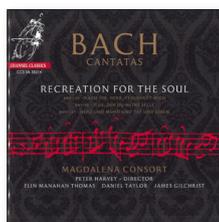


two pianos that comes the closest to being something I would like to hear at the edge of sleep. If I ever have the luxury of going to bed next to a room furnished with two grand pianos and such accomplished performers as Schumann and Magalhães I would love to put the Keiserling premise to the test.

Having spent July immersed in Bach's music, I spent August exploring the first half of Petermann's treatise, devoted to the Jazz Novel, a genre with which I am mostly unfamiliar. As a matter of fact Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* is the only book covered that I had read, and Toni Morrison the only other author mentioned I had previously heard of. It turned out to be quite a challenge to track down many of the books discussed, but I am pleased to say that, after a mostly unfruitful search at the Toronto Public Library, with the aid of Toronto's (few remaining) used book sellers and the Internet I have been able to find books by all of the authors discussed (including Xam Wilson Cartier, Christian Gailly, Jack Fuller, Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray). This too has been a very satisfying journey.

You might think that after all those *Goldberg Variations* I would have had enough of Bach for a while, but perhaps I am like those animals who, even when choices abound, continue eating a single food type until its source is depleted before moving on to something else (not that one could ever exhaust the available wealth of Bach recordings).

For a change of pace I found that a new recording of **Bach Cantatas** entitled **Recreation for the Soul** featuring the **Magdalena Consort** (Channel Classics CCS SA 35214) did



indeed provide a refreshing respite. I must confess that I am not well versed in Bach's many cantatas – some 209 have survived – although I am of course familiar with some of the more famous arias. Listening to this new recording, which features stellar soloists Peter Harvey (bass and direction), Elin Manahan Thomas (soprano), Daniel Taylor (alto) and James Gilchrist (tenor) in one-voice-per-part arrangements, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the beloved melody I know as *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring* appears not once but twice in the cantata *Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben* (Heart and mouth and deed and life) BWV147, as the final chorale of Part One *Wohl mir, dass ich Jesum habe* (What joy for me that I have Jesus), and as the grand finale of the work, *Jesus bleibet meine Freude* (Jesus remains my joy). The other “musical offerings” on this marvelous disc are *Jesu, der du Meine Seele* (Jesu, by whom my soul) BWV78 and *Nach dir, Herr, Verlanget Mich* (Lord, I long for you) BWV150, both rich in Bach's trademark melodies and counterpoint, heard here in a clarity not always found in full

choral presentations. Highly recommended.

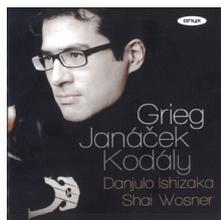
Hoping to wean myself gently off the Bach overdose and realizing that no one writing for solo cello would be able to avoid at least some influence of the master, I decided to check out **Lady in the East, Solo Cello Suites 1-3** by BC composer **Stephen Brown**, featuring **Hannah Adario-Berry** (stephenbrown.ca). The opening notes of *Takakkaw Falls, Suite No.1* confirmed my suspicion regarding echoes of Bach, but almost immediately the contemplative *Air* established its own independent voice and the following *Strathspay & Reel* and *Slow Waltz*, although based on dance patterns like a Baroque suite, were obviously drawing inspiration from different cultural sources – Canadian folk songs and fiddle tunes. It is not until halfway through the final *Jig* that we once again find a nod to Bach in a stately middle passage before a return to the playful fiddle tune of the opening.



I find it interesting to note that the suite was originally composed for solo flute. In my correspondence with Hans de Groot about the disc of Francis Colpron's transcriptions for recorder reviewed elsewhere in these pages I mentioned that one of my favourite versions of the Bach cello suites was Marion Verbruggen's performance on the recorder. I'm pleased to note that the process of translation can also work the other way around, from flute to cello.

The disc includes two other suites (evidently Brown has composed six in all, so far), *Fire*, which is influenced by the classic rock of Hendrix, Procol Harum, Cream and the like, adapted very effectively and idiomatically for solo cello, with a contrasting slow *Recitative and Aria* movement again reminiscent of Bach, and *There Was a Lady in the East* in which Brown returns to folk songs and fiddle tunes. As an amateur cellist I am pleased to note that the sheet music for these works is available from the Canadian Music Centre (musiccentre.ca). I availed myself of the CMC's purchase-and-print-it-yourself service and have enjoyed the challenge of working on the first suite in the past few weeks.

My final selection this month does not show any noticeable influence of J.S. Bach, but does feature solo cello with German-Japanese **Danjulo Ishizaka** accompanied by pianist **Shai Vosner**. **Grieg, Janáček, Kodály** (**Onyx 4120**) features three relatively obscure, or at least rarely recorded, works for cello and piano – Janáček's dark and lyrical *Pohádka* (Fairy Tale) and his brief, dramatic *Presto*, whose origin is unclear but which



may have been meant originally as a movement of the fairy tale suite, and Grieg's *Cello Sonata in A minor, Op.36*. Ishizaka's committed performance of the Grieg and Janáček works makes me wonder why they aren't more often played. After all, these are mature works by respected composers who did not publish much in the way of chamber music – in the case of Grieg two violin sonatas and a string quartet and Janáček just a smattering of works for violin and piano, two string quartets and a woodwind sextet. That alone would make this recording important, but for me it is the centrepiece of the disc, a staple of the modern repertoire, Kodály's *Solo Cello Sonata Op.8* which is most worthy of note.

Presented in a context of “folkloric” works in the liner essay by Ishizaka, I find it hard to make that connection. Of course Kodály worked with Bartók in the early years of the 20th century collecting and transcribing literally thousands of folk songs from Hungary and surrounding lands, and this experience had a lasting influence on both composers and their music. But frankly I don't hear it here. From the abrasive opening through a contemplative middle movement and on to its driving finale, this extended work from 1915 is a thoroughly modern, uncompromising tour de force which extends the cello's sonic possibilities with its re-tuned and simultaneously plucked and bowed strings. Ishizaka's performance brings out all this and more. It's a welcome addition to the discography.

I mentioned above that I imagined that all composers writing for solo cello would be influenced by Bach's solo suites. I find myself unable to find these influences in Kodály however, although I have come up with an explanation. It was Pablo Casals who first brought widespread attention to the Bach suites, having stumbled upon the score in 1890 at the age of 13. He then proceeded to spend several decades working on the suites and developing them as the performance showpieces we know today. Before that time it seems they were regarded as mere finger exercises, learning pieces not fit for the concert hall. Although Casals did record four of the six movements of the *C Major Suite* in 1915, the year Kodály composed his *Sonata*, it would be two more decades before he made his seminal recordings of the entire cycle. I think it may well be that Kodály was not aware of the Bach *Suites* when he composed his masterwork. If this is indeed the case, it is an even more remarkable achievement.

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