

NIGEL ARMSTRONG

Bach
Bartók
Korngold

Sir Neville Marriner
The Colburn Orchestra

GENESIS
ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

 **YARLUNG RECORDS**
BOB ATTIYEH, PRODUCER



1-4	Sonata for Solo Violin Béla Bartók	24:19
	<i>Tempo di ciaccona</i>	8:29
	<i>Fuga</i>	4:21
	<i>Melodia</i>	6:12
	<i>Presto</i>	5:17
5-8	Violin Sonata No.3 in C Major, BWV 1005 Johann Sebastian Bach	19:49
	<i>Adagio</i>	3:54
	<i>Fuga</i>	9:05
	<i>Largo</i>	3:10
	<i>Allegro assai</i>	3:40
9-11	Violin Concerto in D Major Erich Wolfgang Korngold	23:21
	<i>Moderato</i>	8:29
	<i>Romanze</i>	7:20
	<i>Allegro</i>	7:32



Gary Koh from Genesis Advanced Technologies and I first met when Elliot Midwood at Acoustic Image asked Genesis and Yarlung to collaborate for a demonstration for Robert Levi and the Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society. Maestro Levi has built the largest audiophile club in the world, and hosts monthly events at high end listening rooms around Southern California. Working with Gary was a treat. He brought equipment and Yarlung supplied music. People heard fresh recordings for the first time on equipment many of us dream of.

So it makes Yarlung proud that Gary chose to sponsor our fifth quartet of DSD releases from the Yarlung SonoruS series of analog tapes. Dr. David W. Robinson “twisted Yarlung’s arm” to release music in 64fs, 128fs and 256fs (single, double and quad) DSD, and our quartets have been enjoyed by music lovers around the world. exaSound sponsored our first quartet, Merging Technologies underwrote the second set (and we used Merging Technologies’ Hapi converter and Pyramix software to make these files). International Rectifier (now owned by Infineon in Munich) supported our third quartet, and Elliot Midwood executive produced the fourth quartet in collaboration with PS Audio. So it is only fitting that Gary and I shared the Genesis Quartet with the public for the first time at Elliot’s Acoustic Image listening room.

Gary is a friend and we enjoy working together. But projects with him succeed because of the quality of his engineering. Gary was one of a group of pioneers who built the Internet in much of Southeast Asia and invested in Internet companies in the very early days. He “retired” young, and could have spent the rest of his life in luxury and leisure. Instead, he planted a vineyard and started to build the room to house his dream speakers – the flagship reference from Genesis – the G1. When he called to order a pair, he was informed that the company had closed down and couldn’t deliver. Gary didn’t accept this answer; the mere closing of a company shouldn’t keep him from the sound he wanted. He bought assets from the bank that had

foreclosed on the company, and resurrected the brand. Not only has Gary run Genesis Advanced Technologies successfully, but has designed new and successful products. Some years ago, I bought a pair of Gary's Genesis M60 tube monoblocks and fell in love with his solid state amplification as well. Gary has continued to refine the designs of his speakers, both the mind-bendingly expensive and ear-enchanting top of the line G1, but smaller speakers as well, including his G7-series speakers which we demonstrated for the Audio society and the G7 series 2 which Gary shipped to Los Angeles to inaugurate this Genesis Quartet. Gary also showed off his company's new amplifier and music server as well as a recently-designed phonostage. (We offered a sneak preview of Yarlung's two latest vinyl releases: *Ciaramella Dances* and *Sophisticated Lady* jazz quartet, mastered by Steve Hoffman and with lacquers cut by Bernie Grundman).

One might ask, "How does Gary do it? How has he resurrected the company and how has he continued to improve what was already good?" Gary is a meticulous designer with a clear vision for what he wants to build. He does not shy away from tried-and-true engineering when it works but also examines deeply the roots of the science. He is fond of saying "creativity and discovery comes from seeing what everybody has seen, and thinking what nobody has thought." My M60 monoblocks are a good example of this. Gary told me recently that there is no unique technology in these monoblocks. Yet they are only 60 watts each and can drive almost any speaker. Gary explained that within the classic tube power amp design there were countless ways he could improve the interrelation of each component, honing the whole system into a musical and muscular flexibility that was making my ears happy. By contrast, Gary's solid state amplifiers idle using only 6 watts of electricity and utilize many of Gary's from-the-ground-up newly designed circuits in both power supply and amplification.

