

DUSSEK Violin Sonatas: in B \flat , op. 1/1 (CrawD 5); in G, op. 1/2 (CrawD 6); in C, op. 1/3 (CrawD 7); in C, op. 28/1 (CrawD 118); in F, op. 28/2 (CrawD 119); in B \flat , op. 28/3 (CrawD 120); in D, op. 28/4 (CrawD 121); in g, op. 28/5 (CrawD 122); in E \flat , op. 28/6 (CrawD 123) • Julia Huber (vn); Miriam Altmann (fp) (period instruments) • BRILLIANT 96588 (71:49)

Johann (or Jan) Ladislaus Dussek is one of the major players in the world of 18th-century music. As a keyboardist, this Bohemian performer achieved considerable success during his lifetime, beginning with concert touring in the 1780s. He was a favorite fortepianist of Marie Antoinette, and his patron when he moved to Paris was none other than Field Marshal Talleyrand, which is probably why he survived the French Revolution. He was also notoriously bad-tempered and vain, though this did not prohibit him from being a darling of the French salon society during Napoleonic times. Not even a scandalous affair with Ann-Marie Krumpolz could derail this. His sonatas for his main instrument, the fortepiano, were published and earned him an international reputation, and even Beethoven was known to have studied them. What is less known but of equal importance are the 38 violin sonatas, of which this disc is the second volume of presumably the complete works for violin and piano.

That Dussek adhered to the French fashion is clear from the format; most of these sonatas are in a two-movement format, with a brilliant and lengthy *Allegro* followed by some sort of Rondo or Rondo-esque movement. Only in the later op. 28 does he make some small adjustments. Four of the six works here begin with a slow movement followed by the *Allegro*, which makes them more akin to the style of the later century. For example, the first sonata of the op. 1 in B \flat Major has a light and melodious first movement that would in other hands be deemed worthy of Mozart in its lyricism and technical display. Here, the violin plays a decidedly secondary role; it's all about the brilliant and flashy piano part. The languid second movement is a gentle Siciliano, which then dissolves into some short variations. One is hard put to even find the violin in most of it, as it seems like a display of various pianistic technical variations. The Rondo of the third sonata in the set is lovely and fluid, with more of the violin present. I particularly like the sudden appearance and then subtle disappearance of minor-key moments that give it just a hint of emotional content.

The op. 28 sonatas, on the other hand, are more advanced stylistically. They are also much shorter, as it seems like Dussek may have focused on them as pedagogical devices. The second movement *Adagio* of the C-Major Sonata (No. 1) is a light and airy tune of the sort that Joseph Haydn would have loved in its simplicity, particularly since it contrasts with the rather arrogant march of the first movement. The opening of the B \flat -Major Sonata (No. 3) is lively and filled with flourishes, in which the two instruments function more or less as equal partners

(though of course the piano still predominates in places). The first movement of the G-Minor Sonata (No. 5) begins with a slow lament, emotional and sensitive, but this vanishes quickly into a nice major-key lyrical tune. The finale is happy and bouncy, indicating that the somber mood was all a joke. The jagged contours of the finale of the E^b-Major Sonata (No. 6) herald a homage to the Italian style in its lyricism and light-hearted content.

These are but quick descriptive moments in this excellent disc. Not only is Dussek's music quite interesting compositionally, but it is also done with style and verve by Julia Huber and Mariam Altmann. The sonatas show a firm grasp of the style of the period, being tuneful and quite complex stylistically. While the violin part is often secondary, the piano part is always quite technically demanding and filled with roulades and flourishes. This is an outstanding continuation of the series, and one that will demonstrate that Dussek and his Czech colleagues were at the top of their game musically. Well worth getting. Bertil van Boer