

Chamber Reviews

easily from sunny folk-infused playfulness to wistful melancholy, and savour Dvořák's endlessly imaginative chamber textures. The softer string playing has a velvety gorgeousness which is balanced by some truly delightful, sparkling piano playing. *The Lento* of Quartet No. 2 is unforgettably, luxuriously expansive and dreamy, with superb blending of instruments.

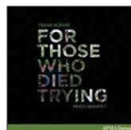
Still, despite the lovely sound, this is quite well-behaved, metronomically-strict playing, especially considering that these works need lots of flexibility. These expansive movements were probably written with the players' (rather than the listeners') pleasure in mind, so need careful pacing and maximum variety. The quartet could enjoy Dvořák's inspired harmonic shifts and moments of grandeur more. The accents could be more rustic, even vulgar and biting, showing off the Schubert-inspired Czech rhythms and melodies described in the excellent liner note (in four languages!). This smoothness of sound may be a trick of the recording quality, which seems sometimes to polish the edges a little too much. But overall, an enjoyable reading. *Natasha Loges*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Horvat

For Those Who Died Trying – The Thailand HRDs

Mivos Quartet
ATMAACD22788 69:56 mins



Born in 1974, Frank Horvat is a multi-genre Canadian composer whose music reflects

a longstanding commitment to social justice. *For Those Who Died Trying* is the title of a photo essay by photographer Luke Duggleby which documents the murder or abduction of 35 Thai Human Rights Defenders over the past 20 years, inspiring Horvat's string quartet, *The Thailand HRDs*.

Performed with intensity and poise by the Mivos Quartet, the work mirrors Duggleby's procedure whereby a portrait of each individual or pair of HRDs was photographed at the exact site of their shooting or kidnap: in 35 through-composed vignettes of approximately two minutes' length, Horvat creates musical portraits in

ALIX LAVIEAU

94 BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

Unshackled:
Lucile Boulanger
frees up the viol



kind, each utilising pitches taken from the letters of the victim's name.

The resulting tributes are poignant in their simplicity. Regardless of limited material – No. 5, for instance, to Boonsom Nimnoi, comprises chugging unisons and octaves – the emotional range is surprisingly broad, spanning melancholy, defiance and even whimsy in conveying a sense of the profound courage shown by ordinary people in the face of existential threat. Most chillingly, the open-ended nature of the quartet-as-roll-call points to ongoing such atrocities in Thailand and elsewhere around the world.

Steph Power
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Saariaho

Tocar; Cloud Trio; Light and Matter; Aure; Graal théâtre

Jennifer Koh (violin), Hsin-Yun Huang (viola), Wilhelmina Smith, Anssi Karttunen (cello), Nicolas Hodges (piano); Curtis 20/21 Ensemble/Conner Gray Covington
Cedille CDR 90000183 68:06 mins



When in 2000 violinist Jennifer Koh first encountered the music of Kaija Saariaho, she felt an immediate affinity with her unique synaesthetic soundworld. Since then, the pair have developed a strong creative bond attested by this delicate yet visceral recording.

Spanning recent chamber works – two duos and two trios – and the 1994 concerto, *Graal théâtre*, Koh's grasp of the composer's inner tensions proves both subtle and fiercely virtuosic. A common thread is her heady, brittle lyricism which coils, tendril-like through the shifting colours and timbres of each piece in turn, matched in dramatic spirit by excellent fellow collaborators. From the opening *Tocar* or 'Touch' (2010), an intense, playful tactility effectively earths a continuous gestural flow that might otherwise be ethereally distant. Here and in the piano trio *Light and Matter* (2014), pianist Nicolas Hodges forms a sensitive anchor-point, he and Koh joined in the latter work by cellist Anssi Karttunen for a world premiere recording which encapsulates Saariaho's kinetic power and luminosity.

Violinist and cellist come movingly together in *Aure* (2011), originally written for violin and viola in homage to Dutilleux, whose *Mémoire des ombres* memorialising Anne Frank touched Saariaho deeply. Hsin-Yun Huang (viola) and Wilhelmina Smith (cello) prove no lesser partners in the Alps-inspired *Cloud Trio* (2009). Yet it's *Graal théâtre* where Koh really takes the breath away; alongside the Curtis 20/21 Ensemble under conductor Conner Gray Covington, she spins lines and textures with exquisite refinement and control. *Steph Power*
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Les Défis de Monsieur Forqueray

Corelli: Sonata III; Mascitti: Sonata II; Leclair: Sonata II
Lucile Boulanger (viola da gamba), Claire Gautrot (basse de viol), Romain Falik (théorbe), Pierre Gallon (harpsichord)
Harmonia Mundi HMM 902330
76:07 mins



This seductive recording by French viola da gambist Lucile Boulanger and her talented trio of continuo players brings to light the virtuosic, experimental and often melancholy soundworld of the great French Baroque viol player Antoine Forqueray. Boulanger traces the influence of the lyrical, exuberant Italian violin style on the French vernacular, dishing up a feast of arrangements and free transcriptions of violin sonatas by Corelli (whose Op. 5 had taken France by storm), by Michele Mascitti (a Neapolitan composer based in Paris), and by Forqueray's colleague Jean-Marie Leclair, whose works fuse Italian verve with French grace. Boulanger's aim is to 'unshackle' her instrument – a goal she certainly achieves in these persuasive transcriptions, and in her delightfully unfettered playing she emerges as something of a Jacqueline du Pré of the viol.

Forqueray's own music drives the gamba to explore new effects and sonorities as it scales the heights and plumbs the depths of the instrument. Boulanger responds to his musical chiaroscuro, illuminating the autumnal colours of the viol's lower reaches with streams of melodic light. The continuo's palette is varied, too, from the thickly-layered textures created by a combination of harpsichord, bass viol and theorbo to the bright and transparent sound of the keyboard alone. The players are equally receptive to the expressive contrasts of Forqueray's bilingual idiom: here, fiery and virtuosic, inflamed by the Italian 'fantastic style', elsewhere, languid and balletic, reflecting courtly French tastes. My only quibble is that Harmonia Mundi's open recording in a resonant chapel acoustic lacks a little warmth.

Kate Bolton-Porciatti
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★