

irrelevant modern pianoforte technique. Mr. Tan, however, has gotten the joy of the fortepiano into his blood. He delights in the very different fortepiano low and high registers, and its uncannily precise ability to shape a tone, because he has seen how Beethoven's concepts require these. The music, his technique, and the instrument's powers are highly integrated.

The three earlier sonatas of Op. 10 are played on a modern fortepiano replica. The fourth, Op. 79 in G, is a special treat, played on an antique 1815 Nannette Streicher from Beethoven's Vienna, whose richer tone is evident in comparison. The entire CD is far better miked than most other fortepiano efforts I have heard.

### Singing Schumann

Olaf Bär, Germany's popular baritone, has a glorious voice, but a badly romanticized approach to Schumann's Liederkreis Op. 24 on his recent EMI CD. Pianist Geoffrey Parsons, often very good, here responds even more romantically and the result is sentimental schmaltz. This is a shame, as Op. 24, the first songs Schumann wrote in 1840, contains some of Schumann's finest responses to some of Heinrich Heine's most ironic poetry. In this CD, almost no irony is to be heard.

Schumann/Heine fans would do much better with baritone Thomas Allen's CD of Op. 24 and "Dichterliebe" with the very poetic Roger Vignoles at the keyboard, on Virgin Classics, VC 7 90787-2 (1989). Mr. Allen is the best Mozart baritone alive: Years of singing Mozart operas have taught him to let his voice do the composer's work and not gild the lily with overly pronounced theatrics. The result, with Vignoles's impressive support, is the long line missing from most recordings of the Heine cycles.

Mr. Bär does better in some of Schumann's less often recorded "Twelve Poems of Justus Kerner," Op. 35, some of the last songs Schumann wrote in that extraordinarily productive year, 1840. These are important songs which deserve more notice, and a number of recordings of them have just been released.

### Children's voices

As a result of the Vienna Boys' Choir wonderful 1992 U.S. national tour, *EIR* acquired their European recording of Mozart's "Coronation Mass" K. 317 and "Sparrow Mass" K. 220 on Philips 411 139-2 (1983). The disc is only now being made available in the United States.

The earlier "Missa brevis" K. 220 (1777) is the better of the performances. Mozart clearly wrote it for boy trebles, in adherence to the famous, annoying demand by his employer, the pompous Archbishop Colloredo of Salzburg, that he "keep it short." While the tag "Sparrow Mass" is said to have been given after Mozart's death to a humorous violin figure, the Vienna and Salzburg boy singers have always been taught to "sing forward, like a bird." Such a brief and happy work is just the sort best sung by children, the elevation of whose

voices create such a joyful sense of freedom that even chained to the "letter" of the archbishop's law, Mozart was "free as a bird" to have the last laugh.

The "Coronation Mass" is not as good. Conductor Uwe Harrer rushes the counterpoint, so that little of it is heard. Moreover, this mass is better sung by adults, even though it was written in Salzburg where only boy trebles were used. By 1779, Mozart was writing more complex ideas for which he had in mind the revolutionary use of adult women's voices, which he required in later Vienna works such as the "Great Mass" in C Minor and the "Requiem." Mozart broke the old rule forbidding women to sing in church, because children simply don't have the maturity to grasp certain extended musical ideas he was inventing.

## Tantalizing sample: Bournonville in D.C.

by Nora Hamerman

The Royal Ballet of Denmark came to the Washington Opera House for a week of performances in June featuring works by the Danish-born, French-educated August Bournonville (1805-79), the greatest choreographer of the last century. He founded a school of ballet which has struggled to uphold classical esthetics in dance, against the juggernaut of what some call the "Anglo-Russian School" of flashy (not to mention fleshy) athleticism.

Our encounter with the U.S. tour of the Royal Ballet confirmed that Bournonville's heirs are valiantly maintaining the dialogue principle in their own, demanding artistic medium.

