

Gramophone Magazine

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Orchestral reviews

Gál

Violin Concerto, Op 39. Violin Concertino, Op 52. Triptych, Op 100
Annette-Barbara Vogel *vn*

Northern Sinfonia/Kenneth Woods

Avie ® AV2146 (70' DDD)

Premiere recordings of three gloriously tuneful late-Romantic masterworks

Hard on the heels of Gil's violin sonatas and Suite (8/10) comes this superb new disc featuring the pre-war Concerto and Concertino, separated by the invigorating late Triptych (1970) written in his 80th year. Annette-Barbara Vogel is once again the nimble-fingered and sweet-toned soloist, ably supported throughout by the Northern Sinfonia and Kenneth Woods.

Vogel's knowledge of and sympathy for Gál's music is manifest from her first entry in the Concerto (1931-32) following the exposition of the lovely opening theme (given to the oboe). The Concerto, scored throughout with chamber-musical clarity, is lyrical from first bar to last but no mere parade of tunes: Gál's succession of Fantasia, Arioso and Rondo are tightly organised, no matter how relaxed or light-hearted they sound. The same attributes can be heard in the Concertino (1939), written after Gál's protracted flight from the Nazi menace to Britain via Vienna. Scored for violin and string orchestra, its lightness of texture is a model of balance and its sense of inner calm in extreme contrast to the uncertainty of his personal circumstances at the time of its composition. While the Triptych is audibly the product of the same mind as the concertos, it does have the feel of a late work. Its spontaneity of invention was matched by its speed of composition: five weeks from sketch to full score in January-February 1970. The energetic outer movements (the concluding Comedy is a particular delight) frame a more sober central Lament in the form of a pavane and stylistically seems closer to Franz Schmidt than the Concerto. Woods directs a highly polished account but the orchestral playing throughout is most assured. Avie's sound is excellent but it is the music that compels attention. Strongly recommended.

Guy Rickards

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