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Wyschnegradsky: *Two Concert Etudes, Op. 19: Two Fugues, Op. 33; Integrations, Op. 49*. Mather: *Sonata for Two Pianos*. Hambraeus: *Carillon for Two Pianos*. Pierrette LaPage and Bruce Mather, duo-pianists. McGill University Records 77002

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feel obliged to rationalize a journal devoted to the past as a reflection of the "new" and "modern." The past is not necessarily dull, musty, and boring, nor has it always been handled ineptly, as we all know. So why the protest? In spite of the curiosities inherent in the subtitle and editorial policy of *Early Music History*, there can be no question that it is a welcome and valuable addition to the periodical literature. It promises to be a solid, catholic, and vigorous journal of the highest order. Although its stated intention is "to stimulate further exploration of familiar phenomena through unfamiliar means," most students of early music will be very pleased if it continues to explore unfamiliar phenomena through familiar means as it does in the first volume.

Bryan Gillingham

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We are grateful to the editor of *Fanfare* magazine for permission to reprint the following reviews of McGill University Records and pleased to direct the attention of our members and readers to this important recording project. The recordings are available at a cost of \$9.95 per disc from McGill University Records, 555 Sherbrooke Street West, Montréal, P.Q., Canada, H3A 1E3.

WYSCHNEGRADSKY: *Two Concert Etudes*, Op. 19: *Two Fugues*, Op. 33; *Integrations*, Op. 49. MATHER: *Sonata for Two Pianos*. HAMBRAEUS: *Carillon for Two Pianos*. Pierrette LaPage and Bruce Mather, duo-pianists. MCGILL UNIVERSITY RECORDS 77002.

Wyschnegradsky. Not one concertgoer in 10,000 is likely to have ever heard his name, much less ever heard his music. Ivan Wyschnegradsky is one of those unique composers of advanced musical esoterics that emerged in the musically fertile World War I and pre-Depression era. Of these early atonalists and microtonalists, several examples of the music of Alois Hába, Carrillo, and, lately, Ornstein, can be found on disc, though only the Ornstein discs are easy to come by; the Swedish label Caprice has given the first discographical light to Roslavetz (see *Fanfare* II:4, p. 99). But for Mossolov (disregarding the famous three-minute excerpt from his gimmicky *Iron Foundry*), Lourié, Ponc, Pâque and others, total obscurity of their innovative works remains. And until the present Canadian release, Wyschnegradsky belonged to the later group.

Born in Russia in 1893 and resident in Paris since 1920, the still-active Wyschnegradsky [Wyschnegradsky died in September 1979, ed.] has maintained an isolated 60-year embrace of microtonality. His music has had only occasional concerts; and for all the attention he has gotten,

he may as well have been living in Tannu-Tuva. A meeting in 1974 between Wyschnegradsky and Canadian composer-pianist Bruce Mather led to a 1977 Montreal concert of eight of the former's works—for two pianos, for four pianos, and for violin and two pianos. Three of the four two-piano pieces that Mather and his wife, Pierrette LePage, performed on that concert (on pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart) are on this disc, including the world premières of the *Two Etudes* and *Two Fugues*.

The first of the *Two Etudes* (1931) is dominated by arpeggios, its creative inspiration being the one by Chopin in C major; tremolos introduce the second Etude, a rather anguished lullaby. The *Two Fugues* (1951) are also highly contrasted: the first is broken, fragmentary — with nervous progression of stops and starts of the theme; and the second features an almost relentless flow of descending scales with only brief moments of agitation. The two *Integrations* of 1967 are the most intervallic of the selections here, emphasizing minor ninths and “minor” fifths (13 quarter tones), and, in the second *Integration*, setting up simultaneous “rotations” of descending and ascending “minor” fifths.

If you've never heard quarter-tone music before (and Ben Johnston's *Sonata for Microtonal Piano* is a superb disc example), you should be fascinated by Wyschnegradsky's aural vista. But more important, he doesn't sacrifice true musical invention for novelty of sound, as is unfortunately the case with much of Hába and Carrillo.

The Mather and Hambraeus works might seem like also-rans in a production that understandably highlights Wyschnegradsky. But what makes this release completely satisfying is the strong side 2. Mather's *Two-Piano Sonata* (1970) is a rarefied dialogue built initially on rapid, short passages, with dynamics and pitch relationships fully explored.

Hambraeus, a Swede residing in Canada since 1972, brings his long fascination with bell and chime sounds to the opening of his *Carillon* (1974). Chopin returns for a literal appearance (The Grande Valse in E-Flat Major) as Hambraeus weaves in some musical quotations to present, as he puts it, “a nostalgic vision of some sort of ‘forgotten recital’” wherein “musicians try to remember fragments of an earlier repertoire.” This is the Hambraeus of *Rencontres*, his orchestral work available on *Caprice*. If you've heard this latter work, you'll know how masterfully he can pull off this sort of confrontation.

The piano playing is dedicated and precise. The piano sound is natural and clean, though side 2 has a slight pre-echo problem only really noticeable with headphones. And with a full 25 minutes of music on each side, McGill University can be fully complimented for this important and rewarding release in about every way I can think of. The only sad feature is that this disc will not appear in *Schwann*, and thereby will be unknown to so many record buyers who would have genuine interest in such a release and are not regular *Fanfare* readers.

Stephen W. Ellis
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