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THE COMPLETE

PIANO MUSIC

FRANK MARTIN

JULIE ADAM
CHRISTINE LOGAN

Frank Martin 1890-1974

CD1	[55'49]	CD2	[38'23]
8 Préludes	[22'54]	Ouverture et foxtrot	
[1] I Grave – Plus animé – Grave – Andante – Grave	3'24 [1]	(à 2 pianos) Ouverture	[9'02] 4'12
[2] II Allegretto tranquillo	1'40 [2]	Foxtrot	4'50
[3] III Tranquillo ma con moto	2'30 [3]	Pavane couleur du temps	
[4] IV Allegro	1'16 [4]	(à 4 mains)	5'40
[5] V Vivace – Molto vivace – Tempo I	2'12 [5]	Au clair de la lune (à 4 mains)	2'08
[6] VI Andantino grazioso	1'47 [6]	2 Pièces faciles (à 2 pianos)	[2'25]
[7] VII Lento – Più espressivo – Con moto – Andante – Tempo I	6'08 [7]	Petite marche blanche et trio noir	1'14
[8] VIII Vivace	3'57 [8]	Les Grenouilles,	
[9] Esquise	3'52 [9]	le Rossignol et la Pluie	1'11
[10] Clair de lune	1'46 [10]	Etudes pour deux pianos	[19'10]
[11] Etude rythmique	2'10 [11]	I Ouverture	4'07
Guitare	[8'22]	II 1ère Etude – pour l'enchaînement des traits	2'24
[12] I Prélude	2'26 [12]	III 2ème Etude – pour le rythme	2'55
[13] II Air	1'29 [13]	IV 3ème Etude – pour l'expression	3'37
[14] III Plainte	2'05 [14]	V 4ème Etude – pour le jeu fugué	6'07
[15] IV Comme une gigue	2'22 [15]		
[17] Fantaisie sur des rythmes flamenco	13'21	Total Playing Time	94'12

Julie Adam piano
Christine Logan piano (CD2)

It is now more than 30 years since the death of Swiss composer Frank Martin and high time for a renaissance of his music. Perhaps, as with Bach, he needs a Mendelssohn to bring to the attention of the world a body of music that is unfailingly sincere, profound and original. His credo was integrity, responsibility and the creation of beauty, and to these ends he was uncompromisingly honest with himself and the public. In a period of history where the turmoil of war seemed to breed rationalism in all forms of art, Frank Martin represented a swing back toward spiritual values. This is not only apparent in his great choral works, such as the oratorios *Golgotha*, *Le Mystere de la Nativite* and *In Terra Pax* (this last commemorating the end of World War II); the Requiem and *Et la vie l'emporta* (his last work – a chamber cantata completed just ten days before his death), but in all his oeuvre, be it vocal, instrumental or for the stage.

The act of creation, for Martin, was a deeply spiritual one, an expression of his whole being. 'Creation – this little word arouses deep longing in us, and we know in our hearts that this is our task – however small our contribution may be. It is the only thing which is spiritually absorbing.' He wrote extensively about his work; *Un compositeur médite sur son art*, *Responsabilité du compositeur* and *Entretiens sur la musique* all bear testimony to his quest. He was fully aware that 'fashion is puissant and enticing'. In *Entretiens*, he relates a prophetic dream from

his youth: he is with his Master, an austere man, dressed in black, a man whom he loves but also fears. Together they visit a magician dressed in white, full of charisma and charm. The latter claims to have the key to heaven but does not know how to use it. Only the Master has the wherewithal to do so ... This significant dream served as a reminder throughout his long creative life not to use magic formulae or easy solutions but instead to 'be himself'. It took many years of searching, experimenting and integrating before he finally arrived at his unique style which has been described as 'invariably lyrical in feeling with textures that are marvellously limpid and luminous'.

