

pears in the 1936 piano work of that name and the song “Easter,” written in March 1937, only a month before Martinů’s first meeting with Kaprálová. This *Písnička* resolution, once known, would also fit at other points in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, suggesting the movement’s harmonic structure is designed around it. The 3<sup>rd</sup> movement is an agitated scherzo in which obsessive string rhythms are sometimes almost silenced across a wide dynamic range; the final movement begins with an ominous upward slide of thirds, introducing a return of the *Písnička*-seeking mood of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement. Martinů again evokes Kaprálová through the harmonies of her most characteristic music, before combining them with the first neo-baroque, and characteristic of Martinů, themes we have heard, as if the composer is close to finding himself again – before the angry and anxious rhythms return, before a final, satisfying resolution.

This recording by the Škampa Quartet, funded in part by the Kapralova Society, is the first recording of a complete score of Kaprálová’s quartet, and the first to present the Kaprál, Kaprálová and Martinů quartets together; a strong alternative reading of the latter two works was previously made by the Kapralova Quartet (2006) and Kaprálová’s quartet was first recorded by the Janáček Quartet in 1998.

George Henderson



**Frauenstimmen** (Women’s Voices). Kaprálová: Ritornel for violoncello and piano; N. Boulanger: *Trois pièces pour violoncelle et piano*; L. Boulanger: *Trois morceaux pour piano*; Bosmans: So-

nata for cello and piano; Mendelssohn Hensel: *Das Jahr* for piano; and Haensler: *Ni dónde ni cómo* for cello and piano. Anna Fortova, violoncello, Kathrin Schmidlin, piano. Claves Records CD 50-3029 (2020).

This Claves recording by the female Swiss–Czech duo Schmidlin–Fortova features works by both historical and contemporary women composers, some well known, others less so. Mendelssohn Hensel and the Boulanger sisters have been household names for more than four decades, while Dutch composer Bosmans and Czech composer Kaprálová have become much better known in the last two. The only name that is not readily recognizable is that of Swiss contemporary composer Stephanie Haensler.

The album opens with Ritornel for violoncello and piano, op. 25, from 1940, by Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915–1940). This is a powerful work of concentrated expression and almost unimaginable energy, considering that Kaprálová composed the piece when she was already gravely ill. She died three weeks after finishing this piece, in a Montpellier hospital in southern France, during the first months of the Second World War. She was only twenty-five.

The Ritornel is followed by Nadia Boulanger’s (1887–1979) *Trois pièces* for violoncello and piano and Lili Boulanger’s (1893–1918) *Trois morceaux* for piano. Both sets of pieces were composed at about the same time (1915 and 1914). Lili’s lyrical *Trois morceaux* are full of wonderful musical ideas; she was the more talented of the two sisters, as humbly acknowledged by the six-year older Nadia herself. Nadia made her own footprint in the history of music, however, as one of the most influential (and uncompromising) teachers of composition; almost all major American composers of the twentieth century studied with her. Like Kaprálová, Lili Boulanger died at 25, an already accomplished composer whose works revealed a mature musical style well before her untimely death.

Henriëtte Bosmans’s (1895–1952) four-movement sonata for violoncello and piano (1919) is the most substantial work on the disc. Bosmans was the daughter of a pianist mother and a cellist father who died only months following Henriëtte’s birth; his absence in her youth may have been the reason why violoncello played such an important role in Bosmans’s earlier creative period. Her Sonata in A Minor, still rooted in a romantic idiom, is both a tender and impassioned work, and its emotional appeal is enhanced by the duo’s sensitive performance.

Bosmans’s Sonata is followed by Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel’s (1805–1847) *Das Jahr*, twelve „charakterstücke“ for piano, from 1841, conceived as a sort of musical diary capturing various moods of the year’s twelve months. One can only regret that the performers decided to record only four of the twelve programmatic pieces (May, July, September, and November), for *Das Jahr* stands out as the only cycle among Hensel’s many fine piano works.

Stephanie Haensler (1986), the only contemporary composer represented on the disc, studied composition with Isabel Mundry in Zürich. Her *Ni dónde, ni cómo* for violoncello and piano, from 2020, is based on a text of a Chilean women’s artists’ collective, advocating for the end of violence against women. It was commissioned by the duo to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of women’s suffrage in Switzerland in 2021.

All works on the disc receive committed readings from the Fortova–Schmidlin duo. Their finely attuned interplay is especially notable in Kaprálová’s Ritornel. The liner notes are by Walter Labhart who has been interested in Kaprálová’s music since early 1990s and is still following its public reception. With its handsome slim cover and generous color photographs, the CD is a great addition to one’s collection. Claves Records should be congratulated on a project well done!

Karla Hartl