

### **Julius RÖNTGEN (1855-1932)**

String Trio No.1 in D major, Op.76 (1915) [20:02]

String Trio No.2 in A minor *Dvořák* (1918) [13:47]

String Trio No.3 in E minor (1919) [16:18]

String Trio No.4 in D major *Walzer Suite* (1919) [10:36]

Lendvai String Trio

rec. March 2013, Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex

**CHAMPS HILL RECORDS CHRCD068** [60:47]

It's full steam ahead with the Röntgen Renaissance on disc. Not a month seems to go by without his works being unearthed or, more likely, receiving further exposure, such as most recently happened with the Cello Concertos. Now it's the turn of the String Trios. This is the first instalment of a complete recording project from the Lendvai String Trio on Champs Hill Records which, given that he wrote sixteen trios, of which only one has ever been published, is good news for collectors of the Dutch composer's music.

He came late to the genre, writing his First Trio in 1915 at the age of 60 and his last in 1930. He had been an inveterate chamber player and he formed a (professional) piano trio with his sons in 1912. The spur for the 1915 Trio was his 'protest against my 60 years' as he wrote in a letter to his old colleague, the violinist and teacher Carl Flesch. He also admitted it was a 'jolly string trio' and indeed it is. It is, in addition, the only one to have been published, which it was in Germany in 1924. It is a work suffused in *giocososo* spirit; there's not a worried bone in its slim body. There is an ingenious passage in the slow movement where the central voice, the viola, takes the role of a spinning wheel whilst the violin deftly unravels its own lyrical line above, sweetly songful, the cello providing a sure foundation. The *Allegretto* is in jovial, somewhat antique dance style and whilst the finale is marked *Passepied (J.S. Bach)* we get instead a micro-movement, rather overlong in truth, that's more to do with now than then.

The second string trio is christened *Dvořák*. Flesch would have immediately noticed the motif from the Czech composer's Violin Concerto, which recurs. This is a charming work, with an especially lovely *Andante*, with beautiful voicings and plenty of incident. There's real vitality in the finale, a 'hunting music' movement, and a reprise of the Dvořák motif to provide cyclical contentment. Trio No. 3 was written in 1919 and contrasts the deft opening movement with a more heavy-booted peasants' dance in the *furioso* of the ensuing *Allegro*. Dutch Wedding music occupies the third section and there's an unassuming *Allegretto* unpretentiously to end things. Röntgen marries the domestic with the demotic aptly here, and there's nothing too serious. The Fourth Trio, dashed off five days after the Third, is a brief Waltz Suite, containing delightful little dance aperçus, and even including a brief, unexpected fugal moment along the way. This is indeed more a suite than a trio, if such distinctions matter in music as pleasant and undemanding as this.

The performances match the music in spirit and engaging directness and have been finely recorded. The booklet notes match them for style. This is Röntgen in very unbuttoned style, writing to amuse and entertain, and sounding as if he didn't care tuppence what any critic thought of his music.

### **Jonathan Woolf**

Röntgen unbuttoned ... writing to amuse and entertain.