



the latter with rapid arpeggios that could well inspire a more virtuosic performance. This is no less the case for the second of the Ferandiere *10 variaciones* (track 24), and also the third (track 25), which mimics the powerful style of so-called battle music ('Imitando Clarines y flautas' (imitating bugles and flutes), indicates the original source); even in strummed passages, this is not reflected in the performance.

As for the CD booklet, it offers a useful contextualization of the music recorded for the general listener, while also including much relevant information for scholars and performers. However, it also presents a major oversight: though clearly a slip, since Schmitt certainly knows one treatise from another, the substitution of the title *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española*, actually by Gaspar Sanz and published in 1674, for that of Ferandiere's 1799 *Arte de tocar la guitarra española por música* is a striking error.

Likewise, although five- and six-course guitars coexisted in the late eighteenth century, as Schmitt points out, I am not convinced I agree with him that they shared the same repertory. Or rather, it depends on what one means by that statement: with reference to genres in the broad sense this is certainly the case, but at the same time this very disc shows that even in the late eighteenth century the six-course guitar had already developed a language of its own, very different from that of its five-string predecessor (also known today as the baroque guitar). This is especially clear in the works by Moretti and Ferandiere, in which the bass is clearly outlined, unlike in the music of Sanz and Murcia, where it is frequently interrupted or subsumed by *campanelas* (Sanz's term for the performance of scale passages making maximum use of open strings, which thus continued to sound in the manner of 'little bells'). Incidentally, although Ferandiere's title draws attention to the presence of *campanelas* in the seventh of his *10 variaciones* (track 29), these have little to do with those used by Sanz and Murcia around 1700. Ferandiere uses alternating strings to perform dissonant chords and increase harmonic tension, whereas baroque guitarists used this technique to perform linear passages. This was in any case impossible on Ferandiere's guitar, which, having only one octave on the sixth course, lacked the octaveless sonority necessary to achieve this effect.

There are nevertheless, as one might anticipate, several reminiscences of the style of the first half of the eighteenth century in the works by Vargas y Guzmán, which might be interpreted as a link with the baroque guitar repertoire. Sonata 3 (track 16), for example, has similarities with baroque courantes and lacks any trace of sonata form, being perhaps, along with the *Marcha de Nápoles* (March of Naples; track 19), the most archaic movement on this recording, reflecting the stylistic norms of the earlier part of the composer's life (despite some uncertainty about his biography, Vargas y Guzmán was undoubtedly active before Ferandiere and Moretti).

The guitar music of eighteenth-century Spain is still in need of further work, in the fields of both musicology and performance. Thomas Schmitt's recording undoubtedly represents a significant contribution in this sense, allowing us to enjoy once more a beautiful but long-neglected, and even forgotten, repertory.

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JOHANN NEPOMUK HUMMEL (1778–1837)

HUMMEL AT THE OPERA

Madoka Inui, piano

Naxos 8.572736, 2011; one disc, 76 minutes

The first decade of the twenty-first century has seen the steady emergence of discs featuring compositions by Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837): we now have access to seven of the eight extant solo piano concertos and to much of the chamber music, and anyone interested in Hummel's solo sonatas has an increasing variety of interpretations to explore. The dearth of scholarly editions persists, but we do now



have a full-scale biography of Hummel in English, Mark Kroll's *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: A Musician's Life and World* (Plymouth: Scarecrow, 2007). Madoka Inui's *Hummel at the Opera* ventures into the shadowy realm of Hummel's ballets, operas and pantomimes, interlarding Hummel's solo piano arrangements of excerpts from originally orchestral scores with several sets of variations on borrowed themes. The arrangements include the *Quintuor des nègres* from the ballet *Paul et Virginie* and the Potpourri No. 1 from Hummel's opera *Die Eselshaut*, or The Donkey Skin, based on a somewhat arcane folk-tale about a king's daughter who, on the advice of a fairy, circumvents her father's desire to marry her in place of his dead wife by demanding the slaughter of the Golden Ass, in whose skin she eventually flees. This is Inui's second disc devoted wholly to compositions by Hummel. The other, which will serve as a periodic source of comparison in this review, was her 2005 release *Johann Nepomuk Hummel: Fantasies* (Naxos 8.557836A). This included the world premiere recording of the *Fantasia* in G minor on themes of Neukomm and Hummel, Op. 123, the more familiar *Fantasia* in E flat major, Op. 18, and the intriguing *Fantasia 'Recollections of Paganini'*.

In pursuing a multidimensional career of composing, performing, teaching and administration, Hummel was typical of his time. Whereas the solo keyboard output of earlier figures such as Muzio Clementi (1752–1832) and Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760–1812) generally affiliates certain conventions with certain genres, Hummel's works often amalgamate procedures associated with, say, the large-scale professional solo sonata and those connected with the reputedly more meretricious genres of operatic variations and fantasias. Conversely, the techniques emanating from Hummel's celebrated prowess as a virtuoso performer and improviser as manifested in the fantasias and variations (such as quotation followed by 'improvisatory' elaboration) frequently spill over into other compositions ostensibly uninhabited by the spirit of quotation and improvisation: Hummel drew on Cherubini's *Les deux journées* not only in the variations included in the present disc, but also (as the liner notes mention) in his Trumpet Concerto of 1803. He has great fun with motives from the finale of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony in the third movement of his otherwise earnest Piano Sonata in F minor Op. 20. In the sonata finale the approach resembles the free admixture of themes from the outer movements of Paganini's Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 6, in the *Recollections of Paganini* included on Inui's 2005 disc.

