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van der Pals, Leopold  
Works for Cello & Piano

Interpret: Tobias van der Pals (Cello), Cathrine Penderup (Piano)

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Die CD ermöglicht einen Blick auf einen Teilaспект im Schaffen eines leider vergessenen europäischen Tondichters. Leopold van der Pals wurde als Sohn eines niederländischen Industriellen und einer dänisch-stämmigen Mutter 1884 in St. Petersburg geboren. Ein Jurastudium brach er nach kurzer Zeit ab und entschied sich für die Fächer Komposition, Cello und Klavier. Ab 1903 wurde er in Lausanne weiter ausgebildet, ab 1907 in Berlin, wo er eine Zeitlang durch Reinhold Glière unterwiesen wurde. Die Berliner Philharmoniker brachten 1910 seine erste Sinfonie zur Uraufführung, und in Berlin lernte er Rudolf Steiner kennen und schätzen, der für ihn zu einer einflussreichen Bezugsperson wurde. Nach Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs übersiedelte er mit seiner Familie 1915 in die Schweiz, wo er mitwirkte beim Aufbau des Goetheanums in Dornach, das zum Zentrum der von Steiner begründeten Anthroposophie wurde. Von 1934 bis zu seinem Tod 1966 lebte er direkt in Dornach, komponierte und wirkte im Archiv des Goetheanums. Diese biografischen Angaben basieren auf Texten des liebevoll und intelligent verfassten Beihefts zur CD, das der Cellist Tobias van der Pals seinem Vorfahren zueignete.

Die eingespielten Kompositionen stammen durchweg aus den Berliner Jahren sowie aus den 1920er Jahren in der Schweiz; die erst 1960 entstandenen Zwei Stücke für Cello & Klavier op. 240 stehen für das Spätwerk. Zur Besetzung Cello/Klavier treten zwei Opera für Klavier solo hinzu, die Stimmungen op. 15, vier impressionistisch eingestimmte Sätze mit programmativen Titeln, sowie der großartige, langsame Espressivo-Satz In memoriam op. 16 von fast sechsminütiger Dauer, der sich auf ein reales Ereignis, den frühen Tod der Mutter, bezieht. Ein ähnliches Schaffensmotiv liegt der Elegie für Cello & Klavier op. 27 zugrunde, die 1914 in Berlin unter dem Eindruck des Ersten Weltkriegs entstand.

Zentrales, wichtigstes und zugleich einziges größeres Werk ist die 1922 entstandene dreisätzige, fast halbstündige Sonate für Cello & Klavier op. 48, die unterstreicht, was auch seine weiteren Stücke auf dieser CD auszeichnet: Leopold van der Pals geht von der Spätromantik aus; er bricht nicht mit der Tonalität, bereichert sie aber. Er erweitert sie z.B. durch impressionistische Elemente, wobei er Klarheit auch bei relativ sinfonischem Klangbild im Klaviersatz bewahrt. Besonders im langsamen Satz schafft er durch hartnäckige Wiederholungen eines einzelnen Tons, eines Akkordes bzw. durch vieltönige Zusammenklänge in der tiefsten Lage des Klaviers eine Atmosphäre, die etwas vom langsamen Satz aus Bartóks Klaviersonate (1926) vorausahnen lässt. **Selbst unter Ausnutzung solcher Schlagzeugwirkungen bleibt van der Pals der große, ausdrucksvolle Melodiker, mit einem für ihn charakteristischen, fast immer leicht resignierten Tonfall. Diese Sonate kennen zu lernen, ist ein wirklicher Gewinn. Es ist an der Zeit, dass Werke des Komponisten endlich von einem Verlag herausgegeben und für die Musikwelt erschlossen werden.**

**Die beiden Interpreten Tobias van der Pals und Cathrine Penderup sind hervorragende Vertreter ihres Fachs, die der Musik in jeder Hinsicht gerecht werden. Es wäre eine echte Bereicherung, die Künstler in Konzerten und in weiteren Einspielungen erleben zu können.**

## Peter Roggenkamp

Fanfare Magazine, USA,to be published July 2012:

PALS 2 Pieces for Cello and Piano, op. 53. Elegie for Cello and Piano, op. 27. Cello Sonata, op. 48. In Memoriam, op. 16. Stimmungen, op. 15. 2 Pieces for Cello and Piano, op. 240 Ÿ Tobias van der Pals (vc); Catherine Penderup (pn) Ÿ POLYHYMNIA 11001 (68:23)

Here is a composer, Leopold van der Pals (1884–1966), whose works number over 250; yet, as of this writing in February, 2012, not a single recorded work by him is listed by any of the mail order websites I checked, nor do I find anything by him that has ever been reviewed in Fanfare. Shocking, really! But as the album notes tell us, though some of van der Pal's extensive catalog of works was heard in radio broadcasts, none of it was ever recorded, until now, thanks to cellist Tobias van der Pal, great grandson of Leopold's brother, Nicolai.

