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 C. P. E. BACH String Symphonies Nos. 1–6, Wq 182 • Sakari Oramo, cond; Ostrobothnian CO • ALBA 374 (SACD: 63:11)



Bach: Hamburger Sinfonien Wq 182

These thematically rich works were written by Bach in his 60th year, on commission from Baron Gottfried von Swieten. The Baron, nearly two decades Bach's junior, later provided some financial support to Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. The annotator for this splendid Hybrid SACD release (the ensemble's first chair cellist) suggests that von Swieten's interest in north German music was a factor in his subventing the Hamburg-based composer. In any case the set is known as the *Hamburger Sinfonien*, and so identified by ALBA.

The annotator (Lauri Pulakka) also suggests that unlike many such commissions, the Baron gave Bach free rein in his compositional efforts—asking only for sophisticated compositions which presented some technical difficulty in their execution. Bach responded with six works identical in structure (each of three movements, fast-slow-fast), similar in mood (generally cheerful), and similar in length: The Fourth Sinfonia is a hair under 12 minutes and the Sixth just 3 seconds under 9 minutes. Although one cannot imagine they were performed as a set (but, who knows?) they can be heard in barely over an hour's listening time. Unlike the works catalogued as Wq 183, which are scored for strings and winds, these are for strings alone.


Who would listen at a sitting, you might ask? In fact, within these modestly scaled works, the brilliant second son has crafted a half-dozen near masterpieces. They are inventive, melodic, and so rich in their harmonic development as to cause one, at least temporarily, to agree with those who have said C. P. E. is “the most adventurous composer harmonically before Schubert.” Although in my listening prior to writing these comments I have listened several times to one or the other sinfonia, I have twice, for sheer pleasure, listened to the disc straight through with interest and delight.

The first numbered is in G Major and fascinates throughout, the first movement arresting in both rhythm and melody, a lovely slow movement followed by a particularly bracing finale. In the second work, I find the first movement a bit less individualistic, but the poco adagio is gorgeous and the concluding presto even more fun than in the preceding work. My two favorites are the Fourth and Fifth sinfonias, the two longest, and the Fifth, the only one in minor key. The Fourth, in A Major has as much richness and dark coloration as the Fifth, however, and both reach considerable emotional depth. The poco andante movement of the Sixth Sinfonia is in a similar vein. All of the slow movements are in something of a free fantasia, almost arioso, style, but there is great variety among them.

These works have been most readily available to U.S. buyers in a fine Naxos recording issued in 1997; Christian Benda conducts the Capella Istropolitana with understanding and style. No one need discard that recording. However, I should say this Alba release takes priority in choice now. Sakari Oramo has been chief of this Finnish group for only two years, but has, of course, made a huge mark (and career) throughout Scandinavia as a fine conductor, brilliant interpreter of the music of Carl Nielsen, and chair of the respected Malko Conducting Competition. In leading this chamber orchestra of 19 players, gives of his talents to a repertory different from what I have known to be his historic norm. He also may have provided the keyboard player for the group, since Anna-Maaria Oramo (his sister) is listed on the roster for harpsichord and cembalo.

These works, however, offer little—if any—opportunity for continuo. They are modern sounding, as modern as Haydn (or more so), particularly given the incisive, vigorous, spot-on string playing heard in these recorded performances. This is a crack ensemble, a professional orchestra for just over a quarter-century but actually dating to 1972. As recorded in what seems to be an acoustically excellent hall in the coastal town of Kokkola (about three-quarters of the distance to the north end of the Gulf of Bothnia), the splendid sonic properties of this SACD present the music and the playing of it in the best possible framework. This ensemble offers not just precision in its playing, but also genuine tonal beauty. The conductor not only keeps things going, but seems at one with his players in shaping the music with both sensitivity and force when called for. This release calls for a strong recommendation. James Forrest

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 CZERNY String Quartets: in a; in d; in D; in e • Sheridan Ens • CAPRICCIO C5234 (2 CDs: 113:32)



Czerny: String Quartets

Carl Czerny's work list contains over 1,000 entries—861 with opus numbers, the rest without; yet, he is remembered, and not all that kindly, by generations of piano students as the author of their torture in the form of countless keyboard études, progressive exercises, and study methods for all ages and stages. A pupil of Beethoven and one of the most accomplished pianists of his day, Czerny is said to have memorized every piano work by Beethoven, and could play any one of them at the call-out of its opus number. Still, after establishing himself as a leading virtuoso—he premiered Beethoven's C-Major and "Emperor" Piano Concertos—Czerny turned almost exclusively to teaching and found his calling as a composer of pedagogical studies.

