

The Gramophone, maart 2014

CD-recensie 'De Feesten van Angst en Pijn', 'Music for 3 instruments' en 'Improvisations'
Door Liesbeth Devos, sopraan en Het Collectief o.l.v. Vyktintas Baltakas

VOCAL REVIEWS

'Abschied', D475, which clocks in at 5'07", has been known to last two minutes longer in performances by Matthias Goerne. 'Meeres Stille', D216, a song about the calm sea, is sometimes a shade above audibility. One stretch of the CD has four such songs consecutively. So does *Winterreise*, you might argue, but in a cycle with a clear emotional and architectural trajectory.

Of course, there's plenty of artistry here. For all the conceptual orientation of the disc, Boesch isn't the sort of singer who tells you what to think or feel in this music. He lays it out with hugely attractive (and protracted) clarity and then lets you enter the music a fuller participant. And in many ways, the repertoire shows the roads that led to the well-known Schubert cycles. Maybe all of that means that this disc's main appeal is to the most serious students of Schubert. **David Patrick Stearns**

Van Camp

The Feasts of Fear and Agony. Music for Three Instruments. Improvisations
Liesbeth Devos sop

Het Collectief / Vyktintas Baltakas
Fuga Libera © FUG715 (64 • DDD)



Formerly a professional violinist, the Belgian composer Bram Van Camp

(b1980) has established himself as a composer of no mean distinctiveness, as this Fuga Libera disc of works drawn from the past three years confirms. Much the longest piece is *The Feasts of Fear and Agony*, a song-cycle in three parts to poems by Paul Van Ostaijen whose evocative and often fanciful imagery has been reduced to its semantic essence in music that reflects the emotional volatility of the resulting text via a succession of recitative and arioso passages, the soprano affording continuity across a fragmented and often disjunctive instrumental texture that only really coalesces by the latter stages of the second part. Liesbeth Devos succeeds admirably in this respect, while her feeling for vocal timbre teases out meaning even when the actual words are less than intelligible.

The members of Het Collectief are finely attuned to the demands of this music under the guidance of Vyktintas Baltakas, which is no less true of the two instrumental works featured here. *Music for Three Instruments* brings together the Bartókian combination of clarinet, violin and piano, though its 'contrasts' in tempo are elided so as to achieve a seamless

continuity – abetted by writing that draws the trio into an indissoluble whole.

Improvisations is even more impressive, its outwardly free evolution given focus by a formal outline with more than a hint of the chaconne to its unfolding – as if Bach and Lachenmann had been brought into an unlikely yet productive accord.

Performances again do justice to these engrossing pieces, heard to advantage in sound whose clarity is not at the expense of overall perspective. The booklet has a laconic interview with Van Camp – whose music, on the basis of this release, is worth getting to know. **Richard Whitehouse**

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Juliana DiGiacomo sop Michelle DeYoung mez
Vittorio Grigolo ten Ildebrando D'Arcangelo bass

Los Angeles Master Chorale; Los Angeles
Philharmonic Orchestra / Gustavo Dudamel

Video director Michael Beyer

C Major Entertainment © 2013 DVD 714708;

© 2013 714804 (98' + 18' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Hollywood Bowl, August 2013
Bonus: Interview and rehearsal with Dudamel



DVD recordings of Verdi's 'opera in ecclesiastical robes' have become more commonplace in recent

years, the catalogue now boasting (mostly) acclaimed accounts from Mehta (2005), Temirkanov (2011) and Barenboim (2013), as well as 'archive' offerings from Giulini (1964), Karajan (1967) and Abbado (1982).

The latest competitor to challenge these 'indoor' performances comes from the slightly incongruous setting of the Hollywood Bowl, where 11,000+ Californians listened to the heavily amplified Los Angeles forces during two evenings last August. They are certainly a quiet audience, despite the preponderance of wine glasses and other picnic paraphernalia. Judicious editing has also removed the disturbance from passing helicopters and police sirens.

Conducting from memory, Dudamel favours broad tempi, an approach reinforced by his baton-less direction, with much moulding of hand gestures, mouthing the chorus's words and flicking his curly mane to emphasise where the strong beats are (or should be) – since there are times when he seems to be following the orchestra's lead. Nonetheless, he draws beautifully nuanced playing from his highly responsive orchestra and offstage

trumpeters (who really do sound *lontano*, in the distance). The cellos float effortlessly through the opening phrases of the *Offertorio* and the woodwind's contribution is universally excellent. The visual impact of the bass drummer thwacking two drums simultaneously is matched by the sonic gain.

