

**From the Heartland: Music by David McIntyre, Elizabeth Raum and Sid Robinovitch.** Performers: Erika Raum, violin; David Moroz, piano. 1 compact disc (51:46). Toronto: CMC Centrediscs 15410, 2010. Contents: Dance set no. 2 / Sid Robinovitch (13:49) – Sonata no. 2 for piano and violin, “Sprints” / David L. McIntyre (14:02) – *Les Ombres*; Sonata for violin and piano / Elizabeth Raum (9:38) (14:17). \$17.98

*From the Heartland* contains works for violin and piano by three Western Canadian composers—David McIntyre and Elizabeth Raum, who both reside in Regina, and Sid Robinovitch, a composer based in Winnipeg. The compositions are performed by the duo of Erika Raum, violin, and David Moroz, piano. All the works on this disc were written for Raum, a leading performer of Canada’s classical music stage.

The opening work is Robinovitch’s five-movement Dance Set no. 2. The work dates from 2003 and was a commission by Prairie Debut for Raum and Moroz, who premiered the composition in the fall of that year. The titles of the movements are, in order, “Strut,” “Waltz,” “Tango,” “Processional” and “Ragtime.” As the titles suggest, each movement is based on the rhythm and style of a particular dance. Essentially, each movement is a modified ternary form, with the return of the opening material truncated. The character of the string writing works exceedingly well and there is a wonderful interplay between the two instruments. There also is a strong overall arch to the composition generated by this particular ordering of the five movements. Despite some attractive features, notably the imaginative interplay between the violin and piano, the composition occasionally slips into a pastiche that is uncomfortably similar to that of Shostakovich.

McIntyre’s Sonata no. 2, subtitled “Sprints,” was written on commission for Raum, who premiered it at the Women’s Musical Club Series at Walter Hall, University of Toronto, in 1996. This is an engaging work, suffused with exuberance and excitement. There is a sense of textural and formal clarity, as well as a harmonic language in all three movements, that suggests more than a passing influence of Ravel and Roussel. Having said this, McIntyre is his own man, and has deftly integrated their neo-classicism into his style.

The first movement, marked “Lightly,” is filled with contrasts of moods, dynamics and textural changes. Yet, these compositional attributes are at service to the movement’s arch design; particularly effective is the return of the hauntingly beautiful piano figuration of the opening at the outset of the coda. The second movement, although marked “Languorously,” is essentially an allegro in ternary design, with a passionate, slow introduction and a postlude. The finale, also a ternary design, is a three-and-a-half minute high-spirited romp. Ravel’s influence is particularly evident in the intricate piano writing and the textural interplay between the two instruments.

The next two works, the 1989 *Les Ombres*, and the 1995 Sonata for Violin and Piano, were written by the violinist’s mother, Elizabeth Raum. Both works are typical of her style. The music is unabashedly conservative in approach with overt tonal centres, unambiguous formal designs

and an avoidance of avant-garde techniques. Some might view these features as negative attributes, but the writing itself is highly assured from the technical point of view. Raum knows exactly what can be expected from the performer and delivers two musical scores that demand the gamut of technical skill, from the simple and sensitive to the complex and virtuosic.

The single-movement *Les Ombres* is in three parts: part one contains interplay between the two instruments with a first theme; part two contains a second interchange with theme two; and part three brings both themes together. The Sonata is in three movements. The first movement is a six-minute dynamo of fiery energy encased in a sonata design. Movement two, marked “Andante con espressione,” is an ardent utterance of emotion that contains a slightly more animated central section. The sizzling energy of the first movement returns for the finale, a three-part fugue.

Given that all these compositions were written specifically for Raum, the recording can be considered authoritative as well as a testament to her artistry. This is not to diminish Moroz’s contribution. He is an outstanding pianist and a near-perfect collaborative partner. Put simply, this is a superb example of what inspired chamber music playing can be. The sound quality, clarity and ambience of the recording are all excellent. The informative bilingual booklet contains valuable details about the three composers and the performers.

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