When Music Sounds: Canadian Cello Music*.* Joan Harrison, violoncello; Elaine Keillor, piano. Hong Kong: Naxos 9.70126, 2014. 1 compact disc (69:14). (Canadian Classics) Contents: *When Music Sounds* / Jean Coulthard (3:36) – *Sonata for Cello and Piano, "Israel"* / John Weinzweig (18:10) – *Chants oubliés et danse* / Alberto Guerrero (12:11) – *Sonata for Cello and Piano* / Violet Archer (19:59) – *Sonata for Cello and Piano* / Jean Coulthard (15:22).

Joan Harrison is a gifted cellist who has held positions in such prestigious ensembles as the New York City Opera, Aradia Ensemble, and the Toronto Chamber Orchestra. Now based in Ottawa, she is the founder and artistic director of the Capital Strings Collective, an orchestra that helps support multi-generational learning. This is the second recording of which I am aware where Harrison is listed as a performer (the other is a Naxos recording where she is a member of the Toronto Chamber Orchestra). Harrison's collaborative partner on the present recording is pianist Elaine Keillor. Keillor, of course, has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as one of Canada's outstanding proponents of Canadian art music. Not only is her discography broad, she has also shown herself through her many writings to be one of this country's important music historians.

This album contains works for cello and piano by four distinguished Canadian composers. The first work is *When Music Sounds* by Jean Coulthard (1908-2000). Written in 1970, this is a slow, introspective work. Like the *Cello and Piano Sonata* discussed below, the work bears a strong affinity to the sound world of Claude Debussy, a composer Coulthard held in high esteem. This short work is a binary design, where the second part is a more melodic and rhythmically elaborated version of the first.

John Weinzweig (1913-2006) dedicated his 1949 two-movement *Cello and Piano Sonata* to the newly-founded state of Israel. Although the composer had fully embraced Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositional ideas in his writing for nearly a decade, Weinzweig employed an interesting experiment in this particular work: he combined these compositional precepts with Jewish-influenced melodies (for instance, movement one integrates a Yemenite melody with twelve-tone compositional structures). In the liner notes, Keillor points out that the slow, continuous call-and-response between the cello and piano in the first movement metaphorically suggests a cantor and congregation, respectively. The increasingly tense relationship between the two instruments leads to a crisis which then segues to a cello cadenza, a passage that Keillor likens to the *niggun*, an improvised Jewish religious song. Keillor also draws an intriguing analogy between the second movement's *Allegro* opening and the establishment of the new state of Israel. Passages of aggressive dissonance between the instruments may be conceived as the tumult that surrounded the creation of the Israeli state. In contrast, the lyrical passages express the state's attainment.

A successful composer in his native country of Chile, Alberto Guerrero (1886-1959) immigrated to Canada in 1922, where he settled in Toronto and established himself as one of the leading piano pedagogues of his day. Guerrero was also an accomplished performer. One of the musicians with whom he often collaborated was the cellist Michael Penha. The duo gave the first performance of the Guerrero's *Chants oubliés et danse* in 1916. The two-movement work is mid-period Debussy as regards its harmony and melodic gestures. The first movement, a ternary design in moderate tempo, is distinguished by slow, melodic gestures in the outer parts, which are balanced by the elongated cello

lines in the middle part, harmonically supported by the piano's rhythmically active arpeggios. The second movement *Danse* reverses this approach: following a slow introduction, the exciting outer sections are suffused with active Chilean rhythms that are distinct from the middle section's slow and elegiac nature.

Sonata for Cello and Piano by Violet Archer (1913-2000) dates from 1956 (it was revised in 1972). The work is a good exemplar of her strong neoclassical leanings—each movement displays logical and clear formal designs—as well as the harmonic and rhythmic influences of Hindemith and Bartók, respectively, two composers to whom Archer was particularly attracted (she studied with Hindemith for two years and had a couple of informal lessons with the Hungarian master). The work's four movements are arranged in Baroque *Sonata da chiesa* style—that is, slow-fast-slow-fast. The opening movement is a sonata design containing two contrasting themes; the development is more rhythmically active. Movement two is a motoric and rhythmically exhilarating scherzo, where the brief, contrasting middle part is distinguished by the elongated rhythmic values in the interaction between the two instruments. As contrast to the plaintive, expressive nature of the outer portions of the third movement—a descending tetrachord motive pervades these parts—the middle section is rhythmically more exuberant and suffused with substantial scalar writing, particularly by the piano. Movement four, marked *Allegro ma non troppo*, brings the work to a rousing conclusion through its amalgam of rondo design and fugal textures.

The final work is Coulthard's 1946 three-movement *Sonata for Cello and Piano.* The opening movement, marked "In a quietly flowing style," is a traditional sonata design. The main theme, an impulsive, three-octave, arch-like melody announced by the cello, contrasts nicely with the more restrained and chromatically designed subordinate theme. The gorgeous, slow, arch-designed middle movement, marked *Sarabande*, opens with a direct allusion to Debussy's *Clair de lune*. The initial material gradually becomes more elaborate in nature, and ultimately segues to a return of the opening section, albeit with greater florid writing for both instruments. The short final movement, marked *Allegro*, is a tripartite design where each section deftly transitions into the next through a subtle increase in rhythmic activity and dynamic intensity, leading to the rousing conclusion.

In sum, this is a superb recording, both in terms of the committed performances and repertoire. The recording quality is top notch and the balance between instrumentalists is near ideal. The program notes by Keillor are serviceable; however, given her extensive knowledge of this repertoire and comprehensive writings in other forums, one would assume that the brevity of the notes was due to a restriction placed by Naxos.

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