Among those 100 or so works without opus numbers mentioned above are six symphonies and somewhere between 20 and 40 string quartets, most of which have not been previously recorded, and about which there is little is known. Two of the quartets in this two-disc set—the A-Minor and D-Major—are here receiving their world premiere recordings.

Before starting my listening, I asked myself if Czerny (1791–1857), who was so close to Beethoven from the age of 10 until the time of Beethoven's death in 1827, would be able to escape the latter's powerful influence, especially in the medium of string quartet. The answer, it turns out, is an equivocal yes and no.

For the most part, Czerny's writing in these quartets is much closer in style to that of Mendelssohn

than it is to that of Beethoven. Listen, for example, to the opening strains of the A-Minor Quartet. The yearning, upward-thrusting melody in the first violin over pulsating eighth-notes in the accompanying strings is pure Mendelssohn. This made sense when I read the album note, which gives a best-guess date for Czerny's string quartets as the 1850s. If that's the case, these would be very late works in the composer's canon—he died in 1857—and Czerny would most assuredly have been familiar with all of Mendelssohn's quartets, the last of which was completed in 1847, just two months before Mendelssohn died.

But then, with the arrival of the last movement (*Allegro non troppo*) of the D-Minor Quartet, came a major shock. If you acquire this set—and I think you should—before you listen to this movement, do yourself (and me) a favor and put on the third movement (*Allegretto*) of Beethoven's String Quartet No. 8 in E Minor, the second of the "Razumovsky" Quartets. Then listen to the Czerny. You'll do a triple take. The key, of course, is different, and the melodic intervals are not exactly the same, but they're close enough, and the rhythm—that same halting figure interrupted by rests—are unmistakably Beethoven. There's no way this could have been an accident, especially in light of Czerny's familiarity with the Beethoven; for Czerny is quoted by Thayer (*Life of Beethoven*), saying that "the second movement of the quartet [he's speaking of the E-Minor opus] occurred to Beethoven as he contemplated the starry sky and thought of the music of the spheres."

Imitation aside, however, Czerny goes on to write a bracing movement with a stormy development section which uses that rhythmic incipit in an imaginative and masterful way. The music, like Mendelssohn's, never flags, but the score is Mendelssohn with all of the dramatic tension and angst of middle-period Beethoven.

I have to say that these Czerny quartets really bowled me over. I was already familiar with four of the composer's symphonies—Nos. 1 and 5 on a Signum CD led by Nikos Athinaios, and Nos. 2 and 6 on a Hänssler CD led by Grzegorz Nowak—and also a Piano Trio in A Minor, op. 289, on a Signum CD with the Göbel-Trio Berlin, all of which I found very well crafted and often of arresting power and beauty. But these string quartets were new to me—as at least two of them will be to everyone, since they've not been previously recorded—and they really give me pause to wonder if Czerny wasn't a major post-Beethoven, pre-Brahms era Romantic composer of a stature not far below that of Mendelssohn and Schumann. Perhaps the real Czerny has been hiding all this time behind those mile-high stacks of piano exercises, which have made his name the butt of a few jokes.


These string quartets are no joke; they're a major discovery for which we have a number of music scholars and ensembles to thank, chief among them Canada's St. Lawrence String Quartet, which performed the E-Minor and D-Minor quartets at the World's First Carl Czerny Music Festival and International Symposium in Edmonton in 2002. On the 150th anniversary of Czerny's death in 2007, a follow-up symposium was held in Berlin, in which the present Sheridan Ensemble participated.

The Sheridan Ensemble, which I'd not heard of previously, is not a string quartet. It's not even quite like one of those variously populated groups, such as the Nash Ensemble, which expands or contracts to the requirements of the work at hand. As I understand it, the Sheridan Ensemble, founded by cellist Anna Carewe in 2007, is made up of players drawn from some of Europe's leading classical orchestras, such as the Berlin Philharmonic and Basel Chamber Orchestra, but also reaches out to include jazz and cabaret artists and vocalists. The repertoire of the Sheridan Ensemble leans heavily, but not exclusively, towards modern music, a good deal of it from the avant-garde camp of composers such as Morton Feldman, Christian Wolff, and Howard Skempton. No doubt, this explains why I haven't heard of the Sheridan Ensemble prior to this, since the experimental Modernists are not my thing. But the ensemble takes it a step further by presenting mixed programs of works by Couperin and Telemann side by side with works by Messiaen, Kurt Weill, and Kaija Saariaho. The ensemble's objective seems to be the flexibility to perform anything by anyone at any time.

