

THE



DELIAN

The Newsletter of the Delius Society, Philadelphia
Branch, Inc.
3432 Bleigh Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19136, U.S.A.

Harold J. Diamond, Editor
17 Calumet Avenue • Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706
(914) 478-3435 • Fax (914) 478-5314
email: hjdjc@cunym.cuny.edu

DECEMBER 2003

Ravel (trans. Sorabji): *Rapsodie espagnole*; **Sorabji:** *Passeggiata Veneziana*; *Variation 56 from Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*; *Quasi habanera*; **Bach (trans. Sorabji):** *Transcription in the Light of Harpsichord Technique for the Modern Piano of the Chromatic Fantasia of J.S. Bach, Followed by a Fugue*; **Chopin (trans. Sorabji):** *Pasticcio capriccioso sopra op. 64 No. 1 dello Chopin*. Michael Habermann, piano. BIS CD-1306. TT:68:20. (Qualiton).

Michael Habermann has recorded a number of Sorabji discs (LP and CD), and the latest is among his most interesting. Habermann told me in a recent phone conversation that he doesn't really like the long Sorabji pieces that go on for hours, and he has often presented the more accessible works by this complex composer. All of the works here get premiere recordings except for the Chopin transcription based on the *Minute Waltz*. Habermann also gave the premiere live performances at various times and places around the world.

Sorabji made the Ravel transcription for his own amusement and never published it, but Habermann gave the premiere public performance in Stockholm in 1998. The transcription is pretty true to the original with a few textural and harmonic alterations thrown in. The performance is amazing. The *Passeggiata Veneziana* is based on the *Barcarolle* from Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*. It's in six parts and

lasts 21:33—the longest piece on the CD. The dedicatee was York Bowen. There are lots of notes in this one, and how Habermann can memorize pieces like this (as he did for all of the works) boggles the mind. *Variation 56* last just 2:41, the *Quasi habanera* 4:59, and the 'Minute Waltz' treatment just 4:13. On the other hand the Bach transcription of the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* does take 15:23, and if you know the original you will be transfixed by this one.

Habermann learned all these pieces from copies of the manuscripts, and given the nearly impossible task of reading same, his achievement is all the more remarkable. The recording was made by National Public Radio, and Habermann would agree that the piano's sound isn't the most opulent. But don't let that stop you. This CD should be heard. Michael Habermann recently rejoined the Delius Society, and he dedicated this recording to another member, the late Donald M. Garvelmann.