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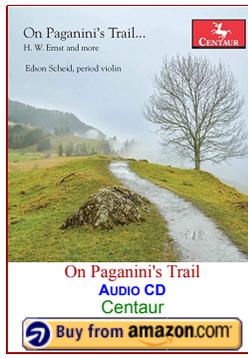
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### CD Review by Dave Saemann

**ERNST** *Six Polyphonic Studies. Grand Caprice for Solo Violin* (after Schubert's *Erkönig*), op. 26. **PAGANINI** *Introduction and Variations on Paisiello's Nel cor più non mi sento*, op. 18. **MOZART** *Duo for Violin and Viola*, K 423: *Rondo in G* (arr. Scheid for solo violin) • Edson Scheid (vn) (period instrument) • CENTAUR 3735 (56:22)

I have been a fan of Edson Scheid ever since Naxos released his period violin version of Paganini's complete Caprices for Solo Violin. Not only were the rigorous demands of the pieces met, but returning to the older instrument expressed Paganini's musicality in ways we only could have dreamt of. Now Edson Scheid turns his attention to the works of Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, and the results of this exploration are as disturbing as they are illuminating. Ernst was one of the great virtuoso violinists following in Paganini's footsteps, although his music on this disc breathes a very different atmosphere than Paganini's. Ernst is less about sensuality than Paganini. His *Six Polyphonic Studies* stretch the limits of what the virtuoso violinist can express in the realm of lucid, contrapuntal escapades. We all think we know what virtuoso violin music sounds like. We think of Jascha Heifetz and Itzhak Perlman, with their sinuous bow arms, melting tone, and ferocious articulation. That is one way to look at these pieces by Ernst. All the works Scheid plays here by Ernst also appear on a Naxos disc by Josef Špaček, performed on the modern violin. Here we find the rapid-fire rushing together of notes in a monotone vibrato, just the sort of display violinists are accustomed to. And from the standpoint of most violinists, there's nothing wrong with this. Note that Špaček's CD contains two very obvious splices, incidents that only prove how difficult this music is.

Edson Scheid thinks differently than Špaček. First, there is the general absence of continuous vibrato. Vibrato in Ernst's time was looked upon only as an occasional ornament, as we hear in Scheid's performance. All of a sudden, textures open up and we hear air between the bow strokes. Then there are gut strings in place of nylon, providing a wider range of tonal qualities and textures. Furthermore, Scheid does not play with a shoulder rest, avoiding the stress and monotony of producing all Ernst's notes with an over-projected tone. The overall result is that we finally hear Ernst's *Six Polyphonic Studies* as truly "polyphonic," filled with harmonies and an instrumental blend



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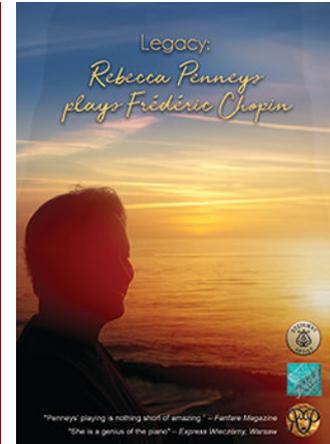
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that give them far more character and artistic daring than we hear in Špaček's performance. At first, Scheid's account may sound very strange to listeners. His violinistic sleight of hand, though, is not aimed at startling the audience. Rather, Scheid produces sonorities that frankly may not have been heard since the 19th century. We must recall that for those 19th-century hearers, Ernst's studies sounded strange at first in the amazing concatenation of effects he developed. Ernst's *Grand Caprice* after Schubert's *Erk König* is a masterpiece of transcription, with the entire drama of the song realized in Scheid's rendition. We hear the boy's terror in the actual scraping at times Scheid does in shaping the vocal line's accompaniment. This is great playing, a total recreation of a piece that might as well have sunk under the ocean.

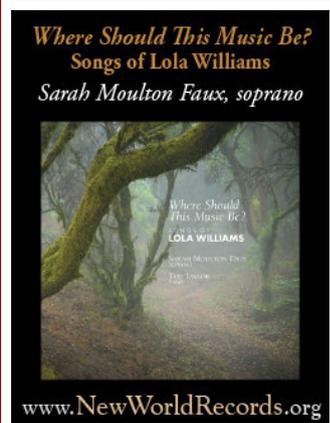
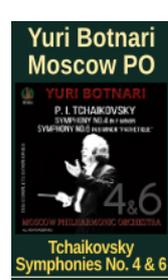
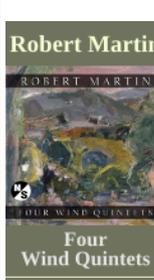
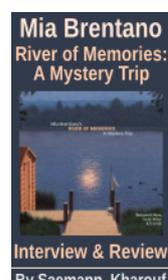
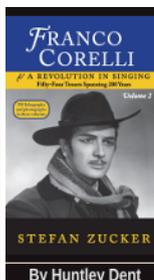
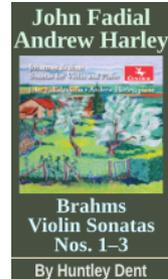
Also on the CD, Scheid plays more Paganini with the aptitude and stylistic aplomb he displays in the caprices. Scheid also has arranged part of a Mozart duo for violin and viola as a solo violin endeavor. I miss the varied personalities of two players together, but Scheid's transcription is a thoughtful and virtuosic experiment in stretching the limits of the solo period violin. The CD's sound engineering is excellent. I can't wait for someone to record Scheid in the Tchaikovsky Concerto. This is a career worth watching and supporting. Highly recommended.

**Dave Saemann**

This article originally appeared in Issue 43:3 (Jan/Feb 2020) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

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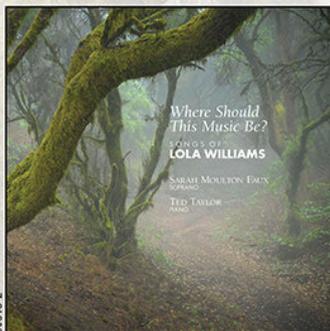


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