It was J.S. Bach who had the first and lasting impact on him. Hearing the St Matthew Passion at the age of 11, Martin declared that 'it was the greatest musical experience of my life and from the beginning to the end, in some measure I lost consciousness.' His early grounding in Geneva with Joseph Lauber ensured a strong awareness of the Franco-Germanic tradition. In particular, the refined chromaticism of César Franck was a determining influence on him, pointing the way to where his own music was heading. Working in Paris in the 1920s gave him a closer appreciation of the French idiom. The conductor Ernest Ansermet, who became a close friend and enthusiastic advocate of his works, claimed that Martin's first breakthrough towards his own style came from his exposure

to Debussy – the concept of the independent melodic bass line and the movement of parallel chords, for instance. From Ravel, he learned fastidiousness, clarity and a sensitive awareness of sonority. A fascination with the elements of rhythm – ‘rhythm is an element of connection between our spirit and our body’ – led to experimentation with various metrical devices, ancient and oriental metres, unequal rhythms as in Bulgarian melodies. Not surprisingly, Bartók had an impact, although Frank Martin’s enquiry into folk music was something of a cul-de-sac, barring the marvellously ingenious *Trio on Irish Airs* (for piano, violin and cello). The preoccupation with rhythm brought him into contact with Jaques-Dalcroze and for a time he taught at the latter’s Eurhythmics Institute in Geneva. The twelve-tone system of Schönberg was to have a profound effect on Martin, helping him to free himself from ‘acquired customs and ready-made formulae’. However, he came to oppose Schönberg’s atonality, discovering for himself that the pull of tonal gravity was absolutely essential for his creative process, this without being squeamish about dissonance. *Le Vin herbé* (1938-41) is generally acknowledged to be the first of his mature compositions. This haunting oratorio (based on the Tristan and Isolde legend) for 12 solo voices, seven string instruments and piano, is a highly chromatic work, using twelve tone rows, perfect triads (he candidly favoured the minor ones), pedal points,

organum, dissonant chords over static basses. Its unique refined sonority became a hallmark of his music from this time on.

There were many extra-musical influences as well, for Martin was a man open to beauty in all its manifestations: places such as Brittany, Iceland and the Mediterranean countries; certain styles of decorative art, especially Roman and Byzantine; the sea, mountains, nature in all its forms. A rich family life, an enthusiastic and enquiring mind, sense of humour, involvement in life and friendship all had a bearing on his creative output. He was also a man adept with his hands, well able to take care of the plumbing, electrical and carpentry needs of the large cottage in Naarden, Holland where he spent the last years of his life with his wife, Maria. He was also skilful in photography, restoring paintings and old icons, cooking for special occasions, repairing the toys of his grandchildren, even painting intricate designs on Easter eggs!

Frank Martin continued right up to the end of his life to be open to new ideas and possibilities. The search for the right timbre for each work led to some unusual combinations: for instance, *Petite Symphonie concertante*, arguably his most famous work, was scored for piano, harpsichord, harp and double string orchestra whereas *Poèmes de la mort* featured three male voices and three electric guitars, the latter

occasioned by his son, Jan Frank, a bass guitar player, introducing him to pop music.

The piano played a significant role in many of his orchestral and chamber works. Frank Martin was himself a fine pianist, having given many concerts throughout his life, particularly in chamber music. In fact, he had been responsible for forming the Société de Musique de Chambre during his return to Geneva in the 1920s, playing both piano and harpsichord as well as becoming Professor of Chamber Music at the Geneva Conservatoire. In view of Martin’s affinity with the instrument, he wrote surprisingly few pieces for piano alone. There are the two Piano Concertos and the *Ballade* for piano and orchestra, it is true. In these, he could explore the potential of the instrument against the qualities of the orchestra. It seems, furthermore, that for his instrumental works he needed a point of departure, a challenge, a technical problem to be solved, a striving after a sort of virtuosity that was genuine and that sprang from music’s essence. In some cases, it was the inspiration that came of his association with a particular instrumentalist.