Despite the sophistication and subtlety of Gary's designs, he keeps them as simple as possible, following his philosophy that "For a recording engineer, an ideal amplifier must not embellish or color a recording. If the source and speaker are close to perfect, the amplifier has to be as transparent as possible. Genesis high-performance audio products are designed to deliver the music to the listener without interference."

Gary initially developed his amplifiers to help him further refine his company's loudspeakers. He wanted an unadulterated lab reference amplifier so he could best judge evolutions in his speaker designs. Successes like

this have a way of becoming known, and now Gary's Genesis Reference Amplifier (the GRA) is highly sought. It won "Ultimate Reference" from *Magazine Audio*, "Select Component" at UltraAudio.com and garnered the Blue Moon Award.

Frederic Beudot with *6moons* gave the amplifier its first review. He responded directly to Gary's goals for the design: "I am still at a loss to accurately describe what the GR360 sounds like. I am actually not even sure it has a sound as every time I changed a component in my system, I was exposed to the sonic signature of the component I just introduced more intensively than I had experienced before. If anything, the GR360 reveals the true nature of other components...." Gary succeeded in building an ideal amplifier for his new speakers and for the rest of us who prize transparency.

Ernie Fisher continues in similar vein in *Inner Ear*: "The GRA ... handled the entire musical signal with a touch of refinement, almost as though it wasn't there. That is a rare experience for this listener, who is forever looking for sonic signatures. This amp has one, to be sure, but it is written in almost invisible ink."

Bravo Gary. Bravo Genesis. And thank you for sharing your success with Yarlung.

-- Bob Attiyeh, producer



Genesis Dragon in the Hong Kong listening room of Forthwise Ltd.



Photo: Jeff Fasano

Nigel Armstrong a special journey

What does a producer do when one has the opportunity to work with a violinist like Nigel Armstrong? One celebrates. This has been an interesting journey. Nigel grew up in Sonoma, California and was appreciated as a prodigy from an early age. Nigel earned his bachelor's degree from The Colburn School where he was a student of the famed Robert Lipsett. Nigel performed well in a series of international violin competitions during his student years and debuted with important orchestras in North and South America and Europe before earning a post graduate diploma from Curtis.

Celebrating Nigel will be a different experience than celebrating other superstar young players, however. Nigel comes with innate musicality; his use of color, his musical line, his flair for expression... these come from his body and blood. Unlike some great musicians who can intellectualize "musical intent" in everything they play, Nigel just does it. When I asked him what inspired a particularly wonderful take, Nigel couldn't always tell me. His playing is supremely intelligent, but he doesn't let his intellect interfere with his playing. It comes from his body and from his cultivated instincts.

Nigel worked hard to raise his playing to the level of the international concert stage but one can tell this effort came naturally to him. His flexible athletic technique and his innate musicality means he didn't have to fight with himself to produce his sound and his music. Nigel is a "natural," and while Nigel plays with technical magnificence, Nigel is not a show off. He doesn't feel nervous when approaching a threatening passage, he just plays the music and gives us a window into the composer's soul.

LACO is among the great orchestras which hired Nigel to make his debut while still an undergraduate. Nigel played the Mozart Violin Concerto No. 3 with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, conducted for that performance by Andrew Shulman.

I collaborated with Nigel on Mozart's G Major Violin Concerto with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. His musicianship is extraordinary. He has a quiet assurance and an athletic virtuosity which, when combined with his chamber-music like sensitivity and beauty of tone, made for a wonderfully spontaneous, yet precise and elegant performance. I look forward to working with him in the future.

-Andrew Shulman, conductor

Nigel is a consummate artist who brings both imagination and conviction to his performance. His influence on young artists and audiences is concomitant with the intensity of his virtuosity and his musical personality. The breadth of his repertoire and experience is remarkably misleading when you realize the age of this young artist -- an asset to his generation.

