

## CD REVIEW 86

### TERZETTI

BAX Elegiac Trio  
DEBUSSY Sonata en trio  
RAVEL Sonatine arr Carlos Salzedo  
MATHIAS Zodiac Varations.  
DUBOIS Terzettino  
The Debussy Ensemble:  
Susan Milan (flute)  
Matthew Jones (viola)  
Ieuan Jones (harp)  
Divine Art dda 25099 (63.20)



A lovely CD.

The performers are all well-known and deservedly admired. They bring to this music commitment and style. And in the Bax a glowing beauty.

His Elegiac Trio dates from 1917 when like most other people he was troubled by the war. His love for Ireland and its political upheavals also distressed him. There was the Easter Uprising in Dublin in 1916 and, to my mind the composer captures a peaceful countryside scene with reference to Irish folk music. There is the sound of running streams and evokes a warm day of delight and peace.

I would not call this work impressionistic music because this is not just mood music. It is not just atmosphere. It contains themes and logic.

The Debussy is rather more earthy and a good piece in parts although it does not have the same obvious coherence.. It consists of a pastoral, interlude and finale. The performers do very well in this episodic piece. But the music is rather like a patchwork quilt. It is like that famous remark about Jane Austens novels in that nothing every happens in them. The soloists all produce gorgeous sounds and impeccable intonation. I do love the tone of the violist and he proves again that this instrument is the Cinderella of the orchestra. But do not misunderstand me... Susan Milan and Ieuan Jones are also exceptional. Having seen them in concert produced evenings of rare pleasure.

I am not sure why anyone would want to arrange Ravel's Sonatine for piano into a trio. In its original form it is a very satisfying work, But Ravel liked to write piano music and then orchestrate it but not always successfully. The arranger Carlos Salzedo was both a composer and a harpist and perhaps wanted to extend the repertoire for the harp and Ravel apparently gave his approval to this arrangement. For what it is, it does bring out elements in the music and you have hear different and new aspects.

This Sonatine is a very fine work and, again, it is not just mood or atmosphere but contains memorable material.

William Mathias is an uneven composer. Some of his works are truly magnificent and others are disappointing.

[\(See separate article on this site about Mathias\).](#)

His works for organ and his piano concertos are first rate but his late works do not reach those heights.

The harp is the national instrument of Wales and so one expected Mathias to write for the harp. He

wrote a Concerto for flute, harp and strings, a Harp Concerto, a Sonata for harp, Improvisations for harp and the curious Santa Fe Suite for harp.

The Zodiac variations are three pieces to the astrological signs of Pisces, Aries and Taurus. He stole the idea and title from Searle's work of 1970 some five years earlier.

Mathias's work is challenging for the performers but he uses techniques such as flutter-tonguing, tremolos, harmonics and sliding a metal object on the fingerboard and various tappings, but this does seem to blend with the conventional use in the piece. If you are going to use such effects then it must result in a totally contemporary piece. If you are to write a conventional piece then these non conventional effects are not at home.

Theodore Dubois lived from 1837 to 1924 and was a successful academic and composer. His organ music is in the libraries of every discerning organist. Terzettino was apparently written for Phillipe Gaubert, Van Waefelgham and Henrietta Renie and is a sumptuous piece. It is unashamedly romantic and has a logic in its structure.

Much to commend this CD.

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