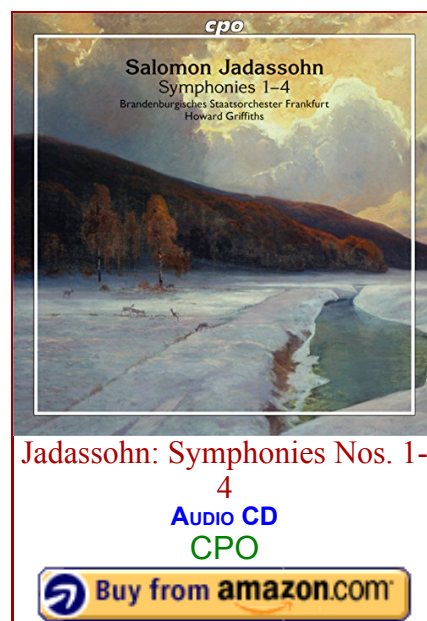
Four of the players from this eclectic group—Yuki Kasai and Matan Dagan, violins; Florian Donerer,

viola; and Anna Carewe, cello—all members of major orchestras and other ensembles, have broken off from the larger Sheridan Ensemble to form the string quartet for these performances of Czerny quartets; and I know this will annoy a few readers and some colleagues to no end, but with playing like this, I wish these four artists would spin themselves off into a formal string quartet and record the mainstream repertoire, instead of expending their time, talent, and energy on a musical cross-culture eclecticism that tries to offer something to everyone and ends up offering everything to probably no one. It's time for me to stand up and own my elitism.

I want to hear these four wonderful players in Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms; and I definitely want to hear them in more Czerny, if the manuscripts can be found. These quartets will definitely change your opinion—assuming you had one in the first place—of who Czerny was and of his considerable talent as a composer. Look for this to be on my 2015 Want List. Jerry Dubins

 **JADASSOHN Symphonies: No. 1 in C, op. 24; No. 2 in A, op. 28; No. 3 in d, op. 50; No. 4 in c, op. 101. Cavatine for Violin and Orchestra, op. 69.¹ Cavatine for Cello and Orchestra, op. 120² •** Howard Griffiths, cond; ¹Klaudyna Schulze-Broniewska (vn); ²Thomas Georgi (vc); Brandenburg St O Frankfurt • CPO 777 607-2 (Download: 127:34)

At first, I thought this was a reissue of recordings that might have been originally released on two separate CDs, but that doesn't appear to be the case, at least insofar as domestic distribution in the States is concerned. They were made between 2010 and 2013, and this appears to be their first release. In truth, there's not much of Salomon Jadassohn's music to be had on record at all, save for a Piano Concerto in C Minor on Volume 47 of Hyperion's *Romantic Piano Concerto* series, a handful of pieces in a collection of albums titled *Music of 19th-Century Jewish German Composers*, a Toccata CD, reviewed in *Fanfare* 34:6, containing the composer's three piano trios, and a Querstand disc containing a piano quartet, reviewed in 36:4. Granted, the vast majority of Jadassohn's 143 published opus numbers are small piano pieces and songs, but there are these four symphonies, another piano concerto, a violin sonata, a string quartet, three piano quintets, and, interestingly, a *Kol Nidrei* for solo piano without opus number, published posthumously in 1904. In my 36:4 review of the Querstand CD, I said, "This sort of thing is right up cpo's alley; one can only wonder why the German label, dedicated to saving so



many lost souls, hasn't gotten around to rescuing one of its own." Well, the record label has thrown Jadassohn not just a lifeline but an entire lifeboat to deliver the composer's symphonies.

