

CD REVIEW 75

KRAUS, Joseph Martin.
Symphony in C minor (1783),
Violin Concerto in C (1783),
Symphonie Funebre in C minor (1792).
Edith Peinemann (violin), Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra,
Martin Sieghart.
Orfeo C254921A (DDD)
(72. 23)

What a lovely CD and fine recordings, superior to those on Naxos. These recordings originate from 1990 and 1991.

Joseph Martin Kraus was an exact contemporary of Mozart. There are many who believe he is a greater composer than Mozart. I find Kraus's music is not predictable as Mozart and his music is fresh! It is also original!

So good is this composer that he is omitted from Michael Kennedy's Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music fifth edition!, and I hope this does not reflect Kennedy's unfair and unwelcome prejudices again.

[*\(See article on Michael Kennedy\)*](#)

Kraus was born on 20 June 1756 and it is unfair to call him the 'Swedish Mozart'. Such comparisons can be unfair and misleading, creating myths which become regarded as factual. To say he is the 'Swedish Mozart' could be taken to be belittling.

He was born in Miltenberg an Main and was influenced by the Mannheim School and orchestra which became great under the gifted Johann Stamitz. But Kraus studied law and philosophy. He was taken with the literary Sturm and Drang school. All his life he was impressed by words and their correct usage. He produced a literary pamphlet entitled *Something of and about music for the year 1777*. This caused a stir and, from experience, I can confirm that when you write about musicians and music in a honest way, you are subject to harsh criticism.

Kraus moved to Stockholm wishing to be in the Court of Gustaf III and to use his love and words and music to write opera. He became kappellmeister at the Court remaining there until his untimely death on 16 December 1792.

While he was in Sweden he undertook a tour and on his way to Italy met Haydn. The Symphony in C minor of 1783 is dedicated to Haydn. It is original in that it does not follow the Mannheim School or the current styles of Vienna. The slow introduction is profound and this leads into an allegro and is prophetic of the Romantic style. Kraus was not a composer to use standard methods or clichés. In this he was original and far better than some of his contemporaries.

The Violin Concerto is a gem but you must listen to this music at a volume that shows its many glories. It is too good to be background music and I cringe when BBC Radio 3 write to tell me that the majority of listeners to this station only want it as background music or company. We cannot disrespect music. Edith Peinemann is, as she always is, superlative. Her tone is impeccably gorgeous and secure and she has a sweet tone even in the more vigorous passages. The clarity of her playing is to be envied by all and I could recommend to come of our younger violinists to listen to her or Wanda Wilkomirska (another omission from Kennedy's dictionary) and learn and benefit from such learning.



[\(See article on Edith Peinemann\)](#)

The Symphonie Funebre is in C minor and is in four movements.. It was written for the funeral of the Swedish king who was assassinated at a masked ball in 1792. The symphony was completed just before his own death. It seems to have different styles perhaps representing characteristics of the king and it is dark-hued. The third movement is a chorale and the finale includes a fugue which shows that Krauss could write in systems or methods.

This symphony brilliantly captures the subject better than any other such work (although some might find it dreary) and here the orchestra are superb. The conductor Martin Sieghart is first class, originally a cellist, who made a sensational debut with the Verna Symphony Orchestra with Bach's sublime St Matthew Passion in Vienna, the city of his birth.



Highly recommended

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