

  **GOMPPER Violin Concerto.** ¹ **Ikon.** ¹ **Flip.** **Spirals** ² • ^{1,2} **Wolfgang David,** ² **Peter Zazofsky (vn); Emmanuel Siffert, cond; Royal PO • NAXOS 8.559697 (70: 28)**

Despite David Gompper's having appeared on numerous previous CD releases as composer and pianist, this release is the first of what I hope will be many full discs devoted entirely to his music. Gompper is a superb composer, and these four excellent works are presented in first-rate, composer-supervised performances. The Violin Concerto, Ikon, and Spirals all feature violinist Wolfgang David, Gompper's frequent collaborator. The concerto (2009) is cast in a three-movement shape—two 10-minute movements precede a four-minute rondo finale. The work's harmonic material is based on a continuous series of perfect fifths. Gompper has related that the inspiration of the work comes from hearing echoes in the mountains (with shapes both predictable and unpredictable). The opening movement is very dramatic, the second movement beautifully lyrically, and the third joyous. This is an exhilarating and deeply expressive piece.

Ikon (2008) is based on the specific mathematical dimensions of an Estonian ikon of St. Nicolas. Gompper studied the process used by iconographers and created a series of pitch matrices and rhythmic proportions that relate specifically to the ikon's graphical proportions. The resulting work is largely atmospheric and mystical, with a particularly evocative ending full of ringing sonorities. Although it is only five minutes shorter than the concerto, it is a work of very different, extremely introverted character.

Flip (1993) for string orchestra is a delightful piece best described by quoting the composer's note: "[Flip] is a playful exhibition of three elemental ideas and their transformation as they 'flip' or switch places—registrally (high to low) and instrumentally (violins to double bass); harmonically and melodically—and eventually 'flip-out' with much protracted and extended emotional eruptions. Snippets of musical ideas are 'borrowed': the first phrase from the music of the popular TV show of the 1970s Flipper, as well as the rhythmic generator of the samba taken from the 1985 film Brazil, where the main character 'flips out.' The work contains various bursts of energy that set the gestures in motion, like a dancer doing back-flips, or one angered as they 'flip' someone off, including the uncertainty of the other's response."

Gompper began Spirals (2007) for two violins and string orchestra by applying the Fibonacci series to all properties of the musical composition. The title derives from the construction of the two musical spirals that form the basis of the work. Neither of these facts is at all important to the listener, however. The work's forward momentum is continuous, and the harmonic language is similar to the Violin Concerto.

The performances by the Royal Philharmonic are excellent. Violinist Wolfgang David has performed more of Gompper's music than probably any other single performer, and he plays it with conviction and deep understanding. Strongly recommended. **Carson Cooman* ***