

The Guardian vom 15.12.2017

theguardian

Seite: 27
Druckausgabe: Hauptausgabe
Gattung: Tageszeitung

Auflage: 164.163 (verkauft) 146.100 (verbreitet)
Reichweite: 0,793 (in Mio.)

Reviews Classical

Alkan: 12 Etudes, Op 35 Mark Viner
PIANO CLASSICS

The piano music of Charles-Valentin Alkan is no longer regarded as the preserve of zealous specialists. Over the last 20 years a raft of young pianists have emerged to take on the challenges of his keyboard writing, some of the most demanding in 19th-century music. Piano Classics has documented a number of those performances, notably from Vincenzo Maltempo, and now come two further additions. One of them, played by Giovanni Bellucci, is devoted to Alkan's early works. The other, from the British pianist Mark Viner, is a complete performance of one of his most substantial cycles, the 12 Etudes in all the major keys, Op 35.

The Etudes follow a sequence of ascending fourths, starting with the deceptively straightforward Etude in A, and ending with the piece in E. The preludes and studies by Chopin and the early versions of Liszt's Transcendental Studies are the models for some of the writing, but Alkan frequently pushes on into uncharted territory. The C major Presto tests a pianist's tremolo ability almost to destruction; the F major piece is a ferocious Allegro Barbaro that anticipates Bartók's work of the same name; and the pieces in E flat and G flat are built more like descriptive tone poems than studies. Viner is an unflappable interpreter. His playing is as beguiling in the lyrical A major Etude as it is controlled in the manic counterpoint of the C sharp piece, or commanding in the bravura explosions that punctuate the cycle. It is also never showy, emphasising that these are explorations of early romantic sensibility first and extreme technical challenges second - a totally convincing way of dealing with some of the most remarkable piano music of its time. Andrew Clements Brahms Nelly Akopian-Tamarina PENTATONE

This is something special. Nelly Akopian-Tamarina is a pianist of a tradition stretching back to Rubinstein and Rach-

maninov, and was winning competitions in the 1960s. But since the early years performances have been rare, recordings even more so - this disc has waited over 20 years to be released. It is captivating. The intimacy in the Third and Fourth Ballades is perhaps because they were recorded after session hours when she thought she was alone, unaware the producer had slipped in and turned on the microphone. There's a feeling of time being suspended, of Brahms's long spans being masterfully, seamlessly moulded with a finely graded, delicate touch. Alongside the Ballades we hear the mighty Handel Variations, to which she brings a sense of resolve and onward motion that is irresistible. Erica Jeal Mahler: Symphony No 5 Gürzenich Orchestra Köln/Rot HARMONIA MUNDI

In 1904 Mahler conducted the Gürzenich Orchestra Köln in the premiere of his own Symphony No 5. So, 113 years later, it's a loaded piece for the orchestra to record with its newish music director, François-Xavier Roth. It is an exciting and fresh-sounding performance, played on modern up, Siècles. Sound den eye precipitous instruments but with a raw energy that Roth has brought from his work with his period-instrument group, Les Siècles. Their transparency of sound means we hear lots of usually hidden detail, and the players relish it; they especially enjoy the surges and precipitous falls of the turbulent second movement, and there are some glorious glissandi from the strings. Is the ebullience making up for a lack of gravitas in Roth's interpretation? Perhaps, but the joyous closing moments are enough to silence such thoughts. EJ sence s, ments Roderick Williams: Sacred Choral Works Trinity Laban Chapel Choir/Allwood SIGNUM

Roderick Williams is not only the go-to baritone for UK composers and opera companies, he's also a composer himself, with a growing amount of choral music to his name. It's hardly at the con-

temporary cutting edge, but doesn't pretend to be. This is wellcrafted, singer-friendly stuff. The consoling first anthem, soupy but not saccharine, sets the tone for the next few, which include a jaunty carol setting of a Christmas text by Longfellow. But an itchy, angry setting of Quare fremuerunt gentes?, with Williams as soloist, shakes things up. The advent sequence O Adonai sags under its own harmonic ambition, but most of the music would sound good in the hands of any decent church choir - and the choir of the Old Royal Naval College in London, sounding vibrant under Ralph Allwood, are more than that. EJ Bach: The Art of Fugue Accademia Bizantina/ Dantone DECCA

In The Art of Fugue, "Bach plays to God and himself in an empty church", the critic and composer Wilfrid Mellers wrote. The sequence of 20 fugues and canons, grouped according to the contrapuntal devices they employ, remains one of the most enigmatic works in the history of western music, not only left unfinished at Bach's death, its final fugue incomplete, but also lacking any indications as to how it might be played. It's widely accepted now Bach intended The Art of Fugue as a keyboard work, but Ottavio Dantone thinks otherwise. Some of the fugues, he writes, are impossible to play as written on a harpsichord. Instead, he opts for an ensemble of string quartet, harpsichord and organ, dividing the numbers between the instruments in a very skilful and effective way - the use of the two keyboards together, for instance, is unexpectedly striking. There is no attempt to complete the final fugue, which is left hanging in midair, and that is just about the only musical phrase in the performance that isn't perfectly shaped. AC Som impos harpsich ense harpsichonumb ve strikin complet hangin abo