

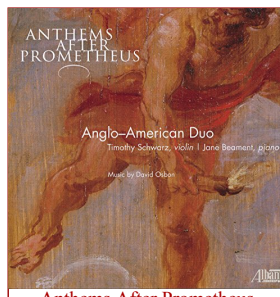
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**FEATURE REVIEW by Colin Clarke**

**OSBON Prometheus Sonata.<sup>1</sup> 5 Hommages.<sup>2</sup> Into the Sun.<sup>3</sup> Still Waiting for the Revolution<sup>4</sup> • 1, 2, 4** Jan Beament (pn); Timothy Schwarz (vn); <sup>4</sup>Lorraine Deacon (vc) • ALBANY 1712 (51:43)

David Osbon is a British composer who obtained his doctorate at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was one of the last students of George Crumb. Since then he has returned to the UK and is currently associate dean and head of graduate studies at the London College of Music. He also explored musical analysis at the University of Sussex.

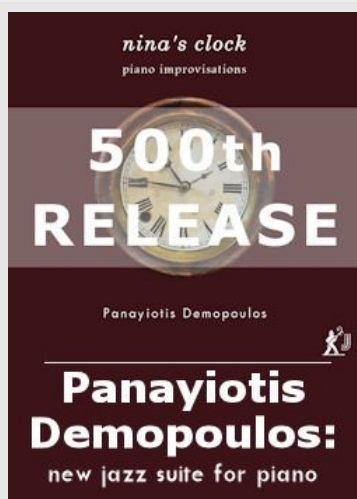


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Violinist Timothy Schwarz offers a little note in Albany's booklet about his fascination with creative couples (Robert and Clara Schumann, for instance), in response to the dynamic at play here: The pianist of the Anglo-American Duo, Jane Beament, is Osbon's wife. There is certainly a pronounced feeling of rapport between violinist, pianist, and composition around the performance of *Prometheus Sonata* of 2017, in which the seven ages of man meet the seven deadly sins. There are five "songs without words." The language is astringent in the first, "Titanic Dance," before becoming decidedly more interior in "Pandora's Destiny," beautifully performed here (as is the similarly expressive fourth movement, "Pandora's Dream"). Osbon's harmonies in "Pandora's Dream" are tender, sometimes veering towards jazz without ever claiming affiliation; Osbon's harmonies become grantically powerful in "Con fuoco!" (no need to explain the fire link to Prometheus in the title, surely). The finale, "Hercules and the Eagle," is obviously intended to project something of a titanic struggle.

Apparently the *Prometheus Sonata* was an attempt to portray in music the emotional states the composer was going through at the time of composition. The *Five Hommages* for violin and piano, premiered in 1999, celebrate Elgar, Beethoven, Messiaen, Crumb, and Nigel Kennedy respectively. Both the Elgar and the Messiaen make reference to works by those composers for the combination of violin and piano (Violin Sonata and *Quatuor pour le fin du temps*); the Messiaen invocation is particularly obvious, with softly repeated mystical chords on piano, over which the violin sings stratospherically. Timothy Schwarz's control of his instrument in this movement is particularly impressive. The shift to Crumb's music of the stars is beautifully achieved by Osbon. The 55-second homage to Nigel Kennedy reworks some of the material from the Elgar *Hommage* (due to links between Kennedy and the Elgar Violin Concerto).

The solo violin piece *Into the Sun* again takes as its basis another work by the composer: his Violin Concerto, which



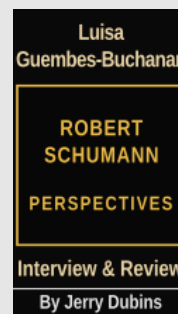
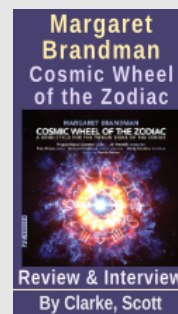
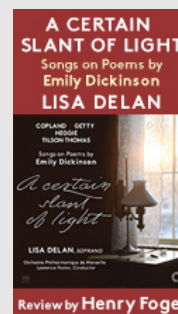
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was commissioned by Schwarz and was premiered by him in 2015. The piece is part of a transmedia project *Follow the Sun* (followthesunofficial.org). All credit to Timothy Schwarz for providing a performance as gripping from first to last as this one. The violin is forward in the soundstage but, thankfully, not right in one's ear. Osbon's piece sustains its length via a core of intensity, an intensity that holds throughout the work's silences (around half way through).

Finally, there comes the piece for piano trio, *Still Waiting for the Revolution*, which dates from 1999/2000. The composer's sojourn in Philadelphia had a bearing on the choice of material and its expression, although the piece was premiered in London (at St John's Smith Square). Vibrant and alive, the surface is often busy but never overloaded. The three players here (the Anglo-American Duo being joined by cellist Lorraine Deacon) seem particularly to relish the glacial stillness of the second movement, an interior exploration and a deconstruction of the *Shenandoah* melody. Players are asked to shout in the third movement, an intriguing, multifaceted panel marked simply *Ritmico*. The dramatic finale pulses in the most disturbing fashion, as if the repeated gestures want at once to acknowledge minimalism but simultaneously to destroy it.

The recording is close, as befits music that sets out to be intense, even occasionally claustrophobic. Sadly Osbon's one appearance on the *Fanfare* Archive finds his orchestral piece, *Liberty*, roundly dismissed by Walter Simmons (*Fanfare* 23:2). That is not a piece I have heard, but the present disc indicates a deep thinker with a wide expressive palette and sound compositional technique. Even the title of the disc implies this depth of thought: *Anthems after Prometheus*.  
**Colin Clarke**

This article originally appeared in Issue 41:6 (July/Aug 2018) of *Fanfare Magazine*.

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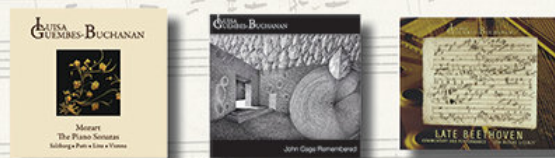
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