

HINDSON Violin Concerto. **CORIGLIANO** *The Red Violin*: Suite. **LISZT** (arr. Kennedy, St. John) *Totentanz* • [Lara St. John](#) (vn); Sarah Ioannides, cond; Royal PO • ANCALAGON 133 (Hybrid multi-channel SACD: 70:00)

Matthew Hindson based his three-movement Violin Concerto (receiving here its first recording) on three Australian scenes: the Wind Turbine at Kooragang Island, Westerway, and Grand Final Day. The first of these, he explains in his notes (the composers or arrangers have all provided copy for Ancalagon's sumptuous booklet), makes explicit use of the turbine's three blades as an organizing principle. The movement, pretty firmly tonal like the rest of the Concerto, sounds occasionally cinematic in the manner of Korngold's Concerto, but with groaning timbral effects and whirlwind accelerandos. Lara St. John plays the swirling violin part with firm command of its virtuosity and sympathy for its representational intent. The second movement (the longest of the three) constitutes a sort of tribute to desolation and hope in Australia's small towns; in comparison with the first movement, it sounds spare and bleakly lyrical, with the violin part itself generally skittishly figural or declamatory rather than singing. The third movement, graphically representing Australia's annual sports festivities, returns jubilantly to the cinematic style of the first movement. As a set of representations, with a hint of outright programmatic allusion in the outer movements, Hindson's ingratiating Concerto should provide enjoyable listening in St. John's and Ioannides's boffo reading for those who respond to such concertos as Korngold's or even Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Prophets*.

John Corigliano's Suite from his score to the movie, *The Red Violin*, hews closer to the original music for the movie than do the Chaconne and the Violin Concerto, based loosely on the same materials (Corigliano himself discusses these relationships in his notes). Its opening recalls the scene in Bussotti's shop, with violins hanging in diffused light through which the lyrical theme (Anna's) gradually emerges. But here it's played by the violin at once, telescoping the movie's gradual shift in identity from Bussotti's wife to the violin. The solo part includes virtuosic passages in diminished-seventh chords, the bread and butter of 19th-century passagework, and brooding cadenza-like ruminations that Corigliano featured in his *Caprices* on the music. The solo part therefore offers possibilities for a more traditional kind of virtuosity than does Hindson's Concerto; and St. John takes as much advantage of these opportunities as does Ioannides in the orchestral part, which exhibits the timbral ingenuity in writing for strings that elevates Vivaldi's concertos far above their harmonic and melodic materials. If St. John doesn't produce from her 1779 Salabue Guadagnini as pure and sweetly piercing a tone as does Joshua Bell in Corigliano's works, she's capable of generating considerable idiomatic excitement.

St. John mentions in the notes her regret that Franz Liszt didn't write anything for violin and orchestra; and like Nathan Milstein, who arranged the *Mephisto Waltz* for unaccompanied violin, she's done something about Liszt's neglect. In this, she's collaborated with composer-pianist Martin Kennedy, who reworked the orchestral part. Their arrangement sounds almost terrifying, if not as electrifying as Liszt's original tub-thumper for piano and orchestra.

In its stereo incarnation, which I've reviewed, the recorded sound is well balanced and clear; given the orchestral sonorities in which all three pieces have been couched, I'd suspect the surround version to be compelling. In either case, these three compositions with strong extra-musical associations—Hindson's hauntingly evocative triptych, Corigliano's equally atmospheric movie score in miniature, and Liszt's theatrical horror show should appeal broadly to general listeners—especially those with a sense of fun—as well as specifically to violin aficionados, to investigators of Australian or film music, and to Lara St. John's followers. Strongly recommended. **Robert Maxham**

