

**Dreams and Tales**  
**Musorgsky** *Pictures at an Exhibition*  
**Scriabin** Sonata No 3 Op 23,  
 Waltz in A-flat major Op 28  
**Michele Campanella** pf  
 Odradek ODRCD395

This all-Russian programme from the great Michele Campanella couples Musorgsky's seminal *Pictures* with Scriabin's Third Sonata (1897/98) and Op 38 *Valse* (1904).

Campanella has lived with this repertoire for over half a century, deepening his appreciation for it through reading Dostoyevsky. He asks: 'Can a man from Naples speak the language of Russian art?' Yes, his recording implies.

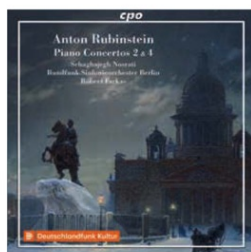
*Pictures* begins sedately. This is a spacious, noble and tonally rich reading with characteristically excellent sound from Odradek. Impeccable left-hand trills in 'Gnomus', a keen awareness of dissonance and terrific definition (try 'Tuilleries') are highlights of the resulting panorama. Audiophiles could easily use 'Bydlo' or

Campanella's regal 'Great Gate' as a sound demo. Only 'Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle' feels a touch contrived.

The Scriabin Third Sonata is given a fine performance, muscular and plaintive by turns. Campanella's achievement is not to lose the direction in the lyric nostalgia. His voice-leading and pacing are masterly. The unrest of the finale is palpably projected via light-to-no pedal. Recorded on a Yamaha CFX from the Roberto Valli Collection in Perugia, this is a fine recording.

COLIN CLARKE

## PIANO CONCERTOS



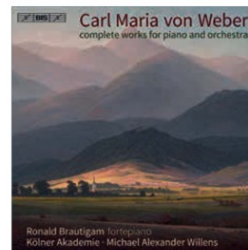
**Rubinstein Piano Concertos: No 2 in F major, No 4 in D minor**  
**Schaghajegh Nosrati** pf Berlin RSO  
 Orchestra/Róbert Farkas  
 CPO 555 352-2

It is a rare talent – or a foolhardy one – who would choose Bach's *The Art of Fugue* for her debut recording, but that is precisely what Schaghajegh Nosrati did in her mid-twenties, in 2014. German-born but of Iranian descent, Nosrati made Bach something of a specialty, earning the praise of András Schiff and going on to tour Bach double concertos with him in Central Europe.

It must be said straightaway that Nosrati is not a player to flaunt her virtuosity for its own sake. This is evident in the slow movements of both concertos here, especially the central Andante of No 4 (1866), the stronger of the two works. Nosrati's lyrical touch is beautifully judged in this songlike movement. Her partnership with Róbert Farkas and the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra is nicely illustrated by the framing outer movements, although the orchestra does not sound wholly comfortable with Rubinstein's Russian idiom.

The Second Concerto (1853) is rather more garrulous and stylistically anonymous but was nonetheless widely appreciated at its first performances. This is a fine rendition in which

Nosrati once more catches the essence of Rubinstein's style. CPO's sound is very natural and clear.



**Weber Piano Concertos: No 1 in C major Op 11, No 2 in E-flat major Op 32; Konzertstück in F minor Op 79**  
**Ronald Brautigam** fortepiano Kölner Akademie/Michael Alexander Willens  
 BIS 2384-SACD

As a project, Weber's complete works for piano and orchestra is as modest as the dimensions of the works themselves: two concertos from 1810-12 and the ground-breaking *Konzertstück*, conceived in 1815 but not completed until the morning of the Berlin premiere of *Der Freischütz* six years later. That conjunction would prove telling, the celebrity of Weber's operatic masterpiece coming to eclipse his instrumental output – even the Second Concerto, which hitherto had been his calling-card as a performer. It is a delightful piece, obviously influenced by Beethoven's later concertos, especially the *Emperor*, but without the latter's monumental stature. That said, Brautigam catches the full drama of the opening Allegro maestoso while in the central Adagio his innate sense of line comes to the fore.

