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Hugh Canning, David Cairns, Paul Driver and Stephen Pettitt



A fine version: Paul van Nevel with the Huelgas Ensemble

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This beautiful opera, written in 1625 for the visit to the Medici court by the crown prince of Poland, is the only surviving theatrical score by the great singer Francesca, daughter of the better-known Giulio Caccini, one of the composers associated with the *intermedi* for the 1589 comedy *La Pellegrina*. Many regard these interludes with dance and song as the precursor of opera, and Francesca soon became established as a vocal “virtuosa” after her appearance, aged 13, in Jacopo Peri’s *Euridice*. Her part witty, part serious retelling of the story of Alcina and Ruggiero is admirably concise, standing between the madrigalian/choral style of Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* (1608) and the sung recitative of his later masterpieces, *Ulisse* (1640) and *Poppea* (1643). Van Nevel’s recording follows the fine version from the Boston Early Music Festival, but includes dance music by Salamone Rossi. Michaela Riener’s vindictive Alcina, Achim Schulz’s languid Ruggiero and Sabine Lutzenberger’s ravishing, androgynous-sounding Melissa are stylistic paragons, as are “choruses” of water spirits, monsters and enchanted plants. *HC*
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REYNALDO HAHN

Piano Quartet No 3, Piano Quintet, A Chloris et al
James Baillieu (piano), Bartosz Woroch and Benjamin Baker (violin), Adam Newman (viola), Tim Lowe (cello)
Champs Hill CHRCD139

The French composer, born in Venezuela, is best known for his exquisite songs: two of his most famous, *A Chloris* and *Si mes vers avaient des ailes*, are included here. Baillieu’s project to record his chamber output as well brings his rare, late Piano Quartet in G (1946) and 1921 quintet in F sharp minor. This melodic, rigorously formal music, recalling Franck and Fauré, is played with zeal by all five musicians. *HC*

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MUSSORGSKY

Piano Works
Alexander Bakhchief, Viktoria Postnikova, Maria Yudina et al
Melodyia MELCD1002541