

## SCORE REVIEWS

Gabriel Fauré. *Trio pour piano, violon et violoncello en ré mineur, op. 120, and Quatuor à cordes en mi mineur, op. 121*. Gabriel Fauré, *Oeuvres complètes, Séries V musique de chambre, volume 3*. Ed. James William Sobaskie (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2010).

The endeavour to publish the complete works of Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) is likely to be viewed as one of the foremost efforts in French music publication of the early twenty-first century. Judging by the merits of this first distinguished volume, and taking at his word the esteemed chief editor Jean-Michel Nectoux, one can assume that the edition will serve performance and scholarship with a quintessentially refined sensibility that is only proper to the composer. Fauré's music has lain too long on the outskirts or the repertory, whether because it was considered not forward-looking enough, or too precious, or – by the most chauvinist of critics more recently – saccharine. Let these critics now be alerted upon the appearance of this edition: Gabriel Urbain Fauré is here not only to stay, thanks to a text that will gain the fullest scholarly attention, but also to be admired by all performers who are eager to either discover or reconfirm the glory of the French tradition.

The publication *responsables* at Bärenreiter intend a 26-volume set, a catalogue raisonné, and a volume of illustrations. The Edition will also present little-known or previously unpublished works or parts of works, especially from the juvenilia. The set will include, for example, the Allegro from the Violin Concerto op. 14 and the Symphony or Orchestral Suite in F op. 20. However, as the publisher acknowledges and as almost inevitably is the case in such an effort, unpublished versions of well-known pieces await rediscovery, as do some of the songs that Fauré orchestrated.

The editors posit that Fauré's integrity and innovation stemmed in large part from his disinterest in schools of composition and in musical politics. The story is recounted that, upon returning to Paris after a trip to Bayreuth, he was seen with the score of *Tristan und Isolde* with the word *poison* dashed broadly in his handwriting across the cover! An interest was of course there, but this interest was perhaps better called a curiosity. Among all the French in the period, including Debussy, Fauré was the least Wagnerian. He was not entirely oblivious to cultural politics. A political awareness is evident in his assumption of the position as Director of the Conservatoire where, true to his manner, he reformed long-standing and antiquated habits. It is also in evidence at the other end of his career there when, at age 75, he left the position perhaps under some duress; although rapidly going deaf, he was yet capable of administration, his mental faculties were at their most acute and his compositional output notably inventive. These works are eloquent testimony to that late creativity.

As the chief editor Jean-Michel Nectoux notes in the preface, the editorial committee has been able to amass all the scores issued in the composer's lifetime, and the *Oeuvres complètes* has likewise referred to original sources, including manuscript rough drafts and fair copies, to editions corrected by Fauré or performers close to him, and even to letters remarking on the scores. The Fauré-Fremiet

family donated between half and two-thirds of the composer's original sources that were still in their possession, the crux of essential documentation, to the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 1978. Many collectors are to be admired for donating other original documents before and after the family donation, rendering the task of providing a reliable critical edition possible.

One also must recognize that the marked stylistic innovation inherent in the music – not to speak of its elegance and pure pleasure – merits its coming to the fore thanks to this Complete Works. Many in Fauré's day regarded the music as esoteric and difficult, and it is true that the music is not at all easy to understand at its deepest level or to perform up to its implicit height. However, if we consider the substantive elegance and meaning of his experimentation that we can appreciate today, after cultivating a hundred years of modernist hearing, we might find such a view of conservative critics of the day to be the music's best recommendation. We who love French music have followed Fauré's marked tonal and formal evolutions, composition by composition, and traced his outgrowing of any common practice. However, by the time of these two, last works, of 1923–4, he had reached the apogee of his innovation.