With its vivacious dancing final Presto – in which Brautigam's partnership with the Kölner Akademie is allowed to let its hair down – the Second is a more mature work than its predecessor. There is much to admire in the stylistically anonymous First, nonetheless, not least its lovely central Adagio, and Brautigam and the Kölner musicians play it for all its worth.

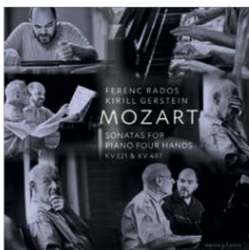
The *Konzertstück* started out as a third piano concerto but morphed into a symphonic poem with piano obbligato that depicts a medieval Lady fretting over the return of her Crusader Knight husband. Its influence, on Liszt among others, was enormous, and graphically illustrates how far Weber's music had moved to the theatrical. Once again, it is vividly performed here and captured, as are all three works, in demonstration quality sound.

GUY RICKARDS



Lyrical touch: Schaghajegh Nosrati

## CHAMBER MUSIC



**Mozart Sonatas for piano four hands:**  
C major K521, F major K497  
**Kirill Gerstein, Ferenc Rados** pfs  
Myrios MYR029

Recorded in Berlin in June 2018, this album pays tribute to Ferenc Rados, a rare visitor to the studio. In Budapest he studied with István Antal and Pál Kadosa, in Moscow with Viktor Merzhanov. Gerstein, latest in a line including Ránki, Kocsis and Schiff, calls him his mentor and inspiration.

Intimate communion and unanimity of spirit stamp these performances. With Rados taking *secondo* in the C major Sonata, *primo* in the F major, the delights, subtleties and time-bendings are many, the slow movements yielding deliriously rhapsodical, improvisatory dimensions. In places ensemble could be tighter, the marginal speeding-up (twice) of the C major's first movement reprise bringing about unexpected short-windedness. Overall, however, this is playing of Orphean insightfulness, accompanied by generous booklet notes.



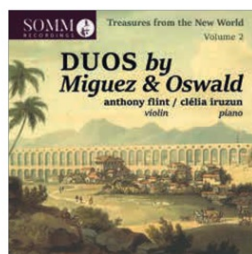
**Żeleński Piano Quartet in C minor Op 61**  
**Mozart Piano Quartet in G minor K478**  
**Paweł Wakarecy** pf Jakub Jakowicz vln  
Katarzyna Budnik vla Marcin Zdunik vcl  
Fryderyk Chopin Institute NIFC CD110

From the end of the 18th century to 1918 Poland was largely absent from the European map, its psyche and culture burning intensely enough in the hands of its

emigrés but otherwise repressed through punitive Prussian and Tsarist annexation. Władysław Żeleński (1837-1921) was one of many musicians relegated to the periphery, introspective and disinclined to provoke – yet not beyond writing an opera on Mickiewicz's subversive 1828 poem *Konrad Wallenrod*, symbol of the country's resistance spirit. However 'unpropitious' the conditions, his villa in Kraków (where he was director of the conservatoire) was a renowned chamber music hub.

Taking Schumann and Brahms at its starting point, Żeleński's late-Romantic Piano Quartet, begun in 1904, is paradoxically both valedictory (following the unexpected death of his first wife) and vernal. The dark moments are weighty but rarely heavy: the A-flat Romanza is fragrantly veined, the folkloric Intermezzo playfully expressive, the Finale impassioned and biting.

Marginally brisker than Jonathan Plowright's 2011 Hyperion recording, this performance is excellent, Paweł Wakarecy, along with his gifted peers, bringing brilliance and imagination to the score. Their 'breathed' Mozart is also winningly elegant, drawing on the autograph manuscript for K478 that was acquired by Warsaw's Fryderyk Chopin Museum in 1957.



