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Bloch · Pärt

'Poème mystique'

Bloch Violin Sonatas - No 1; No 2, 'Poème mystique';
Baal Shem - No 2, Nigun Pärt *Fratres*

Elsa Grether *vn* Ferenc Vizi *pf*

Fuga Libera Ⓢ FUG711 (65' • DDD)



Paris Conservatoire 'premier
prix' laureate's first recording

The young French violinist Elsa Grether here gives the most passionate performances of three of Ernest Bloch's works most deeply inspired by the music of the synagogue, with their exotic augmented intervals. The two violin sonatas as well as 'Nigun', the middle piece in the triptych *Baal Shem*, all date from the early 1920s and my only regret is that Grether does not include all three of the *Baal Shem* pieces, 'Pictures of Hassidic Life'.

Nevertheless, it would be hard to imagine more moving performances of all this music than those of Grether, whose belief in their message is expressed in her own note in the booklet. There was a comparable collection of Bloch works on the now-defunct ASV label (8/90), beautifully played by the unjustly neglected violinist Leonard Friedman, but Grether's accounts are even more persuasive.

Much the longer and more powerful of the two sonatas is No 1, its three movements spanning a full half-hour, superbly sustained. This is music to put alongside my favourite Bloch work, his Violin Concerto of the late 1930s. The Second Sonata, *Poème mystique*, is in a single movement of some 20 minutes, very rhapsodic in Bloch's endlessly inventive way. Grether has opted to offer as supplement Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* ('Brothers'); but, charming as it is, I would have preferred to have the extra *Baal Shem* pieces instead. Powerful recording to match the performances. I look forward to hearing more of Elsa Grether.

Edward Greenfield