-Neville Marriner

Los Angeles had been home to Nigel during his four years at The Colburn School. He has friends and family here, in the school community, at American Youth Symphony where he served as concertmaster, and at Yarlung. Nigel had been performing on the east coast and arrived in Los Angeles for our recording sessions on a spectacular day. I picked him up at Colburn School, where he was staying for the week, and drove him to USC so we could hear him in the concert hall where we made our recording.¹ In the car, we talked about orchestras and conductors in North America and Europe with whom Nigel would soon be performing concertos, and about how Nigel saw his career now that he had graduated from Curtis. Rather than giving me a line carefully honed for public relations, Nigel said “I keep looking for the meaning in my playing, Bob, and for what I bring to the concert stage. I am afraid it is not enough, that I’m not contributing enough as a person. Is this what I am supposed to do?” This is a question few of us are brave enough to ask, of course, and I did not have an answer for him. Life as a soloist on the concert stage is one of the most demanding (often demeaning) and disruptive sorts of life one can live. Concert tours are hard on one’s family and one’s sleep and can be damaging to one’s ego, either by artificially inflating and/or deflating it repetitively. And it can be exhilarating. Nigel went on to explain that playing with glamorous orchestras and conductors and earning higher and higher fees was never part of his ambition and he humbly didn’t know what special thing he had to offer that world. He was just as happy or happier playing with a few friends as he was on a feted European concert stage.

So in-between concerts, Nigel spent part of the next spring studying at a zen monastery in upstate New York (the monks and nuns were particularly happy to hear him with his violin) and he spent the following summer working on an organic

¹ Thanks to the generosity of Dr. Antonio Damasio we recorded the Bach and Bartok on this album at The Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Within this Neuroscience institute, Dr. Damasio built Cammilleri Hall, a jewel of a theater designed by Yasuhisa Toyota. Mr. Toyota and his firm have become famous for some of the finest new concert halls in the world, including Walt Disney Concert Hall, the Finnish Radio Symphony Hall in Helsinki, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo.

We recorded the Korngold concerto at a live concert conducted by Sir Neville Marriner with The Colburn Orchestra in Royce Hall at UCLA. It is interesting but not surprising that Nigel’s album unites three great music schools in Los Angeles in his debut album: Colburn, USC and UCLA.

farm in Germany. This came as a surprise to some of his friends in the music world but Nigel has received support, especially from those institutions with the “most to lose” should Nigel give up the violin at some point. Nigel could dedicate his life to raising carrots or developing networks of community agriculture, or who knows... establish a new religious community.

Sel Kardan serves as President of The Colburn School. I asked Sel his views during a visit to my home. Sel spoke about Nigel and his special artistry and how music is larger than concert halls. Sel said that the study and performance at the highest levels of achievement lead to the development of an empathetic, sensitive and communicative being, whether one seeks a career as a soloist or not. Nigel will make The Colburn School proud, Sel elaborated, in whatever endeavor he pursues. “We are not a factory,” Sel continued, “We are a great conservatory, but more importantly, a community, that supports creative growth and achievement. It has been our pleasure to be part of Nigel’s development as an extraordinary artist and person, and we look forward to the next chapter in his life with interest and enthusiasm.”

Since this recording, Nigel has returned to Germany and Italy for more performances, including additional Korngold violin concertos with Sir Neville Marriner on the podium. We look forward to his next Los Angeles concert, or to the taste of a new Armstrong organic carrot, whichever comes first.

We made this album in two concert halls with great acoustics. For the Bach and Bartok sonatas in The Brain and Creativity Institute’s brand new Camilleri Hall at USC, we used one AKG C24 microphone generously provided by Jon Fisher from Gearworks



Photo: Jeff Fasano

Pro Audio. For the live Korngold violin concerto in Royce Hall at UCLA, we chose two Neumann U47 microphones and two AKG C12 microphones from Gearworks. We used microphone amplification by Elliot Midwood for both recordings. We recorded to high resolution digital media and to RMGI 468 analog tape, with tube recording electronics designed for us by Len Horowitz. We are especially grateful to Susan Lynch, Pamela McNeff-Smith and Nic Monaco, who worked closely with Dr. Antonio Damasio to make us feel so welcome in the jewel that is Cammilleri Hall.

