

ORCHESTRAL

Rival views of Britten's impassioned Violin Concerto from *Tasmin Little* and *James Ehnes*; plus *Valentina Lisitsa's* impressive Rachmaninov, and *Steven Osborne's* deft yet disciplined Stravinsky

BBC MUSIC ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Mark Elder's elemental Sibelius

Michael Scott Rohan welcomes a rugged approach from today's Hallé



ENERGETIC AND FRESH:
Mark Elder conducts a primal version of Sibelius 2



SIBELIUS

Symphony No. 2; The Oceanides; Pohjola's Daughter

Hallé/Mark Elder
Hallé CD HLL7516 70:59 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.99

It's instructive comparing Mark Elder's Sibelius with John Barbirolli's celebrated Hallé recordings, among the first I ever heard. Barbirolli made that atmospheric tone-poem *Pohjola's Daughter* sound relatively smooth and homogenised, almost Tchaikovskian; under Elder it's a primal folk tale rather than an urbane fantasy, open brass and woodwind textures, accentuated by spacious

recording, giving it an underlay of rocky strength that opens out beautifully into the airy vision of the cold-hearted Maid of the North at her rainbow spinning wheel. In *The Oceanides*, the glittering sea itself, like the forest in *Tapiola*, gradually reveals a forbidding, non-human

The Hallé's intense playing makes this CD highly recommendable

identity with a growing underswell of power, which Elder develops with unhurried ease.

Symphony No. 2, recorded live here, became immensely popular when seen as a stirring nationalist hymn, but was in fact written during a traumatic holiday in Italy. However, its musical structure remains open and fresh, the entire

robust first movement evolved out of a three-note motif. Elder catches the manic energy of the second movement's plucked-string and woodwind opening, and the paradoxically jittery melancholy of the *Scherzo*, without exaggeration. But he also rises strongly into the swaying strings and brass fanfares of the last, undercut by the warm woodwind theme apparently commemorating Sibelius's sister-in-law. Elder's elemental strength, relieved by a sense of light and space and the Hallé's intense playing, help to make this highly recommendable.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

ON THE WEBSITE

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CPE BACH • JC BACH JS BACH

Keyboard Concertos:

CPE Bach: Concerto in D, Wq 43/2;
JC Bach: Concerto in D, Op. 7/3;
Concerto in E flat, Op. 7/5; JS Bach:
Concerto No. 2 in E, BWV 1053

Anastasia Injushina (piano);
Hamburger Camerata/Rolf Gothóni
Ondine ODE1224-2 69:25 mins

BBC Music Direct £12.99

The juxtaposition of concertos by JS Bach and his two most famous sons throws into relief the extraordinary changes in musical taste and style at the dawn of the Classical period. In CPE Bach's D major Wq43/2, packed with *Sturm und Drang* fire and abrupt mood changes, the Hamburg Camerata strings are in sparkling form. Anastasia Injushina's articulation is admirably versatile, though ornaments tend to accent, rather than simply decorate, the slow movement's beautifully languid line.

Two concertos by JC Bach, Opp. 7/3 and 7/5, with their simple, predictable phrases, broken 'Alberti' bass lines, and alluring lyricism, belong to a strikingly different world, shared by the London Bach's close friend, Mozart. It's admirably reflected in both orchestral and solo playing. Injushina captures the elegance of fluid scales and pert ornaments. Her cadenza to the opening of No. 5 is ingenious if rather detached from the melodic context of the movement.

The contrast with Bach *père* is made all the more striking by placing the E major Concerto BWV 1053 at the end of the disc. The opening movement, a touch faster than many recordings, retains an elegant metrical pace. Injushina acknowledges, without aping, the harpsichord original in the stylish clarity of her touch. *George Pratt*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★