Turning to the later recording, compositional sophistication inheres in some of the variation sets' engagement with distant keys: the set on 'Vivat Bacchus' from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Op. 34 No. 3, in C major, turns in its ninth variation to A flat major, the key of the flattened submediant, before eventually invoking E/F flat major, the flattened submediant of the flattened submediant. Another third-related shift permeates the final variation of *Armide*, and it is presumably to this that the liner notes refer with their observation of 'an anticipated Schubertian passage in Variation 9' (actually Variation 10). These examples more directly recall the similarly 'improvisatory' harmonic moves in the extended codas of several of Beethoven's nine variation sets published between 1795 and 1800. Perhaps the most impressive composition on the disc is the Grand Fantasia, Op. 116, *Oberons Zauberhorn*, with its depiction of a storm at sea. The 'storm' is constructed as an introductory unit tracing a chromatic ascent (replete with bass *tremolandi* combined with chromatic scales and arpeggiated diminished sevenths), leading to a prolonged dominant of E minor that is resolved at the climax, followed by an extended coda in which, as in the more famous storm from Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the energy subsides very gradually. One is also reminded of the first movement of John Field's Piano Concerto No. 5 in C major, H39 (*L'incendie par l'orage*), which preceded Hummel's effort by twelve years, and which was in turn likely to have been inspired by Daniel Steibelt's third concerto. Hummel's effects are more 'graphic' than Field's, though Field does insert quick *glissandi* to represent lightning and reinforces certain effects with additional percussion (see Geneva Handy Southall, 'John Field's Piano Concertos: An Analytical and Historical Study' (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967), 119). Like Beethoven in the Sixth Symphony, Hummel sustains tonal ambiguity, whereas Field's storm is firmly rooted in C minor. As in the solo sonatas and chamber music with piano, the level of virtuosity in Hummel's variations and fantasias is often considerable and withstands comparison with the concertos – without ever reaching the dizzy heights of Hummel's two major works of 1819, the Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 81, and the Piano Concerto in B minor, Op. 89.



The principal qualities of Inui's playing (on a Bösendorfer concert grand) are warmth and richness of tone, a fairly strict approach to tempo and refined execution. Faster figuration generally has more poise here than on the 2005 disc. One encounters only occasional unevenness or indistinctness, for instance in the left-hand figuration in the fifth of the *Armide* Variations and occasionally also in *Les deux journées*. Inui's right-hand dexterity is beyond reproach, with faultless broken octaves and arpeggios in the third variation of *Les deux journées* and similarly slick high-register passagework in the opening section of *Oberons Zauberhorn*.

The richness of tone emanates partly from the instrument and partly from the extremely close positioning of the microphones, to the point that Inui's breathing becomes audible. This and slightly noisy pedalling are vaguely distracting in the opening section of *Oberons Zauberhorn*, and the close sound, coupled with the instrument's sonority and power, caused me to adjust the volume downwards in certain obstreperous, even histrionic passages, during which I was reminded of Field's admonition, made in response to Alexander Dubuque's forceful rendition of the opening of a Moscheles concerto: 'Do you know that there are limits in the manner of treating a piano?' (quoted in Southall, 'John Field's Piano Concertos', 46). The coda to the *Quintor des nègres* stands out in this way, as do the final sections of *Oberons Zauberhorn* and of *Die Eselshaut*. In the case of the latter, however, a rampage is only appropriate to the depiction of a 'Bacchanal Tanz'. Excessive volume is also sometimes exacerbated by over-pedalling, as in the passage connecting the second (Larghetto) and third (Tempo di Marcia) sections of *Oberons Zauberhorn*, recalling the slightly rushed and jangled development section of the first 'movement' of the *Fantasia* Op. 18 that marred an otherwise outstanding performance on the 2005 disc. Such power does, however, befit the stentorian unison declamations punctuating the *Quintor des nègres*; and Inui's liberal pedalling of the subdued *minore* ninth variation of *Armide* seems highly apposite.

