

American Record Guide

independent critics reviewing classical recordings

third treats the notion of “progress” as a blues. Many of the same techniques are evident, but the writing is now more about music than compositional process, and the difference matters. The concerto begins with an overtly Asian-meets-Hollywood opening movement and now extended techniques are required from the flutist—the other concerto had little if any such demands. After a transition meant to call attention to “the small voice within”, a meditation on serenity follows. If this movement is somewhat sappy, at least it seems genuine, rather than calculated, which is how I feel about the undeniably powerful central movement of the Flute Concerto by Rouse. The opening of the finale could hardly supply a greater contrast with what has come before it: the writing is taut and dramatic and has a hard, mean energy that seems to update the flute writing from a Lalo Schifrin movie score of the 1970s. The music turns chilling as it portrays the events that unfolded in Japan. Thus this work is an uneasy combination of abstraction and theater, needing a psychiatrist more than it needs CPR. On the whole, the listening is palatable, but this work has not left nearly the impression on me as the Flute Concerto by Peteris Vasks (Mar/Apr 2014), which is where I would direct any readers in search of a recent flute concerto worth hearing.

GORMAN

HAYDN: *3 Flute Sonatas*

Nicola Guidetti; Massimiliano Damerini, p
Dynamic 7698—58 minutes

Haydn didn't write flute sonatas, though he did use the flute in many trios for more than one combination and occasionally put brief solos in the symphonies. Around 1800 a flutist-composer named August Eberhard Muller (1767-1817), who held the position of Cantor for Leipzig's famous St Thomas Church, set three of Haydn's late string quartets for flute and piano. The publisher Breitkopf & Hartel, which issued many of Muller's compositions and arrangements, released these transcriptions under Haydn's name without even mentioning Muller's role. The Sonata in C, Op. 87 is based on the Quartet Op. 74:1; the Sonata in G, Op. 90:1 comes from Op. 76:6; and the E-flat, Op. 90:2 from Op. 77:1. The keys have been kept the same, and all sonatas are in three movements.

The music is Haydn at his best, making it a delight to hear. These adaptations work superbly, no doubt in part because the writing is very motivic. The sound is close and vibrant.

The flute sound is rich, potent, and colorful; and the piano also comes across richly. Some listeners may find the piano playing too gutsy sometimes, but it has all the clarity one could desire and it is certainly never dull. The slow movement of the C major, marked *Andantino grazioso*, is rather brisk and businesslike, not languorous and indulgent as Rampal played it; but the Adagio of the E-flat Sonata, marked 'Fantasia', and the other Adagio proceed at a suitable gait. The outer movements range from a moderate Allegretto that could conceivably have been allowed to settle all the way up to Presto. If you like music from this time or you'd like to hear familiar string quartets another way, check out this release.

GORMAN

HAYDN: *Piano Sonatas 20, 23, 40, 50, 52; Concertos in G+D*

Anne-Marie McDermott; Odense Symphony/
Scott Yoo—Bridge 9438 [2CD] 140 minutes

There's a quotation in the liner notes from composer Charles Wuorinen: "I've long admired Anne-Marie McDermott's unsurpassed performances of Haydn. Her understanding of his music is superb, and her playing of it is so apt and expressive that I could not resist her invitation to supply cadenzas for one of Haydn's concertos." True.

My other recordings by Ax, Brendel, Pletnev, and Staier now take second place to these. So many elements are remarkable. Perhaps Sonata 52 is the best example, because in his last sonata Haydn retains his lifelong playful style but also has moved toward the long-lined lyrical style of Mozart and the heavy, thick chords of Beethoven. McDermott takes them all, along with the non-stop rapid 16th-note scales and runs, and spins them into a wheel of continuity that inhales and exhales with expression.

Then there's McDermott's articulation—or, rather, the bright “pins of light” character of her articulation—that she combines with shading and expression. She's also highly alert to Haydn's many contrasting elements. Her spiky accents are not mere emphases but elements that outline the structure of each work. Her technique is utterly awesome, and her playing is very bright, alert, intelligent, and spontaneous (at least it feels that way). Really? I get all that from mere Haydn sonatas that others can make sound so naive and boring? You bet!

Not only that, but the pianist takes all the repeats in all the sonatas, making them potentially *very* long hauls, yet I never grew tired of