

Fancies and Interludes. Performers: Jacques Israelievitch, violin; Christina Petrowska Quilico, piano. Toronto: Centrediscs CMC-CD 21315, 2015. 1 compact disc (69:05). Contents: *Duo for violin and piano* / Oskar Morawetz (8:33) – *Drop* / James Rolfe (9:32) – *...and the dark time flowed by her like a river* / Gary Kulesha (11:23) – *Fancies and Interludes VI* / Raymond Luedeke (39:37).

It is tricky to choose pieces for a contemporary classical CD especially when there is no unifying theme connecting the program or the composers. *Fancies and Interludes* is a recording of works for violin and piano written by four eminent Canadian composers and performed by the late Jacques Israelievitch, violin, and Christina Petrowska Quilico, piano. Israelievitch had a distinguished career as a concertmaster, soloist, chamber musician, teacher, and conductor. Christina Petrowska Quilico is an award-winning pianist and professor at York University. In this CD we hear an astounding level of virtuosity. Both performers also deliver eloquent interpretations filled with individuality and rich expression.

Originally titled *Rondo*, Oskar Morawetz's *Duo for violin and piano* was composed in 1947 and premiered in 1948. The work is highly regarded in the Canadian violin repertoire and frequently performed and recorded. However, I find that the music does not leave an original imprint on the listener; it tends to go in one ear and out the other. Israelievitch's performance also lacks somewhat in musical brilliance and, very occasionally, the sound of the violin is not of its best quality. Quilico, on the other hand, is a world-class performer and we enjoy her virtuoso technique and classy presentation throughout.

I also believe Morawetz should have kept the original title of the piece since the work follows the classical rondo form. Morawetz explains that "to my great surprise not only laymen but even professional musicians seem to think that the word RONDO implies a work of a happy nature and that certainly does not fit the character of this composition." Still, as musicians and artists we must always educate, provoke and challenge the audience by being authentic and sincere in our expression in the art medium of our choice, if we wish to see change and progress.

Born in Ottawa, James Rolfe is one of Canada's leading classical composers. *Drop* was composed in 1998 and premiered in Toronto in 1999. In this piece minimalist techniques are employed with rhythmical patterns that escalate and spiral from the opening passages. The piano doubles the violin melody in the memorable middle section; the synchronization of the instruments in unison is admirable. *Drop* has a special authenticity which creates an



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atmosphere that fascinates the listener. I applaud the interpretation and superb technical execution of both performers.

Gary Kulesha's mysterious and beautiful composition, *...and dark times flowed by her like a river*, was written in 1993; the title is taken from a novel by Thomas Wolfe. As a violinist, I was fascinated by the diverse violin techniques and musical language that Kulesha uses, which make the piece very appealing. I can feel the excitement of the musicians and how deeply the piece affects them by the way they transcend the musical execution. The sound is rich and resonates with remarkable impact. There is a variety of nuance, colour, and character infused into the piece that is delivered through the intelligent interpretation of both performers. This is a perfect example where the essence of the composition moves the musicians and the listener.

Raymond Luedeke's piece, *Fancies and Interludes VI*, was written for Israelievitch. A virtuoso display piece for violin and piano, it is almost forty minutes long and at times is repetitive. The interludes are played pizzicato by the pianist plucking the strings inside the instrument. Each of the interludes consists of between two and five notes that bring the listener to a quiet point before the new material is introduced. Throughout the composition the dominating percussive rhythms of the piano are in contrast to the violin, which often has lyrical melodies or shimmering chains of notes in fast rhythm. In all of the fancies we hear layers of diverse rhythm that sound increasingly agitated at places. The development of each fancy episode, as well as the transitional interludes, is essential for the form of the piece. The violin enters in the last interlude and finishes with a cadence that concludes the piece. Jacques Israelievitch and Christina Petrowska Quilco deliver a performance of excellent musicality.

The music of this CD will challenge many listeners, but the performers are presented in a most favourable light. I recommend this recording to listeners who enjoy contemporary classical music. The program notes are quite thorough and the sound quality is exceptional.

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