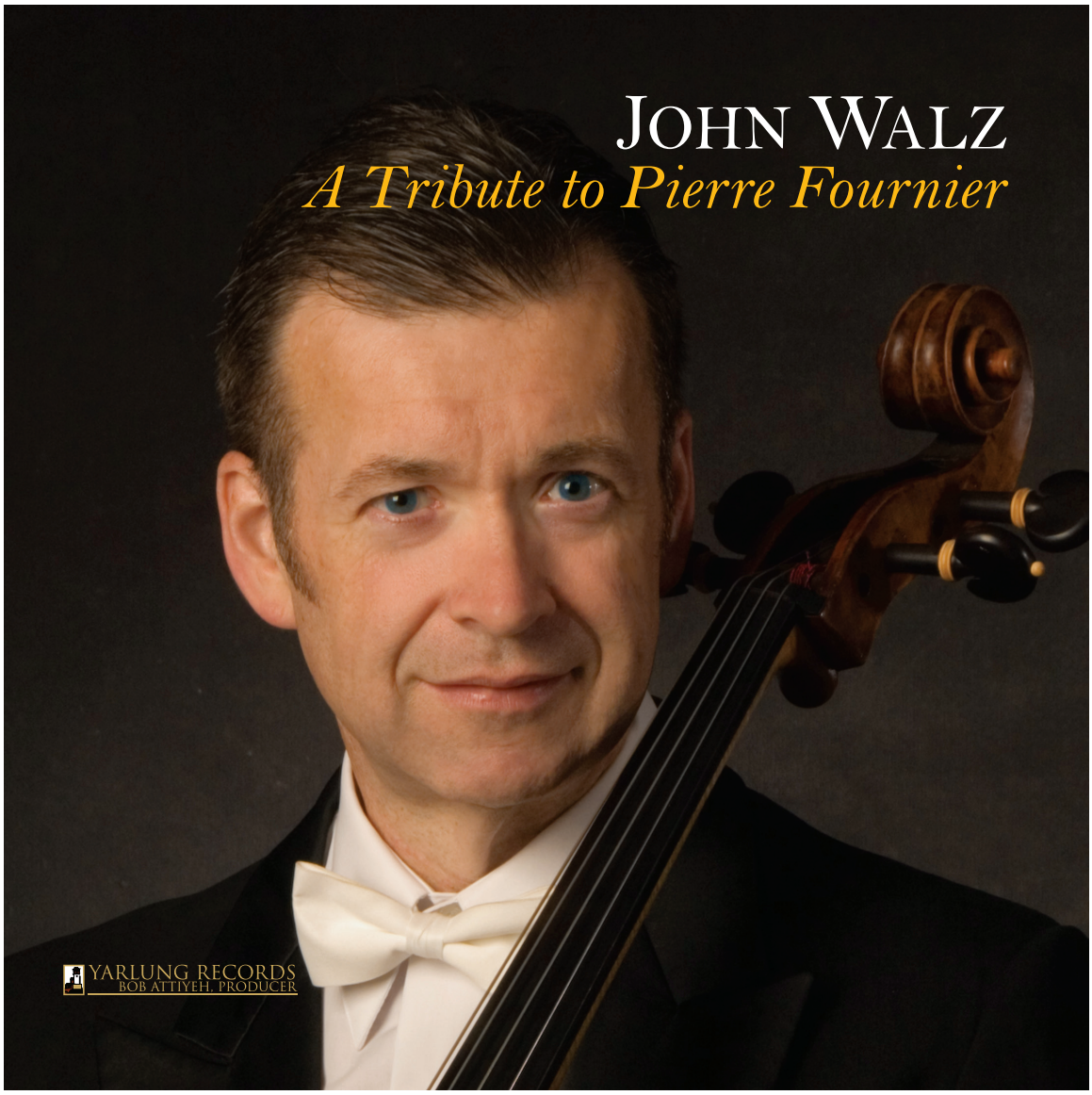
JOHN WALZ
A Tribute to Pierre Fournier
YARLUNG RECORDS
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER

John Walz: A Tribute to Pierre Fournier

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The two pieces for 'cello on this album serve an excellent introduction to the composer's music. Martinu wrote prolifically for the instrument: three sonatas, two large concerti, two additional concerti with chamber forces, several other concertante works, and a gaggle of smaller pieces, many of them infrequently performed on these shores.

In his first incarnation of Martinu's first 'cello concerto, the composer scored the work as a concerto grosso with accompaniment of seven winds, piano and strings. He began this early version in Czechoslovakia and completed it in Paris in 1930. Gaspar Cassadó, to whom Martinu dedicated the work, played the premiere in 1931. In August of 1939 Martinu rewrote the piece for full orchestra, entrusting the first performance to Pierre Fournier. The composer created the final revision used for this recording in 1955 in response to Martinu's professed "shock at the bad orchestration" of the 1939 version. The 'cello part remained intact in this last version, but the composer lightened the orchestration considerably.

