



déjà-rêvé

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GRAMOPHONE

Ever since Bartók's 1937 Sonata, the medium of two pianos and percussion has exerted a compelling fascination on contemporary composers, not least among them Bernd Alois Zimmermann, whose Monologues, in his 1964 arrangement of the pianos-and-orchestra original of four years earlier, is the main feature of this new disc.

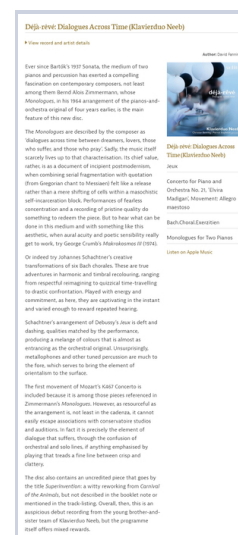
The Monologues are described by the composer as 'dialogues across time between dreamers, lovers, those who suffer, and those who pray'. Sadly, the music itself scarcely lives up to that characterisation. Its chief value, rather, is as a document of incipient postmodernism, when combining serial fragmentation with quotation (from Gregorian chant to Messiaen) felt like a release rather than a mere shifting of cells within a masochistic self-incarceration block. Performances of fearless concentration and a recording of pristine quality do something to redeem the piece. But to hear what can be done in this medium and with something like this aesthetic, when aural acuity and poetic sensibility really get to work, try George Crumb's Makrokosmos III (1974).

Or indeed try Johannes Schachtner's creative transformations of six Bach chorales. These are true adventures in harmonic and timbral recolouring, ranging from respectful reimagining to quizzical time-travelling to drastic confrontation. Played with energy and commitment, as here, they are captivating in the instant and varied enough to reward repeated hearing.

Schachtner's arrangement of Debussy's Jeux is deft and dashing, qualities matched by the performance, producing a melange of colours that is almost as entrancing as the orchestral original. Unsurprisingly, metallophones and other tuned percussion are much to the fore, which serves to bring the element of orientalism to the surface.

The first movement of Mozart's K467 Concerto is included because it is among those pieces referenced in Zimmermann's Monologues. However, as resourceful as the arrangement is, not least in the cadenza, it cannot easily escape associations with conservatoire studios and auditions. In fact it is precisely the element of dialogue that suffers, through the confusion of orchestral and solo lines, if anything emphasised by playing that treads a fine line between crisp and clattery.

The disc also contains an uncredited piece that goes by the title Superinvention: a witty reworking from Carnival of the Animals, but not described in the booklet note or mentioned in the track-listing. Overall, then, this is an auspicious debut recording



from the young brother-and-sister team of Klavierduo Neeb, but the programme itself offers mixed rewards.



Déjà-rêvé: Dialogues Across Time (Klavierduo Neeb)

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Author: David Fanning



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Jeux

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 21, 'Elvira Madigan', Movement: Allegro maestoso

Bach.Choral.Exerzitien

Monologues for Two Pianos

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