Although the Requiem is not a difficult piece in terms of chorus notes, it does require stamina and discipline. The diction of the well-drilled Los Angeles Master Chorale is exemplary, with crisp enunciation, perfect tuning and unanimity of attack. The solo quartet can make or break a performance, depending on whether they view it competitively or as an ensemble piece. The greatest pleasure comes from the soprano, Juliana DiGiacomo, whose ravishing tone is spread evenly across a true Verdian range, with a honeyed lower register and high notes which can sear the ear, though never screechingly so. The mezzo Michelle De Young is less impressive; her flailing vibrato can become tiresome, though when singing in octaves with the soprano, the tuning is perfectly matched. Vittorio Grigolo sings his tenor sections with impassioned fervour, although there are a couple of sloppy moments in the 'Ingemisco'. Verdi's passages for the bass are not as stretching as for the other soloists but Ildebrando D'Arcangelo despatches them with a firm tone and eloquent phrasing.

Visually, I wonder how often one would regularly re-view this performance. Some of the camera angles are awkward and the lighting makes everything look somewhat flat. The bonus chapter consists of rehearsal material and a lengthy (though not especially helpful) interview with Dudamel. He does not explain, for example, why he pulls the tempo about so much, for example in the final *Libera me*. His interpretation is sound, if a little stodgy. I feel that the Requiem requires a more turbulent approach than that presented here, despite the sonic splendours of the closely miked musicians.

Malcolm Riley

Erika Sunnegårdh

Beethoven Fidelio – Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin R Strauss Salome – Ah, du wolltest mich nicht deinen Mund küssen lassen. Vier letzte Lieder Wagner Der fliegende Holländer – Wie aus der Ferne. Tannhäuser – Dich, teure Halle. Allmäch't'ger Jungfrau

Erika Sunnegårdh sop Erika Ström Majling mez
Thomas Sunnegårdh ten Albert Dohmen bar
Malmö Symphony Orchestra / Will Humberg
Erika Sunnegårdh © 888174 304687
(67 • DDD • T/I)

Vertaling

De Belgische componist Bram Van Camp (geboren in 1980), vroeger een professionele violist, heeft naam gemaakt als een bijzonder goede componist wat bevestigd wordt op deze CD met werk van de voorbije drie jaren. Het langste werk is De Feesten van Angst en Pijn, een lied-cyclus in drie delen op gedichten van Paul Van Ostaijen, wiens suggestieve en vaak fantasievolle beeldspraak is teruggebracht tot haar semantische essentie in een muziek die de emotionele volatiliteit van de resulterende tekst weerspiegelt in een opeenvolging van recitatieve en arioso passages, terwijl de sopraan continuïteit biedt over een gefragmenteerde en vaak disjunctieve instrumentale textuur die pas echt samensmelt in de laatste stadia van het tweede deel. Liesbeth Devos slaagde wonderwel in dit opzicht, terwijl haar gevoel voor het vocale timbre betekenis haalt uit onverstaanbare woorden.

De leden van Het Collectief zijn fijn afgestemd op de eisen van deze muziek onder leiding van Vykintas Baltakas, wat ook het geval is voor de twee instrumentale werken. Music for Three Instruments brengt de Bartókiaanse combinatie samen van klarinet, viool en piano, hoewel de 'contrasten' in tempo worden weggelaten om zo een naadloze continuïteit te bereiken die het trio tot een onlosmakelijk geheel samenvoegt. Improvisations is nog indrukwekkender; een ogenschijnlijk vrije evolutie ontvouwt zich binnen een formeel concept met meer dan een hint naar de chaconne - alsof Bach en Lachenmann worden verenigd in een onwaarschijnlijk maar vruchtbaar akkoord. De uitvoeringen doen alweer eer aan deze meeslepende composities, die te beluisteren zijn in een klankkwaliteit waarvan de zuiverheid niet ten koste gaat van de algemene beleving. Het tekstboekje bevat een laconiek interview met Van Camp - wiens muziek, op basis van deze release, is de moeite waard om te leren kennen.

(Richard Whitehouse, The Gramophone, Maart 2014)