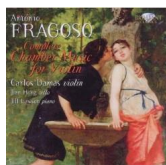


António Fragoso – Complete Chamber Music for Violin (2011)



Sonata In D For Violin And Piano (unfinished) 1 *I. Allegro* 10:09 Suite Romantique For Violin And Piano 2 *I. Prelúdio* 3:56 3 *II. Intermezzo* 2:21 4 *III. Berceuse* 4:44 5 *IV. Nocturno* 4:47
Trio In C Sharp Minor For Violin, Cello And Piano
6 *I. Allegro Moderato* 10:36 7 *II. Molto Lento* 6:10 8 *III. Scherzo – Molto Vivace* 2:41 9 *IV. Allegro Vivo* 6:13
Carlos Damas – violin Jian Hong – cello Jill Lawson – piano

When his untimely death from influenza robbed Portugal of one of its most promising young talents, António Fragoso was working on his Violin Sonata, of which he completed only the opening *Allegro*, as heard here. It is a congenially lyrical, sunny piece, reminiscent of Franck, betraying no sign either of the author's ill health or of the devastating war in Europe that was going on at the time.

Fragoso's affinity with French music is flagged both by the title and the tempo and mood markings of the four-movement *Suite Romantique*. Listeners are sure to perceive the benign influence of Fauré and Debussy in the harmonic language, not to mention its slightly wistful melodious quality and intimate nature.

The wistfulness morphs into shades of ambiguity and melancholy in the ravishing Piano Trio. Mendelssohnian in its Classical elegance and Romantic vitality, it is surely one of the finest piano trios ever to have come out of Portugal.

Bits and pieces of Fragoso's restricted but still sizeable output - comprising more than a

hundred works - have appeared on the Portuguese Numérica label in the last decade or so. Brilliant seem to be the first major label to put together a monograph - of first recordings, at that - for which they deserve handsome credit.

The blurb boasts of an all-Portuguese cast, but Jian Hong and Jill Lawson will likely not strike many as Portuguese-sounding names. On closer inspection, Lawson was born in Mexico to American and Portuguese parents, whereas Hong is northern Chinese, albeit now living in Portugal after a spell in its former colony of Macau. Violinist Carlos Damas's commendable debut recording for Naxos came out last year, the Violin Sonatas of his compatriot Luís de Freitas Branco (review). The present disc was recorded over a year later and Damas seems to have grown in confidence and expressiveness. Fragoso's writing requires Lawson to be more than a mere accompanist, and she responds with great poise to Damas. Hong's contribution is smaller in terms of minutes, but nonetheless significant in the long, soulful Trio.

Brilliant's engineering goes from strength to strength and the label's recordings are nowadays reliably among the best - this one is no different. By name alone, 'Timbuktu Studios' does not sound the classiest of venues, but the ambience is warm and welcoming, the balance between soloists nicely judged. There is one minuscule blip two minutes from the end of the Trio where the cello momentarily 'moves', but that, and the shortish running time of the CD, are the only things that can be said about this disc that are not entirely positive. The booklet notes by Ivan Moody are fairly brief but interesting. ---Byzantion, musicweb-international.com

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