

not depend on a coherent political message'—its satire does contain a message, albeit one that sits badly with pacifists; otherwise, this is a good study of an opera that deserves to be performed more often.

Diane Paige has not very much to say about Janáček's relationship with Kamila, and Beckerman's own contribution is most disappointing—a whimsical post-modernist piece framed around his own acquisition of one of Janáček's visiting cards.

The translations in the last third of the book will introduce readers to Janáček's curious *feuilleton* style, a heady mix of impressionistic aphorisms whose logic is often impossible to discern. It is fascinating to see Janáček (of all people!) criticising Wagner for the 'harmonic roughness, coarseness and even incorrectness' of *Tristan und Isolde*. He is far more convincing when observing and collecting the rhythms and melodies of speech, which served as the laboratory material for his own work.

'Janáček and his World'? Not really. But there are five good essays, and lots to be learnt from the book, which certainly gives an impression of the healthy state of Janáček scholarship in the English-speaking world today.

Felix Cherniavsky, *The Cherniavsky Trio* Vancouver, Canada: Felix Cherniavsky, 2001 ISBN 0 9689076 0 1. 176pp., port., bibl., discog.

Reviewed by Bonnie Smart

The history of the Cherniavsky Trio is presented in a self-published book for the first time. Three Russian boys, brothers Leo (1890–1974), Jan (1892–1989) and Mischel (1893–1982) are the protagonists of this tale. Born into a struggling musician's large family, the brothers possessed prodigious musical talents that proved to be their passport from poverty to prosperity. From the time of its debut in Odessa in 1901, the Cherniavsky Trio performed the world over. Interestingly, they made a significant contribution to the concert scene of South Africa, and gave several successful seasons in Australia. Their musical legacy is encapsulated in recordings (made between 1918 and 1928), and in the printed recollections of their students. The author, Mischel's son, Felix Cherniavsky—whose work includes *The Salome Dancer: The Life and Times of Maud Allan* (McLelland & Stewart, 1991)—combines these recollections with family interviews and extensive archival work to create a comprehensive chronicle of the Trio's peregrinations.

The early days of the Trio are presided over by the ambitious Cherniavsky patriarch, Abraham (1856–1938). His meagre earnings from freelance performing at Jewish festivities were barely enough to feed him, his wife Rosa, and their children. Ingenuity and necessity led Abraham to form an income-generating 'act' using the talents of his three middle sons. Abraham's haphazard yet at times ferocious teaching approach, which had previously been

applied to his own children's orchestra in Shpola, and to a young Mischa Elman, was now employed to whip Leo, Jan and Mischel into shape for the stage. After several years in Leo's case, and several weeks in Mischel's, the boys were concertising for the whole family's benefit. The boys were a great success in the many Russian towns and villages that they visited. Although the boys were focused on their performance and had little to do with formal music institutions, they had auditioned for Auer, and Mischel had played before the cello professor Wierbilowicz. In return, Wierbilowicz issued Mischel a certificate which allowed the boys to bypass prohibitive anti-semitic laws and tour Russia freely.

Abraham used this certificate to get the boys all the way to Berlin, where their 1904 debut received mixed reviews. The trio then moved to Vienna; they were in the care of their eldest sister, Sonia, by 1905, and the rest of the family joined them soon after. Here, Jan came into contact with Leschetizky, and studied with one of his assistants. Mischel had several lessons from David Popper during this period, when Popper visited Vienna. His main teacher at this time was Joseph Sulzer in Vienna. The trio made important contacts while in Vienna, and were invited to perform at Albert Gutman's Sunday soirées. Through the Gutmans, the trio met influential people who would help them resettle in London in 1906.

Two years of successful concertising in Britain were to follow. Again the reviews were varied, but the trio still attracted large audiences. By 1908, they were working with the impresario Edward Brandscombe, who sent them to the scene of their greatest triumphs—South Africa. Packed halls greeted the boys in Cape Town and Johannesburg. These large events were followed by performances all over the country—the trio ventured as far afield as Zambia and Zimbabwe—with their mode of transport generally being an ox cart. The same year saw the trio visit Australia, to great acclaim. In 1909, the boys returned to Europe for individual study. Their following London performance was not the success they might have hoped for; it became clear that the Cherniavsky Trio's future lay elsewhere.

