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**Current Issue**



**David Brutti: ENTARTETE MUSIK on BRILLIANT**



Classical Reviews - Instrumental  
Saturday, 07 February 2015

ENTARTETE MUSIK • David Brutti (alt sax); Filippo Farinelli (pn) • **BRILLIANT 94874 (2 CDs: 106:00)**

**HEIDEN** Saxophone Sonata. **DESSAU** Suite for Saxophone and Piano. **DRESSEL** *Bagetellen*. **SCHULOFF** *Hot-Sonata*. **HINDEMITH** Sonata in E $\flat$  for Horn, Alto Horn, or Alto Saxophone. **JACOBI** Saxophone Sonata. **GÁL** Suite, op. 102b. **VON KNORR** Saxophone Sonata

**Next Issue**



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In 1938 the Nazis presented, for the edification of the cultural public, a concert of music that they designated as *Entartete*, or degenerate. The term covered anything atonal, or displaying a jazz or popular swing influence, or anything at all written by a Jewish composer. (It is hard to imagine what Jews and Negroes had in common, except George Gershwin.) In 2014 no repressive regime would bother for one moment with classical music—it is now so far from having any kind of mass influence. Things were different in Germany in the 1930s: The Nazis revered Wagner and Brahms, appropriated the great Austrian/German tradition (with Mendelssohn expunged), and did not see why their representative heroes needed to be superseded. (It escaped them how completely Schoenberg was indebted to Brahms.) *Entartete Musik* was never to be played again during the further seven years of the thousand-year Reich. The most degenerate instrument of all was the saxophone: a Belgian invention, but identified by this time with American jazz.

**Entartete Musik**  
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This two-disc set brings together eight works for alto saxophone and piano, written by German composers (with one exception) between 1930 and 1949. Most date from the early 1930s, and several were dedicated to Sigurd Rascher, a saxophonist who gave the instrument legitimacy through his commissions. Rascher, like some but not all of the composers in this program, fled Germany before the Second World War. Initially, he moved to neutral Switzerland, and then permanently to the United States. (Among his recordings is a performance of Debussy's *Saxophone Rhapsody* with Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic.)

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Paul Dessau and Erwin Schuloff were perhaps the most subversive composers among this group. The *Petite Ouverture* to Dessau's three-movement suite of 1935 pits a syncopated, almost swinging saxophone line against an aggressive, motoric piano part. By contrast, the following "Air," a serenade featuring the instrument's high register, is gently Ravelian. The third movement, a combined scherzo and finale, is notable for bent notes and glissandos in the saxophone part; deliberate references to jazz styling of the period. Dessau's communist views were well known: He set poetry by Brecht, and wrote incidental music for the latter's play *Mother Courage and her Children*. Dessau left Germany in 1933 and settled in Hollywood until 1948. Schuloff, who was Jewish and born in Bohemia, was not so fortunate. Alone of these composers he perished in the war, dying of consumption in a POW camp in 1942. His *Hot Sonata* is comparatively familiar fare, having been recorded previously. It is genuinely jazzy (unlike Dessau's piece, which reveals only a slight jazz flavor).

Hindemith's *Sonata* contains not a jot of jazz influence, probably because saxophone is only one alternative of three possible instruments: This sonata may also be played by the horn or the alto horn. (The CBS recording with Glenn Gould and Mason Jones employs the latter instrument.) Hindemith seems to have the horn primarily in mind; many of the thematic statements are in the style of hunting-horn fanfares. A poem that Hindemith directs the musicians to declaim prior to the last movement is recorded here, spoken in German by Andreas Wolf; it can be programmed out without too much trouble.

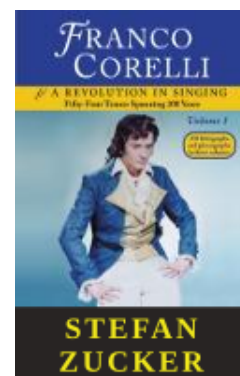
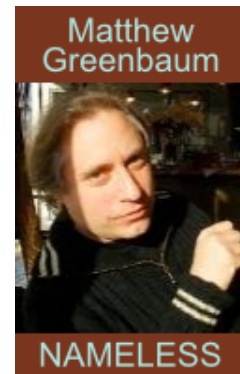
The other music tends heavily toward the Neoclassical. My favorite is the pithy 1932 *Sonata* by the officially half-Jewish Wolfgang Jacobi (1894–1972). Jacobi referred to himself as a Neoclassicist, although this sonata (particularly its swift finale) strikes me as French in style. It is in three movements: two *Allegro*s encompassing a sedate and harmonically astringent *Sarabande*. I do not have a copy of the score to check, but it seems that the *Sarabande* and the concluding *Allegro* have been programmed the wrong way around on this disc. The works by other forgotten names—Bernhard Heiden, Erwin Dressel, and Ernst-Lothar von Knorr—are all worth hearing: Each of their pieces is sympathetically written for the instruments, formally succinct and often catchy—particularly Dressel's *Four Bagatelles* of 1938. The dullest work is also the longest: the four-movement suite by Hans Gál, composed in 1949 after he had relocated to Great Britain. I enjoy Gál's symphonies and piano music a great deal, but this pallid work suggests that the saxophone did not really inspire him. Or perhaps it is just that the other pieces (not excluding the Hindemith) are more fun, despite the difficult circumstances under which they were conceived.

These two Italian musicians play their enterprising program with panache. Brutti's tone actually sounds a lot like Rascher's, although as a modern player he uses much less vibrato (quite often none at all). Farinelli's contribution is by no means secondary, as many of the piano parts are extremely demanding. The two display clear rapport as a duo. Recording quality is fine and spacious. If your curiosity is whetted by this out-of-the-way repertoire, take the plunge and I predict you will enjoy it, degenerate or not. **Phillip Scott**

Last Updated ( Saturday, 07 February 2015 )

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This is one of the more beautiful and satisfying Schumann discs to come my way in quite a while. Very strongly recommended.

Jerry Dubins

(A) splendid recital and yet another reason for one to want to own this disc.

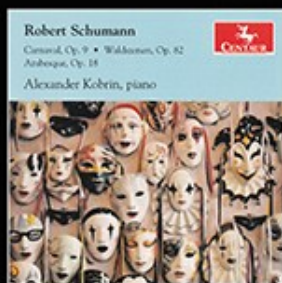
Lynn René Bayley

. . . clearly a remarkable musician.

Colin Clarke

. . . really exceptional *Waldszenen*.

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## Editorial

**Is *Fanfare* Now the Magazine for Serious Musicians?**