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**CD Review by Ken Meltzer**

**TABULA RASA** • Manrico Padovani, Natasha Korsakova (vn); Charles Olivieri-Munroe, cond; North Czech Philharmonia Teplice • ARS 38552 (66:49)

**BACH** Concerto for 2 Violins and Orchestra in d, BWV 1043. **PÄRT** *Tabula Rasa*. **VIVALDI** Concerto for 2 Violins in c, RV 522. **SCHNITTKE** Concerto grosso No. 3

*Tabula Rasa* (Ars Produktion) features a quartet of concertos for two solo violins and accompanying ensemble. The repertoire alternates well-known Baroque concertos by Bach and Vivaldi with contemporary works by Arvo Pärt and Alfred Schnittke. To be sure, there is a striking contrast between the two Baroque concertos and the Pärt and Schnittke (and for that matter, striking contrasts between those two modern works). But there are points of connection as well. In addition to sharing the same complement of soloists, the four concertos are bound by several other elements. Bach created a transcription for solo organ (BWV 593) of the Vivaldi A-Minor Concerto, RV 522, that is included on this recording. In his liner notes for the Ars Produktion release, Joachim Draheim observes that in Pärt’s *Tabula Rasa* (whose title also provides the CD’s name), “the obsessive and cleverly embellished A minor of the opening movement (*Ludus*) picks up on the A minor of Vivaldi’s *Double Concerto*, while the subdued D minor of [the] second movement (*Silentium*) foreshadows the key of Bach’s *Double Concerto*.” Schnittke’s Concerto grosso No. 3 is characteristic of the composer, filled with rapid-fire quotes, allusions, suggestions, and distortions of works from the Baroque era (and beyond). The fourth movement *Adagio* references and develops the B-A-C-H four-note motif (B ♭, A, C, and B), a musical symbol of Johann Sebastian. The two movements of *Tabula Rasa*, juxtaposing agitated and serene emotional states, employ Pärt’s favored bell-like effects, or “tintinnabulation.” In the Concerto grosso No. 3, typical of my experience with Schnittke’s whirlwind, brilliant synthesis of periods and styles, just at the moment I believe I’ve identified a reference, the composer has already moved on to another. I’ve learned over time that it’s better for me not to try to be a musical Sherlock Holmes when I listen to Schnittke. Rather, I allow myself to become engaged and immersed in his unique and surreal vision/sound world, and I believe I’m the better for it.

Violinists Manrico Padovani and Natasha Korsakova are to be commended for their imaginative choice of repertoire. Likewise, their performances are worthy of praise. The Bach and Vivaldi are played with arresting precision, and a lean, attractive tonal quality. Padovani and Korsakova take great care to match both their phrasing and sound, and to impressive effect. Nods to HIP practice include a reduced string ensemble, a harpsichord, and sparing use of vibrato.

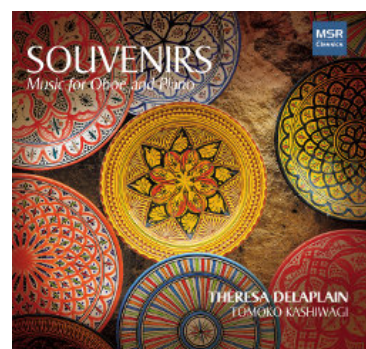
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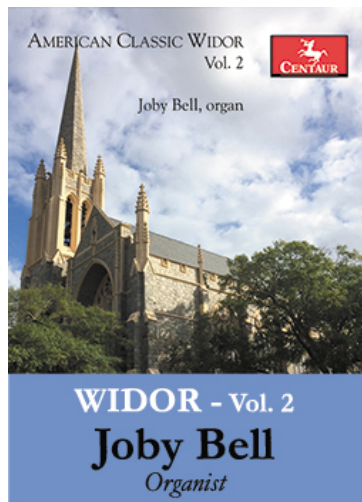
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The soloists avoid adding ornamentation to Bach and Vivaldi's printed scores. Both the Pärt and Schnittke are played with great involvement and intensity. In all the works, the Nordböhmisches Philharmonie Teplice and conductor Charles Olivieri-Munroe are spirited and polished collaborators. The recorded sound strikes me as somewhat on the dry and analytical side—but then again, I don't think that is inappropriate for the featured repertoire on this disc. I admire the concept embraced by Ars Produktion's *Tabula Rasa*; old and new repertoire wisely selected, and admirably performed. All of the works on this disc, well served by the participating artists, merit attention and reflection. Recommended. **Ken Meltzer**

This article originally appeared in Issue 45:1 (Sept/Oct 2021) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

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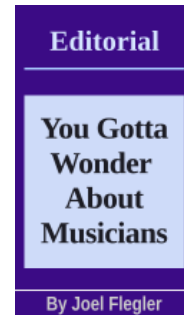
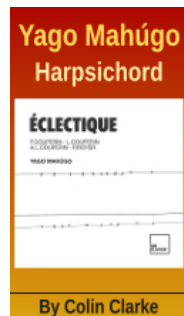
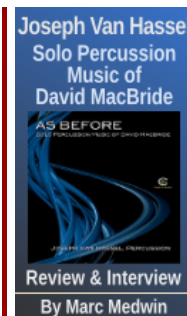
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