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NAXOS

Balys
DVARIONAS
(1904-1972)

Complete Works for Violin and Piano
Sonata-Ballade • Pezzo elegiaco • Three Pieces

Justina Auškelytė, Violin • Cesare Pezzi, Piano

Balys Dvarionas (1904-1972)

Complete Works for Violin and Piano

Balys Dvarionas was one of the most prominent figures in the field of Lithuanian (and indeed Baltic) musical culture. A polymath, he excelled as a pianist, conductor, composer and pedagogue. Dvarionas was born in the Latvian harbour city of Liepāja. His father was a Roman Catholic church organist, and as a result the young Dvarionas received his first music lessons at home. He later studied with renowned Latvian composer and organist Alfreds Kalniņš who encouraged his pupil to enrol at the Leipzig Conservatoire, where he studied composition with Stephan Krehl and Sigfrid Karl-Ewert and piano with Robert Teichmüller. After graduating in 1924, Dvarionas moved to Kaunas in Lithuania where he performed his first recital and, two years later, began teaching at the Kaunas Music School (later to become the Lithuanian Conservatoire). In 1949 he started working at the Conservatoire in Vilnius (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), a position he occupied until his death in 1972.

Dvarionas also spent some time in Berlin to hone his musical skills further under Egon Petri while simultaneously building a successful career as a European concert pianist from 1928.

Dvarionas started his conducting activities in 1928, working with the Kaunas Music School Orchestra. In 1931 he conducted a concert for the first time at the Philharmonic (with Egon Petri as a soloist). In 1934 he went to Salzburg to attend conductors' courses led by Bruno Walter and his assistant Herbert von Karajan, and in 1939 he graduated from the Leipzig Conservatory, studying conducting as an external student under Herman Abendroth. From 1935 to 1938 he was the chief conductor of the Kaunas Radio Orchestra and, in 1939, when Lithuania regained its capital Vilnius, Dvarionas and his fellow artists established the Vilnius City Orchestra (later the Philharmonic Orchestra) and he became its chief conductor. As a conductor Dvarionas collaborated with such legendary musicians as Arthur Rubinstein, Josef Hofmann, David Oistrakh, Mstislav Rostropovich,

Igor Stravinsky and Sergey Prokofiev, among others. The last time Dvarionas appeared on stage was on May 12, 1972 at the Lithuanian National Philharmonic in Vilnius, where together with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra he played Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 1 in D major, K.107* and conducted Schubert's *Mass No. 2 in G major D.167*.

In the challenging post-War 1940s Dvarionas started to focus on his compositional career and in this decade composed his *Symphony in E minor* and *Violin Concerto in B minor*, followed by two *Piano Concertos* and a *French Horn Concerto*, as well as an opera and choral cycles.

Dvarionas was of the opinion that an artist's individuality is shaped by his national mentality. Thus, he viewed Lithuanian folklore as a key tenet of his artistic heritage. Balys Dvarionas belongs to the canon of composers such as Jean Sibelius and Karol Szymanowski, his musical oeuvre remaining attractive in the context of both the contemporary and the historical. In one of his last music articles in 1971, the composer wrote: "My aesthetic ideals were formed under the influence of 19th-century Romanticism, and I believe in the musician's vocational call to spread beauty, good harmony, to educate people and to raise them above the routine. I believe that people who say this type of view is behind the times are wrong. The ideals of human kindness have remained unchanged over many thousands of years, the foremost being love, truth, freedom and friendship. To serve them is not a step backwards."

Balys Dvarionas' works for violin and piano are known outside of Lithuania and occupy a special place in his oeuvre, revealing as they do the composer's subtle idiosyncrasies and musical aesthetic. They have been performed by notable violinists including David Oistrakh, Isaac Stern, Gidon Kremer and Vadim Gluzman. Justina Auškelytė and Cesare Pezzi are the first to record the complete Dvarionas works for violin and piano on CD.

Almost all of Balys Dvarionas' works for violin and piano were written for his children: his daughter, the

pianist, and his son, the violinist. There can be little doubt as to why Dvarionas' instrumental chamber works are said to possess an especially personal quality. In composing music for his children, the composer inadvertently developed a particularly original chamber music idiom, where the interplay between parts relies on an uninhibited bond between performers. Dvarionas greatly valued sincere and intimate conversation in both everyday life and his music.

Sonata-Ballade (1965) occupies a central place in the pantheon of Dvarionas's violin music. The composer wrote of this work: "I have faced a certain problem – a sonata for violin and piano. Plenty of sonatas have already been written and, one would think, there is no need for yet one more, but on the other hand the wish to get once more in contact with the violin has been living inside me for quite some time. What am I going to think about when working on it? The sun. I think the sun is it, a centre of warmth, and of love. These attributes are so greatly missing in today's world ruled by the impersonal, by neglect and intolerance. Perhaps, that is the reason why I am drawn to this work; I hope in my heart to find comfort while creating this piece."

The abundance of emotions in the *Sonata* can hardly be contained by melody alone and often pours over into a stream of new material. An impetuous piano introduction inspires the violin's swift expressiveness and the work's main musical idea. In contrast, episodes of sardonic marching themes and grotesque opulence (representative of Soviet Socialist realism) jar with the tender world of lyrical dreams and romance. From the very beginning the

Sonata was meant to be a one-movement composition with the main theme reprised in the recapitulation. During the creative process each musical idea inspired the next, and so the work can be viewed as one constantly evolving beautiful episodic sequence. A colleague of the composer once described the work in the following terms: "...when listening to the *Sonata* I felt like walking in the most fantastic botanical garden. How beautiful the flowers are, and what about those imposing trees, and a lake glittering so peacefully in the sundown... what luminous music!" Dvarionas was very pleased with this description of the work.

