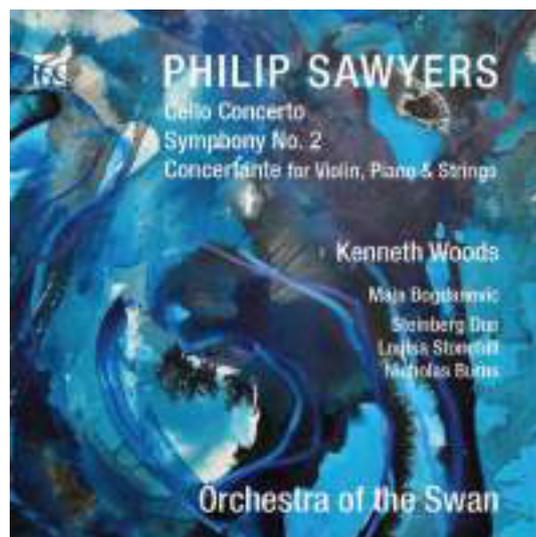


**SAWYERS, PHILIP**

Cello Concerto, Symphony no 2, Concertante for violin, piano and strings.

Maja Bogdanovich (cello), Orchestra of the Swan, Kenneth Woods (conductor), Steinberg Due: Louise Stonehill (violin) and Michal's Burns (piano).

Nimbus NI6281 (59.42)



This is a welcome disc and another admirable product from Nimbus of composers not so well known. There are very many British composers who are almost totally ignored while other composers are elevated constantly. For example, in the first six months of 2014 the BBC has broadcasts over 110 performances of Elgar and I can list 46 British composers who have not had one broadcast during this time and yet British operas including the BBC in house orchestra with their conductors want to perform works by these 46 and others.

Philip Sawyers was born in London in 1951, studied at the Dartington College of Arts and the Guildhall school of Music and his tutors and guides included the great Max Rostal, Buxton Orr, Patric Standford and Rubbra. In 1973 he joined the Royal Opera House orchestra and was the violin coach for the Kent Youth Orchestra and took a post graduate at Goldsmith's College. He is now a composer, freelance violinist, teacher and, at one time an adjudicator for the Royal Schools of Music.

His music is basically tonal and will not present any problems to listeners. Many such composers try to incorporate hints of modernity to be considered up to date but it does not always work. However, originality is an essential for all composers.

The Cello Concerto was commissioned by the Sydenham International Festival in 2010 and written for Maja Bogdanovich who plays it well. I suppose it might be called late Romanticism but it is a strong work. It has an over all memorability which sets it apart and the cello is not used as a wallow as is often the case although the slow movement may hint at this occasionally. Musicians will understand what I mean when I say that the cello is treated with respect in this fine work. There is nothing ugly in this work, no tedium and it is not stop and start music but flows in a welcome coherence. There are not clichés either and its language is somewhat original; it does not sound English or pompous, and nor does it sound European. When I say it is a lovely work it is not slushy or feeble but has a character and a backbone.

The orchestration is first class as it is in the Symphony no 2 also commissioned by the Sydenham Festival. It is a colourful eventful piece untrammelled by modern convention of heavy chunks of cold grey slabs of concrete unmovable and dull. There is activity, life, melodic lines, drama and purpose. It is music that is rich, well developed and satisfying and masterly but not excessive orchestration. If it becomes well known it will make many friends and no enemies.

The Concertante is well written as well somewhat playful as if a divertimento but never banal.

The performances and the sound is first class.

Further information is on the excellent sleeve notes by the conductor Kenneth Woods which I will not repeat here.

I do recommend this CD warmly and will explore NI 6129 of the Symphony no 1 and the Symphonic Music for strings and brass.

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