

# American Record Guide

Vol 78, No 5 November/December 2015

Our 80th Year of Publication

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AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE (ISSN 0003-0716) is published bimonthly for \$45.00 a year for individuals (\$55.00 for institutions) by Record Guide Productions, 4412 Braddock Street, Cincinnati OH 45204.

Phone: (513) 941-1116

E-mail: subs@americanrecordguide.com Web: www.americanrecordguide.com

Periodical postage paid at Mattoon IL.

**POSTMASTER: Send address changes to American Record Guide, 4412 Braddock Street, Cincinnati, OH 45204-1006**

Student rates are available on request. Allow eight weeks for shipment of first copy. Outside USA add \$25.00 postage. All subscriptions must be paid with US dollars or credit card. Claims for missing issues should be made within six months of publication. Retail distribution by Ubiquity. Contents are indexed annually in the Nov/Dec or Jan/Feb issue and in The Music Index, The International Index to Music, and ProQuest Periodical Abstracts.

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# **SORABJI: *Piano Pieces***

Michael Habermann

Naxos 571363 [3CD] 198 minutes

This is a reissue of a British Music Society set first reviewed on these pages in September/October 2004. Jack Sullivan gave it a glowing review concluding with "Don't miss it".

My own responses to the English-Parsee composer range from wonderful to a possibly grueling slog. These highly perfumed, dense, and seemingly abstract essays are very difficult to play, often very difficult to listen to, and wildly brain challenging. I agree with Sullivan's drawing a parallel with "late Liszt and Scriabin", though that would only be a point of departure.

This set divides the selection of music into three parts: Early Works; Nocturnes; and Assertive Works. Sullivan likes the Nocturnes best of all, while I find rewarding discoveries in each category. Remember that these are not your father's nocturnes. CD 2 contains three of them reaching stentorian timings from around 20 minutes to a full half hour. None of this music is easily absorbed, but swimming in molasses was never an easy task.

Habermann deserves full accolades for his sympathetic performances and for his technical skills. The sound varies from date and place of recording. While some are digital and others not, what reaches the ear is cause for little complaint. Habermann's notes are quite complete, but in very small print.

This is an excellent survey to get your feet wet in Sorabji's world. Just don't expect to fall in love with the first bite.

BECKER