

gorgeous cascade of arpeggios near the end. Her phrasing is compelling. Her voicing in Ellen Remick Warren's transcriptions of Stephen Foster songs is subtle and poetic, but when virtuosity is called for in the bigger transcriptions, she has that as well.

The recording was made at DePauw University, where Phang is Professor of Music. The warm acoustic does justice to her ravishing tone, from a richness in the bass to a spine-tingling ping at the top. I listened to this three times without being able to take it off. This is a pianist to watch.

SULLIVAN

Menahem Pressler

SCHUBERT: *Sonata, D 894*; MOZART: *Rondo, K 511*; BEETHOVEN *Bagatelles, op 126*

La Dolce Volta 12—75 minutes

This new label's philosophy is worth quoting in full: "La Dolce Volta wants to change people's perceptions of CDs so that they see them as luxury items. The label's strategy is based on the unique pairing between a work and the artist and the secret connection between them. Each release will be designed as a work of art to create a notion of elegant rarity and a desire to belong to a club of musical epicureans. It will be the result of a unique collaboration with an artist whose work will be like a jewelry box for the recordings."

Once the outer wrapper is removed there is a cardboard band to come off before you access the contents. Removing that you find several large photographs of Pressler caught in jovial mood. The number increases in the attached booklet. The notes are in four languages and tell us both about the pianist and the music.

At the golden age of 90 we might reasonably expect some evidence of technical problems. This is not the case in any of these performances. Granted, the music does not require the virtuosic effort of a Liszt Sonata or the Chopin Etudes. It does require a high level of musicianship and a knowledge of the craftsmanship of composition. Pressler trumps most other performances when it comes to expression and the ability to accurately recreate what is at the heart of a composer's thoughts.

Schubert's sonata is one of inward expression. It moves at a stately pace, with even the final Allegretto well manageable to all but the most insensitive fingers. This is a perfectly lovely performance with special attention paid to detail, along with structure. Exciting it's not, though Schubert in reserve is still something to take great pleasure in.

The famous Rondo is chock full of lovingly executed embellishments. Once again Pressler keeps us spellbound by his ability to caress the

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keyboard and his varied touch. It is only with the second Bagatelle that we come across an Allegro. Even the Presto of the fourth Bagatelle displays his accuracy of execution. The music does not call for sustaining speed for long durations. It is also true that a studio recording also allows for retakes when something goes amiss. I prefer to believe that Pressler chose works he was comfortable with and found little necessity for redoing any of it.

Given the excellence of sound, recorded this past May at Indiana University, and the quality of presentation, this becomes, like the man himself, something to cherish.

BECKER

Bosendorfer Sound

DEBUSSY: *Cathedrale Engloutie; Nocturne; Reflets dans l'Eau*; RAVEL: *Jeux d'Eau; Une Barque sur l'Ocean*; BENNETT: *Barcarolle*; LISZT: *Harmories du Soir*; GRANADOS: *Maiden & Nightingale*; GRIFFES: *Fountain of Acqua Paola; Barcarolle*; CHOPIN: *Nocturne, op 55:2*

Carol Rosenberg, p—Delos 3460—71 minutes

Fabulous recorded piano sound from Rosenberger's Bosendorfer Imperial Grand. The works have all been released before in *Night Moods* (Delos 3030, Sept/Oct 1989), *Singing on the Water* (Delos 3172, May/June 1996), and *Water Music of the Impressionists* (1983). She has the technique to bring all of these works off very well, clearly a great piano, and her own label to record everything with state of the art technology. Even the 1983 pieces stand up quite well against the newer recordings.

The Imperial Grand has 97 keys; it extends down from the normal low A to the C below. I have seen the G only available on this piano used by Bartok (Piano Concerto 2), and Rosenberger admits she couldn't resist using the lowest C in the middle section of Debussy's 'Sunken Cathedral'. Her octave doubling creates a sound I have never heard before, and I've been playing the piece for nearly 50 years. If you are unfamiliar with her playing, or simply want a great sounding piano disc, here it is.

