

Reviews and Testimonials

'In the cello-organ arrangements of three Bach chorale preludes, Hewes's restricted role of voicing the chorale tunes may have seemed diminished, but her contributions were effortlessly elegant. Rheinberger's own arrangements of three of his Six Pieces for violin and organ op. 150 allowed the young cellist to display a fondness for more expansive lines and to exude a powerful but never overwrought expression. In the more modern idiom of the Variations on a Hungarian Chorale by Budapest-born Gardonyi (now resident in Germany), Hewes brought drama to the often low-lying cello part, occasionally offset brightly by bracing organ cluster chords.'

The Strad Magazine (UK)

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'A kaleidoscope of colours and styles: they played with confidence and panache, connecting immediately with the audience.'

*John Fenstermaker (Presenter - Bower Chapel, Moorings Park, Naples, FL, USA)*

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'The Svyati Duo performed with grace and passion and the programming was interesting, well balanced and powerful. The combination of tone color between the instruments is magnificent and is still pleasantly ringing in my ears days afterwards. If you have not heard this outstanding duo you are missing a sensational experience. I highly recommend them.'

Dr Wallace Hinson (Presenter - Piedmont College, Demorest, GA, USA)

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'The Svyati Duo appeared on the Tuesday's Music Live in Augusta, Georgia, the country's largest luncheon concert series. More than 400 people gave the Duo a well-deserved standing ovation for a spectacular performance. Ms. Hewes cello technique was incredible and what a great combination with the organ which was skillfully managed by Julian Collings. We enjoyed their concert tremendously and look forward to a return engagement.'

*Keith Shafer (Artistic Director - Tuesday's Music Live, Inc. Augusta, GA, USA)*

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'The Svyati Duo program and performance in February exceeded every expectation, and the live acoustic and the setting of St. John's gave their program a mystical, transcendent quality, transcending time and place in every way.'

James E Barrett (Denver Drawknob - AGO Chapter Newsletter)

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'Rebecca Hewes' and Julian Collings' performance as Svyati Duo has been a real highlight of the 2012-13 season at Denver Cathedral. Julian's organ registration was masterful, finding color and power without overwhelming Rebecca's singing cello. His technique was flawless. The sound of Rebecca's cello was as mesmerizing as its player who commanded our aural attention through the sheer beauty of her playing. The program was varied - from Bach to Gárdonyi to Bednall. In addition, they are personally delightful and communicated exceedingly well with the audience.'

*Stephen Tappe (Organist & Director of Music - St John's Cathedral, Denver, CO, USA)*

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'We experienced a perfect blend of musicality and musical interpretation by two extraordinary performers in a consummate presentation of compositions. In addition to their technical proficiency, the kindness and warmth of their personalities shine through their performances.'

Lee Afdahl (A Festival of Music Concert Series - First Presbyterian Church, Rochester, MN, USA)

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'The rare instrumental combination gave an exceptional performance capturing the audience's attention like never before. In this "pipe organ" concert, the cello took a dominating role with its unique tender voice and demonstrated some unthinkable harmonies with the organ through the specially selected programme.'

*Hong Kong Cultural Centre*

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'One of the highlights of our concert series was a programme by the Svyati Duo from England. Rebecca and Julian dazzled the audience with their virtuosity and lively programming. Our local audiences are not attuned to truly contemporary classical music, and yet Svyati Duo were able to project the music in a delightful and engaging way. It was great fun to listen to, and the audience, from seasoned musician to 'buffs' were enjoying the programme as much as I was. This unusual pairing of organ and

cello has a fascinating repertoire. We heard the organ and cello do things that I didn't know they could do. Then I did myself an enormous favour and purchased a CD from the duo, and have been luxuriating in even more music for this genre. We'll have to have the Svyati Duo back again - this is good stuff!

Angela Saunders (St George's Church, Germantown, TN, USA)

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'Like a fine wine that perfectly complements the meal, the sound of a cello accompanied by an organ proved to be a delightful combination when The Svyati Duo, featuring Rebecca Hewes, cellist, and Julian Collings, organist, performed on the Heissler organ concert series of St. Petersburg College (FL) this past spring. These two performers conclusively proved themselves to be artists of the highest caliber.