The three miniatures *Prelude* (1950), *Waltz and March* (both 1951) make a garland of cheerful pieces written as birthday gifts for his son, as was *Romance* (1962). More than half a century later, one can really appreciate how invaluable these gifts are – not only for his own, but for all children.

Pieces such as the *Scherzino* (1960), *Pastorale and Presto* (1965), *Allegro giocoso* (1970) and *Impromptu* (1969) made an important contribution to the repertoire of virtuoso violin music in Lithuania of that period, whereas *Pezzo elegiaco* (1946), *Ballade* (1960), *Elegia canzonetta* (1960), *Meditation* (1961), *Adagio* (1969) and *Recollection* (1969) exemplify the composer's musical subtlety. These delicate works illustrate perfectly Dvarionas's musical credo: "It is not the Greatness that is beautiful; rather, it is Beauty that is great."

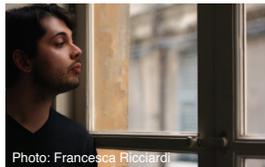
Prof. Jurgis Dvarionas

Justina Auškelytė



The young Lithuanian violinist Justina Auškelytė has won wide acclaim with achievements in violin competitions and performances in international festivals and concerts. She has received awards from two successive Presidents of Lithuania for her musical contributions to her country. Auškelytė was a laureate of the National Balys Dvarionas Violin Competition from 2000-2004, and in 2008 she was the Grand Prix Laureate of the 8th International Balys Dvarionas Competition. She took first prize at the 2006 International Saulius Sondeckis Competition and at the 2007 National Raimundas Katilius Competition. In 2009 she won second prize at the Third International Jascha Heifetz Competition, and has also won distinction in other international competitions in Latvia, the Czech Republic and Romania. Auškelytė has participated in master-classes with Boris Kuschnir, Sergey Krylov, Sergey Kravchenko, David Kim and Peter Oundjian. Her artistry comes from a distinguished lineage of teachers. Since 2006 she has been studying with Pavel Berman at the International Music Academy "Incontri col Maestro" in Imola, and later at the Academy "Lorenzo Perosi" in Biella. Simultaneously, she continued her studies at the Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy with Prof. Jurgis Dvarionas, the son of the composer Balys Dvarionas, whose collaboration was invaluable for the present recording. She studied with Boris Kuschnir at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz and later at the Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna. In May 2015 Auškelytė gained a Master of Music degree at The Juilliard School in New York, studying under the guidance of the late Stephen Clapp and Laurie Smukler. She is now based again in Vilnius.

Cesare Pezzi



The Italian pianist Cesare Pezzi performs regularly in Europe (Italy, Austria, Belgium, France, Holland, Lithuania, Estonia, Monaco, Switzerland) and in the United States as both a soloist and, more especially, in chamber music ensembles. This contributed to his winning the prestigious Chiarappa Chamber Music Prize in Florence in 2013 and to playing with many eminent musicians, such as Francesco Manara, Paolo Andreoli, the Quartetto di Cremona, the Ciurlionis Quartet and others. In 2012 he made his debut at the 75th Festival of the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino with a Debussy recital. In Italy he has played at the most important festivals and venues in Rome, Milan, Florence, Venice, Genoa, Bergamo, Bologna, Brescia, Pesaro, Pisa, Lucca, Cagliari, and many others. He has recorded for TVemme, for RAI, for Vatican Radio and for Lithuanian National Radio, and has obtained distinction in many important piano competitions. Since 2009 he has played with the violinist Justina Auškelytė, acclaimed by critics and audiences. Born in Ravenna in 1989, he studied the piano from a young age and made his concert debut at the age of six. He studied at Florence Conservatory with Maria Teresa Carunchio as well as in Turin with Enrico Pace, and also in Rome and Imola with Konstantin Bogino. He has received guidance from many great musicians, including Elena Ashkenazy, Bruno Canino, Aldo Ciccolini, Pavel Gililov, Sergio Perticaroli, Daniel Rivera, Pavel Berman, Pavel Vernikov and Mats Widlund. His New York debut in 2015 at the Lincoln Center received great critical acclaim.

One of the most gifted and prominent of all twentieth-century Lithuanian musicians, Balys Dvarionas was a musical polymath who excelled as a composer, pianist, conductor and teacher. He viewed his native country's folklore as a fundamental part of his artistic heritage and his aesthetic ideas were formed under the influence of nineteenth-century Romanticism. His violin works occupy a special place in his oeuvre. The *Sonata-Ballade* is his violin masterpiece, full of idiosyncrasies and luminous warmth, while the miniatures encompass subtle charm and effortless virtuosity.

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1 Pezzo elegiaco (1946)	6:07	9 Adagio (1969)	3:15
2 Sonata-Ballade (1965)	13:00	10 Allegro giocoso (1970)	5:28
3 Elegia canzonetta (1960)	4:12	11 Recollection (1969)	3:59
4 Scherzino (1960)	3:35	Three Pieces	4:36
5 Meditation (1961)	2:32	12 I. Prelude: Andante cantabile (1950)	1:24
6 Pastorale and Presto (1965)	4:51	13 II. Waltz (1951)	1:07
7 Ballade (1960)	6:27	14 III. March (1951)	2:05
8 Impromptu (1969)	3:59	15 Romance (1962)	2:23

Justina Auškelytė, Violin • Cesare Pezzi, Piano

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