



the composer is professor emeritus – Bonde has a way of harnessing a wide range of modernist influences into a structure that can still often sound spontaneously random. Ultimately, though, that range becomes rather a fault. After picking out Bartók, Berg, Stravinsky and Webern, one is still left looking for more of Bonde himself.

Ken Smith

Brahms • Smetana

Brahms Piano Trio No 1, Op 8

Smetana Piano Trio, Op 15

Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio

Bridge © BRIDGE9362 (66' • DDD)



Trios from the ensemble formely known as Sequenza

The works that the Weiss-Kaplan-Newman Trio play on their new disc were born out of struggle. Brahms was dissatisfied with the original version of his Trio No 1 in B major, Op 8, and revised it extensively. Smetana composed his Trio in G minor, Op 15, soon after the death of his four-year-old daughter. Each score is filled with intensely emotional material, for different reasons. It is to the high credit of these superlative musicians that they don't stint on the dramatic and poetic qualities.

The Brahms, played in the final version, receives a performance of warm and sweeping beauty, along with impish grace in the *Scherzo*. In the slow movement, every phrase is vibrantly sculpted and placed within the context of the eloquent conversations. The ensemble brings blazing clarity to balances that are so crucial to texture and interplay, with Mark Kaplan's soaring violin and Clancy Newman's firmly assertive cello lines boldly complementing Yael Weiss's authoritative pianism.

Smetana pours out a range of feelings in his trio, which bears his distinctive lyrical urgency. Cast in three movements (curiously minus a slow movement), the score broods and sings, dances and rages. The second movement juxtaposes folksy charm with sweetness. Given the circumstances surrounding its creation, the piece could prompt interpreters to go overboard in the expressivity department. Weiss, Kaplan and Newman take a more sensitive route, remaining keenly alert to nuance and dynamic contrasts while providing welcome and requisite quotas of passion.

Donald Rosenberg

Helps

Helps Postlude^o. Fantasy^b. Piano Quartet^c. Duo^d.

Piano Quintet^e. Trio I^f. Trio II^f. Shall We Dance^g

Mendelssohn Schifflied, Op 71 No 4 (arr Helps)^h

Ireland The Darkened Valley^o. Love is a sickness full of woes (arr Helps)^h **Poulenc** Intermezzo, FP118^o

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRIAN MOSOFF

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Fierce and delicate: percussionist Ryan Scott plays music by Maki Ishii

Godowsky 53 Studies on the Chopin Etudes^o – No 12; No 45^b

^oMarieke Schneemann *fl* Lars Wouters van den Oudenweijer *cl* ^oBernhard Krug *hn* ^oRonald Carbone

va ^oFrank Dodge *vc* ^oRobert Helps, ^oNaomi

Niskala *pfs* ^oATOS Trio (^oAnnette von Hehn *vn*

Stefan Heinemeyer *vc* ^oThomas Hoppe *pf*)

Naxos American Classics © 2 8 559696/7 (118' • DDD)

^oRecorded live in Berlin



Remembering the talent that was pianist-composer Helps

Both of Robert Helps's formidable artistic gifts are represented on this revealing two-disc collection. There's the composer of piquant and poetic chamber music, and there's the pianist who gave supple life to his own works, as well as pieces by other composers. These complementary aspects paint a portrait of a bold musician with the facility to transform and illuminate in myriad styles. Helps (1928-2001) initially built a career as a pianist of remarkable acumen in contemporary music, including scores by his teachers, such as Roger Sessions. But his immersion in the past also can be heard on this collection in shapely and eloquent live performances of transcriptions of music by Godowsky, Ireland, Mendelssohn and Poulenc, as well as in Helps's richly layered 'Shall We Dance'.

The chamber music that spans nearly half a century provides glimpses into Helps's expansive compositional arsenal. Hints of Hindemith can be heard in the Postlude for horn, violin and piano (1964), while the long,

mystical lines in the Piano Quartet (1997) bear the influence of Scriabin. Still, Helps was no imitator. Whatever wisps of the Second Viennese School may float through several of the pieces, the music is always suffused with distinctive clarity, vehemence and pensive drama, as in the two arresting piano trios (from 1957 and 2000). Helps's close association with Spectrum Concerts Berlin can be discerned in the meticulously detailed performances by the ATOS Trio and an array of splendid colleagues. Donald Rosenberg

Ishii

Saidoki (Demon), Op 86. Concertante, Op 79.

Percussion Concerto, 'South - Fire - Summer', Op 95

Ryan Scott *perc* **Esprit Orchestra / Alex Pauk**

Innova © INNOVA809 (52' • DDD)

Recorded live



Scott's percussion versus Esprit's orchestra in live Ishii

The late Japanese composer Maki Ishii devoted much of his creative life to works featuring percussion that fuse Western and Eastern traditions. On his new recording, Ryan Scott is soloist in three pieces demonstrating Ishii's heightened skill at conjuring a spectrum of sonic worlds. These mesmerising scores find metallic and wooden percussion instruments alternating, blending and often entering into battle with the orchestra. The music veers from the most delicate washes of sound to cataclysmic eruptions. The demon that gives

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