Salomon Jadassohn (1831–1902) is not another of those 19th-century Romantic composers we've grown accustomed to reading about—you know the ones I'm referring to: those who were recognized for outstanding achievements in their own lifetimes, only to be quickly forgotten after their deaths and their music not heard again until dusted off and given a second chance in our own time by some enterprising musicians and record company. No, as a composer, Jadassohn was barely better known when he was alive than he is today. That's thanks in good part to Carl Reinecke, who, as director of the Leipzig Conservatory where Jadassohn taught, and as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra where Jadassohn might have hoped to have his works performed, had it in for Jadassohn and undermined his colleague's career in every way he could. The "why" isn't clear, though if I had to guess, I'd say that professional jealousy and insecurity on Reinecke's part played a role. A second and not-to-be minimized factor in Jadassohn being marginalized, if not outright stigmatized, was the rising tide of German anti-Semitism to which Lutheran Leipzig was not immune. Earlier, even the converted Mendelssohn had felt its effects.

It's ironic in a way that no composer had a more impressive pedigree than Jadassohn—he studied composition with Moritz Hauptmann, Ernst Richterand, and Julius Rietz, and piano with Ignaz Moscheles and privately with Franz Liszt in Weimar—yet the only positions he was able to secure early on were working for a Leipzig synagogue and directing a few local choral societies. Eventually, Jadassohn managed to land a job at the city's famous conservatory teaching piano and composition, the further irony being that to the extent he would be remembered at all it would be through the reputations of his students, which included, among others, Grieg, Busoni, Delius, Reznicek, and Felix Weingartner.

Franz Groborz's program note confirms much of this but does point out that Jadassohn's works were published by Breitkopf & Härtel and were not entirely unknown in his lifetime. Along with Reinecke, Jadassohn was acknowledged as a leading member of the so-called "Leipzig School," which followed in the path of Mendelssohn and Schumann, albeit on a decidedly conservative trajectory. Having said that, there's probably no need for me to describe further the content and style of Jadassohn's four symphonies, because you already

know what they must sound like, but I will anyway.

The symphonies were composed over a period of 28 years, from 1860 to 1888 and, if we believe note author Groborz, they do not occupy a central place in Jadassohn's output. According to Groborz, "The composer's understanding of music, academic and craftsmanly in the best sense of the term, meant that he also viewed the genre of the symphony merely as the expression and play of forms moving in sound." "But to me," Jadassohn is quoted as saying, "'symphony' precisely means constructing a world with all the resources of available technique. The constantly new and changing content determines its form by itself."

Frankly, it's hard to listen to these symphonies and believe that they were nothing more to Jadassohn than "merely an expression and play of forms moving in sound." To be sure, these are not the great symphonies one finds named in music appreciation books or on lists of 100 recommended works for building a library, but at least the dates of Jadassohn's first two symphonies were not banner years for great symphonies. Between 1859 and 1861, Joachim Raff produced his First Symphony, "To the Fatherland: A Prize Symphony." Jadassohn's Symphony No. 1 falls squarely in the middle of those years, 1860. Jadassohn's Second Symphony, written in 1863, comes in the same year that Bruckner wrote his "Study Symphony" in F Minor.

Raff completed his Eighth Symphony, "Sounds of Spring," in 1876, the same year in which Jadassohn composed his Third Symphony, a concurrence to which you might reply, "Big deal; so what?" But now there are bigger and more important things to contend with: 1876 is also the year in which Brahms finally completed his First Symphony. And 1888, the year of Jadassohn's Fourth and last symphony, also saw composition of Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony and the original completion of Mahler's First Symphony.

While I'd have to be tone deaf and musically illiterate to place Jadassohn symphonies on a level anywhere near that of symphonies by Brahms, Tchaikovsky, or Mahler, I would not hesitate for a moment to say that they're every bit the equal of the symphonies by Raff, which are pretty good, actually, and better than the symphonies by Reinecke—the composer who put Jadassohn down—which aren't very good at all. (This is as good a place as any to note that there's a misprint in the booklet's title and track listing page, which identifies the Symphony No. 3 as being in D Major. It's not; it's in D Minor, which the body of the program notes gets right, and which I've corrected for in

the headnote.)

The short first movement of Jadassohn's Symphony No. 1 in C Major—only 5:15—is a mainly festive affair which sounds more like the overture to an operetta by Lehár, Suppé, or Arthur Sullivan than it does the first movement of a symphony, but the third movement (*Largo e mesto*) is a moving minor-key piece with a funeral march tread and a gravitas not predicted by the Symphony's high-spirited opening *Allegro con brio* and following scherzo, or reflected in the very Schumanesque scampering finale.

