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**Heinrich von HERZOGENBERG (1843-1900) - MusicWeb Review**

Funf Klavierstücke op. 37 [22:16]  
Vier Phantasiestücke op. 4 [17:07]  
Variation über das Menuett aus 'Don Juan' op. 58 [16:26]  
Fantastische Tänze für das Pianoforte op. 9 [13:10]  
Romanze op. 6 [7:44]  
Funf Klavierstücke op. 25 [19:10]  
Sechs Kleine Charakterstücke op. 5 [10:46]  
Capriccio op. 107 [14:32]  
Akrosticha op. 7 [13:49]  
Fantasia quasi Sonata WoO 13 [16:11]  
Klavierstücke (Vierte Folge) op. 68 [27:26]  
Klavierstücke (Dritte Folge) op. 49 [16:42]  
Acht Variationen op. 3 [15:15]

**Elisabeth von HERZOGENBERG (1847-1892)**

Acht Klavierstücke [20:16]  
Natasa Veljkovic (piano)  
rec. 5-7 December 2011, 11-13 April 2012, and 10-11 July 2012, München, Studio 2  
des Bayerischen Rundfunks

**CPO 777 789-2** [3 CDs: 77:05 + 78:51 + 77:50]

Here are three CDs charting Heinrich von Herzogenberg's works for piano and exploring Elisabeth von Herzogenberg's *Acht Klavierstücke*. All are performed sensitively and impeccably by Natasa Veljkovic. The music evokes both the musical style and relationship dynamic of Robert and Clara Schumann. In 1885 Heinrich said that Schumann was 'a master loved above all things, who exclusively filled my own youth'.

Though lacking the extremity, depth and fortitude that the Schumann's music possesses, pieces such as Heinrich von Herzogenberg's *Vier Phantasiestücke op. 4* are more than derivative tributes. The second movement of this work (*Langsam und sanft*) possesses moments of pure tranquillity, performed with direct feeling and imaginative grace by Veljkovic. It seems that the main difference between Herzogenberg and Schumann is that whilst Schumann's daring unfettered itself from musical structure, Herzogenberg's emotions are more reserved and fit within a tight rhythmical structure and phraseology.

Atypically filigree in style, Herzogenberg's pieces have a well-crafted sense of

unity. Each movement is a commentary on the previous one and a foreshadowing of what is to follow. These pieces unfold and relay an impression or feeling in a refined manner. For a composer writing in the nineteenth century, this reserve infers that Herzogenberg possessed modesty and humility, or at least did not overindulge in sumptuous or dazzling virtuosity when composing.

Interesting comparisons can be made and parallels drawn between the Herzogenbergs and the Schumanns. Listening to Veljkovic's recording of a selection Clara and Robert Schumann's works for piano (Gramola 98827) highlights Herzogenberg's points of stylistic similarity and departure.

Best known for his chamber works and choral music, Heinrich von Herzogenberg was an Austrian composer and conductor descended from a French aristocratic family. Born in Graz, Herzogenberg studied law, philosophy and political science in the university of Vienna. It was however his passion for music that motivated him above all else. He soon turned his energies to music and attended the composition classes of Felix Otto Dessoff until 1864. Initially he was attracted to the music of Richard Wagner, but after studying J.S. Bach's works he became an adherent of the classical tradition — as seen in his use of the Gavotte. He also became an advocate for the music of Brahms. It was at Dessoff's house that Heinrich first encountered Brahms. The two soon formed what was to become a lifelong friendship. Herzogenberg devoted himself to the promotion of the music of Brahms, who in turn introduced him to Robert and Clara Schumann. Although he seems to have valued Heinrich's criticism of his own work, Brahms appears to have never taken seriously Heinrich's work as a composer. In 1866 Herzogenberg married Elisabeth von Stockhausen who had been a piano pupil of Brahms.

Not merely an epigone of Brahms, Heinrich's compositions for solo piano are pastiches of his surroundings rather than of the composers he admired. Despite Elisabeth's cajoling Brahms almost never expressed approval of Heinrich's compositions, perhaps due to Brahms' jealousy that Elisabeth never returned his affections. It's conjecture but no doubt he was piqued at Heinrich's agreeable marriage to a woman he dearly cherished. Towards the end of his life, Brahms somewhat grudgingly relented saying that 'Herzogenberg is able to do more than any of the others', thereby affirming his abilities as a talented composer.

The Yugoslavian pianist Natasa Veljkovic studied in the University of Music in Vienna and then the Juilliard School in New York. He formed a long artistic friendship with the pianist Norman Shetler. Veljkovic is an extraordinary musician who has been winning competitions since the tender age of ten. After winning the Clara Haskil competition in 1985 she embarked upon a concert career touring throughout Europe. With the complete oeuvre of Mozart occupying the centre of her musical passions, Veljkovic has recorded a wide range of piano works from varying epochs. She is more than equipped and suited to these works.

