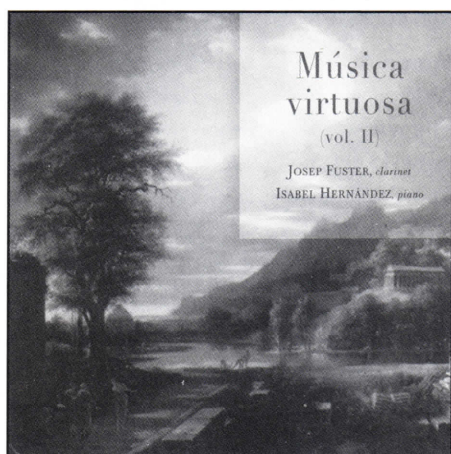


concludes both the first and last movements with repetitive, almost nagging, descending motives.

Overall, this album is a great success. Not only do the performers introduce listeners to approachable Czech repertoire, but they also present thoughtful interpretations that ensure an enjoyable listening experience.

by *Stephanie Zelnick*

Música virtuosa (vol. II). Josep Fuster, clarinet; Isabel Hernández, piano. Johann W. Kalliwoda: *Introduction and Variations*; Louis Cahuzac: *Cantilène*; Schumann: *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 73; Saint-Saëns: *Sonata*, Op. 167; Marcel Olm: *Paisatge*, Op. 91; Joseph Horowitz: *Sonatina*; Niels W. Gade: *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 43. COLUMNA MÚSICA ICM0235. Total time 73:47. www.columnamusic.com



Valencian-born clarinetist Josep Fuster, professor at the *Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya* and a member of the *Orquestra Simfònica de Barcelona*, is hardly a newcomer to the recording world. His numerous and impeccable CDs include the clarinet quintets of Weber, Mozart, Krommer, Bärmann, Spohr and Reicha with the Glinka Quartet. Fuster's prolific canon also includes the compositions of Pico and Beneguerel among others while **Música virtuosa (vol. I)** features works by Bassi, Kalliwoda, Meister, Weiner, Carnicer, Giampieri, Meseguer and Lovreglio. As his recordings of Weber and Rossini with Isabel Hernández also earned him critical acclaim, it is no surprise that he chose to continue this delightful collaboration in this most recent endeavor.

The result of this effort is a lovely and effervescent collection of works for clarinet and piano that are a welcome addition

to any fan's collection. The inspiration for the works comes from the collaborator's stated desire to further elaborate on the idea of what defines a virtuoso. The album's liner notes state, "The Catalan word 'virtuós' has two different meanings, which can be rendered in English by both 'virtuoso' and 'virtuous.' Since we are dealing with music, the most obvious meaning, according to the Dictionary of the Institute of Catalan Studies refers to a performer's extraordinary technical skill when playing an instrument...But a 'virtuous person' is also someone who acts in a virtuous manner and, in terms of music, there are few greater virtues than the ability to listen and enter into dialogue." The idea of listening and effectively collaborating is evident on this recording, with wonderful sensitive playing from both Hernández and Fuster.

The pair have chosen repertoire for this project which reflects their desire for musical dialogue and their positions as effective chamber musicians. Stylistic flair and gusto define this album, and all of the pieces featured are ideal for the performers' seemingly effortless sense of rubato and tempi. Both have impeccable timing, and their collaboration highlights the lovely tension/release relationships in each of these pieces.

The album features two *Fantasy Pieces* which, according to the liner notes have "a title with clear romantic reminiscences used by several composers, following the example of a collection of different stories and texts by E. T. A. Hoffman, to deploy their sensitivity without the restrictions of form presented by the sonata." The performers are in top form on not just the imaginative aspects of Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces*, but also those of the composer's Danish contemporary Niels Gade.

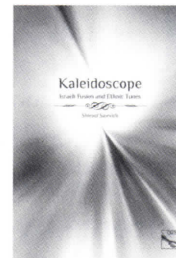
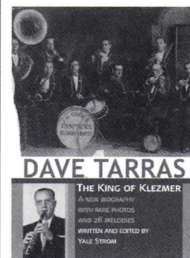
Saint-Saëns' delightful *Sonata* also lends itself well to these elements of imagination and fantasy as does Cahuzac's *Cantilène*. Olm's melancholy *Paisatge* is especially well performed by the duo as is the often neglected *Introduction and Variations* by Czech composer Kalliwoda. It is always a pleasure to hear the expressive *Sonatina* by Joseph Horowitz played in an imaginative and sensitive manner. Fuster lends the slow movement an especially emotional, yet stylistically appropriate interpretation.

Música virtuosa (vol. II) contains lovely interpretations of a well-compiled collection of works for clarinet and piano. Josep Fuster and Isabel Hernández are both in excellent form on this delightfully-paced album.

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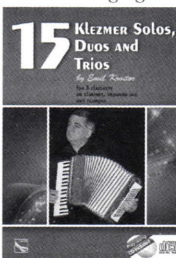
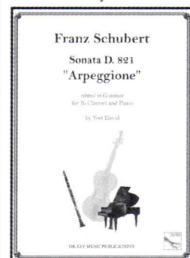
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