The opening martial strains of the Symphony No. 2 in A Major are highly distinctive and quite memorable, this time in a Mendelssohian sort of way, suggesting some of the incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Jadassohn now reverses the order of the two inner movements, placing the lovely rustic-sounding *Andante non troppo* before the all-but-in-name scherzo, marked *Molto vivace allegro*. Mendelssohn may be the mother of this scherzo, but there's no question as to who the father is; it's Jadassohn. For me, this movement is the highlight of the Symphony; it's irresistibly infectious, and the more I listen to how cleverly it's put together the more I marvel at Jadassohn's talent and undeserved neglect. This time an *Allegro grazioso* concludes the Symphony with a mostly amiable-sounding movement, except for a central development episode which is quite turbulent.

By the time we come to the Symphony No. 3 in D Minor, I think we're beyond saying it resembles this or suggests that. Anyone modestly familiar with music history would guess that this was a later 19th-century, Romantic-period work, and probably by a German composer. Beyond that, though, the music's influences have been so thoroughly assimilated and integrated into Jadassohn's personal manners and modes of expression that the score takes on its own individual profile, and it presents quite a striking pose. A modulating sequence beginning at 4:18 in the first movement really grabs the attention. I fear I'm falling for Jadassohn in a way I hadn't expected to. These symphonies may be one of the best-kept secrets of the 19th century. The *Andante* opens with a chorale that rivals Brahms for its voicing of the orchestra's brass section. The Menuetto that follows is as unique as it is comically entertaining. Beginning with a huffing and puffing in the bassoons, we soon discover this to be the lumbering subject of a minor-key fugue, as more and more entries pile on. If Walt Disney had known of this piece, he might have chosen it instead of Ponchielli's *Dance of the Hours* for *Fantasia*'s hippo episode. Jadassohn's Menuetto isn't quite that frilly and frivolous, but I can see it working just as

well. Following good and proper traditional form, Jadassohn switches to the major mode for his triumphant finale. This is a terrific symphony, easily surpassing in this customer's satisfaction many another resurrected Romantic symphony I've heard.

Jadassohn's Symphony No. 4, his last, is another minor-key work; its first movement is marked *Allegro patetico*. I wasn't expecting Tchaikovsky, but "patetico," I think, is a misleading description for this movement, which, for much of its seven minutes, sounds angry and defiant. The second movement, this time properly labeled "Scherzo," sends mixed messages. In its fleet, somewhat furtive sounding opening, the music's character is stealthy, conveying the impression of a cartoon thief, knapsack over his shoulder, carrying out a heist. But his caper is interrupted, not by the police, but by a comely, virtuous young thing who tries to get him to give up his life of crime and go straight. It's a kind of "beast and the beauty" story in which it's not clear whether the beauty wins out in the end. In the final bars, the thief tiptoes off lightly into the distance, none the more rehabilitated for his encounter with Lady Virtue. This scenario, of course, is purely a figment of my imagination. I have no idea what the composer actually had in mind. The program note describes the movement thus: "The animated scherzo theme occurring in the alternation of spooky woodwind and horn repetitions and staccato violin runs in dancy 12/8 time conveys both soaring elegance and rustic robustness." What? I like my description better. Jadassohn might have more appropriately applied "patetico" to the *Adagio affetuoso* movement, which, like the slow movement in the First Symphony, is of a funereal and poignantly touching character. At almost 10 minutes' duration, the finale is longer than any of the preceding movements and seems to overstay its welcome just a little. But it also seems to be a summing up of all of Jadassohn's techniques and stylistic conventions. It's also worth mentioning that the swirling triplets that account for much of the movement's material bear a strong resemblance to the saltarello finale in Mendelssohn's "Italian" Symphony.

The two cavatinas, one for violin, the other for cello, are rapturous rhapsodies that can claim Beethoven's violin romances as precedent, though by now Jadassohn's free-flowing, hyper-Romantic melody and seemingly bar-less phrases are no longer indebted to his famous predecessor. The two pieces are exquisitely played by violinist, Klaudyna Schulze-Broniewska and cellist Thomas Georgi.

I cannot adequately express how much I enjoyed these Jadassohn works and what a wonderful discovery the composer has been for me. I can, however, tell

what a wonderful discovery the composer has been for me. I can, however, tell you that the performances by Howard Griffiths and the Brandenburg State Orchestra Frankfurt are in the awesome category. It's hard to imagine this music being played with any greater technical polish and pureness of heart. Hats off to something truly special that doesn't come along that often. Look for this to be on my 2015 Want List. **Jerry Dubins**

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