

Concert Organ Masterpieces

Mozart arr Best *Overture "The Magic Flute"*

Bach arr Heywood *Concerto for two violins (1st movt)*

Debussy arr Cellier *Clair de lune*

Best *Organ Sonata in D minor*

Dvorak arr Shinn *Largo from Symphony no 9*

Handel arr Best *Organ concerto no 2*

Faulkes *Autumn song*

Haydn arr Stainer *Symphony no 104 "London" (1st movt)*

Lemare *Concertstück (in the form of a Tarantella)*

Thomas Heywood (organ)/ St John's Church, Toorak, Australia.

TT74'00". Move records MD3210

The young Australian virtuoso Thomas Heywood has set himself a severe test by choosing to record this demanding programme in the church where he holds the post of organist. The 1914 Hill organ, now returned to its original state after a misguided 1961 rebuild, is very well suited to this repertoire, but the acoustic is as dry as one would expect in a medium sized Victorian parish church, and every single detail is ruthlessly exposed even in the fastest and loudest passages. But a rock-solid sense of rhythm, a seemingly fireproof technique and a complete mastery of organ management see him through with an exhilarating ease and sense of enjoyment. His thorough knowledge of this instrument is particularly useful in the quiet pieces where he uses atmospheric registration to give the illusion of a larger space. I am afraid that even with Heywood's persuasive advocacy nothing will convince me that Debussy's *Clair de lune* can work on the organ - the musical concept of the piece is surely too closely tied to the composer's exquisite sense of piano timbre - but there are some hugely enjoyable things on this issue.

The *Magic Flute* overture immediately shows Heywood's complete technical control, as well as the weight and power of the organ; there is plenty of bass here but the recorded sound never becomes muddy. Heywood's own arrangement of the Bach *Double Concerto* is clearly in the W T Best tradition of including every note that appears in the original score; all the lines are audible in a performance that has plenty of poise and vitality despite the fairly steady tempo. Of the other arrangements on this disc, Dvorak's famous *Largo* is beautifully phrased and has a real sense of the orchestral original (but why cut the climactic passage just before the recapitulation?), and the Victorian arrangements of Handel and Haydn are as weighty and impressive as one would expect - W T Best's cadenza to the Handel concerto is splendidly over the top!

The original works on this issue are just as interesting, and certainly as well-performed. Best's *Sonata in D minor* is finely constructed and original in conception, with a central

Romanza that is really a minuet and trio – the clarinet tune here beautifully phrased by Heywood – and a last movement of Haydnesque exuberance. The thematic material though, while always cleverly worked-out and developed, is not particularly memorable. Faulkes's *Autumn Song* is somewhere between Hollins and Ketelbey: outrageously slushy harmonies and theatre-organ style registration – I must get a copy as soon as possible. As for Lemare's *Concertstück*, this is a welcome reminder that virtuoso display pieces don't have to be lacking in serious musical content. Always harmonically striking, never saccharine or predictable, this work will hopefully continue the restoration of Lemare's reputation among organists as a composer of original music. Informative and generously illustrated liner notes are also very welcome; this disc is unreservedly recommended.