



# Reviews

Jenny Lin plays Mompou • Primakov's expressive Mozart • Gompper's Violin Concerto

## Mompou

Música Callada. 9 Impresiones intimas - No 8, 'Secreto'

Jenny Lin *pf*

Steinway & Sons © 30004 (75' • DDD)

**A welcome addition to a marvellous pianist's deeply satisfying discography**



The 28 pieces comprising Mompou's *Música Callada* ("Silent Music") are delicate, evocative, harmonically gorgeous jewels that can't help

but quietly shine in the hands of pianists willing to serve them up with tender, loving care, like Jenny Lin. What is more, she manages to assert her individuality while paying close heed to the text. For example, in No 2, she inflects the short phrases with the subtlest of *rubatos* that help give character to the different dynamic levels. She reveals No 4 in a bleaker, plainer, more deliberate light than the relatively suaver Javier Perianes and Herbert Henck, giving special attention to the bass-line upbeat. If I ultimately prefer Perianes's brisker, more pliable No 5 to Lin's slower austerity, Lin's shapely and texturally rich rendition of No 16's right-hand triplet figurations and pillar-like left-hand melody notes mirror Mompou's own pianism. In fact, Lin's tempi and phrasings often give the impression that she has taken the composer's recorded versions into account, certainly more than Henck's frequently faster traversals; compare the playful Allegretto No 9 and you'll hear for yourself. In contrast to the mellow, resonant sonics of the Perianes and Henck editions, Lin enjoys markedly closer, more intimate, yet full-bodied engineering that well suits this repertoire. In short, this release is a welcome addition to this marvellous pianist's ever expanding, well-rounded, refreshingly unhackneyed and deeply satisfying discography.

Jed Distler

## Mozart

'Piano Concertos, Vol 2'

Piano Concertos - No 11, K 413;

No 20, K466; No 21, K467

Vassily Primakov *pf*

Odense Symphony Orchestra / Simon Gaudenz

Bridge © BRIDGE9339 (78' • DDD)

**These musicians locate the drama in some of Mozart's finest concertos**



Continuing his headlong plunge on a modern piano into the heart of Mozart's piano concertos, Vassily Primakov achieves an expressive

sense of touch and colour that Mozart must have intended for the instruments of his time. Through the three performances generously included on this new release, one can hear the young Mozart blossom into the consummate artist whose piano concertos, when played with such personal attention as Primakov gives, are veritable operas in three movements.

Less than three years after the unexpected charms of little K413, its exquisite *Larghetto* slow movement a lingering source of Watteau-like beauty, Mozart dramatically upped the ante with K466 in D minor; in Primakov's hands, it rivals *Don Giovanni* in high drama and risk-taking thrills. The opening movement has not been played so fast and furiously since Edwin Fischer in the 1930s and, for once, Primakov, with his triplet fascination, makes Beethoven's cadenza for the first movement sound like he's on the same page as Mozart, exposing the emotional dimensionality through separating layers of tone and harmony. The offbeat iconoclasm of Christian Zacharias's last-movement cadenza is the perfect foil to such a serious approach.

There is more room for laughter in K467, more opportunities for appreciating Primakov's comfort with making ornamentation sound both felicitous and spontaneous. The orchestra provide a wonderful martial air in the first movement and silky background noises in the second. The first-movement cadenza, by Dinu Lipatti, is a great hulking beast of a thing, three sumptuous minutes of speculation and fantasy.

Simon Gaudenz and the Odense orchestra partner Primakov with passionate unanimity, especially precise in key transitional and cadential passages, and the woodwinds are bright and cheerful with occasional rustic accents.

The absorbing booklet-notes by Malcolm MacDonald suggest the breadth

and complexity of Mozart's writing and habits with ease and authority and pay attention to the importance of each concerto's cadenzas.

The sound is a bit rough and ready, but the piano throughout sounds luminous without being thrust forward artificially.

Laurence Vittes

## Newton

Between the Cherubim<sup>a</sup>. In a Moment,

In the Twinkling of an Eye<sup>b</sup>. Mass<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Elissa Johnston *sop* <sup>bc</sup>Tracy Van Fleet *mez*

<sup>c</sup>Daniel Chaney *ten* <sup>c</sup>Abdiel Gonzales *bbar*

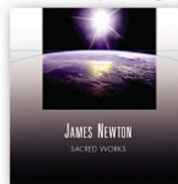
<sup>c</sup>Gary Woodward *fl* <sup>b</sup>Gary Boyyer *cl* <sup>b</sup>Julie Feves *bn*

<sup>a</sup>Gloria Cheng, <sup>b</sup>Vicki Ray, <sup>c</sup>Mark Menzies *pf*

<sup>bc</sup>Grant Gershon *cond*

New World Records © 80714-2 (65' • DDD)

**Atmospheric account of a 'Mass' taking off in surprising musical directions**



James Newton has forged an eclectic career as jazz flautist, conductor and composer. Here, he demonstrates his skills as creator of

sacred music with hints of jazz and roots in modernist aesthetics. All of these scores are intricate in design, with florid vocal lines and myriad instrumental challenges. The music tends to be austere when it's not euphoric.