The most notable was his close friendship with the great Rumanian pianist, Dinu Lipatti, a friendship of kindred spirits that evolved during the 1940s. Lipatti’s unparalleled artistry and extraordinary touch proved an irresistible motivation, although the actual composition process of what became the **8 Préludes** (1948)

was fraught with difficulty as evidenced by the extensive correspondence between the two men. However, it is also true to say that the Preludes’ gestation was a necessary release from the dead end he had seemed to reach in the composing of *Golgotha*; after their completion, he was able to find the inspiration to finish his oratorio. There was a tragic sideline: Lipatti, on seeing the final score, proclaimed that he would need two years of study to do full justice to them in a public recital, this being a measure of his integrity as a musician as well as the profundity and worth of Martin’s work. He was already gravely ill and leukemia claimed him before he was able to give the first performance. Since then, the Preludes have become the most performed of Frank Martin’s piano works – his own fine recording of them still available on disc.

In *Prelude 1*, the point of departure is the use of pedal: by silently retaking melody notes without playing them again, a most arresting opening and conclusion are achieved. Furthermore, Frank Martin demonstrated in this powerful and eloquent piece that dodecaphony and tonal feeling can co-exist happily. The piece requires unusual nuances of touch, particularly in the ‘dolce cantabile’ middle section with its layering of three distinct parts. *Prelude 2* has a nimble chromatic line snaking across limpid chords, punctuated by bass interjections hinting at perfect cadences (the intervals of the fifth and fourth figure prominently throughout). Martin

advised that this piece should be consistently gracious and elegant with a very even tempo. The challenge to the performer is the integration of its different elements, particularly in the build-up to the climax. The elegiac *Prelude 3* harks back to Chopin's second prelude not only in mood but in the slow oscillation of the left hand underpinning a highly chromatic sparse 'cantabile' line of immense emotional power. The accompaniment comes to the fore at times as a subtle counterpoint. The concluding recitative is an obvious example of a tone-row. The rhythmically irregular *Prelude 4* (reminiscent of Bulgarian rhythms) juxtaposes a melody embedded in sostenuto triad chords ('toujours chantée et expressive') against deep double-bass-like pizzicati. The two are mostly independent of each other but when they come together 'these points of encounter underline the overall pulsation' (Martin). The exhilarating *Prelude 5* demonstrates Martin's virtuosic writing which nonetheless has a deep musical content. The melody that subtly emerges from the toccata-like background has an affinity with that of the third. *Prelude 6* is a strict canon at the lower fifth, which transcends the academic by virtue of its subtle inflections and an almost glassy, mysterious quality. Martin marked it 'andantino grazioso' and 'dolce leggiero'. The wide intervallic leaps used in this prelude are somewhat unusual in his melodic writing. The spiritual summit of the set is *Prelude 7*. It opens

and closes with an ethereal procession of *ppp* static chords over a chromatically descending bass pedal point of fifths, reminiscent of Debussy. A powerful declamatory section for left hand alone follows, in which two voices sing over a supportive bass. The ensuing *Andante* sees a repeat of this in addition to an expressive right hand obbligato, thus enabling the music, via an interesting canonic passage, to achieve an even grander climax than before. *Prelude 8* is a rousing, virtuosic rondo, replete with interesting pianistic effects, accentuations and rhythmic playfulness. There are some hidden conceits for the perceptive listener (and performer!): the canon motif of *Prelude 6*, for instance, becomes the accompaniment after the opening fanfare, and the notes B-A-C-H (which are a gift for a chromaticist) appear before the final reprise.

Three shorter works for piano all had their origins in a specific requirement. The deceptively simple **Clair de lune** (1952) was Frank Martin's contribution to a collection of 20th-century pieces for the young, initiated by the publisher Pierre Noël. This enchanting nocturne is by no means easy to play well. The **Etude rythmique** (1965) shares a similar sound world. It was written as a commemoration for a newly-acquired piano at the Dalcroze Institute. Martin based his composition on a rhythmic problem he had put forward to his improvisation class: the two hands play three against four (the notation on paper appears, at first sight, to be just triplets against duplets) but the musical

basis of the hand which plays the threes is governed by four and vice versa. At the end of 12 bars, the two hands return to 'first base'. This creates a certain challenge for the performer. Also during 1965, Martin was asked to write a sight-reading piece for the Munich Piano Competition; **Esquisse** was the result. Though technically less demanding, the unique timbre of the outer sections and the contrasting martial interlude require a degree of artistry.