While experiencing the magnificent artistry of these two young people, I found myself listening with eyes closed and imagining that I was in Carnegie Hall. I am certain that the audience in attendance that evening felt the same way. The Svyati Duo has a fascinating and varied repertoire, and it was this repertoire that initially attracted my attention as a presenter. I was not disappointed in the least. Their concert wound up being one of the highlights of the season, and I can scarcely contain my enthusiasm to have them perform again in the future. For those who might wonder if the grandeur of an organ would overpower the intimacy of the cello-fear not. Mr. Collings is a master at picking the proper balance so as to best present both instruments, and Ms. Hewes is quite successful at bringing out the complete range of dynamics and expressiveness that the cello can offer. On a personal note, I found both Rebecca and Julian to be down-to-earth, easy-going, and full of good humor. Presenters know to value highly the personal as well as the professional relationship! Please consider this to be a thoroughly confident endorsement of the artistry, dedication and professionalism that The Svyati Duo brings to the concert stage.

*Paul Dixon (Artistic Director - The Heissler Organ Concert Series of St. Petersburg College, FL, USA)*

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'Thank you so much for the wonderful concert the Svyati Duo provided on April 10 for our concert series. It was a very refreshing and enjoyable program, and it was inspiring to be introduced to some new repertoire. Rebecca and Julian are each superb musicians and complement each other so beautifully. The sound of the cello and organ together was exquisite.'

Sarah Hawbecker (Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, GA, USA)

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'Thank you for your wonderful concert here last spring. You are absolutely delightful people and your performance at Westminster was brilliant! The Gubaidulina was especially powerful and riveting.'

*Al Fedak (Westminster Presbyterian Church, Albany, NY, USA)*

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'On Friday evening 12 February, the Syvati Duo performed at St. Paul's Church, Bristol Parish, Petersburg, VA. They delivered a stellar performance of varied and captivating repertoire. Of course, the combination of cello and organ is not commonly heard, which made the program even more interesting. Rebecca produced sonorous, warm tones, displaying mature expression and solid intonation and technique. Organist Julian Collings supported cellist Rebecca Hewes with tasteful, colorful registration and musical, precise playing. The organ balanced perfectly with the cello at all times. I spoke with many of the audience members following the performance, all of whom were very impressed with and gratified by the concert. All in all, this duo is first-rate. As organist and choirmaster of St. Paul's, Bristol Parish, I maintain a monthly concert series and highly recommend the Syvati Duo.'

Charles Lindsey Jr (St Paul's Church, Petersburg, VA, USA)

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'Rebecca's playing was inspired, and inspiring, and also very moving. The excellent organ playing added colour and excitement, and despite the possible problem of distance, the two instruments combined faultlessly.'

*Deborah Sandringham (St Alfege Church, Greenwich, London, UK)*

## **CD Reviews**

'The pairing of organ and trumpet is well known; less so that of organ and cello. So it's good to welcome a recording that makes such a strong case for it. Yorkshire-born Rebecca Hewes, a cellist of great talent, is partnered by another fine young musician, Julian Collings, in a programme that includes works by Rheinberger and Dupre. Highlights are the bubbling Humoresque of Jongen and a thoughtful new piece, Invisible Landscapes, by Russell Hepplewhite. A splendid enterprise.'

*Yorkshire Post*

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'Music for organ and cello is not a common thing in the recording studio, though it happens often in the real world. The blend is a natural, as this program demonstrates...Altogether a very listenable program, played with conviction and beauty of tone.'

American Record Guide

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'Cello-organ duos are not exactly thick on the ground. Indeed, the question that immediately comes to mind is whether the cello can hold its own in such a tandem...As the music on this CD proves, the answer to that inquiry is an unqualified "yes"—and the partnership for the most part even proves felicitous. The performances are exemplary. Rebecca Hewes has a sumptuous, mahogany tone and bold arresting sound, and plays with both power and delicacy as required. Julian Collings is an able accompanist with an excellent ear for apt choices of registrations and stops.'

*Fanfare Magazine*

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'An adventurous program of works for Cello and Organ performed by two fine players and recorded in a very fine acoustic...In a program of 19th- and 20th-century works, they adventurously explore textures and literature for their instruments in a sympathetic and well-recorded acoustic.'

Organ Historical Society

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'Here is a varied program of 20th Century compositions for cello and organ mingled with transcriptions of earlier music, played with fervor and taste by two young British musicians who are blending their talents in discovering and commissioning this kind of repertoire. The recorded sound is rich and satisfying, and so is the playing.'

*American Record Guide*

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'An unusual and exciting CD!'

Orgelnieuws (Netherlands)

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'The players are excellent in all the many styles they portray, from gentle lyricism to powerful drama to kooky sound effects. This is a fine release.'

*American Record Guide*