

## CD REVIEW 94

### **HANS GÁL Complete piano duos.**

Three Marionettes Op 74 for piano duet

Serbian Dances Op 3 for piano duet

Concertino Op 43 for two pianos

Three Impromptus for two pianos

Anthony Goldstone and Caroline Clemmow

Divine Art DDA25098 58.42

No one needs to be reminded of what a very fine duo Goldstone and Clemmow are... they are in the best in the U.K. and probably the best internationally.

As a duo, and in Mr Goldstone's solo recitals, they have brought to us some rarer and neglected music and enriched our lives. I have always been thankful to Mr Goldstone for his Rebikov!

This CD is no exception as to quality, although I would be the first to admit that, while the music is attractive and worth having, it may not be the greatest music.

My friend, the late Robert Crawford, always spoke well of Hans Gál who was his teacher for a while. Gál's music was never really in fashion but regarded as anachronistic.

He was born near Vienna on 5 August 1890 and was a Hungarian Jew. He studied with Mandyczewski and with him edited the works of Brahms, a composer near to his heart and to the heart of everyone who values great music.

In 1915, Gál won a State prize for music in Austria but World War I ruined Austria in many ways including musically. His poor eyesight prevented him being called up for military service.

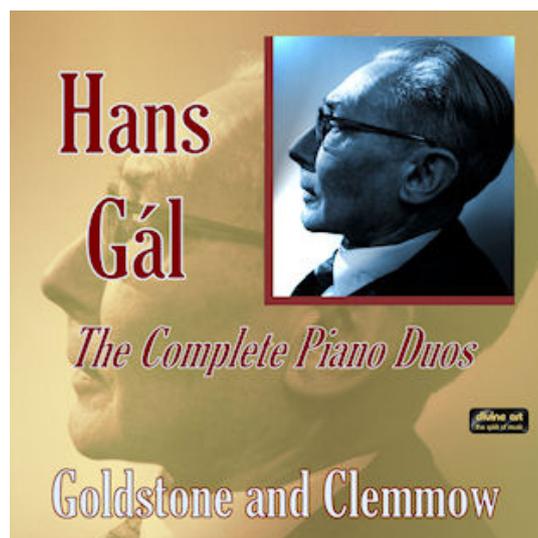
Gál went to Germany in the 1920s. His early operas were a success there and he became the director of the Mainz Conservatory. But when the evil Hitler and the Nazis came to power, Gál's music was banned. He moved back to Vienna but had to emigrate to England in 1938. He had a meeting with the stuffy Tovey in Edinburgh and became a lecturer at the University there.

Robert Crawford told me that Gál was sincere and never pompous but self-effacing and utterly likable.

But he did have a flaw, if one could call it that. He would not move with the times not even by a centimetre. He was in bondage to the Austrian tradition. Egon Wellesz was the same. And, in Italy, Pizzetti's mind was also closed.

Gál married Hanna Schicke and they were married for 65 years until his death on 3 October 1987. His operas had some measure of success, his chamber music is refined and the Serenade for string orchestra is lovely. There was a Violin Concerto and a Violin Concertino as well as a Triptych for orchestra which were recorded. He wrote a Piano Concerto in 1948 and a Concertino for piano and string orchestra earlier in 1934.

The influence of Brahms is never far away and, apparently, Brahms had the idea that piano duets were 'fun' and more intimate than string quartets. There are flashes of humour in Gál's duos and, as he was a good pianist himself, he understood the piano. That he was an academic is shown in the finale of his Concertion for two pianos which is a fugue. Nonetheless, the Concertino is the best work on this CD.



Listen to 'Brahms' in the Second Impromptu and then play Brahms Op 117.

What I like about this duo, is that their playing is never excessive. Unlike many of our young pianists of today, they are not out to show off and conduct demolition jobs on the piano. Their performances are so convincing, highly polished and show a maturity not hampered by fussiness. They make the music speak and often sing. Their touch and tone is impeccable and the sound is choice. There is admirable subtlety in their playing... and the clarity of the playing is quite superb!

I hope young pianists will take note of the excellent and indispensable example that these two fine musicians give.

This is a real find. Thank you Mr and Mrs Goldstone!

(See article on [Robert Crawford](#) on this site)

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