I particularly want to thank Sir Neville, who along with Lady Marriner, champions Nigel and his playing. They love Nigel as a person and as a violinist. Sir Neville was happy we were able to capture this performance in Royce Hall. We are also grateful to Sir Neville for serving as such an intelligent and experienced advisor to Yarlung Artists. We treasure him and his input on every level.

As with the Korngold concerto, Nigel's performances of the Bach and Bartok sonatas are "live to tape," complete takes. I remember Sel Kardan sitting in my living room shortly after the orchestra recording saying to me, "is that really one take? Nigel plays so beautifully. Did you fix any mistakes?" No, I told Sel, we didn't fix any mistakes. There wasn't really much that would benefit from "fixing." We are indeed proud of Nigel.

Bob Attiyeh, producer

Executive Producers **Randy and Linda Bellous** join Nigel and Bob in thanking the generous people and institutions who supported Nigel with his debut album, especially

The Stratton-Petit Foundation
Ann and Jean Horton
Carlos and Haydee Mollura
Jerry and Terri Kohl

We also wish to thank friends and supporters who have helped generously with this release: Raulee Marcus, Drs. Antonio and Hanna Damasio, The Brain and Creativity Institute at Dornsife College, USC, Sir Neville and Lady Marriner, The Colburn School, Patrick and Erin Trostle, European American Music, Wes and Nancy Hicks, Rinchen Lhamo, Michael and Linda Rosen, Peachy and Bud Spielberg and Maureen Keesey Fuentes.



Photo: David Fung



Photo: Jeff Fasano

Nigel's thoughts on the music:

The Adagio in Bach's C Major sonata is one of the most contemplative movements I know for solo violin. Most of the piece offers gently pulsing chords that unfold from one harmony to the next. I've found it wonderful, while playing, to allow the music to lead, to follow the individual lines as they manifest. I love submitting myself and my violin to the power of Bach. He leads us into often inexorable and surprising directions.

The fugue that follows his adagio is the longest fugue Bach wrote for the violin. It is also, in my opinion, the grandest. He gives relief from the complexity of the fugal sections with spans of gently running eighth notes. There's a moment in the last of these simpler sections that always gives me a thrill--the violin starts climbing, measure by measure, step by step, until it reaches two plaintive Gs, the highest notes in the piece, and then gently returns to earth to begin a quiet restatement of the theme.

Each time I play it, I learn something new from the Largo, the third movement of the sonata. It demands simplicity and innocence, two qualities which are sometimes the hardest to convey.

The finale is quick and joyful. Bach again uses the high G (this time triumphantly), just before bringing the sonata to a close.

In his Sonata for Solo Violin, Bartók writes with an expressive force that grabs me by the ear from the first chord. Like Bach's famous Ciaconna from the Partita in D Minor, Bartók's first movement explores a vast architecture of emotion. From the rough pride in the opening statement to the tentative searching that follows, from the wild outbursts in the final climax to the calm resignation of the ending, the piece remains eternally new for me.

In the second movement, Bartók creates a fugue injected with a raw intensity.



Sir Neville Marriner rehearses in Royce Hall with Nigel Armstrong and The Colburn Orchestra

It is thrilling to witness and exhilarating to play. The Melodia that follows, on the other hand, expresses a faded beauty unique in all the pieces I play. It reminds me of a grainy photograph that evokes some childhood memory of innocence, a souvenir that's difficult to recall in any detail.

Bartok's finale is exciting, tempestuous, and brings back some of the earthiness of the opening movement. I'm very fond of the last few seconds.

Korngold wrote his violin concerto in Los Angeles and I feel lucky that I was able to perform this work, in Los Angeles, with The Colburn Orchestra and Sir Neville Marriner. I have since played this concerto with Sir Neville in front of other important orchestras in Europe. But there will always be something special for me in this first performance with my conservatory orchestra, especially in the shimmering middle movement.



