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ADD

A tribute to  
**PHYLLIS SELICK, Pianist** (1911 - 2007)

1	<b>Couperin</b>	Le Pavolet Flotant	2:22	13	<b>Chopin</b>	Prelude Op.28 No.10	
2	"	Le Carillon de Cythère	1:56		"	in C-sharp minor	0:26
3	<b>Rameau</b>	Les Tendres Plaintes	2:59	14	"	Etude Op.10 No.5	
4	<b>Daquin</b>	Le Coucou	1:39		"	in G-flat major	1:44
5	<b>Poulenc</b>	Pastourelle	2:13	15	<b>Harry Hodge</b>	Waltz in A flat	2:11
6	<b>Ibert</b>	Le Petit Ane Blanc	1:47	16	" "	Gavotte & Musette	3:00
7	<b>Poulenc</b>	Adagietto		17	" "	Variations in G minor	9:03
		(from <i>Les Biches</i> )	3:24	18	" "	Toccatina	2:28
8	<b>Debussy</b>	Reflets dans l'Eau	4:40		<b>Tippett Piano Sonata No.1</b>		
9	"	Feux d'Artifice	4:16	19	1 <sup>st</sup> movt. Allegro - Allegro vigoroso - Molto		
10	<b>Ravel</b>	Prelude *	2:13		allegro scherzando - Allegro molto -		
11	"	Rigaudon *	2:19		Tempo del principio	8:13	
12	"	Toccata *	3:54	20	2 <sup>nd</sup> movt. Andante tranquillo	4:29	
				21	3 <sup>rd</sup> movt. Presto	3:52	
				22	4 <sup>th</sup> movt. Rondo giocoso	4:37	

\* (from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*)

Total duration 73:56

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A tribute to  
*Phyllis Sellick*  
Pianist (1911-2007)

Includes Music by  
Couperin  
Rameau  
Poulenc  
Ibert  
Debussy  
Ravel  
Chopin & Tippett

The death of Phyllis Sellick on May 26th 2007, three weeks before what would have been her 96th birthday, removed the last of the great British female pianists of her generation, artists who had begun to make their reputations before World War II and who found the esteem in which they were later held significantly increased by the work they undertook during the hostilities.

Phyllis Sellick was born in Ilford, Essex. Her father was of West country stock and her mother was by all accounts an accomplished amateur painter. Phyllis entered the Royal Academy of Music in 1925 studying for several years before being accepted at the Paris Conservatoire as a pupil of Isidor Philipp, who had been a pupil of Georges Mathias (himself one of Chopin's few pupils), Saint-Saens and Stephen Heller. It was from Philipp that Sellick deepened her love of French music – which she imparted to *her* pupils – and of teaching (Philipp was one of the finest piano pedagogues of the first half of the 20th century – he died aged 95 from a fall in the Paris Metro). In the direct line of Isidor Philipp, Phyllis Sellick's command of the music of Chopin, Schumann and the late 19th - early 20th-Century French school was justly admired, as we may appreciate in the rare collection of solo items in this anthology of her art. While she was studying in Paris, she played to Maurice Ravel on several occasions, going through the G major Concerto, the *Sonatine* and *Alborada del gracioso* which, apparently, she found easier to execute on Ravel's French piano than on a modern Steinway.

Phyllis Sellick made her orchestral debut in Harrogate in 1932 playing the Grieg Concerto, with which she became closely associated. She also built her reputation as a notable champion of contemporary music, with which her excellently finished technique coped admirably. In the mid-1930s a BBC recital of Music by John Ireland, Ravel and Falla drew considerable praise from the press, and it was about this time that she met the British pianist Cyril Smith. He had studied, and also taught, at the Royal College of Music, and was to become one of the greatest of all British pianists. They married in 1937 and had two children, and first played together professionally at the Henry Wood Proms in 1941 – Sir Henry bequeathing to them one of his Steinway pianos, to match one they already owned. It was in 1941 that Phyllis Sellick made her first recording, of Michael Tippett's *Fantasy-Sonata* (No. 1 of the four he eventually wrote). She had given the world premiere of the work in 1938 at Queen Mary Hall in Bloomsbury, and this recording was a semi-private issue for the specialist classical record shop, Rimington Van Wyck, which was located just off Leicester Square in London's West End. The Sonata was recorded at the Decca Studios with Tippett present; he was so impressed with her commitment to his work ("A delightful work... beautifully played by Phyllis Sellick" wrote Compton Mackenzie in *Gramophone Magazine* in October 1941) that he dedicated his next work to her, the *Fantasia on a Theme of Handel* for piano and orchestra, which she premiered at Wigmore Hall in March 1942.

During the War she and her husband undertook many concert tours and engagements for the Allied Forces, including a tour of India. Phyllis Sellick continued to juggle her solo career alongside her duo partnership with her husband, and in 1945 she made the first recording of Walton's revised *Sinfonia Concertante* for piano and orchestra, with the composer conducting the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Curiously, Cyril Smith had given the first performance of this version a little while before his wife's recording was made. Her commercial discography grew in the 1940s with various two-piano works with her husband, and singly and together, Phyllis Sellick and Cyril Smith continued their careers, playing repertoire concertos and recitals, and introducing works specially written for them. But on a tour of Russia in 1956, owing to inadequate pressurisation in the aircraft taking them from Kiev to Kharkov, Cyril Smith suffered a stroke in the air, which saw the left side of his body permanently paralysed.

On returning to England, with commendable courage they began to build a repertoire of new works for three hands at two pianos, and to arrange existing two-piano (four-hand) works for three hands. This was a very difficult undertaking, but encouraged by the example of Lennox Berkeley, who arranged his two-piano Concerto (which had had written in 1948, and which had been premiered by them) for three hands, other composers obliged either with arrangements of their two-piano concertos (notably Arthur Bliss) or wrote new ones for them (Malcolm Arnold, Gordon Jacobs and Graham Whettam), resulting in new engagements and recordings.

In 1964 Phyllis Sellick was appointed to the staff of the Royal College of Music, and in her later years she became a much-loved and greatly-admired teacher. Cyril Smith died in 1974, and although she continued to concertise with a new two-piano partner Terence Beckles, teaching occupied her more often in her later years. She continued to give lessons well into her 90s.

This collection of solo recordings demonstrates her qualities admirably. In the first place her technique is flawless, but over and above that essential pre-requisite is her profound artistry, which often reaches the heart of the individual work, no doubt through the provenance of her musical breeding – most particularly in the music of Chopin and the later French school, as we may hear. We can also appreciate that Phyllis Sellick possessed that rare ability of communicating joy in the very act of music-making – a gift that few pianists possess – which far transcends the occasionally impersonal medium of recording.