



TRIPLE DOUBLES
Double Concertos by Richard Danielpour, David Ludwig, Daron Aric Hagen

Jaime Laredo, violin
Sharon Robinson, cello
Vermont Symphony Orchestra
Conductors: Sarah Hicks (Danielpour, Ludwig) and Troy Peters (Hagen)

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CD Review: VSO's first CD features Laredo and Robinson in new concertos

DISC REVIEW | November 17, 2011 | By Jim Lowe (Staff Writer)

The Vermont Symphony Orchestra's first commercial CD should put our tiny state's fine professional orchestra on the map internationally.

Not only does it feature Vermont's world-travelling stars, Jaime Laredo and Sharon Robinson, it has the first recordings ever of three concertos by well-known contemporary composers.

"Triple Doubles," double concertos for violin, cello and orchestra, by Richard Danielpour, David Ludwig and Daron Aric Hagen, has just been released by Bridge. And it's **gorgeous — even exciting.**

Laredo, the VSO's music director of more than a decade dropped his baton in favor of his Strad, to perform these three beautiful and diverse concertos with his cellist wife, while the VSO is directed in these complex scores by Sarah Hicks and Troy Peters. All three were recorded after VSO Masterworks Series concerts 2008-2010, two at Rutland's Paramount Theatre, one at Burlington's Flynn Center for the Performing Arts.

All three have some sort of "program" or back story, but in the case of Wisconsin-born Hagen's (b. 1961) "Masquerade: Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra" (recorded May 5, 2008 at the Flynn) it could easily be received as a traditional abstract concerto. The violin and cello soloists are essentially accompanied by the orchestra in the grand concerto tradition.

The story is of two commedia dell'arte lovers, from the Renaissance theater form, who are represented by the solo instruments. In "Burlesque," the first of four movements, a dramatic opening combines rhythmic drive and beautiful lyricism. The musical language is complex but

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superficially tonal, and the movement ends with amazing tenderness between the soloists.

“Elegie,” representing mature love, is a complex but haunting lament using unexpected percussion and strings as well as the pining violin and cello as the lovers separately grow older and wiser. “The Last of Pedrolino” represents a reunion with gorgeous lyrical solos, particularly from Laredo’s violin. The final “Gallopade” is joyful and carefree, with lots of brass and percussion, a reprise before parting quickly.

Laredo’s brilliant lyricism combined with Robinson’s rich lyricism make their lines sing but their intimacy gives their performance truly compelling power. And the VSO, conducted by Peters, former music director of the Vermont Youth Orchestra, manages this colorful score with real flair.

The work with the most downright beautiful passages on this CD is Ludwig’s Concerto for Violin, Cello and Orchestra (recorded at the Paramount on Jan. 26, 2009). Ludwig (b. 1974), grandson of pianist Rudolf Serkin, has been composer-in-residence at Marlboro Music Festival as well as the VSO, and remains new music adviser for the VSO.

According to Ludwig, the charismatic work describes three types of love in three movements, interspersed by two interludes. “Eros,” representing erotic love, begins with relentless tympani and low brass building to near cacophony when the solo violin and cello enter fiercely with their own passionate statements.

An exotic almost “jungle” nature continues. The sensual writing is along the lines of Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring” with the instruments playing the two lovers. In the interlude that follows, “Calypso’s Dance,” violin and percussion accelerate into a fast-paced erotic dance.

“Agape,” unrequited love, opens with the lamenting cello and then the violin, each in a declaration of their hearts, complemented by the darkness of the orchestra. In the following interlude, “Iseult’s Alba,” the cello’s sad lament is interrupted by flashes of anger.

Finally, “Phila,” love of mankind, begins with driving exotic percussion, followed in-kind by the soloists. Celebratory music then represents rebirth. Particularly unusual and effective is the use of a percussive violin to punctuate the cello melody and vice versa.

In more of a concerto grosso than a concerto, Ludwig uses both soloists and the orchestra in a broad spectrum of colors and emotions. Robinson and Laredo’s lamenting lines are at times beautifully heart-wrenching, complemented by the rich colors of the VSO, ably led by Hicks.

Danielpour’s (b. 1956) hauntingly beautiful three-movement “A Child’s Reliquary” (recorded on March 22, 2010, in the Paramount), also in concerto grosso style, is a tribute to a young child’s drowning. The three movement work is an adaptation of a piano trio written for the Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio.

From the haunting entrance of the soloists in octaves, the first movement, Moderato un poco misterioso, represents innocence being lost in a multi-layered and difficult world. The music is tonal but uncomfortable, quietly and later not-so-quietly dramatic. The espressivo cello is often echoed from above by the solo violin.

Vivace e leggero is a carefree romp by violin and cello through innocent childhood. Full of summer joy, as well as dramatic fun, the again-expressive cello is danced around by the violin’s virtuoso

flourishes, with moments of beautiful tenderness interspersed.

The final Adagietto begins with haunting, sad and intimate song by the soloists followed by tragedy in the orchestra. The violin and cello interact sympathetically and gorgeously lament. **There are many a beautifully tender moment both from the composer and, sublimely, from the soloists.**

Danielpour has written specifically for the soloists' overtly lyrical playing. The orchestration is broad and colorful and Hicks leads a bold and sympathetic performance.

The VSO's first commercial is indeed a landmark of firsts and should draw international recognition to our great little orchestra. **It's great listening, too.**

Vermont Symphony Orchestra

To order a copy of "Triple Doubles" (Bridge 9354), call [802-864-5741, ext. 10](tel:802-864-5741), or go online to www.vso.org. For information, go to www.bridgerecords.com.