



A Swedish Smorgasbord — Issue 151, 1 August 2021



The Swedish Smorgasbord in orchestral music



'... an enduring melodicism and a surface character
of lightness and sentimentality ...'

containing composer biographies and portraits, program notes, musical texts with translations and an introductory preface from the label's executive producer recounting the circumstances surrounding the creation of this anthology, apparently the first of its kind on record.

John Dante Prevedini: Sterling Records' recent release, *The Swedish Smorgasbord in Orchestral Music*, is a two-disk anthology of orchestral music by various Swedish composers spanning from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. The ensembles featured include the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, the Gävle Symphony Orchestra, the Västerås Symphony Orchestra and Gävleborgs Orkesterförening; the various conductors include Sten Frykberg, Björn Hallman, Göran W Nilson, Harry Damgaard and Gunnar Staern. The anthology consists of previously-released recordings made between 1955 and 1981 and includes a bilingual booklet in English and Swedish, written in a style that is scholarly yet accessible and thus appropriate for specialists and general readers alike. The booklet is quite substantial,

How fortunate it is that such an effort was made, because this anthology is an invitation for the rest of the Western world to re-examine its standard canon and address the relative absence of these Swedish masters, including their unique solutions in the universal saga of achieving modernization within tradition. Indeed, it is rare to see music schools and performance venues (at least in my country, the United States) programming Swedish composers, though they frequently showcase representative figures of other Northern European cultures like Grieg, Nielsen and Sibelius. If the composers on this Swedish anthology were curated alongside the likes of Messiaen, Webern or Bartók for the ears of today's budding generation of would-be composers, I suspect it would equip those listeners with a noticeably more nuanced roadmap for the kinds of innovations that are possible in classical music traditions facing a changing landscape.

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Patrick Maxwell listens to Bach's Goldberg Variations played on the accordion on the Delphian Records label, and Giuseppe Pennisi listens to Nicola Sani's *Tempestate* on Stradivarius. Gerald Fenech listens to orchestral and chamber music by Christopher Gunning on Signum Classics, to Stravinsky's ballet music on harmonia mundi, and on Naxos, to music by Paul Wranitzky, John Philip Sousa, Richard Addinsell and to Hungarian music played by the Offenburg String Trio.

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PROFILE — FRANCESCO AZOPARDI

Simon Farrugia: The composer Francesco Azopardi was born on 5 May 1748. His parents were Salvatore and Anna Azopardi and his birthplace was Rabat, a suburb of Mdina, the old capital city of Malta.

It is not exactly known what inclined Azopardi to the art of music from a young age. At the time, the great musical centre in Malta was Mdina, where St Paul's Cathedral is situated.

It may be that since Azopardi's birthplace was so near the cathedral, he might have been inspired towards sacred music, which was particularly taken care of by the Cathedral Chapter. At the tender age of fourteen, Azopardi was enrolled at the Sant' Onofrio Conservatory in Naples to further his musical studies. [i] Naples was a natural destination to study music, and the 18th century Neapolitan school stood for elitism and perfection. The Sant' Onofrio Conservatory was one of three conservatories in Naples during the eighteenth century, the other two being the Santa Maria di Loreto Conservatory and La Pietà dei Turchini Conservatory. From these three renowned conservatories emerged great musicians, such as Traetta,

Piccini, Sacchini and Guglielmi. The famous Nicolo Piccini is believed to have been Azopardi's teacher of composition. It is noted that Piccini was pleased with Azopardi, as were the people of Naples, who encouraged him to remain in Naples. The Neapolitans were familiar with the names of Paisiello, Cimarosa and Piccini, who were very successful in Naples. It is also believed that Carlo Cotumacci (died 1785) and Joseph Doll (died 1774) were also his tutors. [ii] Cotumacci was a student of Alessandro Scarlatti and was a prominent organist and composer. Musical instruction at Sant' Onofrio usually lasted eight years but it took only four years for Francesco Azopardi to complete his studies at the Sant' Onofrio. [iii] After successfully completing his studies, Azopardi gave music lessons to the nobility of Naples and in various monasteries. [MORE ...](#)

ENSEMBLE — FESTIVALS AND CONCERTS IN ITALY AND THE UK

Giuseppe Pennisi sends two reports from the Chigiana Festival and Academy in Siena, and also reports on various events in Rome, including the Musica d'Amare Festival and the Stravinsky anniversary celebrations.

Mike Wheeler covers the Buxton Festival in detail, and, in Derby Cathedral, listens to The Sixteen and to the first of the cathedral's summer organ recitals.

Keith Bramich reports on the beginning of the Three Choirs Festival in Worcester.

LATEST CONCERT AND FESTIVAL REVIEWS

NEWS — GRAHAM VICK (1953-2021)

We mark the passing of Graham Vick and others, and report on Roger Doyle's new electronic opera *iGIRL* and on Oregon Symphony's latest series of digital events.

LATEST NEWS

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