BY COLIN CLARKE

Mozart

Piano Sonatas – Volume 6: A minor K310; A major K331; D major K576 Yaron Ross (pf) YRCDM63569

Notes the second second

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 offering, recorded live a 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 *orage* enclosing heartfelt peace, the A-flat (No 1) subtle and warmtoned. 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 *Konzertetüden* 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 \hat{A} *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 Gieseking (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 twilit 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.



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Dinternational JAZZ CHOICE



The Transitory Poems Vijay lyer ,Craig Taborn (pfs) ECM CD 2644

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

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Age venture, yet from its inception it has powerfully advocated the most radical free jazz/improvisation, including albums by the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Roscoe Mitchell. Conservative and radical streams converged in Keith Jarrett's best-selling *Köln Concert*, but Jarrett is the most lyrical of free improvisers.

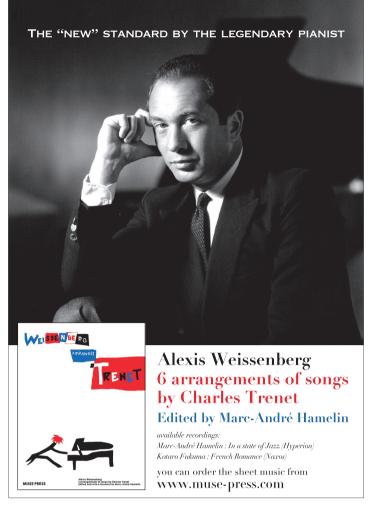
This new recording by Iyer and Taborn offers a more challenging kind of free improv. It also has a Chicago connection – the two pianists began duo performance with Roscoe Mitchell's Note Factory, and key influences include Chicago pianist Muhal Richard Abrams.

Transitory Poems was recorded live at the Liszt Academy, Budapest. In a *Downbeat* interview, Iyer recalls asking his partner, 'How does one think about form... when you're starting from scratch?' Taborn responds that when using an existing structure – as jazz mostly does – you have 'a sort of armature around which you can improvise... But with what we're doing... you have to discover what the armature is'.

Taborn comments jokingly that when people ask, 'How do you negotiate [two pianos]?', the real challenge is negotiating two *pianists*. Iyer responds that 'the two-piano problem has basically been solved [by] Stravinsky and Stockhausen' – that is, the problem of how two pianists can avoid getting in each other's way.

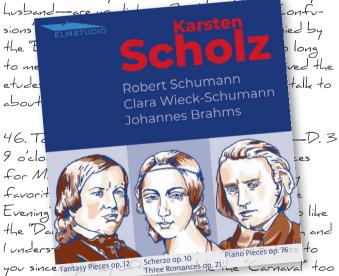
In light of their latest album, these are fair comments. 'Kairos', one of the most effective tracks, begins tentatively, but builds to a gripping rolling climax. 'Life Line' offers bluesy probings against a walking bass, evolving into spiky turbulence and then a forbidding vamp. In the final track, 'Meshwork/Libation/When Kabuya Dances', intense exchanges push the two-piano format to its limits in a beautifully paced, eventful exhibition of free improvisation as compositional method.

As one reviewer notes, the two pianists together seem less distinctive than they do alone. But I think this shows they are searching together, throwing off their distinctive stylistic mannerisms in a keen-eared, mutually empathetic musical collaboration. ANDY HAMILTON



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At 3 o'clock ... Tell me how you think about the "Fantasy Pieces" and "Dances of the League of David"—sincerely, not to me as your groom but your



you since Fantasy Pieces OD. I three Romances OD. I ise Carnaval too much, which is the dearest of these smaller pieces that you wrote; I love it beyond all measure and romanticise while playing it ...

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