



In Brief...

Get Happy

Jenny Lin (pf)

Steinway & Sons 30071, 64 minutes

Jenny Lin is a talented pianist; her BIS recordings of Ruth Crawford-Seeger and a disc entitled *Chinoiserie* are fascinating and, in the latter case, enchanting. Here, for the Steinway label, she presents 18 virtuoso show tunes in arrangements by Earl Wild (his *I got Rhythm* Etude is expertly despatched, as is the one on *Fascinatin' Rhythm*), Alexis Weissenberg (*Lover* from *Love Me Tonight*, a playful ditty), Stephen Hough (the tender *Carouse Waltz*, the Stravinskian *March of the Siamese Children* from *Carousel* and a re-imagining of *My Favourite Things* from *The Sound of Music*), André Previn (*Blue Moon*) and Marc-André Hamelin (*Meditation on Laura*), among others. This is all phenomenal fun. Having already proven herself in a variety of genres, Lin now posits herself as an amazing purveyor of honky-tonk. Panache is the key word here, and Lin has it in spades. Technically, she is faultless, as is the recording.

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Chausson String Quartet in C minor, Op 35; Concert in D for piano, violin and string quartet, Op 21

Jennifer Pike (violin), Tom Poster (pf), Doric String Quartet
Chandos CHAN10754, 68 minutes

Chausson's 40-minute Concert for piano, violin and string quartet of 1889-91 is a tremendously strong, sinewy piece that here receives an impassioned account. Chandos' recording goes head to head with Hyperion's 1996 version (Chilingirian Quartet, with Pascal Devoyon and Philippe Graffin). The Chandos recording is good, although a bit harsh towards the top end; and the performance is beautifully realised. The players, who act as one unit, track the ebb and flow of the music expertly, finding huge tendresse in the calm moments of

the first movement. Jennifer Pike's violin is sweet-toned; Tom Poster is a most sensitive musician who has been well chosen for this repertoire. The near-stasis and pathos of the third movement *Grave* is remarkable here, the concentration approaching that of a live event. Limpid droplets of notes from Poster are to relish; Pike, too, is eloquent. The String Quartet is given a splendid performance of the utmost concentration. A rewarding issue.

CC

Bach Partitas: No 2 in C minor, BWV826; No 6 in E minor, BWV830; Toccata in C minor, BWV911

David Fray (pf)

Virgin 0770944 2, 65 minutes

David Fray's coupling of Bach and Boulez on an earlier disc was a success. This all-Bach offering is less successful, despite its excellent recording. The Second Partita reveals playing that is less engaging than one might expect, and there is even the occasional impression that fingers may run away with themselves. The highlight is the Courante, fluid like running water. But Fray has neither the grasp of Bach's processes nor the sense of communion breathed by Argerich in her famous Deutsche Grammophon disc. Indeed, he loses out to Argerich massively in the latter. Argerich is far more compelling, particularly in the final section. The Sixth Partita initially promises more but fails to get off the ground: the ten-minute initial Toccata seems over-long, and in Fray's hands the Sarabande meanders horribly. The Gigue lacks energy, pretty much exemplifying the release.

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Scriabin The Travel Preludes, Op 11, 13, 15-17

Javier Negrin (pf)

Odradek 1700305, 64 minutes

The recording is the main bugbear here, over-spacious and rather boomy, as if an acoustic could not be tamed. Scriabin's

music is fragrant and sensuous (although much of this is from his post-Chopin output, rather than his theosophist-led strivings for the transcendent). The Op 11 Preludes, 24 of them, have an obvious predecessor in Chopin himself, particularly in those that speak of nostalgia-drenched pathos. Negrin is particularly good at these. He understands Scriabin's tiny statements (the beautifully fluent 51-second Op 15 No 2, perfect in itself even at that length); and he also appreciates the importance of beauty of sound, as in the tiny droplets in the treble of Op 16 No 1. This is an important disc of music Scriabin wrote while touring Europe from a talented young pianist.

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Zelenki Piano Concerto in E flat

Zarzycki Piano Concerto in A flat; Grande Polonaise in E flat

Jonathan Plowright (pf), BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Lukasz Borowicz
Hyperion CDA67958, 62 minutes

Wladyslaw Zelenki (1837-1921) composed his Piano Concerto in 1903. It is arrestingly heroic, lushly poetic and very likeable; Chopin meets Rachmaninov. It requires the pianist to do technical cartwheels, which Jonathan Plowright achieves admirably, romancing as required. It's a dashing and expressive work, with an ingenious set of variations as the second movement and a foot-tapping finale. The much shorter (17 minutes) concerto by Aleksander Zarzycki (1834-1895) is from 1860. The first movement is lyrically suggestive; the second robustly dramatic. Neither work is a masterpiece but both are well worth getting to know. Zarzycki's Grande Polonaise is exactly as you would expect, a swinging and proud creation contrasted with gentler intimacies. The performances, recording and presentation are all superb. If you have a musical sweet tooth, then do not hesitate to acquire.

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