

the undulating passages of the opening theme, and violinists Veronika Jarkšiková and Marie Fuxová delivered an emotional, haunting reading of the soaring melody in the Lento movement.

The following night saw the arrival of the **Takács Quartet** at Zankel Hall (26 April). Although only two of the original Hungarian members remain in the group, the Takács has, for the most part, an eastern European sound that, at its best, is warm and expressive. The trade-off is in ensemble and intonation, which both suffered in this concert.

**GIL SHAHAM (VIOLIN)
AKIRA EGUCHI (PIANO)**

Rose Theatre, New York 2 April 2008

Gil Shoham's 'Countess Polignac' Stradivari nicely filled a space that's usually used for jazz concerts but has been pressed into service for Lincoln Center's Great Performers recitals owing to the closure this season of Alice Tully Hall, which is being rebuilt. His sound had an engaging suavity as he began the Walton Violin Sonata, one of two post-war works that he played here within a month – the other was William Schuman's Violin Concerto in March. He proved a very sympathetic interpreter of both works. The Walton is the more substantial of the two, and he essayed its movements with an exceptional sensitivity to the *chiaroscuro* and varied tints they possess. It had a striking maturity that was abetted by the equally important contribution of Akira Eguchi.

In Bach's Solo Sonata in A minor BWV1003 the line was always intelligently articulated, but Shoham's expression and command of colour were not always on the same high level. Joaquín Rodrigo's *Sonata pimpante* (1966) offers some interesting inventive touches, but not enough to sustain interest throughout its three movements, despite the player's advocacy. The three Sarasate works that ended the programme, *Zapateado*, *Romance andaluz* and *Zigenweisen*, betrayed some continuing intonation problems, particularly in downward motion,

Engaging suavity from Gil Shoham



that affected Shoham's playing of rapid passages. Joachim's transcription of Brahms's Hungarian Dance no.4 made an effective encore. **DENNIS ROONEY**

**HELENA BAILLIE (VIOLIN)
JULIAN RIEM (PIANO)**

Bargemusic, New York 6 April 2008

London-born Helena Baillie, who graduated last year from the Curtis Institute, studied both the violin and the viola, but she chose only the former for her recital, playing on the 'Red Diamond' Stradivari. The Charler



Helena Baillie: brilliance and poignance

arrangement of Vitali's Chaconne opened the programme, and her fiddle soared nicely above Julian Riem's sensitively voiced keyboard accompaniment. Full partnership for him came with Mozart's Sonata in G major K379. It was a breezy afternoon and the floating concert hall was subject to some occasional rocking, which the performers noticed without being upset by it. The Romantic intensity and occasional turbidity of Schumann's Sonata in A minor op.105 seemed aptly accompanied by the motion of the venue, and the piece was sympathetically interpreted.

The last of the sonatas on the programme, Debussy's, was heard after the interval, preceded by Arvo Pärt's *Frates* and Prokofiev's *Five Melodies* op.35bis. A strongly Gallic character united the three works, even in the Pärt's resemblance to certain moods

in Messiaen. The crystalline sonorities of *Frates* seemed extremely well suited that afternoon to the undulating view of lower Manhattan that accompanied them. Baillie's combination of brilliance and poignance as well as a telling lower register made her an effective exponent of all of them.

A high point came in the third movement of Brahms's String Quartet no.3, in which Geraldine Walther brought out the plaintive viola line with surging intensity before the ensemble launched into the final theme and variations movement. After the interval, Jean-Yves Thibaudet joined the ensemble for a soulful reading of the Franck Piano Quintet in F minor that seemed to dispel any technical shortcomings. ■

DENNIS ROONEY

ERIC GROSSMAN (VIOLIN)

GLEB IVANOV (PIANO)

RUSSELL PETERSON (SAXOPHONE)

Christ and St Stephen's Church, New York 23 April 2008

Jazz-influenced works were the focus of this recital, which began with Ravel's Violin Sonata with its blues-tinged second movement. Eric Grossman possesses a strikingly beautiful sound and Gleb Ivanov, playing a mellifluous Yamaha, was a tonally sensitive partner even if the syncopations in his part sometimes needed more animation. Robert Russell Bennett's *Hexapoda (Five Studies in Jitterbug)* is a souvenir of the jitterbug craze of the early 1940s. The fifth of the miniatures ('Jim Jives') is a cryptic reference to Jascha Heifetz, who wrote popular songs under the pseudonym Jim Hoyle. Grossman and Ivanov played them with affection and humour.

Shostakovich's First Jazz Suite of 1934 is a series of three dance movements far more evocative of cabaret and *the dansant* than jazz, although it is doubtful if the composer had heard much, if any, authentic jazz. As the instrumentation is elastic, it was effectively essayed by violin, piano and alto saxophone, the latter played by Russell Peterson, whose classic French timbre blended superbly with his colleagues both here and in *Sweet Cicimir* by Jorge López Marín (b.1949), a Soviet-trained Cuban composer. This piece's four short movements, the last of which calls for some improvisation, are a nostalgic backward glance at the Afro-Cuban jazz idiom. **DENNIS ROONEY** ►►