Inui's control of rhythm is extremely taut throughout, resulting in a delectable crispness that stands out in the principal theme of the *Quintor des nègres*; it can be heard too in the array of spread chords, staccato melodies and accents in Variation 11 of *Die Entführung*, as well as in the dotted rhythms in the octave passage in Variation 6 of *Les deux journées* and in the march of *Oberons Zauberhorn*. Neatness also distinguishes Inui's management of more complex textures (Variation 2 of *Armide*) and underpins her carefully conceived juxtapositions of *forte* and *piano* dynamic levels, as in the third variation of *Armide*, which recalls the alternations of robustness and lyrical restraint in 'The Bloodhound' from the G minor *Fantasia* recorded in 2005. Inui's approach to tempo is consistent with her overall performance style, but I wished for more flexibility in the Larghetto of *Oberons Zauberhorn* and in the extended coda to the second section of *Die Eselshaut*. Subtle rubato effects enhance Inui's handling of the cantabile melody in the slow *minore* variation of *Armide*. The eighth of the *Cendrillon* Variations (in C major) contains a triplet passage of quasi-Beethovenian improvisation, straying to A flat major and also to A major; Inui demarcates the latter key with a slight slowing of the tempo.

Liner notes in general vary enormously in terms of approach, coverage and competence. Heinz Sichrovsky's contribution to the present recording is among the most successful I have ever seen in reconciling comprehensiveness with salience and lucidity. Full details of the fantasies' and variations' operatic sources follow an informative biography of Hummel. Refreshingly absent are tedious descriptions of the decline in Hummel's reputation coupled with the usual threadbare debates about his standing relative to Beethoven, Schubert and others. Sichrovsky's effusive claim that Hummel's 'book on playing the piano' (meaning the *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel, vom ersten Elementar-Unterricht an, bis zur vollkommensten Ausbildung* of c1822–1825) 'revolutionised the playing of the instrument' (3) is extravagant, but it is gratifying to read unqualified and unembarrassed references to 'Hummel's genius' (4) and to experience a frank enthusiasm for the works at hand rather than sense an implicit disappointment that the subject is not the more erudite realm of sonatas and concertos. Orthodoxy obtrudes only in Sichrovsky's casual likening of parts of the *Cendrillon* Variations to 'fragments of Schubert (Variation 3), Chopin (Variation 5) or Schumann (in the bizarre Variation 4)' (4). Such resemblances are simply not clear without fuller



demonstration, and Variation 5 does not even vaguely anticipate Chopin's style. Nevertheless, with its informative notes and accomplished performances, this disc is strongly recommended as an important addition to the growing selection of recordings of the works of this centrally important figure.

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LOUIS SPOHR (1784–1859)

SYMPHONIES VOL. 3: SYMPHONIES 1 & 6, OVERTURE OP. 12

NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover / Howard Griffiths

cpo 777 179-2, 2011; one disc, 62 minutes

The symphonic output of Louis Spohr seems to be experiencing something of a renaissance lately, at least in the field of recordings. Howard Shelley's cycle of Spohr symphonies with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana was recently completed on the Hyperion label, and Howard Griffiths, with the NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, is not far behind with this third volume of symphonies on cpo. Both Shelley and Griffiths work with orchestras performing on instruments with modern set-ups, and both fill out their discs with recordings of Spohr's incidental music.

Thus, alongside renditions of the first and sixth symphonies, Volume 3 of the cpo cycle includes Spohr's earliest essay in purely orchestral music, his Concert Overture in C minor, Op. 12, composed in 1806 when the composer was around twenty-two and published in 1808. A review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* commented on Spohr's agreeable mix of gloomy (*düster*) and gentle (*sanft*) melancholy and concluded that 'if one calls this ROMANTIC, this reviewer would not object' (my translation; *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 11 (1808/1809), 182). Certainly this was music that appears to have touched a chord with many born in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Music theorist Moritz Hauptmann reminisced about how as a seventeen-year-old, after hearing Spohr's Overture, 'I cried, cried again the whole way home, cried at home by the pailful, and cried for several days afterwards. I see myself even now, sitting alone in my room, kneeling on the ground with my head on a chair, weeping like mad in a delirium of joy and despair.' Like the reviewer in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, Hauptmann was touched by persistent cultural trends, by the curious mixture of despair and joy: 'I was at an age', he explained, 'when one of La Fontaine's novels could make me infinitely happy or miserable' (Moritz Hauptmann, *The Letters of a Leipzig Cantor*, trans. and ed. A. D. Coleridge (London: Novello, 1892), volume 1, 13). The Concert Overture begins with a slow introduction which opens into a fresh and energetic Allegro, with a contrasting secondary theme occasionally coloured by the chromaticism that Spohr was to make his trademark over the course of his illustrious career. It was presumably this rapid and heady mix between apparently contrasting affects and moods – each containing, as it were, a shadow of the other – that caused the teenage Hauptmann to weep like mad.

Spohr attempted his first symphony in 1811 at the suggestion of Georg Friedrich Bischoff (Symphony No. 1 in E flat major, Op. 20), and as Clive Brown and others have noted (including the present liner-note writer, Bert Hagels) the composer used Mozart's Symphony No. 39 in E flat major, K543, as something of a model. The general outlines of Spohr's movements, such as their time signatures and sentiments, can be traced to Mozart's 1788 work. Yet far from being a slavish imitator, Spohr in fact infuses Mozartean forms and themes with his own formidable contrapuntal and thematic designs, a procedure characterized by the late Charles Rosen as 'classicizing'; such works were 'based on the exterior models, the results of the classical impulse, and not upon the impulse itself' (Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style* (London: Faber,