Nigel's recording session in Cammilleri Hall
photo: Marcus Rinehart



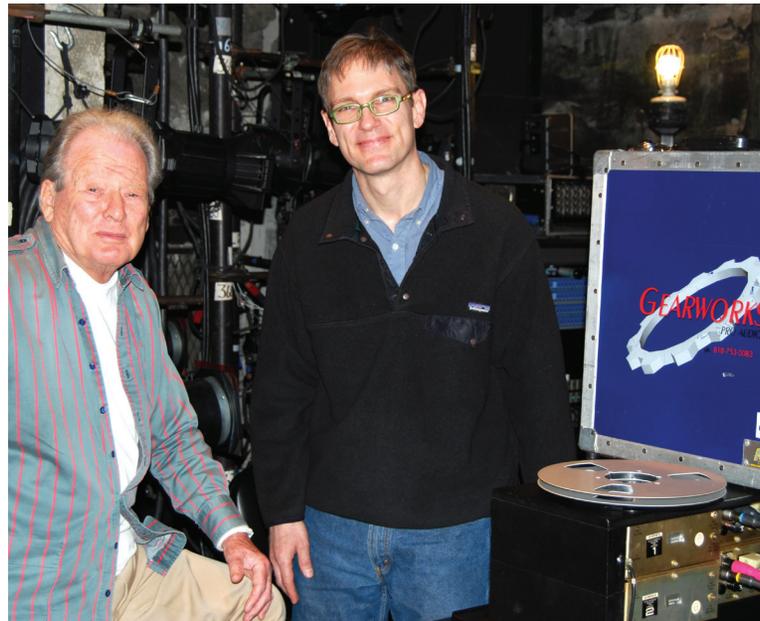
Yarlung Artists board chairman
Michael Rosen and Nigel,
concert at annual meeting

Not only is Sir Neville one of the world's greatest conductors but he is a kind spirit whose mentorship I have appreciated greatly. Maestro tells wonderful stories when he works with an orchestra and he never fails to inspire us musically and enliven the spirits of those around him.

Nigel Armstrong
Götzenmühle, Germany

Layout: Eron Muckleroy
Cover photograph: Jeff Fasano

Korngold violin concerto published by Schott Mainz and Japan



Sir Neville and Bob backstage at Royce Hall

The Genesis Quartet



Four New Yarlung Records Releases: Summary Notes
by Robert H. Levi, PFO May 14th, 2015

Nigel Armstrong, *Nigel Armstrong: Bach, Bartók, Korngold*. Featuring Sir Neville Marriner and the Colburn Orchestra. Native DSD Catalog number YAR65007DSD

This Yarlung Records recording is simply entitled *Nigel Armstrong*. Armstrong is a young and dynamic artist, exactly fitting the rising stars captured by the Yarlung label. With a varied repertoire of Bartók, Bach, and Korngold, I was floored by the diversity and sensitivity of this superb artist. Truly a budding Heifetz stylistically, and with the sweetest violin I have heard in years, Nigel Armstrong is an artist to follow closely. The Bartok is solidly played. The difficult Bach is gorgeously rendered. The Korngold Concerto, conducted by the great Sir Neville Marriner, is exceptional and captivating.

Recorded on analog tape with tube microphones. Bob Attiyeh, the exceptional producer and master recordist of Yarlung Records, shows remarkable taste, as usual, and ultimate sensitivity for the

performers and the balance of his recordings. The DSD download is worth every penny and more just for the Korngold. Highest recommendation.

Smoke & Mirrors: *Vanish, Vol. 2, Takemitsu, Rachmaninov*. Featuring the Smoke and Mirrors Percussion Ensemble. Native DSD Catalog Number: YAR15195DSD2

Smoke and Mirror's *Vanish, Vol. 2* is a *tour de force* in elegant, wide-ranging melodic percussion performance. I cannot say I have ever experienced diversity and elegance like this in musical form, but so what? I love it! Truly addictive, it is musically entertaining and original. The six artists sound like sixteen. What an adventure in style and virtuosity. A sonic masterpiece! Recorded to perfection, and great fun!

Recommended, for sure.

Petteri: *Art of the Sonata, Vol. II Brahms & Ysaye*. Petteri Iivonen, Violin; Kevin Fitz-Gerald, Piano. Native DSD Catalog Number: YAR76721DSD2

Beautifully played and recorded, you might think these musicians have been playing together for years. When this was recorded in 2011, Petteri was still in his early twenties! Yarlung strikes again. The delicious repertoire between Iivonen and Fitz-Gerald on this album is as good as it gets.