In subsequent years, the trio returned to Australia and South Africa on multiple occasions, extending their tour route as far as India, Fiji, New Zealand and Malaysia. Some of these tours were less financially successful than others. In 1915, when in Fiji on passage to San Francisco (where Rosa and Abraham had resettled), Mischel met Mary Rogers, who was the daughter of B.T. Rogers, the founder and managing director of British Columbia Sugar Refinery. Mary and Mischel were to wed four years later, while Mary's sister Elspeth would become Jan's wife. Later in this year, the trio performed throughout North America. The year 1917 saw the trio make their Carnegie Hall debut, which was well received. The trio continued to tour until 1928, by which time marriages and children made their adventurous lifestyle quite impractical. The Cherniavsky Trio gave its final performance in Salt Lake City in 1931.

The amplitude of the Trio's touring routes is reflected in the breadth of the author's research, which spans four continents. Cherniavsky successfully synthesises his data into a highly accessible and entertaining text, peopled with whimsical characters. The reader is offered a plethora of intriguing 'facts', both in the main body of the work and in the endnotes. The term 'endnote' is applied liberally here: these endnotes are not referenced at all in the text itself, and indeed many statements for which one would like further clarification are not given a reference. This is one place where the absence of an editor hampers the quality of the work. Cherniavsky precedes these endnotes with an excuse for leaving out a formal bibliography,

stating that the materials collated for the book are too numerous to list. Nevertheless, a bibliography detailing at least a selection of his sources would be greatly appreciated.

Newspapers figure largely in his sources. Cherniavsky skilfully uses multiple reviews, both critical and adulatory, to recreate the performances of the Trio for an audience without the privilege of hearing it first hand. In a transcribed interview which follows the narrative text, Zara Nelsova, a protégé of Mischel's, speaks herself of the musical integrity that her teacher possessed. Cherniavsky is often at pains to try and reconcile this honesty of expression with the technical shortcomings of each player, these shortcomings being the result of protracted time spent as youngsters performing rather than practising. While readers need some indication of the group's performance level, this theme becomes repetitive, and the references drawn upon to illuminate the nebulous divide between technique and musicality are less attuned to the musicologist than the general music lover.

Certainly a unique compound of eloquent artistry tempered by individual instrumental flaws characterises the Cherniavskys' career overall. The authorial challenge in penning such a biography lies not as much in the sheer scope of information to be gathered (mammoth task though it is), than in the construction of a backdrop for such information. Contextualising the culture of itinerant classical ensembles that toured the same far flung circuits and had similar experiences to the Cherniavskys is difficult because so little has been written. Cherniavsky still manages to draw fruitful comparison here and there between the Trio and various artists who entertained the same audiences; Little Tich and Paderewski are two examples. Information such as ticket prices, box office takings and the absence or presence of critics from certain papers is usefully applied to create a picture of how different concert tours fared for the Cherniavskys. In addition, Cherniavsky borrows from biographies of 'the greats,' including Elman, Casals and Menuhin, to illustrate further the musical world to which the brothers were vibrant contributors.

Cherniavsky has done a great service by bringing the Cherniavsky Trio's past to light. The information provided regarding the Trio's tours in South Africa and Australia should be of use to those undertaking historical work on classical music in both locations. This book whets the appetite of the musician for more such work to be done, and it underscores the need for greater study of chamber music ensembles from the past, both as objects of interest in themselves, and for better understanding of past musical mores. As Felix Cherniavsky's brother Mark writes in the Postscript, 'From today's vantage point, the Cherniavsky Trio may seem easy to dismiss, but to do so would highlight our own ignorance of the history of the performing arts. To me, the overriding value of this study—for which we must thank my brother Felix in particular—is that it illuminates the musical world into which the Trio first sprang.'