The four short pieces under the title of **Guitare** (1933) are noteworthy for being the first of his serialist compositions. Commissioned by Andrés Segovia who never played them nor gave any explanation to the composer, the suite eventually became a milestone in the guitar literature. Wishing to have a wider exposure of the work, Martin prepared two versions for orchestra and for solo piano. Although he did not play the guitar, there are many idiomatic touches which are effectively transferred to the piano. Spanish and French elements abound in the *Prélude* whilst the *Air* with its diatonic chords and ornaments recalls an earlier era. The *Plainte's* strumming bass and passionate vocal line bring the listener closer to Spain. *Comme une gigue's* whimsical outer sections encase an intense ('très chanté') duet which might have presaged *Prelude 7* were it not for the ominous basso ostinato. As in the Preludes, there are links between the four pieces.

Later in his life Martin was greatly attracted to the rich, complex rhythms of Flamenco, his

daughter Teresa being a 'fervent devotee of the art'. In 1970 he had explored these rhythms in *Three Dances for oboe, harp and strings*. Three years later, responding to a request from his friend, the pianist Paul Badura-Skoda, for a romantic piano fantasia and wishing concurrently to write something to which Teresa might dance, he began work on the **Fantaisie sur des rythmes flamenco**. In his own words: 'One day I stumbled on a series of chords which evoked sufficiently well the dreamy spirit of the romantics and immediately took on the slow rhythm of the rumba. The special character of this beginning informs the whole of the first part of the fantasia. The rhythm gets progressively faster until it bursts into the frenzy of a flamenco rumba. At its climax it breaks off abruptly. After a prolonged silence a different dance form appears – a Soleares ... [which] denotes solitude... nostalgia, revolt and acceptance of Fate. The work ends with another dance, called the Petenera, which [like the Soleares] is based on a completely traditional, imperturbable rhythm. The Petenera is an old poem of epic character, sung to this rigid ground rhythm. The poem tells of the tragic fate of a woman (Petenera) abandoned by her lover.' Teresa did in fact devise choreography for this work and it was performed the following year at the Lucerne Festival by her and Badura-Skoda, not long before Martin's death.

The works for piano duo/duet have diverse origins. Frank Martin may well have been aware

that through this medium his music might gain greater popularity. One is reminded of the widespread 19th-century practice of disseminating great works of the chamber and symphonic literature via arrangements for the humble piano duet. **Pavane couleur du temps** (1920), originally for string quintet, also appeared in versions for string and later, chamber orchestra. The 'humble' piano duet arrangement succeeds nonetheless in conveying an atmosphere of 'serenity and poetry'. Mme Martin comments that her husband was inspired by Perrault's fairy story *Peau d'Ane* in which a young girl, being granted a wish by a fairy, asks for a dress the colour of 'weather'. It seems that at this period of time fairy tales were 'in the air' and inspired compositions such as Ravel's 'Ma Mère l'Oye' (Mother Goose). The duet **Au clair de la lune** (1955) was written specifically for the six-year-old Teresa and Mme Martin to play together. In effect, the top part consists purely of three repetitions of the nursery rhyme, whilst the accompaniment is in variation form, becoming progressively more complex and expansive. The **2 Pièces faciles** (1937) for two pianos were written for the young students at the Dalcroze Institute. Despite their apparent ingenuousness, these short pieces are witty and charming. *Petite marche* is played on white keys alone and its trio completely on black. In *Les Grenouilles, le Rossignol et la Pluie*, the crickets are depicted by 'secco' fifths and fourths in the bass, the nightingale singing a sparse little tune above and

the rain softly coming in (again, on black keys alone, with the pentatonic scale in evidence).

The dramatic spread of jazz in the 1920s influenced a number of European composers, Martin being one of them. For him jazz had an obvious aesthetic value, though one whose beauty was 'sans âme' (without soul). The **Ouverture et foxtrot** (1924) is an example of his reaction to the idiom. Around this time, he was in Paris and engaged by Mme Julie Sazonova to be in charge of music for her marionette theatre, Les petits comédiens de bois; a task that involved composing, conducting, arranging and hiring musicians for the orchestra. However, it transpired that Mme Sazonova's enterprise was too ambitious, with some embarrassing consequences. The Foxtrot was to have been part of a programme including a Scarlatti suite and a Pergolesi opera arranged by Martin. Due to the fact that the musicians could not be paid, he rearranged the music for two pianos (a young Rumanian composer/pianist was on hand to collaborate in this). The *Overture* is strident, arresting, almost 'wooden', as befits the function of the music. By contrast, the *Foxtrot* has a languorous quality spiced with a tongue-in-cheek quirkiness.

