

CD REVIEW 70

REIZENSTEIN Piano Concerto no 2 in F;
BATE Piano Concerto no 2 in C Op 28;
BATE Sinfonietta no 1 Op 22.
Victor Sangiorgio, Royal Scottish National Orchestra,
Martin Yates.
World premiere recordings
Dutton Epoch CDLX 7282 (69.43)

These are said to world premiere recordings but I have had these works in recordings for over 40 years and they were not broadcast performances from the BBC, CBS or anywhere else.

Like many others who have contacted me, we find the sleeve notes sterile and inadequate, usual features of this writer who once said that he could write three reviews in an evening without reference to any source.

Stanley Bate (1911-1959) was a very fine pianist and, without doubt, in the top rank of British tonal composers. His music is highly attractive and durable. I can listen to his works many times and not be bored. He had an enviable skill in communication and his music is always vital, never introspective or boring. He could write in the diatonic medium and with originality. His slow movements are beautiful, but never slush or Hollywoodish. His fast movements are very exciting and there is always a coherence in his music which enhances it even further.

He wrote five piano concertos, three violin concertos, a Viola Concerto, a Cello Concerto, four symphonies, two string quartets, three piano sonatas and much else. All these works are very well written and the Symphony no 4 is a tremendous dark work... truly impressive!

The sleeve notes contains news of Bate's death which may have been due to lack of sleep, alcoholism or worse. What is meant by this? Suicide? If so, say so. He was apparently sad that his music was neglected and, indeed, he had more success in the USA.

He had a tragic life and he was probably oversensitive. Britten was the same but he could cope with this because of his nasty streak and extreme narcissism. Bate was a very kind man, easy to get on with, enjoyed company and gave no impression of depression.

Bate's orchestration is of the highest quality. Listen to the Sinfonietta no 1 and be amazed! The orchestration in his concertos is never merely 'walk on' parts alla Chopin, but integral to the music.

The sound on this recording is first rate as are the performances and Martin Yates must be commended for his devotion to unusual British repertoire and, particularly, the service he has given especially to my late friend the composer Richard (Tony) Arnell.

I regret I had not heard of Victor Sangiorgio, but he is clearly a very fine pianist. He was born in Italy, brought up in Australia, won many prestigious awards, worked with some fine conductors such as Abbado, Previn, Groves, Skrowacewski, the man who rescued the Hallé Orchestra after years of decline under Barbirolli, and Colin Davis who, in his mature years, has become a very fine conductor indeed. Sangiorgio has also worked with some lesser conductors. He has recorded music as diverse as Cimorena and Stravinsky.



The second concerto of Stanley Bate is dedicated to his wife Peggy Glanville-Hicks and dates from 1940. It has an opening movement of attractive vitality; the second movement is tuneful and the finale is a real cracker. I cannot think of any other British concerto that is half as good as this one, apart from his other four concertos. The honest recommendation I can make is that his piano concertos are the best written by a British composer. They are really that good!

Franz Reizenstein (1911-1968) was Jewish and fled the rise of Nazism. He had the supreme advantage of studying with the great Paul Hindemith and later studied with Vaughan Williams. As well as two piano concertos, there are two very fine concertos for violin and cello respectively, a terrific Piano Quintet, piano music including two sonatas, a splendid oratorio Genesis which some idiot has stupidly said to be like Vaughan Williams!

Sadly, Reizenstein seems only to be known for his contributions to the Hoffnung Festival with his Concerto Popolare which is a real hoot and his Lambeth Walk variations written in the style of several composers... Chopin has never sounded so good! He was brilliant in film music for horror films such as The Mummy.

He was a very fine pianist and I have recordings of his performances of his concertos.

I also met him once and he was a really lovely man plagued with illness and diabetes which only fellow sufferers, like myself, can understand.

[\(Please also see my article on Franz Reizenstein\)](#)

This concerto dates from 1961 and, although it is said to be in F major, the plethora of accidentals takes it away for the predictability of diatonic music. It is not as bravura as the Bate but is equally fine. The finale succeeds from varied rhythms which makes the work even more interesting.

Both these concertos are REAL concertos, beautiful, romantic, lyrical, exciting, well-structured, coherent and technically superb.

This is a must have CD. Of that, there is no doubt.

One of my students said, "This music has the WOW factor!".

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