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Throughout the concerto Martinu writes surpassingly idiomatic music for his 'cello soloist. Martinu was an adept violinist, and prior member of the Czech Philharmonic. He exploits not only the stratospheric range of the 'cello, but also its lower register, which is, after all, its special glory.

Martinu renders the fervent Slavic character of the *Andante Moderato* more piquant by his use of a thrillingly adventuresome harmonic language reflecting the twin influences of Stravinsky and Martinu's Parisian teacher, Albert Roussel. The wind soloists take turns partnering the 'cello in an intricate *Arioso* which, as so often with Martinu, proceeds with an asymmetrical lilt. The middle section of the movement begins with yet another *cadenza*, this even more harmonically far-ranging, its textures recalling the counterpoint of Bach's solo violin writing.

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Bleak news from home may have inspired Martinu to give the first movement of his sonata its particularly Czech flavor. In contrast to the first movement's activity and strife, the *Lento* reveals an introspective and solemn discourse between piano and 'cello. Even the finale, where one might expect the mood to lighten, begins with strife and remonstration, changing only mid-movement to the more desperately optimistic tone that eventually prevails. In later years, recalling Fournier and Firkusny's stirring account of the sonata, Martinu would write, "The view of those present was that it was the

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Antonio Vivaldi's *"Cello Concerto in E Minor"* comes to us as a gift from Paul Bazelaire (1886-1958) who orchestrated one of Vivaldi's most popular 'cello sonatas. Paul Bazelaire ranked among the best known pedagogues of his day. Indeed Pierre Fournier, to whom this album is dedicated, studied with Bazelaire. Today we remember Bazelaire chiefly for his transcriptions, including both this Vivaldi concerto as well as the Couperin suite on this album. Even those schooled in "historically-informed" performance will grant that these are tasteful and extremely skillful translations, and only the most curmudgeonly musical Luddite could listen to these accounts with ungladdened heart.

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By contrast with his violin concerti, the expressive impulse behind this music is not overtly virtuosic. The spirit of opera inspires this concerto, rather than the dawning age of the great 'cello virtuosi. Vivaldi wrote over 50 operas (though he characteristically bragged that he created twice that number), and his vocal music sensibilities manifest themselves in this delightful concerto.

The great J. S. Bach counted François Couperin (1668 - 1733) among his inner circle of correspondents, and regarded Couperin's music highly. We knew less of Couperin's music until recent years because the music he wrote for harpsichord translates less well into piano transcription than did the many works of Bach. Nor have modern orchestras included his chamber works in concert as readily as contemporary ensembles present the Brandenburg Concerti, for example. The recent early music revival has happily boosted Couperin's reputation, and modern recordings of his works abound. But before Paul Bazelaire transcribed the several movements collected as *Pièces en Concert* in the mid 1920s, few had heard Couperin's music since 1750.

Bazelaire extracted *Pièces en Concert* from several suites in a large collection published in 1724 (though likely written over a period of several years), entitled Les Goûts-réünis. The title refers to the "reunification" of French and Italian musical styles, which for a quarter-century had each clamored for the attention of the Parisian musical public. Couperin had himself composed many pieces in both French and Italian manner, but the composer intended this collection to unite the French and Italian styles into a single coherent collection. In *Pièces en Concert*, the *Prélude* and *Plainte* are in the French style, the others Italian.

Couperin did not specify the instrumentation for this music (another collection from the same period might, he wrote, be played on harpsichord, with or without violin, flute, oboe, viola da gamba, or bassoon), though it would not have been played on the 'cello. Couperin's era considered the 'cello to be a lumpen poor relative of the viola da gamba, which reigned supreme in the instrumental pantheon. Today we find the 'cello extremely presentable, I'm happy to say, and Bazelaire's transcription makes a valuable addition to the 'cello repertoire.
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For the Martinu sonata we chose an Austrian AKG C-24 stereo microphone with the original brass surround CK12 tube. We used Yarlung-Records-designed interconnects with a flat silver ribbon suspended in air for the dielectric, customized vacuum tube preamplifiers, no mixer, and recorded directly to two tracks sampled at 176,400 samples per second at 24 bit depth.

We are grateful to Jan Kotzmann for engineering the Prague recordings, and to Maestro Paul Freeman for conducting the Czech National Symphony Orchestra.

Engineers Steve Hoffman, Kevin Gray and I worked at AcousTech Mastering at RTI in Camarillo to convert these high resolution tracks to CD Audio.

