

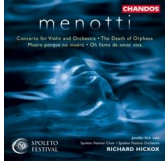
## Menotti - Violin Concerto and other works (2002)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 23 December 2009 11:19 - Last Updated Saturday, 22 February 2014 00:47

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Concerto for Violin and Orchestra 28:40 1 I *Allegro moderato* 12:53 2 II *Adagio* 8:27 3 III  
*Allegro vivace* 7:17 4 *Muero porque no muero* 11:02

Cantata for soprano, chorus and orchestra Billy Hunter trumpet

5 *Oh llama de amor viva* 9:16

Cantata for baritone, chorus and orchestra

6 *The Death of Orpheus* 12:11

Cantata for tenor, chorus and orchestra Julia Melinek soprano Jamie MacDougall tenor  
Stephen Roberts baritone Jennifer Koh violin Spoleto Festival Choir Spoleto Festival  
Orchestra Richard Hickox - conductor Recorded in: Teatro Nuovo, Spoleto, Italy 4 & 5 July  
2001

The opening movement of the Violin Concerto is one of the loveliest things Menotti has ever written. Mostly quiet, it is a serenely relaxed exploration of an unusual richness of thematic material (the lightly scored 'development section' is hardly under way when a fine new idea arrives), and although it taxes the soloist it never demands flamboyant showiness. It is very well suited, indeed, to Jennifer Koh, whose tone is beautiful but slim; she plays a fine Stradivari but never forces it. It would be unkind to say that the rest of this disc never regains that level; but the slow movement of the concerto does not, and the genial finale does not attempt to. The three short cantatas (none of them recorded before) show another aspect of Menotti's lyricism. In all three, the words (respectively by St Teresa of Avila, St John of the Cross and Menotti himself) are of paramount importance, so each is based less on long cantabile tunes than on pervasive but developing motto phrases. In the St Teresa setting that phrase startlingly generates what must surely be an inadvertent but nonetheless uncannily almost-literal quotation from Mikis Theodorakis (the third movement of his Neruda cantata *Canto General*). The second, more memorably, reaches a climax in intense string lyricism and rich choral writing: an image of the 'living flame' of divine love. The destination of *The Death of Orpheus* is a long melody which stands on the very brink of the sentimental or the saccharine but, at least for those who love tunes and are grateful to Menotti for writing so many of them, does not quite fall into that abyss; not quite. Excellent performances: Koh is outstanding, the orchestra first-class. Both Melinek and Roberts push their voices rather too hard; MacDougall does not. ---Michael Oliver,

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