
Records

SORABJI: Nocturne: *Djâmi* (1928); *Le Jardin Parfumé*, Poem for Piano; Pastiche: Rimsky-Korsakov—Hindu Merchant's Song from *Sadko*; Pastiche: Chopin's Waltz, Op. 64, No. 1. Michael Habermann, piano. MusicMasters MM-20019. \$8.98.

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji (b.1892) is a man of strong convictions. The English-born son of a Parsi father and Spanish-Sicilian mother, he was for several decades an important music critic whose writings for a number of British journals and two collections of essays (*Around Music*, 1932, and *Mi Contra Fa: The Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician*, 1947) even today make for brilliantly provocative reading. A measure of Sorabji's aesthetic emerges from a partial list of those contemporary composers he especially disliked (Hindemith, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Webern, the 12-tone Schoenberg, and most of Bartók) and those he particularly admired (Delius, Medtner, Rachmaninoff, Szymanowski, and above all Busoni).

Sorabji is at heart a Romantic, one who values inspiration above deliberation, relishes lush washes of color, and does not eschew fabulous displays of virtuosity when these come at the service of the music. In these respects, and in his love for asymmetric phrases, all manner of textural complexities, and lavish yet intrinsic ornament, he resembles a 20th-century Chopin with a distinctly Eastern spirit.

Michael Habermann's exceedingly convincing readings make the current disc a welcome successor to his initial Sorabji release (MusicMasters MM-20015; see my review in the February 1982 *Keynote*). Included is the latest (1928) and longest (22 minutes) complete Sorabji work yet recorded, *Djâmi*, a hypnotic piece of rapt sensuality. Even more mesmeric is the lustrous, poetic *Le Jardin Parfumé* (The Perfumed Garden), which rarely rises above *pianissimo*. The two short "pastes" are not mere arrangements but rather thoroughgoing transformations of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Song of India" and Chopin's "Minute" Waltz. Particularly fascinating is the Chopin, which in its four-plus minutes replaces the breathless exhilaration of the original with glittering decorations surpassing even Liszt.

The recorded sound is good, but not good enough to capture the rich sonority of Sorabji's keyboard writing. More Sorabji would be welcome from any source. It would be especially interesting to hear Sorabji's more recent work (he was still composing as of 1978), and some of his many orchestral pieces. R.D.H.