

Von: Howard Wall <howardwall@earthlink.net>
Betreff: Amazon.com: Customer Reviews: ALFANO: Violin Sonata / Piano Quintet / Nenia E Scherzino
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[Violin Sonata / Piano Quintet / Nenia E Scherzino](#) by Alfano (Audio CD - 2011)

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★★★★★ **Passion personified - Alfano redux**, October 9, 2011

By [Ralph Lockwood "Professor of Music Emeritus -..."](#) (Phoenix, AZ, USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

REAL NAME

This review is from: Violin Sonata / Piano Quintet / Nenia E Scherzino (Audio CD)

Naxos' recent release of Franco Alfano's hugely daunting Violin Sonata in D, and the magnificent Piano Quintet in Ab, demonstrates a passionate belief in this composer's music on the part of these superb musicians, whose love of this woefully underperformed composer's musical ethos sizzles off the CD like molten lava.

We live in a throwaway culture of instant gratification and short sound bites; even the teaching of cursive writing is under fire. The art of conversation seems a dying ember in the onrush of modern technology's hurricane. Yet, for me, the true pleasure and scope of this music came from repeated, intense and focused hearings ... conversations, albeit one-sided, between the performers and me, as auditor.

The extraordinarily incandescent violinist, Elmira Darvarova, enlivens every note (and there are lots of them!) of Alfano's Sonata in D, imbuing each phrase with her special intensity and subtlety; by turns heroic, then pensive; whimsical, then emphatic. It is a mammoth work - each movement could stand alone as a mini-sonata in itself. Alfano's music here brings to mind the quote of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: "All poetry is the discovery of unity in variety." Many moods are evoked in these three movements, and they are projected seamlessly by Ms. Darvarova and Scott Dunn, not a "collaborator," per se, but a co-interpreter, whose elegant, lyrically sung, and yes, impassioned piano artistry underpins all of the music in this delightfully exuberant Romantic excursion. Alfano provides the unifying blueprint's variety; Darvarova and Dunn their own tonal variety and structural unity, bringing the Sonata, freshly and glowingly, to vibrant life. Alfano must be in "seventh heaven," hearing such a hearty, sympatico realization of his work, from his celestial aerie.

There will be some naysayers and nitpickers, who will label Alfano's music with the "derivative" epithet. One could fine tooth comb over the music, and accuse: "Ah, there's some Debussy there; clearly a snatch of Respighi there; hmmm, I catch a whiff of Wagner's Liebestod in that passage!" They are missing the point and pleasure of the uniquely special turns of phrase and lyricism of this sadly overlooked master. But those of us who welcome and embrace the red-blooded Romantic Revival, applaud this music's rediscovery with that Dickensian catchphrase: "recalled to life."

Joined by violinist Mary Ann Mumm, violist Craig Mumm, and violoncellist Samuel Magill, the Sonata partners broadened their scope with a huge chunk of satisfying chamber music, presenting a thoroughly convincing, "ripe as a pumpkin," reading of the glorious Piano Quintet in Ab. String quartets take note: this is the pluperfect companion work to the great Piano Quintet in f minor of Johannes Brahms - and in the relative major, even. Score a coup on your next concert with a featured pianist, and program the Alfano with the Brahms.

The player's enthusiasm for this work is palpable, drawing in the listener to the Chiaroscuro the composer builds into the structure. Even a bit of "Chinoiserie" in the charming second movement. This is full-bodied Chianti for the Romantic soul. Buon appetito!

Lovingly realized exquisite shorter gems round out the CD - Nenia and Scherzino, bringing to mind some of those splendid works of Fritz Kreisler - simply profound, and profoundly simple; their beauties superbly captured by Darvarova and Dunn.

Naxos again forges new and renewed territory with these fascinating and ingratiating World Première offerings.

Another Dickensian reference sums up my appreciation of this advocacy of Alfano's oeuvre: "please, Sir, I want some more" [Alfano]!

Ralph Lockwood
Professor of Music Emeritus
The School of Music
Arizona State University

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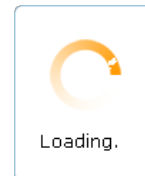
★★★★★ **One of the great 20th century violin sonatas!**, September 25, 2011

By [jaura](#) (New Jersey, USA) - [See all my reviews](#)

This review is from: Violin Sonata / Piano Quintet / Nenia E Scherzino (Audio CD)

At long last the Alfano Violin Sonata and Piano Quintet have now been recorded and what a revelation the Sonata is! This is to my mind one of the very finest of 20th century violin sonatas and deserves to be heard alongside those by Bartok, Ravel and Prokofiev. And it is really on another level beyond that of Respighi in its inspiration and depth of feeling. Elmira Darvarova and Scott Dunn have produced a world class performance

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and Darvarova's complete mastery of her instrument is breathtaking. Everything is perfect, from the soaring melodic line to the command of both her bow and left hand. Dunn's playing is grand and sumptuous. Together they take one to another plane of existence! I cannot recommend this CD highly enough. The engineering is first rate as is the recording space.

The Quintet of 1945 is a large, ambitious work which makes great demands on the players. It is quite orchestral in texture and instrumental color. The central movement is a shimmering scherzo which reminds me of Cyrano de Bergerac. Bravi to all concerned and to Naxos for realizing the greatness of this unjustly neglected master!

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