



RESPIGHI Violin Sonata
CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO

Ballade; Opera transcriptions

STRAVINSKY Suite italienne

Francesca Dego (violin)

Francesca Leonardi (piano)

DG 481 7297

Operatic paraphrases and a world premiere make for a rewarding release

Apart from her exceptional command of the instrument, the distinguishing feature of Francesco Dego's playing is her beguiling tendency towards temporal fantasy, especially at the lower end of the dynamic spectrum.

The Respighi Sonata is invariably played as a (Richard) Straussian emotional powerhouse, yet in Dego's sensitive hands it emerges as a deeply poetic, exquisitely lyrical masterwork. Not even she can quite disguise the strange (for its time, place and composer) lack of singable melody, yet she invests her phrasing with such glowing intensity that even the central Andante seems not a note too long. Her regular accompanist, Francesca Leonardi, makes light of Respighi's virtuoso piano writing with a disarming textural clarity and lucidity, matched by DG's balanced, tangible engineering.

In contrast to the cool tempo giusto of more traditional readings, Dego's natural inclination towards emotional narrative turns each movement of Stravinsky's Pulcinella-based *Suite italienne* into a strikingly haunting miniature. It also proves a perfect match for Castelnuovo-Tedesco's coruscatingly inventive operatic takes on Rossini (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and Verdi (*La traviata*), and the world premiere recording of his inexplicably neglected Ballade – written for Tossy Spivakovsky – in which Dego and Leonardi make every note sound enchanted.

JULIAN HAYLOCK

SAARIAHO Tocar¹; Cloud Trio²; Light and Matter³; Aure; Graal théâtre⁴

Jennifer Koh (violin) Hsin-Yun Huang

(viola)² Anssi Karttunen (cello)²

Wilhelmina Smith (cello)² Nicolas

Hodges (piano)^{1,3} Curtis 20/21

Ensemble/Conner Gray Covington⁴

CEDILLE RECORDS CDR 90000 183

A precise but fantastical musical ascent into the clouds

US violinist and new-music specialist Jennifer Koh is very much in the spotlight as soloist on every track of this deeply rewarding disc of recent

Making light work of Respighi: Francescas Leonardi and Dego