**Treasures from the New World – Vol 2**  
**Oswald Violin Sonata Op 36 Mignone**  
**Romanza Miguez Violin Sonata Op 14**  
**Nobre Poema I Op 94/1**  
**Levy Tango Brasileiro**  
**Clélia Iruzun** pf Anthony Flint vln  
Somm SOMMCD0632

Having usefully revived Henrique Oswald's Piano Quintet last year, Clélia Iruzun now brings us his later Violin Sonata (1908), a considered, elegantly Brahmsian/Franckian score. Arthur Rubinstein thought of Oswald as 'the Brazilian Gabriel Fauré', and we learn from Robert Matthew-Walker's booklet note that his parentage was not Hispanic but

Swiss-German – pretty much summing up his aesthetic orientation.

Leopoldo Miguez was also European-trained and served as Oswald's predecessor as director of Brazil's National Institute of Music. Miguez published his A major Sonata in Leipzig in 1896. Lyricism, limpid invention, sensitivity of feeling and sureness of pen inform its pages, putting keyboard virtuosity at the service of point-making rather than self-glory. I particularly enjoyed the charmed fairies and fugues in the scherzo.

The remaining miniatures are expressively turned, a haunting love affair suggesting itself within Mignone's youthful 1917 Romanza. Ready for Hollywood, Nobre's first Poema (2002) breathes John Williams by the ocean. Levy's *Tango Brasileiro* (1890, the same year as Albéniz's *España 'Tango'*), arranged from the piano original by João de Souza Lima, cameos a world between Gottschalk and 'tropical Romanticism'. Iruzun's attentive collaboration with Anthony Flint, sweet-toned whatever the register of his instrument, makes for an essential album.

ATEŞ ORGA

## CONTEMPORARY/JAZZ



**Fantasy: Oppens Plays Kaminsky**  
**Laura Kaminsky** Piano Quintet; **Fantasy; Reckoning: Five Miniatures for America;**  
Piano Concerto  
**Ursula Oppens, Jerome Lowenthal** pfs  
Cassatt String Quartet; Arizona State University Orchestra/Jeffery Meyer  
Cedille CDR 90000 202

The piano music of leading American composer Laura Kaminsky is loosely tonal or modal, quirkily rhythmic with suggestions of jazz, and highly personal. It is immensely appealing yet offers a challenge to listeners.

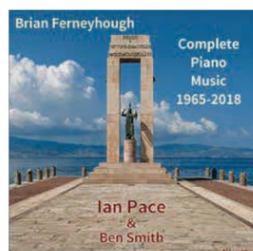
The first movement of the Piano Quintet is 'Anthem', which melds West African drumming patterns with Eastern European irregular dance rhythms. The solo *Fantasy*



(2007-10), described by the composer as 'free-form yet organically conceived', recalls Copland's *Fantasy for Piano* in ambition and achievement, though its fluidity echoes Elliott Carter's *Night Fantasies* (premiered by Oppens in 1980). In one remarkable passage, the two hands play lines that are completely rhythmically disjoint.

The colourful, often fiery *Reckoning: Five Miniatures for America* for piano four-hands, with veteran pianist Jerome Lowenthal, was written for this recording, and reflects our turbulent times. The album concludes with Kaminsky's Piano Concerto, inspired by images of sunlit rivers in New York and St Petersburg, where Oppens gave the world premiere with Jeffery Meyer. Its 21-minute single movement, with a chamber-like quality, is orchestrated with gorgeous delicacy. The bitonal, opening cadenza provides the work's material.

An exciting, compelling release.