HARRINGTON

Scarlatti Recreated

Tausig, Brassi, Granados, Czerny+ Sandro Russo, p

Musical Concepts 149—62 minutes

A romp in the form of a recital: 19 arrangements of or homages to the great Domenico Scarlatti, whose keyboard music is so perfectly suited to the piano that I'm tempted to call him the first great composer for it. The program runs the gamut from the respectful but virtuosically souped-up arrangements by Carl Tausig of K 20 (E) and K 487 (C) to the hilarious

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American Masterpieces

BOLCOM: *Recuerdos*; COPLAND: *El Salon Mexico*; BRUBECK: *Points on Jazz*; BERNSTEIN: *Arias & Barcarolles*

Wang-Rogers Piano Duo
Albany 1427—78 minutes

This is a brilliant collection of piano music for four hands by American composers. We get a South of the Border influence in the *Recuerdos*. *Three Traditional Latin-American Dances* from 1991 by Bolcom. It is also there in Bernstein's four-hands arrangement of Copland's great 1932 orchestral work. Brubeck's 1968 eight-movement mini-ballet is a set of great jazz pieces that occasionally recall some of his best-known compositions. Bernstein's piece employs a huge variety of styles: jazz, pop, 12-tone, Hebrew songs, blues, musical theater, and late romanticism. The first three works are characterized by sharp rhythms and highly accented piano playing. While subtle nuances are never missed, the music only calls for them occasionally. I also hear the influence of Gershwin all through this program, and I believe that all four composers represented here have or would unabashedly acknowledge that.

Bernstein composed *Arias and Barcarolles* in 1988; it is considered his final major work. There are eight songs with Bernstein's own texts, and it owes a little to Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* in that it follows the relationship between a husband and wife over a lifetime. Schumann's female singer with pianist here becomes male and female singers and two pianists at one piano. It is a perfectly designed piece to bring everyone together in a duo singer recital. The husband and wife team of Bradley and Jennifer Robinson join the Wang-Rogers duo for a very effective performance of this stylistically scattered work. Their voices are pleasant and diction is very good (no texts in the booklet).

I can hear the interaction between the singers and assume that there is acting going on, so I expect this work would be most effective in concert or recital.

HARRINGTON

Bach to the Future

Bach, Berg, Barber, Beethoven
Ashley Wass, p—Orchid 33—79 minutes

In his entertaining notes Wass describes this program as a kind of nod to celebrity numbers

March App

Duo Scaramouche

MILHAUD: *Scaramouche*; BRAHMS: *Haydn Variations*; FALLA: *2 Dances fr La Vida Breve*; RAVEL: *Rapsodie Espagnole*

Malvina Renault-Vieville & Filippo Antonelli, p
Maguelone 111.151—51 minutes

One would certainly expect a duo named after a famous composition to play it well, and so begins this program. Milhaud's *Scaramouche* (1937) is a three-movement, 10-minute work for two pianos full of verve and charm. It comes my way on a very regular basis and never fails to please. The Brahms is a core piece in the two-piano repertoire, as is Ravel's *Rapsodie Espagnole*. Only the Falla Dances (transcriptions by Gustave Samazeuilh) are rarities. The Duo was formed in 1992, and this was recorded in their 10th anniversary year.

The performances are strong. Tight ensemble and many pianistic colors bring new interest to familiar works. I especially enjoyed their rhythmic drive and forward momentum. The sound here is OK—the microphones seem a little too far away for my taste. The booklet notes are good, but the English translation is less than perfect. This is a well balanced and very well performed two-piano recital of core repertoire.

HARRINGTON

Autograph

Alexandre Tharaud, p
Erato 934137—69 minutes

There is nothing objectionable about this recording of assorted encores. Tharaud's playing is confident and secure; his technical abilities are never in doubt, but because he consistently takes a standard, unadventurous approach to this repertoire, it is doubtful whether many listeners will be particularly interested in this record.

There are 23 assorted short pieces by composers ranging from Couperin, Rameau, Bach,

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