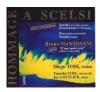**Scelsi & Mantobani - Hommage a Scelsi (2008)**

Giacinto Scelsi *[1-3] Sonata for Violin and Piano (1934) [24:06] [4-7] Divertimento No 4 (1955) [14:04] [8-9] Duo (1965) [9:30] [10-12] Xnoybis (1964) [12:09]*   Bruno Mantobani
[13] D'une Seule Voix (2007) [10:54]
Diego Tosi (violin)   Timothé Tosi (cello) Jay Gottlieb (piano)

I had not previously heard much of Scelsi's early music, and found the Violin Sonata to be surprisingly melodic, reminiscent in its angular phrases of the neo-classicism of Hindemith. The style is not far removed from other 'big name' composers of the era, with resonances of Berg and his contemporaries. There is a hint of romanticism; this is not academic music in the sense that it seems to have a clear emotional message intertwined with the strangely memorable lines. Quite a substantial work, it has character and a naïve charm.

The Divertimento No. 4 for solo violin was composed some twenty years later, and is altogether more contemporary in its style, despite retaining a sense of tonality. This is a challenging work, heard here in its first recording. There is an underlying sense of earthiness, and the frenzied faster sections seemed almost ritualistic in their spiralling motion. There is room, too, for expression, and the piece serves as an excellent show-piece for the violin. The four movements each take on their own characters, extending the previous sound-world in a different direction. The playing is assured and exuberant, with poetic expression juxtaposed with displays of technical brilliance.

Duo, composed in 1965, is scored for violin and cello. This is much more similar in style to those of Scelsi's works I had previously encountered, making use of clusters, dense textures and unusual sounds to create an individual sound-scape. The music is essentially textural, rather than melodic, with multiple-stopped notes - the score is notated, according to the

programme notes, with usually three staves per instrument - performed with altered tone qualities. Trills and tremolos give a sense of movement to the work, which, although primarily static, has a sense of constant evolution. With two movements of similar length, this is highly atmospheric, with tensions building between the instruments and dissonances increasing through microtonal pitch bends.

The remaining work by Scelsi on this disc is Xnoybis, a microtonal work in three movements for solo violin. Making use of minimal material, Scelsi creates a slowly evolving musical line which seems like a concentration of the style of his earlier works. The contrast with the Divertimento is enormous, in terms of melodic structure and musical language, and yet the juxtaposition of emotion and technique is retained. This is difficult music to perform; treated purely on the technical level, the music becomes quickly boring – the emotional level is essential to retain interest and atmosphere. Diego Tosi does an excellent job here. The performance is gripping, captivating even, and one is intrigued to find out where the music will go next. Scelsi's use of dissonance is scintillating, with micro intervals emerging from the texture and then sliding slowly to become unisons. For me, this was the most fascinating work of the disc, demonstrating Scelsi's unique voice as a composer.

Bruno Mantovani describes his duo for violin and cello as a 'Solo for two instruments'. This is a highly challenging work for the performers, which is brilliantly executed here. Composed specifically to be included in a concert programme of Scelsi's works, Mantovani takes elements of Scelsi's style and combines them with his own, creating an exciting musical language. Mantovani is an exciting young composer who already has an impressive CV. His music is certainly worthy of further exploration. ---Carla Rees , musicweb-international.com

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