

playing that moves with conviction from the intensity of its triumphant conclusion, to its Lutheran chorale melody. Items, comprising his shorter works for cello and as convincing, the *Variations* combining brilliance with warmth, while in the *Song Books*, Alice Neary's tone and combine to give her line a truly

Duncan Druce

comparison:

06) (HYPER) CDA67485

R Strauss · Verdi

temi. Three Minuets **R Strauss**
Op 2 **Verdi** String Quartet

108 (66' • DDD)



You will not need reminding by now that the Strauss and Verdi quartets, a

rd-company coupling, are ks for the medium by two of predominantly vocal music. in seven years of each other, that the Strauss is a prentice way anticipating masterworks Verdi audibly the work of master heard midway between

another link, however, in admiration of both composers 'ical' Viennese masters of the Strauss has some clearly image to the Beethoven ets, the Verdi to Beethoven's the medium but also, characteristically, to the anarchic of Haydn – the dynamic the *Andantino* or the whole finale.

rmances of the two main works York-based quartet are serious forward – obviously suited to and with a stirring account of *Andante cantabile* movement) too Germanic for the Verdi. s made to relax into an 'Italian' even for moments such as the in the *Scherzo*. Compare this verni recording (CRD, 5/89 – usher (and larger) sound and ways dividends. Also, if the ent and musical argument of y professional one-off outing try another 'serious' reading deus (DG, 9/80), very 'live', and of playing that puts that of

some others in the shade and more relevantly coupled with contemporary Tchaikovsky and Smetana. The shorter Puccini items, little tone-poems, are more lollipop-time and rightly treated as such by the Ensō. A convenient new collection then, but I would want to look elsewhere for the Verdi. **Mike Ashman**

Röntgen

'String Trios, Vol 2'

String Trios – No 5; No 6; No 7; No 8

Lendvai String Trio

Champs Hill © CHRCD087 (69' • DDD)



The Lendvai Trio's previous disc of Röntgen string trios (2/14),

featuring Nos 1-4, was one of the great surprises of the year to date: four delightful chamber works, warmly lyrical, quirky in expression with little of the longueurs or repetitiveness to which this composer sometimes fell victim, all superbly played by the Lendvai Trio and caught in excellent sound by Champs Hill. Could the next batch maintain the same level of quality all round?

Well, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Röntgen may have churned trios out in unusually large numbers, often in rapid succession – Nos 5-7 here were written a few months apart in 1920, with No 8 following in 1923 – but he clearly had a real talent for these intimate dialogues, not intended as public statements. The writing is lean, with a rather Classical (or neo-classical) feel. The slow movements display a winning lyricism – not quite equalling that of the First, perhaps – and in Nos 6 and 7 sport a rather folk-like tint (as with Nos 3 and 4). Harmonically, the music sounds of its time but what compels attention throughout is the sense of fun, particularly in the *scherzos*. Nos 6 and 7 are four-movement designs with discrete *scherzo*, whereas the Fifth's *scherzo* finale plays tag with the listener's expectations of what theme it should end with before sidestepping the question completely. The tripartite Eighth is almost built out of three *scherzos*, their gentle humour making for a most satisfying whole.

The Lendvai Trio once more acquit themselves with flying colours, their infectious enthusiasm consistently communicated. As I said of Vol 1, 'With beautifully clear, natural sound, listening to this disc is a delightful way to spend an hour': so is Vol 2.

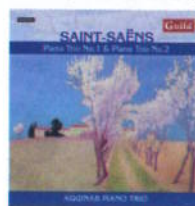
Guy Rickards

Saint-Saëns

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 18; No 2, Op 92

Aquinas Piano Trio

Guild © GMCD7408 (61' • DDD)



Geniality and impeccable craftsmanship go hand in hand when it comes

to Saint-Saëns's piano trios. As Basil Smallman remarked in his study of the piano trio genre (1990), the First Trio of 1869 is 'notable for its classical elegance of style, [deploying] many charming, though never profound, musical ideas'. This is music to enjoy, as the Aquinas Piano Trio clearly do in playing it. Although by no means without its moments of emphatic drama, the trio's demeanour is predominantly one of delicacy and restraint, gently projecting its ideas through lucid textures in which the pianist Martin Cousin fluently and with finesse finds the trio's limpid tone, with the violin and cello of Ruth Rogers and Katherine Jenkinson eloquently establishing their place within the colour scheme. The recording sensibly stresses the intimate nature of the music. At times there could usefully be a touch more focus on the string lines but that does not unduly detract from a performance that is precisely attuned to the music's affable allure.

The Second Trio of 1892 is larger in both scale and expressive gesture. The E minor key seems to provoke more searching thoughts and Saint-Saëns spreads his ideas over five movements rather than four. Contrast and cohesion nevertheless coalesce in the working-out of material, and again the Aquinas Trio are spot-on in interpretative instinct.

Geoffrey Norris

'Barroco español'

Anonymous Xácara **Boccherini** Minuet. La musica notturna delle strade di Madrid **Brunetti** Sonata in D **Murcia** Canarios. Grabe **Nebra** Seguidilla **Sanz** Passacalles **D Scarlatti** Sonata, Kk208 **A Soler** Sonatas – G major; G minor. Fandango

Nils Mönkemeyer va **Klaus-Dieter Brandt** vc

Thomas Zscherpe db **Sabine Erdmann** hpd

Andreas Arend gtr/theo **Anja Herrmann** perc

Sony Classical © 88843 04224-2 (73' • DDD)



Spanish Baroque music played on the viola? Why not – especially when the