

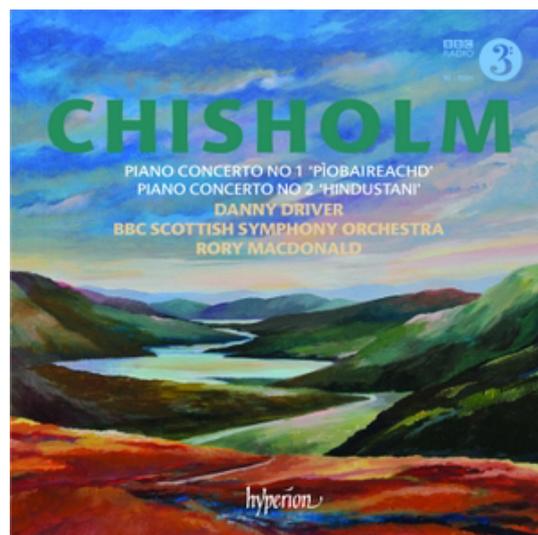
CD REVIEW 93

CHISHOLM

Piano Concerto no 1, Piobaireachd; Piano Concerto no 2, Hindustani.

Danny Driver, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Rory MacDonald.

Hyperion CDA67880 (DDD)
(68 43).



Many were very seriously put off the first concerto because of Rob Barnett's inane and utterly stupid review of the earlier recording by the excellent Murray MacLachan.

Reviewers really must address the music and talk about it in musical terms. Barnett goes off on his usual tack of irrelevant comparisons, verbal diarrhoea and says nothing about the music itself because he is not musical.

Barnett wrote, "The Piano Concerto no 1 is a gorgeous work twisted from the silk and hemp of Bartok, Ravel and Szymanowski and the rough cloth of the Scottish Highlands. Praise be that there is no tartan travesty. Chisholm delves as deep as Bartok, Novak, Karlowicz and Szymanowski. Vividly fantastic energy shakes the rafters in the finale the progeny of say John Fould's Dynamic Triptych and Walton's Sinfonia Concertante".

How can music be described as silk or hemp or Scottish tartan? Chisholm's music is nothing like the composers Barnett refers to, and Walton's work is not a high energy work. Chisholm's writing for the piano is uniquely individual and incomparable with any other composer. The most essential ingredient of a great composer is originality. Erik Chisholm had that.

Danny Driver may not yet be a household name but he is a very fine performer. He has recorded concertos and sonatas by York Bowen with deserved success. He has played the standard repertoire as well as rare works including works by Benjamin Dale. He has won many awards.

I am also impressed with the young Scottish conductor whose operatic experience stands him in good stead for these concertos.

Piobaireachd means pipe music and especially Highland bagpipes.

The first concerto was composed in 1932. It was revised in 1937 and performed with the composer at the piano in 1938 with Ian Whyte conducting.

John Pursers' sleeve notes are so good that I do not have to repeat them here.

The second concerto is subtitled Hindustani. Chisholm had a fascination with Indian ragas and the work is founded on such a device. The Violin Concerto has a raga movement and must now be taken up. I have a score here and it is an impressive piece.

But, as with the first concerto, one should not necessarily play too much attention to the titles. Enjoy the works as absolute music.

Chisholm must have been a very fine pianist and these concertos deserve the accolade of greatness.

There are many awful piano concertos about, including some written by famous composers and there are great concertos like Chisholm's that are comparatively unknown... Pabst, Stojowski, Galynin and Bortkiewicz to name a few.

Recently I heard young Benjamin Grosvenor play a modern British concerto at a Prom which was simply appalling.

What is also noteworthy is that Chisholm was a fine orchestrator and blends the piano with the orchestration to great effect. Unlike Chopin, his orchestral part is not a walk on part that can be dispensed with.

The Chisholm concertos should be near to the top of the list of worthy British concertos.

Words are inadequate. The music speaks for itself. Listen to it.

This is a vitally important CD. Beautifully performed and with excellent sound.

THE CD of 2012?

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