Allusions and beyond

aud 97.700

EAN: 4022143977007

4 0 2 2 1 4 3 9 7 7 0 0 7

Fanfare (Raymond Tuttle - 01.02.2017)
Quelle: http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/a...

fanfare

This is Piano Duo Takahashi-Lehmann's third disc for Audite. The first, Originals and Beyond (Audite 97.706), contained arrangements for piano four hands by Schoenberg, Beethoven, and Schumann of their own works. It was reviewed positively by Huntley Dent in Fanfare 39:1. The second, Transcriptions and Beyond (Audite 97.708), contained music by Stravinsky (including the composer's own arrangement of Le sacre du printemps), Nancarrow, and Arnulf Herrmann. It appears not to have been reviewed in these pages. Now we have Allusions and Beyond. The title is itself an allusion to the fact that the works by Brahms and by Bernd Alois Zimmermann allude to the works of other composers.

There are surprisingly few recordings of Max Reger's very convincing arrangements of Bach's six Brandenburg Concertos. In fact, the only recording of all six of them—as far as I know, anyway—is a set that was released on LP by the Musical Heritage Society, featuring pianists Martin Berkofsky and David Hagan. It's serviceable, although aggressively recorded, and (obviously) out of print. Peter Rösel and Santiago Rodriguez also recorded Concerto No. 5, for Elan Recordings. That's a better recording, but it is even harder to find than the MHS LPs. Let's hope that this strong and joyful performance by Piano Duo Takahashi-Lehmann encourages Audite to ask these performers to record the remaining five. I'd buy it.

György Kurtág's Bach transcriptions are somewhat better represented on disc, including on an ECM New Series disc that features the composer himself with his wife, Márta. These are extraordinarily subtle works. For example, at times Kurtág asks the pianists to cross their own or each other's arms as they play. This is not a circus stunt, but still trickery of a sort, because the departure from traditional playing positions forces a rethinking of the music, and thus produces changes in the "expressive microcosm," to use the booklet annotator's apt phrase. A YouTube video (youtube.com/watch?v=Z8lTh58jhA8) of the aged Kurtágs playing some of these works is very moving, but the present performers certainly are sensitive to what is going on here, and these are beautiful readings. It's worth mentioning that Kurtág's setting of O Lamm Gottes unschuldig uses doublings of the melody at octaves or fifths in order to mimic an organ's overtone stops. You will swear that another instrument is being played, but it's all piano!

For Bernd Alois Zimmermann's Monologues, Norie Takahashi and Björn Lehmann leave each other's side for 18 minutes and sit at their own pianos. (They remain separated for the Brahms.) Monologues contains five sections, and most of them include fragments of music by Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, and Messiaen to create

what the composer called “music about music.” Zimmermann had the idea that time was not a line but a sphere, and that cosmic time and an individual’s “inner time” were not necessarily in sync. He described this as “pluralistic chronological simultaneity,” and expressed it musically through the insertion of quotations into his own works. Thus (we are asked to consider in the booklet note), his Monologues “embody the concept for this CD.” Whether you buy that or not probably will determine how you feel about Monologues. Perhaps ironically, it seems a little dated to me, but I might need more time to grow into it. The present performers plunge into this work unreservedly.

The last piece on this CD is Brahms’s famous Haydn Variations. The version for two pianos predated the orchestral version. Other than that, little needs to be said about the music itself, probably. As for the performance, I find it refined, hush-hush sensitive, and interpreted almost to the point of preciousness. It’s as if Elisabeth Schwarzkopf cloned herself and both of them took up the piano. My impression of Brahms was that he was unaffected, and that’s a quality I listen for in his music as well. Piano Duo Takahashi-Lehmann seems to have other ideas, and while I can respect them I do not share them. This is fussy, finicky Brahms.

I’ll come back to this disc for the Bach/Reger and the Bach/Kurtág, and not so much for the Zimmermann and Brahms. There’s no denying, however, that Norie Takahashi and Björn Lehmann are thoughtful and superbly capable musicians.

»audite« Ludger Böckenhoff • Tel.: +49 (0)5231-870320 • Fax: +49 (0)5231-870321 • info@audite.de • www.audite.de