

a photograph showing the four instruments he plays: modern copies of flutes made in Brussels around 1740, Berlin around 1750, and Dresden around 1760. One has separate keys for E-flat and D-sharp. Granatiero is accompanied by cello and harpsichord. The playing is marvelous, and some of the writing for flute has considerable virtuosity. The sound is very clear and balanced so everyone comes across just right.

Steven Zohn of Temple University in Philadelphia has contributed the notes. The cover is a painting by Claude-Joseph Vernet from 1753 chosen to coordinate with the theme of the program: light and darkness. The French magazine *Diapason* gave this album its Golden Tuning Fork award in March 2023. I concur completely about its excellence.

GORMAN

BARNES: *Portraits*; see MOZART

BARTOK: *Divertimento for Strings*;

BRITTEN: *Bridge Variations*

Polish Chamber Orchestra/ Jerzy Maksymiuk

MDG 102 0180—52 minutes

This is a reissue (Jan/Feb 1989). Performances are good in both works. The Bartok has a gritty string sound appropriate to its content. The Britten is done with the skill needed best to effect its long, complex lines. The ensemble plays with accurate rhythms and sensitive dynamics. Maestro Maksymiuk's interpretations show a good grasp of the works' structure, and the sound is fine.

O'CONNOR

BEACH: *Viola Pieces*

Dreaming; Romance; Sonata; Invocation; Lento Espressivo

Matteo Amadasi; Katia Spluga, p

Stradivarius 37259—53 minutes

Here is (if I may put it so) all the viola music that Amy Beach didn't write. Everything here was originally for violin and is transcribed by the violist, Matteo Amadasi. (There is a corresponding print edition of the transcriptions, by Edizioni Eufonia.)

The big piece is the 1896 Sonata, in 4 extensive movements. It has the hallmarks of all Beach's large-scale works with piano, including fine themes and a somewhat galumphing (though, of course, expertly

contrived) piano part. Amadasi, who boasts a robust and unusually even sound, makes it—like everything else here—sound meant for the viola; there aren't any of the tell-tale stigmata of adaptation. The smaller pieces, especially the opening *Dreaming*, are tenderly and affectionately done.

Giordano Montecchi's note lays out some of the contradictions in Beach's character. She was a champion of American music, but not of Negro folk traditions; she drew rather on music of the British Isles, which she considered the true roots of a new American tradition. Montecchi credits this observation to Richard Taruskin, adding that Beach was also a "deeply religious Episcopalian" (now there's a contradiction, if you like) and a Daughter of the American Revolution. What she thought of Marian Anderson's 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, when the DAR barred her from Constitution Hall, the notes do not reveal. (Beach died in 1944.)

Katia Spluga is the fine pianist. Sound is a trifle close, but not unduly so.

THOMSON

BEETHOVEN: *Cello & Piano*

Ramon Bassal & Maria Canyigueral

Da Vinci 749 [2CD] 147 minutes

Here we have Beethoven's five cello sonatas in their dated order of composition and three sets of variations separating them from each other. His two sonatas, Op. 5 surround 12 Variations, Op. 66 on 'Ein Madchen oder Weibchen' from Mozart's *Magic Flute*. Then the program ends with 7 Variations on 'Bei Mannern, welche Liebe fuhlen' from the same opera.

Disc 2 begins with Beethoven's glorious Sonata, Op. 69, followed by Variations on a theme from Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus*. We finish with the two strong sonatas, Op. 102.

Cellist Bassal was born in Barcelona in 1988. He is having a fine career. Pianist Canyigueral is shown with him on the cover. Their playing and working together are well worth our eartime.

D MOORE

BEETHOVEN: *Overtures*

Minnesota Orchestra/ Stanislaw Skrowaczewski—Vox 3026—74 minutes

This is labeled "Overtures and Incidental

Music". but there is very little of the latter. All the overtures are here except the 4 for *Fidelio*.

The engineering is stunning. In fact, it adds to Beethoven's aggressiveness; what usually sounds merely frantic sounds downright hysterical here. You can't listen to this very often; it will rip you apart. In an angry mood you might enjoy it. It just makes me realize why Beethoven is not one of my favorite composers. But Skrowaczewski is a brilliant conductor.

This was originally 3 LPs, a Vox Box. Was there anything else on it? 74 minutes on 3 LPs?

VR00N

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Sonata 29*
with **STOCKHAUSEN:** *Klavierstück X*
Marc Ponthus
Bridge 9584—62 minutes

with **IVES:** *Concord Sonata*
Christian Kälberer
Thorofon 2681—75 minutes

Two new performances of Beethoven's longest and technically most demanding piano sonata, the *Hammerklavier*, by specialists in 20th Century avant-garde music. Each is paired with a work where their expertise may be expected to shine. 137 minutes of music in all, of which I heard only about 41. To be precise, I listened to Ponthus's Beethoven (40 minutes) in toto but only to the beginnings of the other three items.

His playing is nervous and restless. A tendency to contract sequences of fast notes and shorten rests results in uneven rhythm. His touch is hard and stabbing, with strong accents. The fugue in particular seems to consist mainly of accented notes, with the 16ths running along in the background. There are few quiet moments, even in III, which sounds agitated rather than contemplative. There is no gentleness or subtlety, which this sonata needs badly from time to time, since it's a rather relentless composition to begin with. All in all, this is not a distinguished performance, though it is not boring.

I don't think I've ever heard any of Stockhausen's pieces. What little I have read about him convinced me that he was crazy and wrote despicable music. Hearing the

beginning of the piece played by Ponthus proved me right instantly. Disc ejected.

Kälberer starts the Beethoven sonata at a ridiculously fast tempo and with a messy jumble of notes. It is a travesty.

Ives's *Concord Sonata* is a strange but original piece. It is quaintly expressive, rarely ugly, and has moments of haunting stillness. A sensitive performer can bring it to life. Such a one is the young German Fabian Müller, to whose interpretation at the 2020 Schwetzingen Festival (recorded from the radio) I listened first. I enjoyed it quite a lot, even though I am not an Ives fan. But I instantly hated Kälberer, who just hammers out the notes on an unpleasant sounding Fazioli. I quickly terminated this torture.

This is not all. Kälberer's booklet bulges with his 21-page philosophical essay, including 80 footnotes, on "Die Dynamik der Humanen Zeit" (The Dynamics of Human Time), of which mercifully only some 7 pages have been translated into English. We learn that "Beethoven starts to crumble at the point where Hegel becomes ideological" (Adorno) and "Music is materialization of philosophy as time". A similar essay graced the booklet of Kälberer's recording of Bach's *Art of Fugue*, which Bradley Lehman (M/A 2018) considered "dreadful" and "[without] any redeeming elements". At least this pianist is consistent.

REPP

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Sonatas 30-32*

Jin Ju—MDG 9472274 [SACD] 67 minutes

The cover image suggests that the star of this release is the piano, a handsome walnut Steinway D built in 1901, named "Manfred Bürki", probably after a previous owner. It has indeed a beautiful sound and has been used in other MDG recordings, two of which are reviewed in this issue.

Jin Ju (b 1976) is Chinese but lives in Italy. This is her fifth solo recording for MDG. Alan Becker reviewed three of the previous ones (Schumann, S/O 2011; Beethoven-Schubert-Czerny, M/J 2012; Chopin, M/A 2014) with increasing enthusiasm, though seemingly short of full conviction. (We have not reviewed a second Chopin disc.) He thought her Beethoven *Appassionata* was too intense.

Hearing her for the first time, I share Mr Becker's general impression. She has a

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