The Brahms *Violin Sonata Number 3* is played with such uncanny feeling and perfection. The difficult Ysaye *Sonata No. 4 in E Minor* is polished off with such ease and skill as to make it a true gem. The recording is truly first-class: very analog in its smoothness and lack of grain. How can Yarlung Records do this and Sony not?

Highest recommendation.

Frederic Rosselet: *Bach, Ligeti* Cello solo album. Native DSD Catalog Number: YAR07498DSD

Recorded to perfection, this young cello player Rosselet is a true virtuoso.

His skill and sensitivity to the pieces is astounding for such a young player. With toe-tapping rhythms and inflections, this is one magical cello recording. The Bach is exciting and rich. The Ligeti is mysterious and compelling. The combo makes for an entertaining package.

Once again, Yarlung has produced a truly reference quality recording which is a winner in DSD. Yo Yo Ma should be looking over his shoulder: Rosselet will be there!
Highest recommendation.

www.yarlungrecords.com

Please call (310) 692-4575 or email support@yarlungartists.org with any questions about Yarlung Artists and programs supporting young concert musicians.

-Robert H. Levi



stereophile

Michael Fremer

In a surprisingly short period of time, the adventurous GRAMMY® Award winning classical music label Yarlung has produced an eclectic catalog of impeccably recorded performances by a roster of adventurous musicians, including many that are well-known and others soon to be. The varied repertoire, with a refreshingly international flavor, covers everything from modern percussion to solo piano and violin to large scale symphonic works with singers.

The minimally miked “purist” recordings produced and engineered by label founder Bob Attiyeh in some of the world’s great concert spaces, are captured simultaneously on analog tape and high resolution digital and released on vinyl, reel-to-reel tape, CD and as high resolution Studio Master downloads.

Yarlung’s production and sonic model is distilled from the recording industry’s glorious past—one that pessimists were certain could never be successfully resurrected—while its forward-thinking business and distribution model points the way towards a healthy future for a “record business” long given up for dead by trendy “futurists.”

For older lovers of recorded classical repertoire, Yarlung’s catalog represents a return to sonic and musical greatness. For younger ones familiar only with dynamically and spatially compressed low resolution recordings, these from Yarlung are like 3D IMAX but without the glasses.

-Michael Fremer
Editor analogplanet.com
Senior contributing editor, *Stereophile*

Stereo Sound

by Mori Shima

Once upon a time there was a land of hi-fi. And it was gone all too soon. But thank Heavens for Yarlung Records. In the age of compressed digital downloads, it is refreshing to hear real sound and real music again, reminiscent of RCA Living Stereo in its golden age, or Mercury Records at its height. Yarlung's sound is liquid and transparent, just as if you were sitting in the concert halls with superb acoustics, where these recordings are made. Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Ambassador Hall in Pasadena, and Zipper Hall at The Colburn School, to name a few.

What Mercury did for Howard Hanson and the Eastman-Rochester Orchestra in the fifties, Yarlung Records is now doing for The Colburn Orchestra and Metropolitan Opera mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke. You can hear the evidence on the album *If You Love For Beauty*, released in 2012. Who would have thought that a conservatory orchestra (granted the players are young superstars, soloists all), could capture the world's attention like this. I understand that Yarlung does this by using similar techniques to those in the golden age of recordings. Only one stereo microphone for smaller ensembles, and up to four microphones for full orchestras, recording directly to two track analog tape and high resolution digital.

Don't worry, Yarlung's recordings are all on iTunes, Amazon MP3 and so forth, but you can also order 180 Gram virgin vinyl LPs, exquisitely made CDs mastered by mighty Steve Hoffman, and high resolution downloads, all available worldwide through Naxos Global Logistics in Munich. Most exciting for analog tape enthusiasts might be the SonoruS Series of recordings on 1/4 inch master tape. I recently reviewed Yarlung's *Martin Chalifour and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Walt Disney Concert Hall*, another album I recommend highly.¹ Yarlung offers us a true feast for the ears, and this reviewer for one, wants more.

