

CD REVIEW 69

WIDOR, Charles-Marie.
Piano Concerto no. 1 in F minor Op 39;
Fantasy for piano and orchestra Op 62;
Piano Concerto no 2 in C minor Op 77
Martin Roscoe, BBC Concert Orchestra, Martin Yates.
Dutton Epoch CDLX7275 (73.65)

Why have we had to wait so long for these attractive works?

Poor Widor, he is only known for the Toccata from his Organ Symphony no 5 chosen often to be played at weddings without consideration to the organist as it is not easy to play.



He was a marvellous pianist, a superb organist playing at Saint Sulpus in Paris for 64 years. He was a stimulating teacher and not a traditional stick in the mud. He taught Marcel Dupré, Darius Milhaud, Albert Schweitzer and Louis Vierne.

Widor wrote ten organ symphonies, a symphony for organ and orchestra, music for piano, music for violin and piano, a Violin Concerto, a Cello Concerto and two piano quintets, a piano trio, a Spanish Overture, six stage works, many religious choral works and songs. He lived from 1844 to 1937.

He was the great uncle of that superlative violinist [Ginette Neveu \(see article on this site\)](#).

Martin Roscoe, who is now 60, is a splendid pianist and a honest musician. He may not quite be a household name but he is reliable and dependable. You cannot always trust him with any music. In these concertos, we have yet another example of his unsullied musicianship.

The sound is very good.

The sleeve notes by John Warrack are, in the main, excellent and a role model for how sleeve notes should be written. There are details about both the composer and the performers, and informed details about the works themselves which are eminently readable. There are pictures, some in colour. Dutton often employs a writer for booklet notes who is unreliable, often inaccurate and pillages what little information he has from other sources without the courtesy of any acknowledgement.

I was put off by the note that the first concerto was akin to Chopin since that is no recommendation whatsoever but that only meant that the similarity was in the fact that the orchestra part was only a mere support but, nonetheless, adequate. Widor's music is more masculine with strong themes. Widor also develops his material with great skill and it has a coherence and a plan. In common parlance, it knows where it is going. That this work may be akin to Franck is another put down remark. Comparisons can be odious and people will make them. Widor's concertos are vastly superior to the alleged comparisons.

The slow is marked *andante religioso* and has a serenity and eloquence. It is somewhat repetitious with many broken or arpeggiated chords and clichés which some may find wearisome. The finale is infectious, and real fun... almost a foot tapper.

The second concerto is a concerto for piano and orchestra and the first movement has some surprises and therefore is non-predictable. It is a movement of great originality and every work has to be original to enable it to be great. It is said that the slow movement may show influences of Wagner and Parisfal. Even if that is so, it has a beauty one seldom finds in such works. The finale is basically

joyful and recalls the opening movement making the work somewhat cyclic and, again, coherent. Of the works on this CD, this second concerto is the most successful.

The Fantasy contains some very good music as well, but it is episodic. In other words, it stops and starts. But there are some very exciting and impressive moments.

Whether these concertos are durable and will remain fresh on repeated hearings is a matter of opinion. What is clear is that they should be heard since they are far better than many piano concertos and other works for piano and orchestra.

And thank you, Martin Roscoe!

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