

RECORD REVIEWS

by Matthew Cosgrove

HUMMEL

Piano Concerto in C, op.34a

Fantasy, op.18

Rondo Fantasy, op.19

Scherzo (from Bagatelles, op.107/1)

Variations for piano and orchestra, op.97 - 'Ariette favorite'
from 'Castor and Pollux' by Rameau

-OPUS (2 records) - Stereo 9112 0701-02

Harold Moores Records, Great Marlborough Street, London W1. Price £9-
Opus Records, Danajaska 18, Bratislava, CSSR (Czechoslovakia)

It would seem that with this recording of the early C major concerto

we have had all but one of Hummel's piano concertos recorded at one time or another. Not counting the sketches for a concerto in A, WoO24 & 24a, this leaves only the Concerto in F major, op. posth. No.1. The concerto in question here dates from about 1811, and therefore predates the well-known No.1 in A minor, op.85, by some 9 years. The style is typical of Hummel's earlier period, brilliant decoration of material plays a dominant part here, perhaps too dominant, but Hummel's ability to delight our ears with his music is always present. The concerto is long and one must say therefore rather over-ambitious, rather like a trial run for the B minor, op.89 which it resembles in breadth and keyboard decoration if not in emotional content. The performance (Pavol Kovac - piano, Bratislava Chamber Ensemble, Vlastimil Horak - conductor) is spirited if not very refined, and much the same can be said of the recording, which is similar to the Supraphon discs of the early 70s. Still, one must not be too critical of this, and congratulate Opus on this set of records.

Of the remaining works here, the op.18 Fantasy deserves special mention. Almost 25 minutes long, it is a cut above salon music, and for its time I think very daring. It was written in 1803 and is in 4 movements played without a break. The styles vary between brilliant Hummel and Beethoven at his most adventurous, suggesting in places his sonatas of his late middle period. In places Hummel's experiments do not always succeed, but the music is always very interesting and of a consistently high standard. The pianist is Ludovit Marcinger.

HUMMEL - Sonata for flute and piano in D, op.50

CHOPIN - Variations for flute and piano on a theme by Rossini, op. posth.

BEETHOVEN - 3 Variations from a set of 10 variations for flute and piano, op.107 Nos.3, 7, 9.

Colin Tilney - fortepiano

Hans-Martin Linder - flute

EMI (Conifer) Electrola IC 065-30247

A record of early 19th Century easy listening music. The Hummel is listed in the catalogue of his works as a violin sonata, or to be more exact, a piano sonata with violin or flute obligato, and dates from 1810 or 1815.

The instruments used for the Hummel and for the other works are, or sound, of the period, and the recording and pressing quality are of a high standard.

As a matter of interest, those who like Hummel sonatas may like to know that apart from Malcolm Binns' admirable record of piano sonatas, op.81 & 106, ORION have released recordings of the F minor, op.20, (ORION ORS 81409 with op.81). These records, and the flute recital disc, should be available from good record shops, but, in case of difficulty, Farringdon Records of London stock them.

PRINCE LOUIS FERDINAND OF PRUSSIA - Complete Works, op.1-13

Fugues for piano
3 Piano Trios
3 Piano Quartets
2 Piano Quintets
Septet
Octet
2 Rondos for piano and orchestra

Horst Göbel, piano/Göbel Trio, Berlin/Joachim Quartet, Hannover/
R.S.Orchestra, Berlin/Academy Orchestra of the Herbert von Karajan
School, Berlin/Residenz Orchestra, Würzburg/Herrmann Dechort, conductor:
THOROPHON 76.30834 (6 LPs Stereo) available from Parnote, £27 approx.

Louis Ferdinand's piano playing was of such a standard that it earned him praise from his friend Beethoven, and provided Dussek with a job of official piano player to the royal court. Works by both men were dedicated to the prince. Their views on his music have not been recorded, but as one would expect it shows influence of both, plus Hummel, Haydn etc., but perhaps most interesting of all is the foreshadowing of Mendelssohn in places, especially in the larger chamber works. They are on the whole of a brilliant virtuosic nature, and it is fair to say that some of the ideas are thin; but as with some Hummel, always tastefully executed, never dull. With such influences as Beethoven and Hummel, it comes as no surprise that the variation movements are perhaps the most successful ones. In fact 5 of the 13 works have such movements.

The performances are good, and the contribution of the orchestra in the delightfully quirky Dussek-Field like Rondos is crisp and disciplined. Surfaces are very good, although it is a shame that the booklet is all in German.