Though his father was Dutch and his mother Danish, van der Pals was born in St. Petersburg during the time that van der Pals senior was Dutch Consul to Imperial Russia. Leopold showed musical talent at an early age and as a young man, on recommendation of Rachmaninoff, he traveled to Berlin to study with Reinhold Glière. By 25, van der Pals had had his first symphony premiered by the Berlin Philharmonic, and his reputation was rapidly spreading throughout Europe and to the U.S., where his symphonic pieces, Frühling und Herbst, were taken up by the New York Philharmonic in 1911. That was Mahler's last year of tenure as the NYPO's director, so I'm wondering if it was he who led the van der Pals premiere.

For the next several years, Leopold threw himself into composing with an almost obsessive zeal, producing symphonies, concertos, chamber works, opera, and lieder. Then, in 1920, his wife fell seriously ill, and for the next 11 years his musical career was virtually put on hold as he accompanied her to over 80 sanitaria and incurred crushing medical and travel expenses. At her death in 1935, van der Pals was 51 and almost broke. His brother, Nicolai, himself a conductor and recognized musicologist, helped the composer to get back on his feet. But then the war came, ravaging Europe and severely curtailing opportunities for the composers and musicians that remained. Many, of course, didn't; quite a few, as we know, emigrated to the U.S. But van der Pals chose to stay behind, a decision which, according to his biography, resulted in a lost career. He died at 86 with 252 opus numbers to his name, including four symphonies, nine operas, 500 lieder (!), and a large number of sonatas and other chamber works.

Once again, according to van der Pal's bio, his output ranges in style from late Romanticism to Impressionism to Expressionism. When his Frühling und Herbst was premiered in 1911 by the New York Philharmonic, critics for the New York Times and the New York Sun compared van der Pals to Debussy. Needless to say, I haven't heard that work, but in van der Pals's earlier pieces on this CD—namely, Stimmungen and In Memoriam—the Debussy influence is palpable.

The Elegie, though a slightly later work, looks back to a more Romantic idiom, one that is highly impassioned and which, in some ways, recalls Brahms but without ever reflecting Brahms's actual melodic contours or harmonic idiom. It's more the emotional feeling projected by van der Pal's piece that evokes the Brahmsian mood.

**The Cello Sonata announces itself, with no special pleading needed, as a masterpiece and a major addition to the cello repertoire. Now that it has been brought to light by Tobias van der Pals in this stunning performance,** I'd be surprised if other leading cellists didn't take it up. The work is a bit unusual, not in its layout of movements which follows the standard fast-slow-fast configuration, but in its balance, with a central Adagio and concluding Allegro both longer than the sonata's first movement Allegro. Composed in 1922, not long after the onset of his wife's illness, van der Pals, finds voice for his depression in the intensely moving Adagio in which a poignant melody emerges haltingly from broken phrases over chiming chords in the piano.

Given the album notes' mention of Expressionism, I would have expected the Two Pieces, op. 240, composed in 1960, late in van der Pal's life, to adopt a more modernist style, one influenced perhaps by Schoenberg and Berg. But the evidence is otherwise. There is integration now of van der Pal's Romantic and Impressionist tendencies, but this is music that sings softly of going gently into that good night. Not intended in a pejorative sense, I'd describe this as music that left the salon in search of the lost weekend saloon—sad, nostalgic, and regretful in a kind of self-pity-inducing way.

As composer discoveries go, **Leopold van der Pals is a major find, and just think what an untapped goldmine lies in those 250 works never before recorded.**

**Cellist Tobias van der Pals** studied in Copenhagen and at London's Royal Academy of Music. Obviously, he has a special interest in and connection to this music and you can hear it in his playing which is a real labor of love. **His technical execution and tonal luster are as one as he brings to each of these works expressive insights and profound passion.**

Van der Pals's partner, Catherine Penderup, is a highly accomplished pianist who has distinguished herself as soloist in a recording of music by Danish women composers, and as an accompanist in a program of songs by Emil Hartmann. **Her contribution to the present release is inestimable.**

At the moment, this CD, as noted above, is unlisted, but I suspect it will be by the time you read this. In the event it's not, I would suggest you contact Polyhymnia at <http://www.polyhymnia.nl> or e-mail the company's press contact, [soren@gadenpr.dk](mailto:soren@gadenpr.dk). **However you manage to get your hands on it, this release is essential.***Jerry Dubins*