

AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

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HELEN CALLUS. PROKOFIEFF: *5 pieces fr Romeo and Juliet*; VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Romance*; TCHAIKOVSKY: *October*; *April*; *None But the Lonely Heart*; *Nocturne*; *Ardent Declaration*; WIENIAWSKI: *Reverie*; BRIDGE: *Valse Russe*; *Allegro Appassionato*; *Romance*; SWAIN: *Song at Evening*; TERTIS: *Coucher du Soliel*; SCHUMANN: *Adagio & Allegro*; CHOPIN: *Waltz*; *Etude*.
With Phillip Bush, p – ASV 1184 – 75 minutes

At last, violist Helen Callus has given us another recital disc. Her first had music by women composers (Nov/Dec 2002) that was well chosen and even better played. This one, while lacking a theme, is just as fine.

The program opens with a very effective arrangement by Soviet violist Vadim Borisovsky of selections from Prokofieff's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*. The scenes from the ballet – 'Introduction', 'The Young Juliet', 'Dance of the Knights', 'Balcony Scene', and 'Mercutio' – are all well chosen. A *Romance* by Ralph Vaughan Williams follows. The piece was not published in the composer's lifetime, which is surprising considering its great beauty. Next is a group of works by Tchaikovsky mostly arranged by Borisovsky again. These are just as effective as his Prokofieff arrangements. *Ardent Declaraion* and William Primrose's arrangement of 'None but the Lonely Heart' are especially effective.

Many people don't know that the super-virtuoso violinist Henryk Wieniawski was also a violist. He played viola in what must have been by far the greatest string quartet of all time with Heinrich Ernst playing first violin, Joseph Joachim second violin, and Alfredo Piatti cello. His *Reverie* is in a similar vein to the works by Tchaikovsky, though more conventional in style. The three pieces by Frank Bridge, himself a violist, are lovely works from the turn of the last century when young British composers were finally finding their own national style.

Freda Swain (1902-85), from a generation after Vaughan Williams and Bridge, was represented on Callus's first recital disc and has here her 'Song at Evening' from 1958. From the same time of day but 35 years earlier is Lionel Tertis's 'Sunset-Coucher du Soliel'. Tertis (1876-1975) was the giant of the violas, who transferred the tonal richness and density and the continuous vibrato of Fritz Kreisler to the viola. It is a modest but charming piece. Robert Schumann's Adagio and Allegro was originally written for French horn and piano, but the composer sanctioned versions for violin, viola, and cello. The Adagio is especially effective on the viola. The melancholy, ardent lyricism of the Chopin pieces fits the viola like a glove.

Callus again shows that she is one of the world's greatest violists. Her playing is so deeply felt the music's message goes straight to the heart. Her playing is alternately delicately nuanced and bold, and the new viola she plays by Gabrielle Kundert has a rich, sweet tone with apparently limitless reserves. I suspect this is why she plays with an unprecedented freedom here, and I would love to hear her play this instrument in person. Her two recital discs are among the finest made by any violist and should be in the collection of all viola lovers.

-Magil