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PERSICHETTI Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 15. Sonata for Solo Violin, Op. 10; Piano Sonatinas. Masques for Violin and Piano, Op. 99. Serenade No. 4 for Violin and Piano, Op. 28 • Hasse Borup (vn); Vincent Craig (pn) • NAXOS 8.559725 (53:00)

Vincent Persichetti (1915–87) was one of the most versatile and engaging composers of his generation. Largely remembered for his significant contributions to the concert band literature, Persichetti's output consists of over 150 works, including nine symphonies, four string quartets, a large body of choral and vocal music, and solo and chamber works for virtually all the standard (and some non-standard) orchestral instruments. He was also one of the most influential composition teachers of the mid-20th century, with students as diverse as Philip Glass and Lowell Liebermann. Much of his output remains virtually unknown, though, strikingly absent from standard concert programming. It is therefore gratifying to see the steady stream of recordings his works have enjoyed in recent years.

This disc contains Persichetti's complete solo violin and violin/piano works. (Persichetti also wrote a suite for violin and cello and two works for piano trio, which are not included here). Also featured are Persichetti's six brief piano sonatinas. The program is listed as a world-premiere recording, and for all practical purposes, it is, though the piano sonatinas were released some 20-plus years ago on cassette through Educo Records. The entire disc, though, is a welcome addition to the catalog.

The featured work on the program is Persichetti's two-movement *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, which Hasse Borup premiered at the University of Utah in 2012. The work is one of a handful of pieces in Persichetti's output that has remained unpublished, stored in manuscript at the New York Public Library. The sonata's premiere received a fair amount of press because the manuscript had been catalogued under the wrong name. Persichetti's publisher, Theodore Presser, lists the piece as *Fantasy, Op. 15*. The first page of the manuscript, though, reproduced on several websites chronicling Borup's premiere, relegates that title to a faint scrawl in the upper left corner. "SONATA" is written in bold letters in the center.

Borup's research is commendable, and his discovery of the discrepancy in the piece's nomenclature is interesting. Journalistic claims that Borup has unearthed a lost work by Persichetti, though, are grossly overstated. The sonata was not missing from the catalog of Persichetti's works; it was simply misnamed. Nor was the manuscript's location unknown; Presser's website indicates that it is available from the New York Public Library. None of this detracts from Borup's achievement in obtaining and premiering a 70-year-old piece that has no record of public performance, and it would be a shame to see Borup's genuine achievement lost in the misleading hullabaloo that has surrounded it.

As for the sonata itself, it is quite attractive. It shares some traits recognizable as quintessential Persichetti: crisp rhythms, a knack for humor, and a clear, easily-comprehended structure. The first movement is a bit darker than much of Persichetti's music. Thick, jazzy

harmonies are prominent in the accompaniment, and a strain of melancholy pervades the movement, which ends on an unadorned minor triad. The second movement is bold and emphatic, full of repeated double-stops, rushing passagework, and occasional Weill-flavored rhythms. It is highly-skilled writing, though not possessed of the self-assured musical personality that characterizes Persichetti's best work. Borup and Connor offer a colorful, confident performance of the piece.

The sonata for solo violin is comprised of four brief movements. A triple-stop motif unifies the first movement, which is energetic and punchy. The second movement has a lamenting *arioso* quality to its main theme. Though Persichetti had a warm, lyrical sensibility, such overt effusiveness is rare in his work. The third movement features a flurry of repeated notes. The final movement is a high-spirited rush of scale passages and emphatic double-stops introduced by a slow recitative. Borup's tone is full and commanding without becoming shrill. His rhythms are crisp and well-accented. My only complaint is his handling of harmonics, which have a bit more bow sound than I would like.

Persichetti wrote 15 serenades for a variety of instrumental combinations, including such novelties as recorder duo and solo tuba. The disc's program notes quote him as characterizing the serenades as "suites of 'love' pieces ... of a certain lyric, under-the-window quality." Unsurprisingly, the *Serenade No. 4 for Violin and Piano* is full of sunny, joyous music. The first movement, a gently undulating Pastorello with a tuneful, soaring violin melody over a treble-centered piano part, is ingratiatingly cheerful. The rhythmic second movement features Persichetti's characteristic running scales and projects a sense of boisterous good humor. The third movement shows Persichetti at his most lyrical, with a wide-ranging violin melody and bright harmonies in the piano. The finale features transparent textures, fast repeated notes, and playful scale passages. The serenade is a delight and would make a fine introduction to Persichetti for listeners unfamiliar with his work. Borup and Connor play expressively, with a wide dynamic range, sensitivity to harmonic color, and plenty of brilliance in the fast sections.

Persichetti was an expert miniaturist. The *Masques* are a collection of ten brief pieces, most under a minute long, each of considerable charm. Particularly noteworthy is the economy of means Persichetti uses in the lyrically tranquil third piece, which combines a simple stepwise melody with a steady stepwise eighth-note accompaniment. The fifth piece is another lyrical highlight: an expressive, dignified violin melody over a gentle chorale in the piano. Among the faster pieces, the eighth, a sparsely-textured canon between the two instruments featuring staccato notes and frequent rests, is especially attractive.

An excellent pianist himself, piano works were central to Persichetti's output. The six sonatinas were composed in two groups, in 1950 and 1954. All six are under five minutes long and are not terribly demanding technically, though they require significant musical sensitivity. The second group is especially well-suited for talented intermediate piano students. Heather Connor delivers engaging, fresh-sounding performances of these works, though her rubato is occasionally a bit more Chopinesque than is appropriate and her tempo is rather brisk in some of the slow movements. But she captures the wit and brittle drive of the faster sections, the solemnity of the canon that begins the second sonatina, and the innocence of the fourth sonatina.

The sound engineering is skillful and clear, if just slightly more reverberant than I find ideal. This disc is an important contribution to the documentation of Persichetti's output and makes for very rewarding listening. **Myron Silberstein**