

From “Classical Source”

Gál

Symphony No.4 (Sinfonia concertante), Op.105

Schumann

Symphony No.2 in C, Op.61

David Le Page (violin), Christopher Allan (cello), Diane Clark (flute) & Sally Harrop (clarinet)
[Gál]

Orchestra of the Swan
Kenneth Woods

Recorded 5-6 December 2011 in Civic Hall, Stratford-upon-Avon, England

CD Number

AVIE RECORDS (AV2231)

By Colin Anderson



Avie here continues its survey of the music of Hans Gál (1890-1987) with the first recording of his Fourth Symphony, the second Orchestra of the Swan/Kenneth Woods release coupling Gál's and Robert Schumann's four symphonies. (Gál authored sympathetically about Schumann's music. Avie has already issued Thomas Zehetmair's recording of Gál's first two symphonies; maybe Zehetmair will go on to also record Gál's foursome.)

Gál's (36-minute) Fourth Symphony dates from 1974, the composer in his mid-eighties and remaining a creative force, and is scored for four soloists and a Classical-sized orchestra. Four also informs the number of movements. It's a bewitching work. Anyone responding to Richard Strauss's last music (such as Horn Concerto No.2, *Metamorphosen*, and *Capriccio*), often referred to as 'autumnal', will find much to like in Gál's expressive and pastoral first movement. The piroetting scherzo owes something to Columbine and Harlequin (of *commedia dell'arte* fame); the slow movement is deeply-felt; and the finale is entitled 'Buffoneria' and is a delight. This first recording of Gál 4 is admirable, players whether soloists or ensemble at the top of their game), the music's deep-seated expertise unravelled for the listener's pleasure.

Robert Schumann's Second is one of the greatest of symphonies. Period! It's a wonderful outpouring, at once deeply personal and vividly outgoing. Energy and eloquence combine for a score that simply stays fresh, thrilling and entrancing with each and every outing (even the dodgy ones!). Kenneth Woods and his willing band of Swans give a superb performance, lithe, neat, nimble, poetic (the glorious slow movement really touches the heart) and passionate. A chamber performance it may be, but there's no lack of power and passion when required and it's also a reading studied with detail: woodwinds, brass and timpani revealingly balanced with the strings (violins helpfully antiphonal).

If I am ever sent off to that desert island and can grab a Schumann 2 before embarking, I would take Sawallisch's Staatskapelle Dresden version while bemoaning the leaving-behind of Celibidache and Boult (very different readers of this symphony), but Woods and Swan are right up there, charting this marvellous work with a very special dedication and insight.