

BY COLIN CLARKE

Mozart

Piano Sonatas – Volume 6: A minor K310; A major K331; D major K576

Yaron Ross (pf)

YRCDM63569



Yaron Ross' liner notes speak of his affection for Mozart's slow movements, and indeed the Andante cantabile of K310 and the Adagio of K576 are models of

their kind. That of K576 is a particular triumph, a glorious, natural unfolding. The Sonata in A major K331, is structured differently, a theme and variations followed by a Menuetto and the celebrated Ronda alla Turca. Ross sustains the long variation movement superbly. His light touch in all finales is delightful, his ornaments natural throughout. Perhaps only the Allegro maestoso of K310 verges on the pedestrian, with an element of stop-start. But there is much to enjoy here, captured in decent sound.

Chopin

24 Études

Panos Karan (pf)



Panos Karan has a laudable, humanitarian credo: 'Playing music is one of the simplest ways to make our planet a better place'. The Greek-British pianist

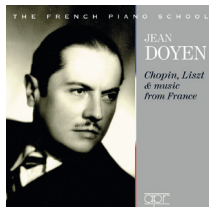
presents individual but not artificially interventionist Chopin in one of the most significant of recent offerings, recorded live at Cadogan Hall in London. His playing is impeccable but also incredibly musical – try comparing his Op 10/2 with Pollini's technique-fest for DG. Karan's G-flat Op 10/6 is gloriously unsettled, while the E-flat minor Op 10/11 is spun of exquisite silk.

The Op 25 set is just as fine, the 'Octave Study' a Lisztian *orange* enclosing heartfelt peace, the A-flat (No 1) subtle and warm-toned. Karan's reading of Liszt's 'La campanella' is not quite as compelling, but Chopin is the meat, and points to a first-class pianist offering one of the finest *Études* available.

Jean Doyen: Chopin, Liszt and music from France

Jean Doyen (pf)

APR 6030



Part of APR's series on the French Piano School, this twofer dedicated to Jean Doyen (1907-1982) focuses on a pianist who perfectly encapsulates the Paris

Conservatoire's ethics of legerdemain and textural transparency. Chopin's *Variations on 'Là ci darem'* demonstrates both of these in a sparkling performance.

The set contains all four of Chopin's Ballades (1941, in superb transfers that brilliantly convey nuance of tone). The G minor is ardent and impetuous; the A-flat impeccably sculpted. Liszt's *Études de Concert* S244 and *Konzerttetüden* S145 glitter and sigh.

The second disc is dedicated exclusively to French music. Chevillard's transcription of Chabrier's *España* is a tour de force, while both Chabrier's *Bourée fantasque* and Saint-Saëns' 'Wedding Cake' *Valse-Caprice* reveal Doyen's deliciously light touch. His Fauré is a dream. A glorious Debussy *Images I* ends with a perfectly articulated, celebrational finale. All this is crowned by a 1937 Ravel *Gaspard* of commanding insight, poise and integrity.

Robert Cowlin and Seth Winner, responsible for mastering and transfers, have produced an historical release of the very first order.

Russian Piano Music

Music by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Prokofiev and Shchedrin

Julia Sigova (pf)

Classica Dal Vivo 0518



Born in Minsk and based in Scandinavia, pianist Julia Sigova offers an imaginative programme, brilliantly performed. Her Tchaikovsky *Dumka* is beautifully shaped, while the Rachmaninov *Études-Tableaux* Op 33 are rendered with a lovely sense of yearning, intelligent pedalling and pure textures. Each is individually characterised: No 3 seems to have the weight of the world on its shoulders; No 6 is a triumph of prestidigitation. Sigova brings a crystalline touch to Prokofiev's *Sarcasms* but is in

Shchedrin that she truly excels: his post-Prokofiev *Humoresque* rubs shoulders with *À la Albéniz*, a glittering explosion followed by decidedly deconstructionist frolickery. Sigova's Yamaha piano is superbly prepared, particularly in the upper register.

Pfitzner

Piano Concerto in E-flat

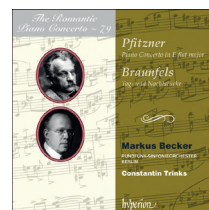
Braunfels

Tag- und Nachstücke

Markus Becker (pf); Berlin Radio SO/

Constantin Tusks

Hyperion CDA68258



The Pfitzner Concerto was premiered by Giesecking (and Fritz Busch) in 1923; it is a work that deserves recognition, and its restrained Romanticism

sits well with the more heart-on-sleeve Braunfels. Romantic at times but with a harmonically unsettled undercurrent, the first movement finds the ideal interpreters here. Laudably, Becker doesn't try to make the Scherzo sound like Mendelssohn, although one can't miss the parallels, while the twilight slow movement with its distant horn calls is the clear highlight.

Walter Braunfels' *Tag- und Nachstücke* (1933/4) is a five-movement piece for orchestra with piano obbligato. It is mysterious and atmospheric, even glowing. The third movement is a devilish scherzo with Germanic humour, the Adagio sensual.

An outstanding release.



Markus Becker

IRÈNE ZANDEL



ECM

According to its critics, the ECM label is a soft-focus New

ANDY HAMILTON

A black and white portrait of a man in a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is resting his head on his right hand, looking directly at the camera with a thoughtful expression. The background is dark and out of focus. In the bottom left corner, there is a small logo that reads 'WISSEN BE' in a stylized font.

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