

PARAY Violin Sonata. *Sérénade* for Violin and Piano. *Humoresque* for Violin and Piano. Nocturne for Cello and Piano. Cello Sonata. Romance for Violin, Cello, and Piano • Eliot Lawson (vn); Samuel Magill (vc); Diane Andersen (pn) • AZUR 155 (66:29)

Dare we hope that the magnificent compositions of Paul Paray—far better known as a fine conductor for his remarkable series of recordings with the Detroit Symphony in the 1950s for Mercury—might at last be coming into their own? Barry Brenesal, Adrian Corleonis, and I have all had occasion to wax ecstatic over the wonderfully crafted, beautiful, imaginative, and truly inspired compositions to issue from Paray’s pen, overlooked primarily because they unabashedly remained stylistically conservative, settling neatly alongside those of Gabriel Fauré, rather than following the revolutionary contours blazed by Schoenberg, Stravinsky, *et al.*

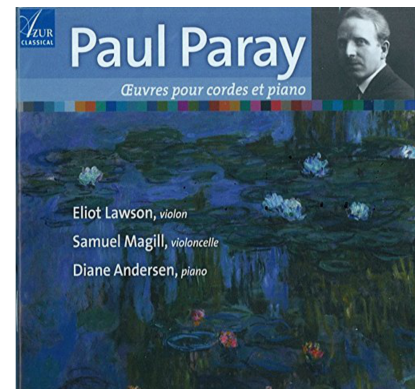
Now, after the premiere recordings of these pieces on the Grotto label (see Brenesal’s reviews in 28:2 of the two sonatas) by Detroit-area musicians violinist Marian Tanau, cellist Nadine Deleury, and pianist Eduard Perrone, we have this new alternative.

The two sonatas appeared on Grotto with Paray’s String Quartet; for reasons of space, the three short duo works were somewhat awkwardly slotted as fillers onto a disc of Paray’s two cantatas, *Yanitzka* and *Acis et Galatée*. Here the quartet is dropped to make room for the three occasional pieces; the Nocturne is played on cello instead of on violin as in the Grotto series, and there is a bonus of the Romance, which was arranged for piano trio by Fr. Perrone in 2005 but not recorded. In comparing the two sets of performances, what is remarkable is how widely some of the timings vary throughout:

Composition	Grotto CD Timings	Azur CD Timings
Violin Sonata	8:28, 6:13, 9:01	10:25, 6:30, 9:54
Cello Sonata	10:41, 6:48, 6:42	10:44, 8:54, 7:23
<i>Humoresque</i>	2:46	1:57
Nocturne	3:10	3:44
<i>Sérénade</i>	2:06	2:39
Romance	——	4:19

The result is an experience that is almost more of listening to different compositions than of different interpretations of the same compositions. With Tanau and Perrone, the emphasis in the opening *Allegro moderato* of the Violin Sonata is emphatically *Allegro*, a rushing whirlwind of energy, whereas with Lawson and Andersen it is definitely *moderato*, ruminative and reflective, while in the *Humoresque* hats are reversed, and it is Lawson and Andersen who give a blistering rendition, while Tanau and Perrone are more relaxed. Likewise, with Deleury and Perrone the central *Andante* of the Cello Sonata is lyrically songful, whereas with Magill and Andersen it is charged with deep pathos. In all cases the respective interpretations fully justify themselves, and I would be hard-pressed to choose one over the other.

That said, this new release has several definite advantages, and one disadvantage. The latter is that Grotto provides superb booklet notes that include multiple excerpts from the musical scores, something that lamentably seems to be an increasing rarity. Against that, Azur has significantly better recorded sound, and overall superior players. Not that Tanau, Deleury, or Perrone have anything to be ashamed of; they are quite good. But while Tanau is almost on a par with Lawson on the violin, when it comes to the cello the difference between Deleury and Magill is that between a skilled professional and a world-class artist (Magill’s opulent tone is positively seductive), and



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Andersen likewise outclasses Perrone at the piano. Also, the coupling of works here is arguably more logical, though I'd never want to do without Paray's masterful String Quartet. Hence, those interested in acquiring these works—which should include anyone and everyone who loves late Romantic chamber music—have the relatively fortunate option of being able to buy this CD and the Grotto release for the String Quartet and fine alternative takes on the two sonatas, while skipping over the Grotto cantatas discs for the fillers to get those here plus the brief Romance as a bonus. Enthusiastically recommended.

James A. Altena