

"Although Gordon's tonal language is unambiguously modern, there's a definite romantic streak here, as well as a Berlioz-like relish for the sound and physical impact of a full orchestra."

-Richard Bratby *Gramophone*

ORCHESTRAL REVIEWS



Bass clarinetist Laurent Ben Slimane takes the role of tormented hero in Geoffrey Gordon's Kafka-inspired *Prometheus*, with Martyn Brabbins and the Philharmonia

Mélisande's graceful oboe-led Spinning Song and the familiar Sicilienne (subtly enshrining Pelléas and Mélisande's contentment) are possessed of an affecting tenderness that one would like to have heard in context.

Again all credit to Järvi's Frankfurt orchestra for their total immersion into two such stylistically different sound worlds – a reminder, if such were needed, of music's ability to move us in mysterious ways with the same story from different storytellers.

Edward Seckerson

## G Gordon

'Mythologies and Mad Songs'

*Ice*: aut inveniam viam aut faciam<sup>a</sup>. *Mad Song*<sup>b</sup>. *Prometheus*<sup>c</sup>. *Puck – fleeing from the dawn*<sup>a</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Dimitri Mestdag *cor ang* <sup>c</sup>Laurent Ben Slimane *bass cl*<sup>a,b</sup>BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra;

<sup>c</sup>Philharmonia Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins Orchid (ORC100305 • 70')

<sup>a</sup>Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, January 19, 2019



Richard Strauss once suggested that *Elektra* should be conducted like Mendelssohn's

'fairy music'. And if you've ever wondered what such light-footed fantasy might sound like if translated into the sound world of a virtuoso post-Straussian orchestra – well, so, apparently, has Geoffrey Gordon. His 2017 tone poem *Puck – fleeing from the dawn* is exactly that: a featherweight Shakespearean caprice written (to coin a phrase) on the point of a needle, and played with dazzling élan by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins.

And there's certainly no shortage of colour elsewhere on this disc. Although Gordon's tonal language is unambiguously modern, there's a definite romantic streak here, as well as a Berlioz-like relish for the sound and physical impact of a full orchestra. Gordon admits a debt to Vaughan Williams in *Ice*: a massive meditation on Arctic exploration that places a very human sense of struggle in a powerfully evoked world of grinding ice sheets and thunderous menace (Gordon never spares the timpani).

*Mad Song* and *Prometheus* take their inspiration from Byron and Kafka respectively. The former is a surprisingly turbulent concerto for cor anglais, while the second casts a bass clarinet as the tormented hero. Both are played with

formidable conviction by their respective dedicatees, and Slimane, in particular, brings an almost athletic power to the plangent cries and fierce, visceral trills of his solo line. The recording of *Prometheus* is taken from the premiere performance and I don't think I imagined the added sense of immediacy that comes from a live occasion – but in any case, the whole album is a powerful piece of advocacy for a composer with a big imagination.

Richard Bratby

## Haydn · Hétu

Haydn Cello Concertos - No 1 in C; No 2 in D  
Hétu Rondo, Op 9

Cameron Crozman *vc*

Les Violons du Roy / Nicolas Ellis  
ATMA Classique (ACD2 2851 • 56')



Performances of Joseph Haydn's two cello concertos always seem to be about the fast outer movements, but these recordings by the young Canadian cellist Cameron Crozman and Quebec City's famed chamber orchestra with Nicolas Ellis at the helm suggest we rethink all that.