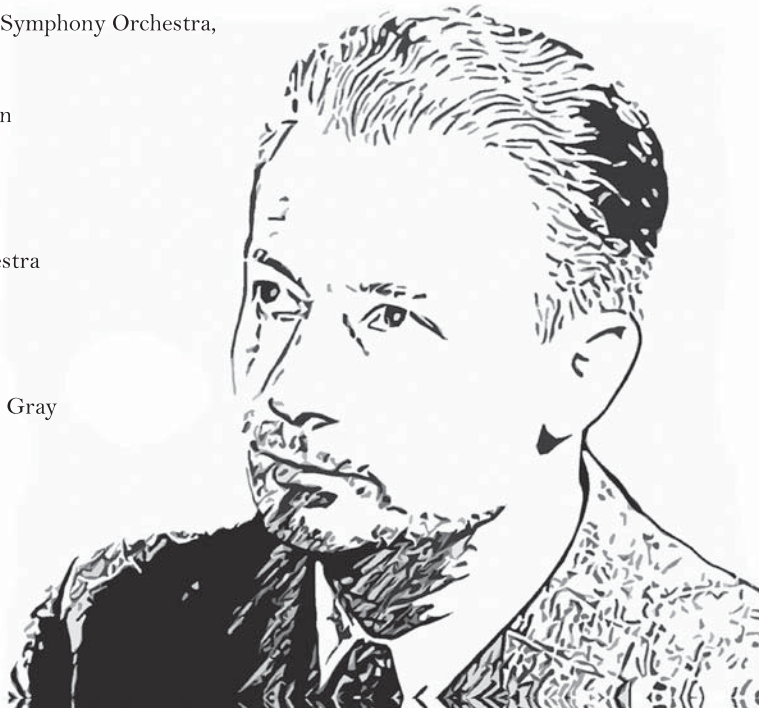
Martinu Sonata Recorded October 3rd, 2007 in
Zipper Hall at Colburn School, Los Angeles
Recording Engineer: Bob Attiyeh
Steinway Technician: Kevin Stock

Tracks with Czech National Symphony Orchestra
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Recording Engineer: Jan Kotzmann

Monitoring Equipment: Acoustic Image
Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman & Kevin Gray

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