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All orchestral tracks with the Czech National Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Paul Freeman

Martinu Sonata Recorded October 3rd, 2007 in
Zipper Hall at Colburn School, Los Angeles
Recording Engineer: Bob Attiyeh
Steinway Technician: Kevin Stock

Tracks with Czech National Symphony Orchestra
recorded in Prague, May 4 and 5, 2006
Recording Engineer: Jan Kotzmann

Monitoring Equipment: Acoustic Image
Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman & Kevin Gray

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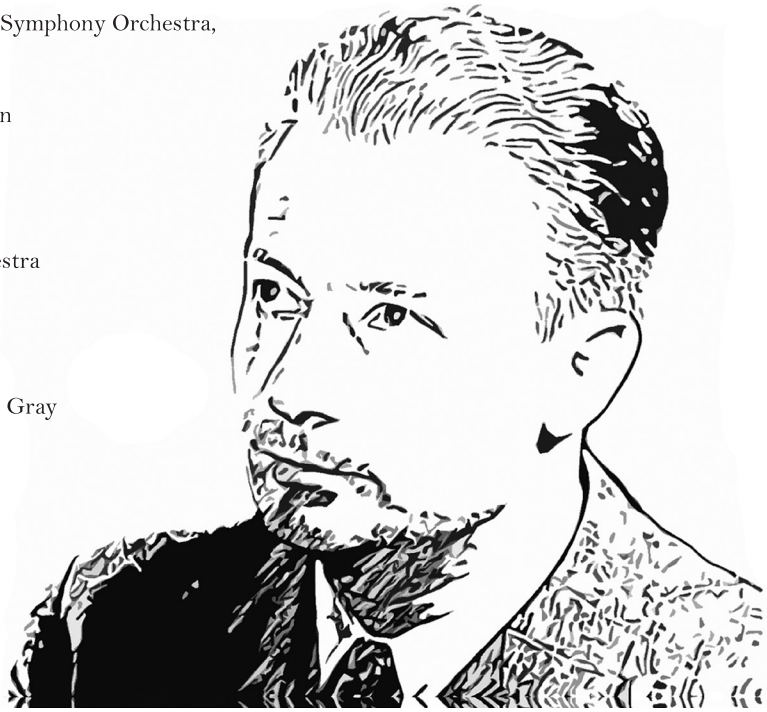

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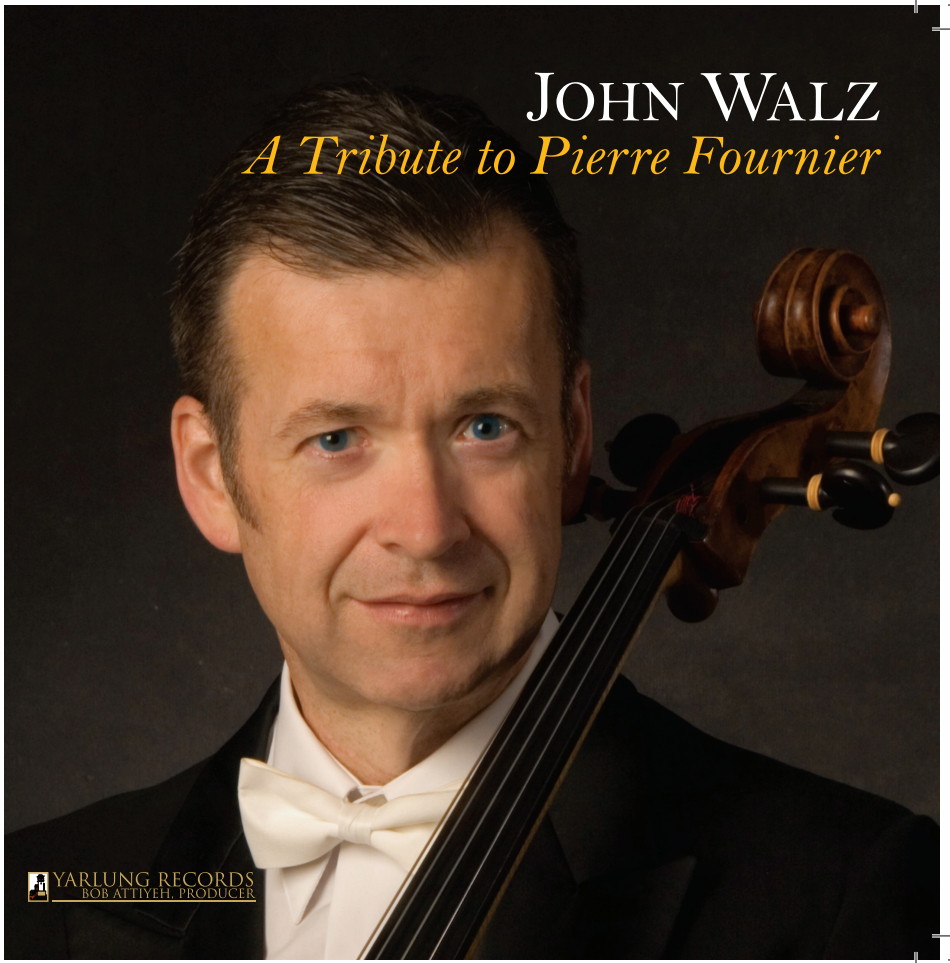

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Tracks with Czech National Symphony Orchestra
recorded in Prague, May 4 and 5, 2006
Recording Engineer: Jan Kotzmann

Monitoring Equipment: Acoustic Image
Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman & Kevin Gray

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