

Concerto Reviews

Malek Jandali

**Violin Concerto;
Clarinet Concerto**

Anthony McGill (clarinet),
Rachel Barton Pine (violin); ORF
Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra/
Marin Alsop

Cedille CDR 90000 220 61:04 mins



Syrian-American composer Malek Jandali has long combined music and activism. His work integrates

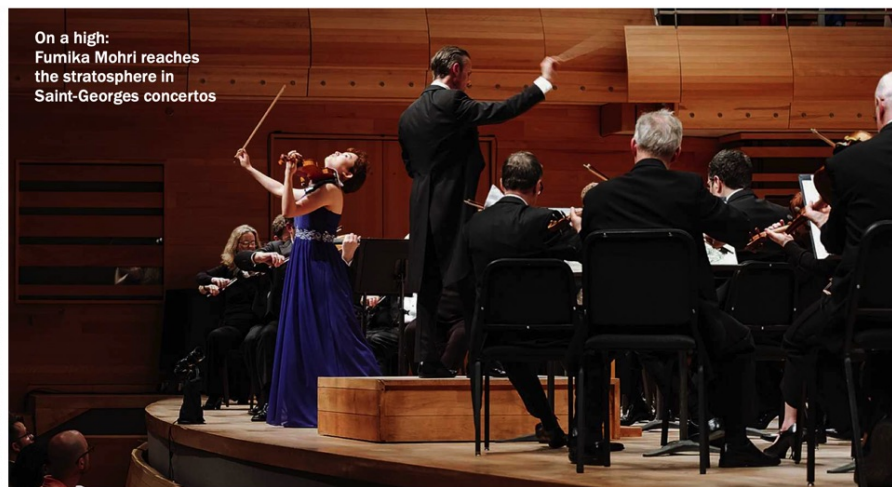
Middle-Eastern modes into Western classical structures, and he views this fusing of musical forms as a response to UNESCO's call to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of Syria which remains under threat. This accomplished album of concertos aptly showcases Jandali's compositional approach with two strong solo performances.

Jandali's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra was composed in 2014 and is dedicated to the many Syrian women who have endured oppression and hardship, including the composer's own mother who was brutally attacked in Syria in 2011 shortly after Malek joined a political protest in Washington DC. Broadly tonal but with a modernist bent, the work draws on an array of Syrian and Arabic musical forms and devices, also incorporating an oud (Arabic lute) into the piece. The score is strongest when at its most angular, but the work certainly engages as a whole and Rachel Barton Pine gives a terrifically assured performance throughout.

Written in 2019, the Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra was especially composed for the principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic, Anthony McGill, who is on outstanding form here. By turns biting and lyrical, the piece similarly weaves in Arabic musical elements, including a number of *Muwashshah* – a complex vocal form based on classical Arabic poems – which McGill renders with particular grace, supported with great subtlety by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marin Alsop.

Well-recorded and expertly performed, this is a rewarding album which skilfully explores the intersection of Western and Arabic musical vocabularies. *Kate Wakeling*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



On a high:
Fumika Mohri reaches
the stratosphere in
Saint-Georges concertos

Lalo • Saint-Saëns

Lalo: Cello Concerto;
Saint-Saëns: Cello Concerto No. 1;
Carnival of the Animals – The Swan;
Allegro appassionato, Op. 43
Maja Bogdanović (cello); RTS
Symphony Orchestra/Bojan Sudjić
Challenge Classics CC 72949 53:16 mins



This recording has two drawbacks that are not the fault of the performers: the acoustics

of the Belgrade concert hall are unflattering and, in two of the Saint-Saëns pieces especially, the soloist is recorded at a level above that of the orchestra. The very start of the first movement of Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto, gives us a taste of the 'boominess' that will disfigure many of the louder sections of the piece, while the foregrounding of the soloist comes as a considerable shock. A third drawback however is the cellist's tone, which has an edge, particularly at *forte* and above in the middle register, that over time becomes intrusive. In quieter passages, the edge tends to disappear, and 'The Swan' from *Carnival of the Animals* is delightfully tender.

The acoustics are more unhelpful to Lalo's brass-heavy orchestration in the first movement of his Concerto, and whatever delicate phrasing the conductor was trying to elicit is largely lost both here and in the more jaunty middle movement. Maja Bogdanović has a good technique and the many testing moments are never less than perfect

as far as notes go, but she does tend to ignore tempo markings, notably at one point in the first movement of the Saint-Saëns concerto where she accelerates on a bar marked 'rit'. In bar 11 of the first movement of the Lalo concerto there's also a 'domino' or false entry, which really should have been picked up. *Roger Nichols*
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★

Mozart

Piano Concertos: No. 15 in B flat, K450; No. 16 in D, K451; No. 17 in G, K453
Claire Huangci (piano);
Mozarteumorchester Salzburg/
Howard Griffiths

Alpha Classics ALPHA928 71:50 mins



This fifth volume in the series 'Next Generation Mozart Soloists' features the American pianist

Claire Huangci, a frequent soloist around Europe, though not so far in the UK. Billed as a representative of the next generation, her Mozart playing stylistically reflects, rather, a previous generation: always charming, fluent, with plenty of finger staccato and good phrasing, but ignoring some of what we know of Mozart's practice. The convention that the soloist played continuo with the orchestra, emerging from the ensemble – actually made explicit in a figured-bass part for K451 – is here ignored. And while the few bars of elaboration Mozart provided for his sister Nannerl in the central movement of K451 are followed to

the letter, they are not used as an example of how one might improvise elsewhere: Huangci plays every note even in Mozart's cadenzas exactly as he wrote them out.

These three concertos are lively but not deep works from Mozart's first months in Vienna, the B flat making a cheeky point from the outset that the wind will be as prominent as the strings. Balance between Huangci's forward-balanced piano and wind is good: it is the upper strings that suffer in the imitative passages between piano and strings. Tempos are flowing, articulation is crisp and the rhapsodic arpeggios of K450's *Andante* are well drawn. The more subtle chromaticism in K453 tends to be smoothed over, but the chirruping finale (the theme that Mozart noted that his pet starling could sing) is delightfully driven by Howard Griffiths. *Nicholas Kenyon*
PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Saint-Georges

Violin Concertos, Opp 2 & 7
Fumika Mohri (violin); Czech
Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra
Pardubice/Michael Halász
Naxos 8.574452 76:54 mins



Arguably, this is where it all began. Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges made his public debut as a virtuosic violin soloist in 1772 presenting his own Violin Concertos in G and D, published as his Op. 2. Already famous as a