Ballet is the one art form which can claim to be both temporal (like music and poetry) and spatial (like sculpture and architecture). It suffers from some drawbacks in comparison to these other media. Its primary vehicle of expression is the human body; and unlike the voice, which is not only invisible, but is the very organ that renders us uniquely human through speech and song, the body is linked with the mechanics of living and, well, sex. So classical dancing has to fight to turn that into an irony, to prove that ideas which are immaterial are expressed through the very material body.

A second handicap is that ballet as we now know it matured in the 1830s—the era when the classic gave way to romanticism as the dominant esthetic. Of course there were still classical artists—like the composers Schumann and Brahms—throughout the 19th century, but an art form born in that era has less chance to define a truly noble standard for itself. For example, most of the music to which the great "classic" ballets are danced ranges from the tolerably light-



*Nikolaj Hübbe and Heidi Ryom dancing in March 1992 in Denmark. Inset: A scene from the "Raphael Bible" shows the Renaissance principle of three-dimensional motion in relief, which Bournonville adapted to the classical ballet.*

weight, to the intolerably sappy.

Bournonville's ingenious approach centers on *drama*, with dancing as a secondary feature. He draws the audience emotionally onto the stage through open-ended patterns of dancing and a way of moving the body which is always elastic, never brittle. Much in contrast to the often autistic style of Russian dance, men and women dance the same steps, and there is a place in the Danish ballets for all ages, from 8-year-old children, to 70-year-olds playing character parts.

We admired the Danish Royal Ballet's young soloists when they danced the *pas de six* from "Napoli" and other ballet excerpts at Wolf Trap near Washington, two summers ago, to recorded music. What is a rare treat, is to see the entire company, accompanied by a live orchestra, with full staging, here in the United States.

### **Mime is key**

The performances at Washington Opera House in the Kennedy Center over the weekend of June 19-21 featured two works: the two-act ballet "La Sylphide," Bournonville's first major work (1836), and Act III of "Napoli," his masterpiece, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

In the Saturday night performance, two of the most outstanding dancers of the company had leading roles in "La Sylphide." The drama is based on a fairy-tale about a Scotsman, James, who is betrothed to a village girl, but who chases a radiant sprite into the forest, running away from his own wedding feast. In the second act, James (danced by Nikolaj Hübbe in the cast we saw) is crushed after the Sylph dies when he embraces her, and the witches who control the forest destroy him.

The role of the main witch, a mime role with little dancing as such, was performed by Sorella Engeland, one of the great

character dancers in the company, who celebrates her 25th anniversary on the stage this year. Engeland's ability to communicate decrepitude, malevolence, and eerie grace is gripping beyond words and would have made the whole evening worthwhile by itself. In addition, the Sylph was danced by Heidi Ryom, one of the older stars of the Royal Theatre, who continually strives to surpass herself. She gave the impression of being totally ethereal and immaterial; one critic has called her recent performances "an outpouring of spiritual beauty."

"La Sylphide" is Bournonville's first major ballet and also his last, since he worked on it throughout his life. The current production of this short ballet needs much more thought. In the first act, the speech-like mime, on which Bournonville heavily depends, seemed rushed. At the end, the device of the dead Sylph being wafted away into the sky on invisible strings evoked nothing so much as the famous paintings of the "Voyage of the Soul" by the American romantic landscapist Thomas Cole, at Washington's National Gallery—which date from exactly the same era as Bournonville's ballet, the 1830s.

We had heard so much about the new production of "Napoli," especially the second act, that it would have been a thrill to see that *whole* ballet instead of only the third act, the Flower Festival, especially since the incomparable male star of the Royal Ballet, the American-born Lloyd Riggins, was dancing the lead role of the fisherman Gennaro. It is not clear why "Napoli" was not given in full, instead of the underdeveloped "La Sylphide."

But it is hard to quarrel with a theatrical performance so buoyant and yet subtle, that almost everyone in the audience walks out smiling to himself. A typical Bournonville action involves the dancer running to the front of the stage and stretching out her or his arms in a circle as if to embrace the audience. It is impossible not to respond to such warmth.