This music is modernist. For instance, if one considers the first movement of the Quartet, which is in E minor, I at least hear the recapitulation of a highly modified sonata form beginning at measure 103. If one relates that to the exposition, one recognizes an unquestionable dismissal of nearly all expectation in exchange for surprise and a wholly unaccustomed satisfaction. The recapitulation is approached by a prolonged chromatic sequence. In fact, for me Fauré has created neither a distinct exposition, with a closing articulation, nor a tonally or melodically framed 'discursive' development section, but instead has embarked on a continual variation form, without conventional tonal articulation and with a melodic spinning out that moves beyond Brahms in its essential and complete escape from the common practice. Fauré is no through-chromaticist, however, and no logician in the Germanic sense; instead we hear a delight in subtle surprise that works without fail. The recapitulation is the most subtle surprise of them all, in that it is approached not by the dominant but by a suspenseful chromaticism that only later resolves. Immediately upon the arrival at the main theme – here registrally and contrapuntally altered – and at the tonic, the composer spins onward, extracting motivic fragments and pursuing further tonal expansions. There is no settling into tonic and straightforward theme. When Fauré arrives at the key of E major, about halfway through the recapitulation, he gives us the major tonic realm but evades the tonic chord: this is no Brahmsian coda after the fashion of the first movement of his E minor cello sonata. Fauré attains the unveiled tonic chord only after two measures; he sounds it for two measures, but thereupon side-slips chromatically and through the relative and parallel minor keys until a bare seven measures before the end.

James William Sobaskie must have seemed the obvious choice for editing this first, path-breaking volume. He has given his scholarly life primarily to the study of the composer, and especially his instrumental music, and now his tireless and most careful attentions have reached a high state indeed. We cannot thank him adequately. Sobaskie has taken utmost care in following the guiding principle to regard as the final version the composer's last written score and emendations, whether in proof sets or corrected performing scores. The editor has performed his task with great conscientiousness, and the student of the score can be confident in as faithful a text as one can expect. Sobaskie remarks that the

gestation of the Trio in D minor was arduous, and the intensity of the working out reveals Fauré's inventive concentration, even as he neared the age of 80. The gestation spanned from late 1921, the year after Fauré's retirement as Conservatoire director, through an internal wrangle with the decision regarding the genre and its instrumentation – he even entertained the clarinet for the upper part – to a concluding choice of the violin with cello and piano upon the publication. Sobaskie remarks that, 'The lyricism, articulations, and range ... appear in an early version of the finale' (Preface, p. xvi) and continue through to the final version. The trio was completed only in March 1923. In a letter to his wife, Marie, of January 1922, early in the work's genesis, Fauré signalled that the publisher Jacques Durand had suggested a trio. The autograph manuscript has not been located, and the first edition published by the Parisian house of Durand served here as the basic source.

There is no doubt that editing the Quartet challenged James Sobaskie much more, and he has delivered a reasonable set of compromises. The composer finished the work in its essentially final state, but, recognizing that his death was imminent, he left many details of articulation and dynamic indications to his disciple Jean Roger-Ducasse. Here, too, Durand had suggested the genre of the work, noting that the string quartet was lacking in Fauré's *oeuvre*. True to his lifelong respect and sense of professional duty, Fauré devoted himself with all his energy to its completion, despite his failing health. Sobaskie posits that, like Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Brahms, Fauré was reluctant to attempt genres Beethoven had mastered. In September 1923, Fauré wrote to his wife, 'I have undertaken a *Quatuor* ... a genre that Beethoven has particularly distinguished, one that gives *cold feet* to all those who are not Beethoven!' (p. xvii) Unfortunately, fatigue and an attack of double pneumonia prevented Fauré from completing the details of articulation and dynamics in the final autograph, nor did he write the planned fourth movement. Instructing Roger-Ducasse to complete the final touches, and handing it over to him only five days before his death, Fauré passed away on 4 November 1924. The younger composer added what he thought were proper emendations by December 7, and Durand published the Quartet in April 1925.

