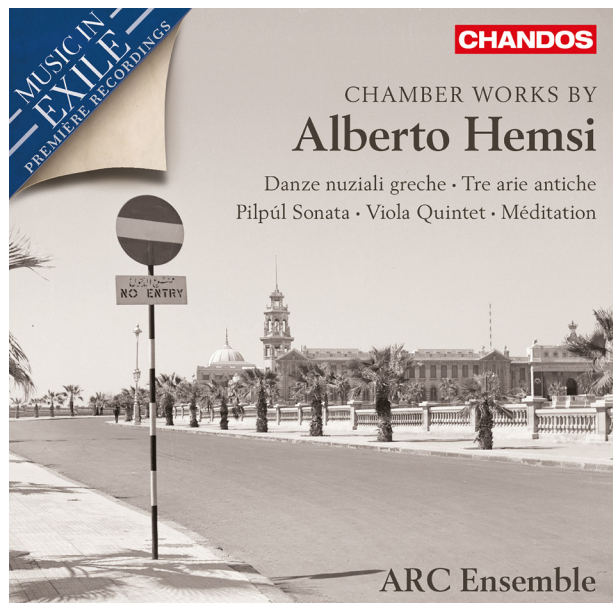


Rave Reviews for ARC Ensemble Recording

Chamber Works by Alberto Hemsí Garner International Acclaim



It is ironic that Alberto Hemsí, a composer who spent much of his youth collecting the music of Jewish communities that were destroyed during WW II, should have his own brilliantly original music ignored. As part of its mission to research and recover 20th-century works that have been suppressed or marginalized by repressive regimes, war and exile, Canada's acclaimed ARC Ensemble has dedicated its sixth Chandos recording to this overlooked and prodigious talent; the latest in its acclaimed "Music in Exile" series, and the first commercial recording dedicated to Alberto Hemsí's instrumental works.

Born on the western coast of Turkey into a Sephardic Jewish family, Alberto Hemsí (1898–1975) led an unsettled life, having on several occasions to leave everything behind and rebuild his life anew. [...] Starting around 1920, Hemsí devoted himself to collecting Sephardic folk music. He published a set of some 60 coplas sefardíes, and consistently drew on the riches of this and other folk traditions for his own music. The present collection, beautifully recorded in Toronto by the Royal Conservatory's ensemble-in-residence, gives a most interesting overview of Hemsí's chamber music for strings.

- Carlos María Solare, The Strad

The performers show a real affinity with this music and deliver a sparkling and vivacious performance that is full of character at every turn. [...] I hope this recording sparks increasing interest in this composer. [...] This is a very enjoyable disc of engaging and colourful music, performed by the very fine musicians of ARC Ensemble. I think most listeners will find enjoyment with this fine disc of unfamiliar music.

- Geoff Pearce, Classical Music Daily

These premiere recordings of works by Hemsí are [...] both decorously beautiful and introspective [...] cleanly and powerfully recorded by David Frost, Carl Talbot and Kevin Fallis. The team have secured an atmospheric rather than a starkly hygienic sound. This, and the quality of the music-making, suits the music's folk origins (North Africa, Greece, Armenia and Turkey). It's another excellently carried through and enterprising disc from Chandos. The standards for such unusual music, appearing on disc for the first time, are high; not to be taken for granted.

- Rob Barnett, MusicWeb International

Hemsí was certainly fortunate to abandon both Smyrna and Rhodes, almost all of whose Jewish residents were killed in Auschwitz after Nazi forces took over the island. [...] Yet, while the frequently displaced composer may have been able to survive and even thrive, despite having to rebuild his career, his strikingly original music has remained in exile, unheard for the last 60 plus years. ARC's "Chamber Works by Alberto Hemsí" highlights five works by this unheralded composer.

- A.A. Cristi, BroadwayWorld.com

The ARC Ensemble deserve special plaudits for their enterprising series of recordings which highlight the work of composers that were side-lined as a result of political and/or racial suppression. Their latest compellingly performed release, featuring music by Alberto Hemsí, ... reflects the composer's lifelong fascination for Sephardic folk music which he assiduously collected and transcribed, as well as a keen absorption of other exotic idioms. The net result is a sequence of attractive and atmospheric works.

- Erik Levi, BBC Music Magazine

As always with this ensemble, performances could hardly be bettered in terms of execution and commitment, abetted by the clear and spacious sound.

- Richard Whitehouse, Gramophone Magazine U.K.

Méditation, Op. 16 – is one of the most redolent of Mr Hemsí's mélange of folk music than anything else on the recording, which like all of the other recordings in the Music in Exile series is one to die for.

- Raul Da Gama, That Canadian Magazine

Once again, Toronto's splendid ARC Ensemble (Artists of the Royal Conservatory) has redeemed a deserving composer from unwarranted "exile" in this important ongoing series.

- Michael Schulman, The WholeNote

Despite its title, Danze nuziali greche (Greek nuptial dances) for cello and piano reveals Hemsí's strong Sephardic streak right away, with humorous titles for the movements honoring the mother-in-law, the bride, and the godfather. Tre arie antiche for string quartet is drawn from the Coplas songs, with an opening movement that often swings to a fandango rhythm, a Canzone that swoons nostalgically, and a playful Rondo finale that changes tempo a lot.

- Richard S. Ginnell, San Francisco Classical Voice

What is striking is Hemsí's ability for whatever musical combination he is writing for, to portray a connection and relationship between instruments whether it is cello or violin with piano or other chamber music pairings, they effectively coalesce.

- Andrew Palmer, Yorkshire Times

It is wonderful work that Chandos and the ARC Ensemble are doing in their ongoing "Music in Exile" series of recordings. This is the third one that I have personally encountered; all three have been excellent in all respects – music, engineering, liner notes, art, the whole package. I extend to this and the rest of this series my most enthusiastic recommendation.

- Karl W. Nehring, Classical Candor



► The ARC Ensemble, from left to right: Thomas Wiebe, cello; Julien Altmann, viola; Kevin Ahfat, piano; Emily Kruspe, violin; Marie Bérard, violin; Steven Dann, viola; Erika Raum, violin. Credit: Gaetz Photography.