**Brian Ferneyhough: Complete Piano Music 1965-2018**

**Ferneyhough** *Lemma-Icon-Epigram, Quirl, Opus Contra Naturam, Invention, Epigrams, Three Pieces for Piano, Sonata for Two Pianos*

**Ian Pace, Ben Smith** pfs  
Métier/Divine Art MSV28615



**Becomings**

**Hayden** *Becomings, ...still time..., Fragment (After Losses), Piano Moves*

**Ian Pace** pf  
Métier/Divine Art MSV28611



Compelling: Ursula Oppens

British modernist composers Brian Ferneyhough and Michael Finnissy have been brought together in a movement that critics labelled New Complexity – presumably in contrast to Old Complexity (Schoenberg, Webern, Boulez and Stockhausen) and New Simplicity (minimalism). Ferneyhough (born 1943) has produced a relatively modest output for solo piano that fills two CDs, but which embraces scores of incredible complexity in his hallmark style.

British pianist Ian Pace is a leading exponent of this challenging music. A musical thinker as well as a virtuoso of the highest order, he began his Ferneyhough project for Métier in 2005, just before the label was acquired by Divine Art. Pace subsequently extended the recording to include more recent compositions and the Sonata for Two Pianos, which he performs here with Ben Smith.

The music was composed between 1965 and 2013. The earliest pieces – *Invention* (1965), *Epigrams* (1966), *Three Pieces for Piano* (1966-67) and *Sonata for Two Pianos* (1966) – are rooted in Old Complexity. The album really comes alive with an electrifying interpretation of *Lemma-Icon-Epigram* (1981), where Pace is looser and more Romantic than Nicolas Hodges' rather classical treatment on Neos – though both are outstanding interpretations. *Opus Contra Naturam* (2000) for speaking pianist was developed from a scene in Ferneyhough's Walter Benjamin-inspired opera *Shadowtime*.

The album of Sam Hayden's piano music features a comparable stylistic terrain to the

Ferneyhough release. Hayden (born 1968) studied with Michael Finnissy, as well as Jonathan Harvey and Louis Andriessen. The album is dominated by Hayden's monumental seven-movement cycle, *Becomings (Das Werden) I-VII* (2016-18), the most ambitious and demanding work here. It was premiered by Pace in 2019. The title refers to the sense of 'becoming' advocated by Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus, famous for his remark that 'No one ever steps in the same river twice', for whom the world is in constant flux. The composition contrasts hyper-energetic material with moments of relative calm.

There are two shorter works, *...still time...* (1990) and *Fragment (After Losses)* (2003), plus the more substantial *Piano Moves* (1990) for amplified piano. Hayden comments in an online interview that '*Piano Moves* is more gradual, process-driven music (minimalistic, in some ways), and *...still time...* [has] more in common with complexity' – it was written in 1990 while he was studying with Michael Finnissy. According to Hayden, the subtle electronic enhancement of *Piano Moves* is not intended to make the piano sound overtly 'electronic': 'Compression is used to narrow the dynamic range ... Some reverberation is also used, extending the natural decay of the instrument.' The 'moves' are the series of relatively sudden harmonic changes in which the hands move to the piano's extreme registers. Hayden's music is perhaps less individual than Ferneyhough's but will still appeal to more adventurous listeners. **IP**

**ANDY HAMILTON**

One of the open secrets of the piano world is that the fortepiano, and old instruments in general, can provide insights to performers on modern keyboard instruments. Individual soloists have made this clear, from the Austrian pianist Paul Badura-Skoda to András Schiff, who has recorded late Schubert works on a Brodmann fortepiano built in 1820, about two decades before the music was written.

In a promotional video for his ECM recording, Schiff noted that Schubert is 'quintessentially a composer for the voice ... even when he is writing for the piano alone', and indeed the lyrical qualities of the Brodmann fortepiano are comparable to the vox humana reed stop that pipe organists rely on for especially empathetic effects.

What has been the province of an insightful few research-minded virtuosos is now more widely accessible to students, thanks to this appealingly ardent manual with suggestions for performers and listeners by David Breitman, director of the Historical Performance Program at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, USA.

Breitman's name is known to keyboard lovers for his recordings of the Beethoven violin sonatas with Elizabeth Wallfisch and cello sonatas with Jaap ter Linden (Nimbus), an unusually graceful rendition of the Mozart violin sonatas with Jean-François Rivest (Analekta), and four albums with the American baritone Sanford Sylvan

(Nonesuch). Breitman is also among the seven fortepianists on the 10-CD set of the complete Beethoven sonatas for Claves.

