

Heinrich Wilhelm ERNST (1812-1865)

Introduction et Variations Brillantes en form de Fantaisie
pour le violon sur le *Quatuor favori* de Ludovic de F.

Halévy, Op.6 (1833) [13:45]

Élégie sur la mort d'un objet chéri, Op.10 [9:19]

Introduction, Variations et Final, Dialogués et

Concertans sur une Valse favourite pour piano et violon
par Charles Schunke et H.W.Ernst, Op.26 (1834) [13:59]

Pensées fugitives par Heller et Ernst, Part II: Nos.7-12
(pub. 1842) [22:39]

Souvenirs de l'opera La Juive de F. Halévy pour piano et
violon concertants, par Osborne et Ernst (c.1835) [8:07]

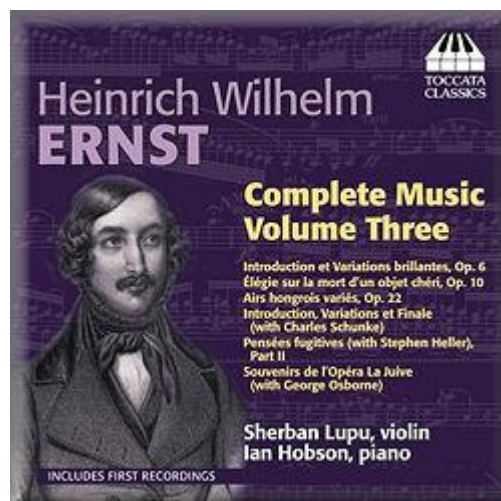
Air hongrois variés Op.22 (1846) [13:07]

Sherban Lupu (violin)

Ian Hobson (piano)

rec. May 2011, Foellinger Great Hall of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois

TOCCATA TOCC 0163 [80:55]



The third volume in Toccata's Complete Ernst series is largely of premiere recordings. Only the *Air hongrois variés* and the *Élégie sur la mort d'un objet chéri* have been recorded before and even in their cases, not that often. As before, the intrepid and stylistically assured practitioners of the Moravian composer's art are Sherban Lupu and Ian Hobson. I've reviewed both of the previous volumes in the series, so feel I should get straight to work in surveying the recital material.

The *Introduction et Variations Brillantes en form de Fantaisie* is based on themes in Halévy's *Ludovic*. What marks out the performance is the element of lightness, in articulation and bowing, which Lupu employs, qualities often ascribed to Ernst himself. The cascading roulades, and the pert, almost military direction of the music at one point, are all convincingly delineated by Lupu. So, too, are the devilish thirds in the finale, which the intrepid violinist has to surmount after all the bowing trials and ricochet staccato he's had to undergo. Ernst also took themes from *La Juive* by Halévy and together with the Irish pianist George Osborne (1806-1893) fashioned a pleasing confection shorn largely of his usual pyrotechnics, as well as lacking the demanding piano writing of other ventures in the operatic field. Divided into two sections, *Adagio* and *Allegro*, there is, almost uniquely for him in such circumstances, no variation material in this fantasia.

When he collaborated with Charles Schunke, as he did in the case of the *Introduction, Variations et Final, Dialogués et Concertans sur une Valse favourite*, the piano writing was significantly more taxing. The parcelling out of material is infectiously exciting, not least an opening passage for piano with accompanying pizzicati. This work is rich in technical and expressive variety, and its lyricism is well conveyed, as are, too, its wit and excitement. Possibly its length, at 14 minutes, has kept it from recital programmes, though equally its relative obscurity can't exactly have helped either. Lupu and Hobson also give us *Pensées fugitives par Heller et Ernst*, Part II: Nos.7-12, a work published in 1842. Each has a story to tell, and each receives a characterful reading from the duo: variously warm, capricious, full of contrast, and feeding on urgent declamation. The twelfth and final piece is the most extensive and is beautifully laid out. Interestingly, the notes are rather critical of the Tenth, a stormy piece that still manages to convey real vehemence.

Gringolts and Wass have recorded the *Élégie sur la mort d'un objet chéri* [Hyperion CDA67619] in their all-Ernst disc. They're significantly quicker than Lupu and Hobson, but Hobson is the more dramatic pianist and Lupu the more expressive violinist. He's full of little details and subtleties that align his playing with the presumed performance practices of the time — flattened intonation to point 'pathetic' phrasing, for instance. This is not the first time Lupu's recorded it, either. With Peter Pettinger he set it down on Continuum CCD1017 back in 1990, though I've not heard it. *Air hongrois variés* is dedicated to Liszt and was one of Wieniawski's favourite concert dazzlers. Kreisler loved it, and Elgar heard Wilhelmj play it and resolved to go to London there and then to become a concert violinist. Clearly, it's a piece that gets people going. Lupu plays it with great style and dash. His approach to the 'affect' of the piece is substantial, and so too his excellent playing of harmonics, and the cadenza inserted by American violinist and composer Arthur Hartmann, which is recorded here for the first time.

It ends another splendid and finely recorded Ernst disc from Lupu and Hobson.

Jonathan Woolf