-Mori Shima
Stereo Sound, Japan

¹ *Stereo Sound*, June 2013

Joseph Newsome, *Voix des Arts*

November 1st, 2014

Few decisions are more important to the career of a young artist than those that determine repertory for the recording that will introduce him to listeners not yet fortunate enough to have heard him in concert or recital. Despite the existence of far more masterful compositions for the violin than musicians talented and conscientious enough to play them, it often seems that young fiddlers confine their fledgling musical adventures to a dishearteningly small handful of pieces. Recording the violin concerti of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, and Tchaikovsky can establish or solidify a young violinist's reputation but also invites comparisons with the work of the greatest artists of the past. What could be more dispiriting for a violinist at the start of his career than to be subjected to the kind of scrutiny that concedes excellence whilst lamenting that details of his technique or interpretation are markedly inferior to those of this or that long-dead player? It seems counterintuitive to criticize the high level of technical accomplishment among today's concert violinists, but the strangely damaging fact is that there are too many virtuosi; too many technical wizards who can whirl through the intricacies of any of the great canonical concerti with panache but without exploring the nuances of the music or making a credible argument on its behalf. In the first years of an exceptionally promising career, young violinist Nigel Armstrong exudes the confidence of a violinist who is not only a master technician but also has unique interpretive insights that he is eager to share with audiences. Choosing Béla Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin, Johann Sebastian Bach's Sonata No. 3 for unaccompanied violin, and Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Concerto for this disc, expertly produced, mastered, and engineered for Yarlung Records by Bob Attiyeh, Jacob Horowitz, Steve Hoffman, and Randy and Linda Bellous, Mr. Armstrong made decisions that qualify him as an uncommonly versatile musician and provide the listener with an unexpectedly challenging initiation into the enchanting sphere of a fantastic young violinist's artistry.

Bartók's Sonata for Solo Violin was commissioned in November 1943 by Sir Yehudi Menuhin, who seems to have premiered the piece in New York on 26 November 1944. [In his autobiography, *Unfinished Journey*, Menuhin notes the November 1944 date as that of the première of the Sonata. In the *New York Times* obituary for Bartók published on 27 September 1945, a day after the composer's death, it is stated that the Sonata had not yet been performed, however.] Composed in 1944 in New York and in Asheville, North Carolina, where he was undergoing treatment for the leukemia that would prematurely end his life, the Sonata for Solo Violin is a tremendously demanding work that requires incredible concentration from the player. Though not a true chaconne in the Baroque sense, the *Tempo di ciaccona* opening movement is the most noticeably Hungarian of the Sonata's four movements. Both in its rhythmic patterns and distinct harmonies, the first movement inhabits the domain of Bartók's beloved Hungarian folk music. Mr. Armstrong displays total poise in his negotiations of the unconventional rhythms, deriving the full melodic impact from the composer's disjointed phrases. The three-voice fugue in the second movement, marked *Risolto, non troppo vivo* by Bartók, draws from Mr. Armstrong playing of uncompromising virtuosity, each subject delineated with impressive clarity. The lyricism of the *adagio Melodia* movement shimmers in the warm glow of Mr. Armstrong's tone, and he manages to devote considerable eloquence to his elucidation of the melodic lines without indulging in exaggerated sentimentality. The extravagant difficulty of the passagework in the *Presto* final movement, devised by Bartók using quarter-tones, is conquered with youthful exuberance by Mr. Armstrong. His command of double-stops, wide intervals, and harmonics is unfailingly accurate—especially so considering that his performance of the Sonata was recorded in a single take. Bartók's music is not easy going for either the violinist or the listener, but Mr. Armstrong reveals much beauty where many violinists have found only collisions of notes.

Bach's Sonata No. 3 in C major was composed sometime between 1703 and the publication of the collection of *Partitas and Sonatas* for unaccompanied violin in 1720. Whether the C-major Sonata and its companions were composed for performance by noted violinists of Bach's time or by himself or his

sons remains unknown, but the quality and inventiveness of Bach's music is beyond doubt. Bach's use of double counterpoint in the C-major Sonata is compelling, and the level of understanding of the instrument exhibited by the score is remarkable. In the opening Adagio, Mr. Armstrong plays with feeling that remains within boundaries of good taste, and his performance of the subsequent Fuga movement, its principal subject derived from a chorale popular in Bach's time, indicates a thorough familiarity with the composer's contrapuntal writing. The contemplative, almost desolate simplicity of the Largo movement is expressively rendered, with Mr. Armstrong's unerring intonation contributing powerfully to the prevailing sentiment of the music. The closing Allegro assai movement represents Bach at his most playful, the doubts of the third movement brushed aside by the unfettered joy of music-making. As in the final movement of the Bartók Sonata, Mr. Armstrong draws inspiration from the music, playing Bach's undulating phrases with individuality but obvious attention to the historical context of the music.

