

theWholeNote

From the strident opening notes of the Sonata for Cello and Piano No.2 in A Minor (1919) by Guy Ropartz (1864-1955) the new Le Palais des Dégustateurs release Guy Ropartz | Albéric Magnard (PDD029 lepalaisdesdegustateurs.com) commands the listener's attention. As with the previous disc, little known gems are presented in



stunning performances by Alain Meunier and Anne le Bozec. To say the Ropartz opens stridently is not to suggest that the work is abrasive however, and the subsequent movements – Lent et calme and Très lent – Assez animé – are warm and lush. Ropartz and Magnard were neighbours and friends, both proud of their Breton heritage. Magnard (1865-1914) died defending his home from invading Germans in the early days of the First World War. In the attack his house was burned and several manuscripts destroyed but fortunately Ropartz was able to reconstitute from memory the orchestration of Magnard's opera Guercoeur. The Sonata for Cello and Piano Op.20 in A Major from 1910 is in four movements, opening traditionally with a fast movement Sans lenteur – Alla zingarese followed by a brief Scherzo lasting less than three minutes. The Funèbre third movement

is followed by a boisterous finale bringing a wonderful disc to a rollicking close.

I was surprised to hear from the Dégustateurs label founder and renowned vintner Èric Rouyer, that he finds it hard to produce recordings of French music, presumably due to market pressures, although further on in these pages you will see another of his recordings featuring the piano music of contemporary Frenchman Guy Sacre, with soloist Billy Eidi. I commend Rouyer for his efforts to unearth neglected repertory pieces and, with such outstanding performers as here, he is to be congratulated and encouraged to continue his exploration of “the road less travelled.”