

## **Maurice Emmanuel (1862-1938)**

Cello Sonata, Op.2 (1890)

Sonata for clarinet, flute and piano, Op.11 (1907)

Symphony No.2 in A, Op.25 *Bretonne* (1930/31)

String Quartet No.2 in B flat major, Op.18 (1903)

Suite on Greek Folk Songs, Op.10 (1907)

Maurice Maréchal (cello), Jeanne-Marie Darré (piano)

André Boutard (clarinet), Jacques Castagner (flute), Janine Saggier (piano)

Orchestre radio-symphonique de Strasbourg/Charles Bruck

Parrenin Quartet

Maurice Fueri (violin), Jean Hubeau (piano)

rec. 1959, 1962 (quartet)

**SOLSTICE SOCD397 [74]**

It's regrettable that the music of Maurice Emmanuel is seldom heard today. Of all his oeuvre, only the six sonatines for solo piano seem to have caught the public's imagination. He was a pupil of Léo Delibes and César Franck at the Paris Conservatoire, and became an acquaintance of Claude Debussy, a fellow student. He forged a notable academic career, writing a treatise on the music of Ancient Greece. Between 1904 and 1907 he undertook the role of choirmaster at the church of Sainte-Clotilde. In 1909 he became professor of the history of music at the Conservatoire. His students included Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleux.

The performances on this release have been mined from the INA archives, and special praise is given to Anne Eichner, the composer's granddaughter, for keeping the candle burning for Emmanuel's music. What distinguishes these recordings from their rivals in the catalogue are the roll call of illustrious participating performers, names such as Maurice Maréchal, Jeanne-Marie Darré, André Boutard and the Parrenin Quartet.

Emmanuel began working on his Cello Sonata, Op. 2 in 1887 and completed it three years later. As the opus number indicates, it's an early work. Conventional in structure, two lively movements bookend a sombre and ardent Larghetto. The final movement is a sprightly Gigue. Despite a poor reception from his teacher Delibes, who remarked that the work "sets my teeth on edge", it finally received a premiere by Paul Bazelaire in 1921. Maurice Maréchal, who plays it here with pianist Jeanne-Marie Darré, had it in his repertoire since 1923, so was intimately familiar with it by the time this 1959 recording took place.

In 1907, Emmanuel penned his Sonata for clarinet, flute and piano, a work whose outer movements are suffused with Gallic wit and charm. The central Adagio is a rather sombre and ruminative affair. The performers are André Boutard (clarinet), Jacques Castagner (flute) and Janine Saggier (piano). They deliver a stylish and idiomatic reading, with all three instruments finely balanced in the mix.

The only orchestral work on the disc is the Symphony No.2 in A, Op.25 *Bretonne* of 1935. Emmanuel was a lover of Brittany and visited it twice in the summers of 1889 and 1890 on his hiking expeditions. The Symphony utilizes material he had collected on his travels. Breton legends fascinated him, and the Symphony takes its inspiration from the legend of Ys. The composer incorporates folk material into the score. Its four movements are vivid, imaginative

and adeptly scored. The second movement Scherzando is colourfully orchestrated, where woodwinds, harp and solo violin whip up some exotic delicacies. The finale is punchy and buoyed up with dance rhythms, ending the work with panache and whirlwind brilliance. Charles Bruck and the Orchestre radio-symphonique de Strasbourg give an engaging, exciting and fully committed performance.

The String Quartet No 2, Op. 8 dates from 1903 and is dedicated to his friend Robert Hausmann, a violinist of the Joachim Quartet. That ensemble never performed it, however, and it was left to the Charot Quartet to grace it with a premiere at the Salle Pleyel, Paris on 23 February 1912. Coincidentally, Maurice Maréchal was the quartet's cellist. The work displays great accomplishment in its structure, four movements distributed in three parts, with an overall cyclical element, and its use of adventurous harmonies. The Parrenin Quartet certainly give it a walloping good run for its money, especially in the *alla zingarese* finale.

Violinist Maurice Fueri of the Loewenguth Quartet and pianist Jean Hubeau join forces for the Suite sur des airs populaires grecs, Op. 10. The work consists of four dances:

I. *Khasarikos*. Allegretto moderato

II. *Mamaro et Amadès*. Allegretto

III. *Pyrghi*. Allegro ma non troppo

IV. *Boulgarikos*. Allegro energico

In 1908, the composer gave a lecture on Greek folk music. The four pieces of the Suite were illustrative material for the lecture. Each is adeptly woven into an attractive ear-catching miniature. The performer's infectious enthusiasm, as they are carried along by the music's rhythmic buoyancy and swagger, is truly infectious.

All the performances are in agreeable sound and offer a valuable and treasured addition to the composer's discography. The booklet notes are comprehensive and informative. This welcome release certainly gets my appreciative thumbs up.

***Stephen Greenbank***

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