James Sobaskie was at some loss as to what conclusions to draw about details of the score, when regarding both Fauré's final draft and the published edition as retouched by Roger-Ducasse. Keenly alert to the late style of Fauré and its classicism, and observing carefully the style of the Trio as the work closest in time and idiom, the critical editor remarked that there were, in the published edition concluded by Roger-Ducasse, '...too many phrasing slurs to remain true to Fauré's late style; indeed, this abundance of slurs often obscures clear perception of the downbeats, essential to the subtle and often complex rhythmic conception of Fauré.' (p. xx) Recognizing Roger-Ducasse's closeness to the composer and the style, Sobaskie did not disregard his emendations entirely; nevertheless he judiciously also drew heavily on the autograph section of the exposition of the first movement, which the composer completed in every detail. From there, Sobaskie pursued the abiding idiom of articulation and dynamics throughout the work, and he made what seem clearly to be the most sensible possible choices. A facsimile of the composer's autograph is given in the present volume, and, in fact, the faithful Jacques Durand had chosen to print the complete manuscript together with the first edition.

This volume of Gabriel Fauré's final two works is smart, thorough, and sensitive, and it leads off the *Oeuvres complètes* as such an edition deserves.

All *dévoués* of the composer, of this musical phase, and of French music itself, owe a resounding applause to a scholarly and musically sensitive volume that stands as a model of its kind.

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Robert Schumann. *Scherzo g-moll* (1841), No. 13 from *Bunte Blätter* op. 99 for Piano, orchestrated by Joachim Draheim (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010), preface plus 12 pages; and *Abendmusik* in B-flat Major (1841), No. 12 from *Bunte Blätter* op. 99 for Piano, orchestrated by Joachim Draheim (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2010), preface plus 12 pages.

1841 was Robert Schumann's 'symphonic year'. He composed the First (*Spring*) Symphony, op. 38; Overture, Scherzo and Finale, op. 52; a *Phantasie* for Piano and Orchestra (later revised to become the first movement of his Piano Concerto, op. 54); and the original version of his Fourth Symphony, op. 120. To this list we can add two other projects: extensive work on a symphony in C minor, whose third movement is a scherzo in G minor; a minuet movement in B $\flat$  major titled *Abendmusik*, which Joachim Draheim believes was composed in conjunction with either the B $\flat$  major *Spring* Symphony, or another symphonic fragment in F major. Both pieces, *Abendmusik* and G Minor Scherzo, later found their way into Schumann's *Bunte Blätter*, op. 99 (Nos. 12 and 13), published in late 1851.

The Scherzo is the only completed movement of the C minor symphonic fragment. For those who know it from *Bunte Blätter*, 'the piano miniature follows the sketch almost measure for measure'.<sup>1</sup> Draheim derives his orchestration from notations in Schumann's short score.<sup>2</sup> His harmonization, I gather, is from the *Bunte Blätter* version, which Jon W. Finson hears as 'appropriate for the piano',<sup>3</sup> but which Draheim says 'clearly bears the character of a piano reduction' (*Scherzo g-moll*, preface).

Whether the *Abendmusik* was originally intended as an orchestra piece is a matter of speculation. No score from 1841 is extant. The assigned date is the composer's, given in the first edition of *Bunte Blätter*. Because 'only two piano pieces ... ascertainably date from this year', and because for Draheim the *Abendmusik* is 'less interesting as a piano piece and clearly bears the character of a piano reduction', he assumes an association with one of Schumann's 1841 orchestra projects (*Abendmusik* preface).

The *Abendmusik* is 'an enchanting three-part serenade in minuet form' (*Abendmusik*, preface); the Scherzo, an energetic piece – a scherzo in two parts (the second beginning with a fughetta and developing motives from the first part), and a bright binary-form trio in G major. Draheim applies Schumann's instrumentation for the first movement of his C minor symphony fragment to both (2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns and strings).

<sup>1</sup> Jon W. Finson, 'The Sketches for Robert Schumann's C Minor Symphony', *Journal of Musicology* 1 (1982): 405.

<sup>2</sup> Some of the notations can be seen in Finson's transcriptions of a portion of the Scherzo sketches (ibid., 404, 405).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 405.