In his performance of Korngold's Violin Concerto, Mr. Armstrong is joined by the Colburn Orchestra and Sir Neville Marriner. Here, unfortunately, the excellently-balanced, natural sound achieved by Yarlung's technical team allows a great deal of audience noise to intrude into the listener's enjoyment of the superb performance. Composed in Los Angeles in 1945 and dedicated to his mentor's widow, Alma Mahler, Korngold's score employs themes from several of his successful film scores. The Concerto was premièred by Jascha Heifetz and the St. Louis Symphony in 1947, and the composer wrote that the music was conceived for an artist like Caruso rather than a virtuoso like Paganini: he had particular praise for Heifetz, in whose playing he believed that the finesse of the former and the technical largesse of the latter were combined. He might have expressed the same sentiments about Mr. Armstrong. The opening Moderato nobile movement is shaped by precisely the quality that the composer's marking requests: nobility. Bolstered by the generally fine playing of the young orchestral musicians and the reliably intelligent leadership of Maestro Marriner, Mr. Armstrong elucidates the broadly tuneful strands of Korngold's late-Romantic writing. This is nowhere more apt than in the Romanze: here, violinist,

orchestra, and conductor collaborate on a reading of concentrated intensity, the moody beauty of the music magnificently highlighted. After the Caruso-like effusions of the Romanze, the Allegro assai vivace final movement conjures the pyrotechnical displays of Paganini, and Mr. Armstrong proves no less capable of delivering thrills in extroverted passages. As with the Bartók and Bach Sonatas, he has clearly allowed himself time to truly understand Korngold's compositional idiom, and even in the company of very good recorded performances of Korngold's Concerto—including Heifetz's own—his traversal of the music is competitive.

What impresses most in the playing of Nigel Armstrong on this disc is not his technique, for it is to be hoped that any young violinist offered the opportunity to make a recording is an admirable technician. Mr. Armstrong leaves no doubt about the validity of his credentials as a musician, but the foremost joy of this disc is the inception of a recording career for an artist whose heart, soul, and intellect are as engaged by his playing as his fingers. There are many youngsters who can play the violin music of Bartók, Bach, and Korngold, but Mr. Armstrong is not another technically-proficient but spiritless product of a conservatory education. In the performances on this disc, he reveals himself to be an ingenious artist with much of value to say through music.

-Joseph Newsome, *Voix des Arts*

Nigel Armstrong, violin

Sir Neville Marriner, The Colburn Orchestra



Nigel Armstrong



Sir Neville Marriner

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|------|---|-------------------------|
| 1-4 | Sonata for Solo Violin | Béla Bartók |
| 5-8 | Violin Sonata No.3 in C Major, BWV 1005 | Johann Sebastian Bach |
| 9-11 | Violin Concerto in D Major - Moderato | Erich Wolfgang Korngold |

This recording made possible
with generous support from:

The Stratton-Petit Foundation
Ann and Jean Horton
Carlos and Haydee Mollura
Jerry and Terri Kohl

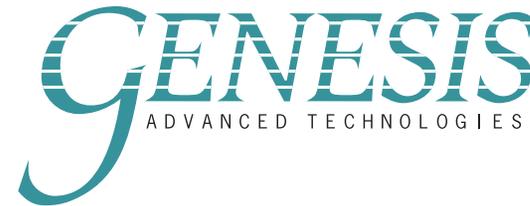
Recorded at the Brain and Creativity Institute's Cammilleri Hall,
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, October 21-23, 2013
Korngold violin concerto recorded in Royce Hall at UCLA, February 13th, 2011

Producer and Recording Engineer: Bob Attiyeh
Assistant Producer: Jacob Horowitz

Executive Producers: Randy & Linda Bellous

Mastering Engineers: Steve Hoffman & Bob Attiyeh

AKG C24 tube microphone: Gearworks Pro Audio
Microphone preamplification: Elliot Midwood



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