The Gavotte of Heinrich von Herzogenberg's *Funf Klavierstücke op. 37* interchanges between pep and the ephemeral. This mixture is also to be found in the catchy *Andantino* from *Klavierstücke (Vierte Folge) Op. 68*, and characterises the compositions on this CD. Similarly, a recurrent feature of Herzogenberg's style appears in *Sechs Kleine Charakterstücke op. 5* where his simplicity, use of repetition and silence are all features making this work particularly entrancing. The final section (*Getragen*) is a notable example of this.

Rescued from a somewhat watery beginning, at 15:56 Herzogenberg's *Variationen über das Menuett aus 'Don Juan'* becomes tense, exciting, fraught with intricacy and gripping. Playing with strength and devotion, Veljkovic extracts Herzogenberg's innermost sensibilities until the work's seemingly deconstructed closure.

In the *Fantastische Tänze op. 9*, evidence that the Herzogenbergs were friends of the Griegs becomes apparent. The fourth section has a similar lyricism to that of the Norwegian composer and the sixth segment possesses the same feminine, almost feline daintiness. Herzogenberg's touchingly desolate and despairing opening to *Akrosticha op. 7* is a perfect example of where the composer's intentions and the performer's execution coalesce to create a harmonious work of art. This composition is complex, far-reaching with an abundance of eloquence and penetrative lucidity. Both the first and third movements (marked *Langsam*) contain utterly beautiful melodies, captivatingly played.

Though in his early works Herzogenberg was intent upon following the well-trodden path of the 'New German School', he later somewhat rejected the 'New German' compositional ideology and followed the precedents of J. S. Bach and Heinrich Schutz. This shift can be heard in *Fantasia quasi Sonata WoO 13* and *Thema* from the *Acht Variationen Op. 3*.

If Heinrich is in some ways Baroque, Elisabeth's composition is more commanding and powerful. It brings to mind the Flemish Baroque still-life painters. There's an acute sense of the temporality of vitality and a fleeting sense of spontaneity. The fifth of Elisabeth's *Acht Klavierstücke* is vivacious and virtuosic, demonstrating a high technical ability and daring personality. The sixth ('The one dearest to me', as Elisabeth said) is a negotiation between contemplative states and gentle kindness though never without a tinge of sadness. Played *Allegro appassionato*, the final part magnanimously demonstrates the influence of that astounding composer and performer, Clara Schumann.

There we have it: a CD replete with skilful compositions evoking the nineteenth century greats. Most notably the echoes are of Schumann and Brahms but there are unequivocal allusions to Bach as well. The interpretations are intelligent and

alive with colour and texture. An exquisitely crafted and energetically performed set of the complete piano works of Heinrich and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg.

**Lucy Jeffrey**

**Amazon Review: Rated only 2\*/5\***

**Disappointing Wanna-Be Husband and Wife Composers like Robert and Clara Schumann - Dennis E. Ferrara**

Reviewed in the United States on August 2, 2019

Heinrich and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg - Complete Piano Works - Natasa Veljkovic. 3 CPO cds - (2019) - CD - (1) - TT: 77:05 - Heinrich von Herzogenberg - (1843-1900) - Funf Klavierstucke, op. 37; Vier Phantasiestucke, op. 4; Variationen uber das Menuett aus 'Don Juan,' op. 58; Fantastische Tanze fur das Pianoforte, op. 9; Romanze, op. 6; CD - (2) - TT: 77:50 - Elisabeth von Herzogenberg - (1847-1892) - Acht Klavierstucke; Heinrich von Herzogenberg - Funf Klavierstucke, op. 25; Sechs klein Charaterstucke, op. uber das Motiv cis-d-b-a; Capriccio, op. 107; Akosticha, op. 7; CD - (3) - TT: 77:50 - Heinrich v H - Fantasia quasi Sonata WoO 13; Klavierstucke - (Vierte Folge), op. 68; Klavierstucke - (Dritte Folge), op. 49; Acht Variationen, op. 3 - Here one finds the complete piano compositions of this basically unknown and forgotten husband and wife team of pianist-composers who need Robert and Clara Schumann and tried to follow in the footsteps of the Schumanns; sad to say, the music is very academic, well written and very dull in its thematic and lackluster thoughts and ideas. Genius in the Schumanns has always been attributed to Robert; now, Clara is becoming better known in her select compositions; however, in this extremely well performed, three cd set, the music is not as interesting; however, the Variationen uber das Menuett aus 'Don Juan,' op. 58 certainly has charm due to its original composer, W.A. Mozart. The variations do have some merit here.

Natasa Veljkovic is most certainly a truly gifted and empathic pianist; moreover, her discographies reflect her interests and scholarship into performing unique and unknown composers for the piano. One should check AMAZON catalogue for these composers. Her performances are subtle, warm, and a full understanding for the Art of the Musical Phrase; moreover, her research is interesting in being able to perform these unknown pieces with such feeling and understanding.

The concert instrument utilized in this set of recordings is beautifully voiced and the tonal balance here is excellent. There is a fine 27 page booklet with excellent program notes which accompanies these recordings with 5 photographs. The research is most appreciated.