Duo pianists could well be grateful that Frank Martin decided, a year after the completion of his masterly **Etudes** for string orchestra (1956), to make a version for two pianos. At the time, he was teaching at the Köln Hochschule and it

was there that he and the pianist, von Bremen, gave the first performance. The original version was commissioned by Paul Sacher, the conductor of the Basel Chamber Orchestra, one of the great champions of 20th-century music and an enthusiastic supporter of Frank Martin. The work exemplifies the latter's dictum that the exploration of technical possibilities was only a starting point for something more meaningful. Four *Etudes* are preceded by an *Overture* whose dotted rhythms and imitative counterpoint easily remind one of Bach. The *First Etude*, 'for the connection of links', involves much interweaving of parts. 'The writing,' he says, 'is very chromatic and particularly difficult to play neatly and without jolts ... All is muted in this mysterious, fleeting little scherzo.' The *Second Etude* focuses on different kinds of 'pizzicato', which the two pianos are called upon to simulate. The rhythms are mostly syncopated and a Spanish influence can be discerned. A moment of repose is provided by the *Third Etude*, 'for expression'; here, the pianos take on the roles of divided violas and cellos. The *Fourth Etude* is the most substantial of the four, playing masterfully with aspects of fugal style. Martin writes: 'the first subject is essentially rhythmical, the second subject [which has already appeared in the *Overture*] expressive. To prevent the exposition from sounding academic I added an accompaniment which continues until the entry of the third voice, upon which it joins in free contrapuntal play. In the middle part...after a

section in close canon, there is a figured chorale. Then the fugue takes over again, mixes the two subjects and leads in a broad conclusion.' The B-A-C-H motif can be found again in the chromatic middle section. Throughout, Martin's understanding of the piano's capabilities ensures that there is no loss of colour or texture when compared to the original string version.

In the composer's own words: 'may these pieces ... bring each listener that very private joy which music can sometimes give.'

Julie Adam

Julie Adam



Julie Adam was born in Hungary where she received her early musical training. Moving to Australia, she studied with Marta Clare and later with Alexander Sverjensky at the Sydney Conservatorium. From the age of 11 she played in studio broadcasts, public recitals and concertos for the ABC, as well as chamber music performances for Musica Viva.

Scholarships for further study took her to England and Europe, amongst her teachers being Louis Kentner, Géza Anda, Paul Hamburger and Albert Ferber. Making London her base, Julie Adam performed throughout the UK and in Europe, in festivals and for music

societies and universities. In London she was frequently to be heard at the Wigmore Hall and on the South Bank and worked extensively as a chamber musician and accompanist. She broadcast regularly as a soloist for BBC Radio, including live 'Concert Hall' recitals.

Since her return to Australia, Julie Adam has continued her musical activities, broadcasting for the ABC, giving recitals and concerto performances, taking part in chamber music, teaching extensively, adjudicating and coaching young instrumentalists. She has been a guest artist with Symeron, Sydney Alpha and The Song Company. This is her second recording for ABC Classics.

Christine Logan

Dr Christine Logan is currently Head of the School of Music and Music Education at the University of New South Wales.

The recipient of many scholarships and awards including the Sydney Moss Travelling Scholarship from the University of Sydney, she graduated with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati. Her major piano teachers were Marjorie Docherty, Alexander Sverjensky, Elizabeth Kozma and Béla Siki. She has performed as a soloist and chamber musician in the US, Canada and Australia



including with members of the Cincinnati Symphony, the Australia Ensemble, Canberra Wind Soloists, Adelaide Chamber Orchestra, Sydney Wind Soloists, Sydney String Quartet. She is a contributor to the *Revised New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and has published on aspects of Australian music and the piano music of Gabriel Fauré.

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