With great enthusiasm, Breitman offers *Top Gear*-style similes to attract potential performers to older instruments: 'The modern piano's large mass of sound, like the inertia of a large truck or boat, resists sudden changes of speed or direction. A fortepiano, in contrast, behaves more like a sports car whose quick responses inspire its driver to accelerate aggressively, turn sharply, and stop abruptly.'

Fortepianos are compared not just with sports cars, but also with 'jet skis that are designed to start or stop abruptly and to take sharp curves at high speed. All have very little inertia and react quickly to sudden changes in input. Because they cater to their operator's impulses, their strong suit is improvisation, not cruise control; they are better for delivering thrills and shocks than a smooth ride.'

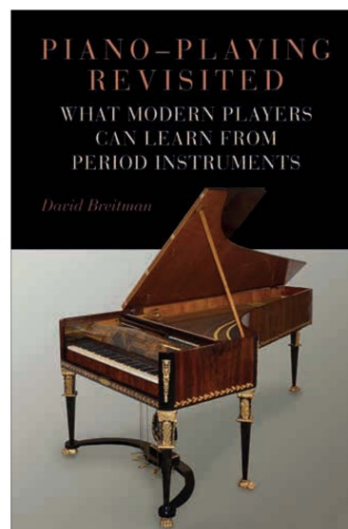
Yet despite the peppy tone, Breitman confesses that his turn to fortepiano playing was a result of disappointments he experienced when interpreting works by Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Chopin on the modern concert grand. Quieter old keyboards make musical lines more transparent. For example, a passage in Beethoven's Cello Sonata in G minor Op 5/2 drowns out the string player when executed fortissimo as the composer indicated, while on a fortepiano even the most exuberant playing does not overpower the cellist.

Just as András Schiff likened the sound of his Brodmann to a singing voice, Breitman notes that in chamber music, the fortepiano blends in more naturally and fraternally with string instruments, whereas the modern piano stands apart in a distinct accompanying role.

Such observations are not intended to advocate replacing or displacing the Steinway or Yamaha grand, but rather to offer old instruments as a means of investigating the repertoire in more depth. As Breitman puts it, to 'remove the fortepiano from the early music arena, proposing it simply as a vehicle to help pianists play better.'

Since sounds fade more quickly from older instruments, compared to the sustained lines of the modern keyboard, the former can more easily resemble a personal narration, with pauses for breath that are expected from a storyteller.

Transparency is a byword in works by Chopin with multiple voices; a fortepiano can emit individual notes more equally than



**Piano-Playing Revisited:  
What Modern Players Can Learn from  
Period Instruments**

David Breitman

University of Rochester Press, 228 pages

a modern piano, 'making the chords fuller and denser without sacrificing clarity.' Works such as Chopin's Prelude in E major, Mozart's Sonata in F major KV 533/494 and Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata are cited among works with passages that 'can easily become muddy' on today's pianos compared with the limpidity of older instruments.

The friendly didactic tone of *Piano-Playing Revisited* is bolstered by perceptive comments from students from Breitman's seminars. One example: 'The ordinary touch, this non-legato sonority, is what characterises the fortepiano and makes it totally different from the modern piano.'

Because of its evident limits in sustaining sounds, the fortepiano presents definite challenges for maintaining melodic lines at slow tempos. This might serve as a healthy reminder to performers on modern instruments who are prone to distend adagio markings beyond all reasonable limits.

Naturally, techniques used at the fortepiano cannot be applied unaltered to the modern instrument, but by keeping in mind lessons learned about sound textures obtained, and by listening closely to a new sound world duly explored, aspiring pianists may achieve a more varied discourse at the keyboard. **IP**

BENJAMIN IVRY



David Breitman: 'Fortepianos are better for delivering thrills and shocks than a smooth ride'