

(transcription for cornet, ophicleide and piano) by Mikhaïl Glinka (1804–1857); *Kyrie eleison pour trois ophicléides* by Claude Philippe Projean (fl. 1843); a short *Agnus Dei* by Gilbert Duprez (1806–1896), along with a transcription for three ophicleides of the same composer's *O Salutaris*; *Variations pour l'ophicléide* op. 62 by Gaspard Kummer (1795–1870); *Air varié pour ophicléide et piano* op. 21 by Hyacinthe Klosé (1808–1880); and *Teutatès, Fantasie mystique* by Albert Corbin (d. 1893).

The transcriptions add colour to the programme, but the more interesting pieces are the original works for ophicleide and piano and the short set of duets for two ophicleides. It is these pieces that really reveal the instrument and Wibart's mastery of it. There are no great works here, but that is hardly the point. Wibart has a refined and brilliant technique, but he also shows great musicianship in the instrument's lyrical mode. The most convincing aspect of his playing is that each note is beautifully centred, and one suspects that it is the absence of this fundamental aspect of brass technique, which gives the instrument clarity, that separates performers like him from those of lesser accomplishment. Even without the extraordinary virtuosity that Wibart exhibits, the recording would be valuable for this aspect alone.

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**Guillaume Lekeu, *Complete Works: 'Les fleurs pâles du souvenir ...'***

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Ricercar 351, 2015 (8 CDs: 584 minutes), \$41  
Notes by Jérôme Lejeune in English, French and German

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Guillaume Lekeu, the brilliant Belgian composer who died in 1894 one day after reaching his twenty-fourth birthday, wrote enough good music to have established some familiarity in the ears of anyone who enjoys the rich, sometimes decadent, music of the late nineteenth century. In less than ten years of intensive activity as a composer he produced nearly ten hours of music, collected here on eight CDs originally issued by Ricercar in 1994 on the centenary of the composer's death and now reissued by the Belgian recording group Outhere Music. Two or three of his best works have been played and recorded by other artists, especially the superb Violin Sonata and the Adagio for Strings, but here we have all his juvenilia and songs and orchestral music revealing how his gifts flowered in a brief creative span.

The new element in this reissue is a very long essay by Jérôme Lejeune, musicologist at the Royal Conservatoire of Liège. This provides the most searching analytical study yet on Lekeu's development, tracing the works in their chronological sequence, which is more or less how the music is divided between the eight CDs. This essay, which provides the most detailed writing on Lekeu available in English, draws on the invaluable work of Luc Verdebout, whose edition of

Lekeu's correspondence (Liège: Mardaga, 1993) provides the principal source of information about Lekeu's life and also includes a catalogue of his works.

Lekeu was driven by an intense emotional inner life, which is forcibly expressed in his letters, in the epigraphs that head many of his works, in his poems, and of course in the music itself. He was, ironically, obsessed with the transience of life and with death itself. As Lejeune points out, he found it hard to write fast music; much of it is slow or very slow, often marked 'doloroso'. He was not himself gloomy – he was too dedicated to his work and too sociable, evidently, for that – but he found himself expressing the darker corners of his soul (which he talked about a lot) in one piece after another.

He played the violin and the piano and was early drawn to the music of Beethoven, echoes of which, especially the late music, are heard in the themes and textures of even the earliest pieces. It was Beethoven's fondness for complex counterpoint that led Lekeu to include fugues in many of his larger works, even though his style, which was built on rich post-Wagnerian harmony, did not easily accommodate counterpoint. This was an internal conflict which Lekeu would doubtless have resolved if he had lived longer. While his harmony recalls Chausson and Delius, his counterpoint can resemble that of Reger. For Wagner followed closely behind Beethoven as an important influence, and Lekeu managed a longed-for pilgrimage to Bayreuth when he was 20.

Meeting Franck and studying with him for a single year before the older master died were ideal catalysts in helping Lekeu to shape his music; he learned to be economical with his material where formerly he had been merely extravagant, displaying the prodigality of youth. This is most evident in the Violin Sonata which, as everyone can hear, is close in spirit to Franck's great Violin Sonata, but the richness of its melodies is Lekeu's own and their haunting character lingers after any hearing.

Lejeune is a trifle hard on the composer's technical skill, which is only clumsy in the earliest works. His writing for the violin and strings was always idiomatic, as we learn from the delightful String Quartet in six movements, and in his chamber works with piano it is remarkable how he learned to tame his inclination to put everything into the piano part. In the Cello Sonata (1888) and the Piano Trio (1890) the string players seem to work unfairly hard to be heard against the accompaniment, whereas in the Violin Sonata and the Piano Quartet, his two last works, the lyrical qualities of the strings are never submerged even though the pianist seems to be operating at full throttle throughout.

Of orchestration, too, Lekeu contrived to learn the essentials at an early age. One of the chief achievements of this set of recordings is the inclusion of Lekeu's mostly unknown orchestral music. The Orchestre Philharmonique de Liège under Pierre Bartholomé treat their fellow Belgian with the utmost respect and devotion in these performances, so that his 'Symphonic Study' on *Hamlet* comes over as a complex and powerful work, darkly brooding like both Hamlet and Lekeu themselves. Its companion piece is an affectionate portrait of Ophelia.

The largest piece Lekeu ever wrote is the 45-minute cantata *Andromède*, a 'poème lyrique et symphonique' for soloists, chorus and orchestra. Andromeda's uncomfortable situation (chained naked to a rock and attacked by a monster) is ideal for laments from both Andromeda herself and the chorus, and laments are ideal for Lekeu's temperament. The happy ending is brought about by the heroic arrival of Perseus. There is a degree of assurance in Lekeu's setting of this text, which suggests a much older composer.

Neither the piano music nor the songs have quite the same appeal as the chamber music and orchestral music, although pianists and singers would do well

to explore them. An unsuspected gem is the 'Introduction and Adagio' for tuba and wind band, whose origin, purpose and date are unknown. Writing for the tuba at least spared Lekeu the obligation of having to write fast music.

Lejeune's excellent essay would be a lot easier to use if each mention of a work also directed the reader to the CD on which it is to be found; unfortunately, readers must now chase through a long track list to find the discussed repertoire. He writes about the *Morceaux égoïstes* for piano, even though no such pieces are included in the contents of the CDs; the reader is left to deduce that each piece is listed under its own name, not that of the collection. Another shortcoming is the lack of texts and translations of the vocal works. These are found on the company's website ([www.outhere-music.com](http://www.outhere-music.com)), where verses are sometimes longer and sometimes shorter than the sung text. It would be helpful to know if Lekeu set just part of a poem or, in the corresponding case, if he added verses of his own (an imposture of which he was quite capable), or if this was merely an editorial oversight.

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### John Knowles Paine

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#### *Orchestral Works*

Ulster Orchestra, JoAnn Falletta *cond*  
Naxos 8.559747, 2013 (1 CD: 70 minutes), \$12

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#### *Orchestral Works, vol. 2*

Ulster Orchestra, JoAnn Falletta *cond*  
Naxos 8.559748, 2015 (1 CD: 68 minutes), \$12

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For those who teach American music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the availability of recordings and scores has long been a major difficulty. This is particularly true for symphonic works, which are expensive to record. Recordings over the years have been welcome whether the performances are just adequate or exceptional.

The works of John Knowles Paine have always held an interest for Americanists. As one of the earliest generation of Americans to be recognized as a composer of consequence (and the first composer to teach at a major university), Paine is an artist whose career should be explored in music history classes.

With the availability of performances of the complete published works of Paine's orchestral music by JoAnn Falletta and the Ulster Orchestra, an important