The most ambitious work is *Mass* (2006-07), which is scored for vocal quartet and small ensemble. In five movements, the piece heads in all sorts of surprising musical directions, abounding in improvisatory-like gestures and piquant harmonies, as well as glistening instrumental colours.

The Latin text remains crystal clear, even when voices and instruments are tightly interwoven. *Credo* is sinuous and spiky; *Sanctus* a cornucopia of pop and avant-garde tendencies, complete with jazzy piano, drums and bass touches. Vibraphone plays a major role in *Agnus Dei*, whose solo and ensemble wisps provide the work with a haunting farewell. Grant Gershon conducts the expert musicians in a lucid and atmospheric account.

Newton's *Between the Cherubim* (2007) comprises three short movements dedicated to keyboard colleagues who are characterised in the music. The score juxtaposes stillness and darting passages to



intriguing effect. Gloria Cheng's performance is the epitome of crisp, nuanced virtuosity. The vocal lines are sung and spoken in *In a Moment, In the Twinkling of an Eye* (2004, revised 2009), for soprano, clarinet, bassoon and soprano. As in *Mass*, Newton sets words deftly amid vivid instrumental writing. The soprano, Elissa Johnston, is gleaming and intrepid; her colleagues equally superlative.

Donald Rosenberg

## Wolfgang

Encounters<sup>a</sup>. *Low Agenda*<sup>b</sup>. *Quiet Time*<sup>c</sup>. *Rolling Hills & Jagged Ridges*<sup>d</sup>. *Still Waters*<sup>e</sup>. *Theremin's Journey*<sup>f</sup>. *Three Short Stories*<sup>g</sup>

<sup>a</sup>g<sup>h</sup>Judith Farmer *bn* <sup>b</sup>Nico Abondolo *db*

<sup>a</sup>Sara Parkins, <sup>d</sup>Tereza Stanislav *vns*

<sup>e</sup>Brian Dembow *va* <sup>c</sup>Joanne Pearce Martin,

<sup>d</sup>Bryan Pezzone, <sup>c</sup>Gloria Cheng *pf*

<sup>f</sup>Gernot Wolfgang *electronica programming*

Albany Records © TROY1248 (66' • DDD)

**Winning sonic arsenal from composer with jazz, film and TV music background**



The seven engaging works on "short stories [more groove-oriented chamber music]" come from the brain of a composer who is a stylistic chameleon.

Although there are many nods to jazz, folk and Latin music, the influences come across as partners to Gernot Wolfgang's creative individuality.

Rhythmic buoyancy is one element in the composer's winning sonic arsenal, which isn't surprising, considering his background. Austrian-born and California-based, Wolfgang has played jazz guitar and written film and TV music. The chamber works on this disc reveal his affection for thematic accessibility, harmonic diversity and unconventional instrumental combinations and effects.

The repertoire embraces everything from puckish humour and jubilation to haunting modernism and lyrical radiance. Wolfgang is especially inventive in frisky and poetic material for such pairings as bassoon and double bass, as in *Low Agenda*, and viola and bassoon, which weave *Three Short Stories*.

Wolfgang's ability to tell tiny tales in sound is vividly evident in *Rolling Hills & Jagged Ridges*, for violin and piano, and the three delightful miniatures that make up *Encounters*, for violin and bassoon.

*Still Waters* is a tranquil tone-poem for piano, marked by sighs and sustained notes, while *Theremin's Journey* places that curiously otherworldly instrument and



## Garrop

In *Eleanor's Words*<sup>a</sup>. *Silver Dagger*<sup>b</sup>.

String Quartet No 3, 'Gaia'<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Buffy Baggott *mezz* <sup>a</sup>Kuang-Hao Huang *pf*

<sup>b</sup>Lincoln Trio <sup>b</sup>Biava Quartet

Cedille Records © CDR90000 122 (68' • DDD)



Based on recorded evidence from two Cedille anthologies, the music of Stacy Garrop has seemed well worth following.

This album, the first devoted entirely to her works, reveals both the talent and breadth promised in those earlier works.

At the heart of the programme is *In Eleanor's Words*, a song-cycle derived from the newspaper columns of Eleanor Roosevelt. Roosevelt's prose bubbles off the page with such natural grace that it's to Garrop's credit that the music is equally buoyant, shifting between narrative action and emotional reflection with quasi-operatic ease. To the credit of mezzo-soprano Buffy Baggott, I needed to

check the printed texts only a couple of times – and then only at the extremes of her vocal range.

Garrop's String Quartet No 3, *Gaia*, is a marked advance from her Second String Quartet from Cedille's "Composers in the Loft" collection. With the composer attempting to portray nothing less than the creation of the world, her musical audacity has much to admire. Just as with the voice, Garrop knows where and how to place strings for maximum impact. But compared with *Eleanor*, whose structure is fairly well determined by the text, *Gaia* tends to ramble, particularly in its final movement.

On the other hand, the opening piano trio *Silver Dagger* goes on not one moment too long. An Appalachian folksong set in an appropriate string-playing style, the piece falls into a long line of composers, from Haydn to Bartók, who've harnessed popular idioms for more cultivated ends. Without sounding like any of her antecedents, Garrop has hauled their spirit into the 21st century.

Ken Smith