



## CHARLIE SIEM

**Violin works by Bazzini, Kreisler, Paganini, Ponce, Sarasate, Waxman & Wieniawski**

Charlie Siem (violin),  
Caroline Jaya-Ratnam (piano)  
Warner 2564 67804-7 47:57 mins

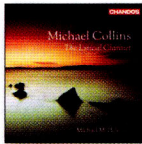
**BBC Music Direct £12.99**

Having made something of an impression with his recording of Sonatas by Grieg and Elgar in 2008, the 25-year-old Charlie Siem has now come up with a disc of lollipops – and rather a short disc to be retailing at full price. He's certainly up to most technical challenges, though some of the faster music can be unfocused in pitch and tone, especially when higher up the instrument: in this sense the Wieniawski/Kreisler *Caprice* was an unwise start to the CD, and Bazzini's *Ronde des lutins* doesn't always sound comfortable.

But he's more at home in the two Paganini *Caprices* and the *Paisiello Variations*, perhaps because he is not trying to compete with Jaya-Ratnam's brittle sounding piano. This may have more to do with the closeness of the recording than the actual playing – Siem himself could bloom more in the acoustic, especially in the more lyrical passages in Waxman's *Carmen fantasie* and Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*. And it's in places like this that there's also a lack of charm. Siem introduces the final track, Ponce's *Estrellita*, where suddenly there's a feeling of relaxation and enjoyment – otherwise this is all rather relentless. *Martin Cotton*

**PERFORMANCE ★★**

**RECORDING ★★★**



## THE LYRICAL CLARINET

**Clarinet works by Baermann, Burgmüller, Finzi, Pärt, Poulenc, Reade & Saint-Saëns**

Michael Collins (clarinet),  
Michael McHale (piano)  
Chandos CHAN10637 80:27 mins

**BBC Music Direct £12.99**

Hard on the heels of Michael Collins's *The Virtuoso Clarinet*, reviewed in January, comes its companion, *The Lyrical Clarinet*. The distinction is a somewhat arbitrary one. The Sonatas by Saint-Saëns and Poulenc do indeed have more than their fair share of lyricism, but require plenty of virtuosity as well. And the clarinet's simple scale-wise long notes in Arvo Pärt's rapt *Spiegel im Spiegel*, though admittedly anti-virtuosic, are equally anti-lyrical. But there's certainly lyricism of an intimate English variety in Gerald Finzi's *Five Bagatelles*, and an uncomplicated tunefulness in the late Paul Reade's Suite from his music for the TV series *The Victorian Kitchen Garden*. And lyrical early Romanticism is well represented by Heinrich Baermann's *Adagio*, and the Duo by Norbert Burgmüller, a short-lived contemporary of Mendelssohn and Schumann.

It's hard to imagine this varied programme better played than it is here by Collins and Michael McHale. They're technically impeccable and stylistically flexible, and, aided by an unobtrusively excellent recording, they both produce some beautiful *pianissimo* playing. *Anthony Burton*

**PERFORMANCE ★★★★★**

**RECORDING ★★★★★**