

**DUSSEK Duet for Harp and Pianoforte in B $\flat$ , op. 38. Piano Sonata No. 24 in f $\sharp$ , op. 61. Duettino No. 2 in F. Sonata for Solo Harp in E $\flat$ , op. 34. Duo concertant in B $\flat$ , op. 69/1 • Masumi Nagasawa, hp; Richard Egarr, pf. • ETCETERA 1270 ( 78:20)**

My heart goes out to Masumi Nagasawa and Richard Egarr, fine artists both; for if ever there was a performance sabotaged by its recording, this is it. The program was recorded in the cavernous acoustic of the Doopsgezinde Kerk, Haarlem, in the Netherlands. What this venue and the mike setup do, especially to Egarr's John Broadwood and Son 1804 Grand Piano has to be heard to be believed. Every chord ricochets like a gunshot inside an enormous empty barrel. For the first minute or two, it's funny. After that, it's an Excedrin headache.

This recital advertises itself as "Grand Desserts: The World of Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812)," accompanied on the booklet cover by a tray of dehydrated looking pastries—hardly more appetizing than the contents of the disc—whose shelf date has long expired.

Dussek, as many will already know, was a deadbeat husband and father, and a home wrecker to boot, who broke up the marriage of Johann Baptist Krumpholtz and his wife, Anne-Marie, leading to Krumpholtz's suicide. He was also a pianist and composer of considerable repute who wrote prodigiously for the piano in a somewhat generic period style that blends elements of Mozart, Clementi, Czerny, early Beethoven, Hummel, and Schubert. Not quite as prodigiously, Dussek also wrote for the harp, the instrument on which Anne-Marie was an accomplished player.

This release could have been a valuable addition to the Dussek discography. The instruments are authentic: an 1815 single-action Naderman harp, which has a lovely silvery tone when heard solo in the only redeeming item on the program, the op. 34 solo harp sonata; and the aforementioned Broadwood 1804 Grand, a five-octave plus seven-note model. In no way can either Nagasawa or Egarr be faulted for this recording disaster.

**Jerry Dubins**

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## **Duos for Harp and Piano Forte**

Duo Concertante Op.73 in F major (1811) [23:25]

Duetтино (1802) [5:40]

Duetto in F major Op.26 (1794) [16:38]

Duo Concertant in E flat major Op.72 (1811) [20:57]

### **Sophia Giustina DUSSEK-CORRI (1775-1831)**

Introduction and Waltz for the Harp and Piano Forte [4:24]

Masumi Nagasawa (single action harp)

Richard Egarr (pianoforte)

rec. November 2011, Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam

**ETCETERA KTC 1436** [71:13]

Jan Ladislav Dussek wrote a significant amount of music for the combination of harp and fortepiano, some for concert performance and others for the attention of amateurs. This disc, the second in the series, gives us a taste of both kinds of work. An added attraction is that Masumi Nagasawa plays on a c.1815 single action pedal harp made by F.J. Naderman of Paris and Richard Egarr plays an 1804 Broadwood Grand Piano. François Naderman was Dussek's harpist colleague in his last years in Paris, with whom he played many concerts.

Egarr is writing no more than the truth when he says in his booklet note that the sonorities of these instruments blend so well, so magically in fact, that it can be very difficult at times to work out at which point the harp ends and the Broadwood takes over, or indeed which instrument is carrying the melody line at any given moment. There is piquancy in this timbral coiling. And if nothing else this disc, released in the 200<sup>th</sup> year of Dussek's death - Egarr doubts many pianists will be playing his works, so out of fashion is the Bohemian composer - will serve to show just how well the use of original instruments can convey the special combination's particular sonorities.

The music is vital, exciting, and full of colour and sentiment. The *Duo Concertant* of 1811 has ear-titillating breadth, but a real 'thwack' to the unison passages and demonstrates how easily the two instruments can blend seemingly to produce a new one; a kind of 'forteharp' or 'harpopiano', perhaps. The *Larghetto* in this work shows Dussek's seemingly inexhaustible fund of expressive writing, though the B section also reveals his ear for big-boned contrastive material. He invariably ends with a sporting *Rondo*, relishing the full resources of both instruments.

Ingratifying warmth is a prerequisite of the combination, too, as the *Duetтино* of 1802 exemplifies and though this work is in two movements and for amateurs it doesn't stint on charm. The bigger and bolder *Duo Concertant* of 1811 is a match for the brother work of the same year though its opening movement is a shade more salon-inclining than the Op.73. Dussek's finales can always be relied upon to

go *con brio*, as here. The *Duetto* Op.26 was a product of the composer's London years. He exploits, as does Egarr (to the max, indeed), some thunderous unison opportunities. Ebullience once again is writ large, though his *Rondo* finale is not quite as outgoing as the later Parisian models. To end the recital there is a charming *Introduction and Waltz* by Dussek's wife, Sophia Corri.

This fine recording has been well captured in the Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam, which provides warm sonics without any cloying reverberation to blunt the music-making.

***Jonathan Woolf***