

# Instrumental



Harriet Smith hears the conclusion of an outstanding Mendelssohn survey: 'Shelley is able to reveal inspiration in even the most obscure corners, and there are some striking discoveries' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 58



Jed Distler revisits Wilhelm Kempff's electrical Polydor 78s: 'Those who contend that Kempff was less of a technician should bear the "Hark, bark! the lark" transcription' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 59

## CPE Bach

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Abschied von meinem Silbermannischen Claviere, in einem Rondo, Wq66 H272. L'Aly Rupalich, Wq117/27 H95. Arioso, Wq118/10 H259. La complaisante, Wq117/28 H109. Fantasia, Wq61/6 H291. Freie Fantasie fürs Clavier, Wq67 H300. L'Herrmann, Wq117/23 H92. Keyboard Sonatas: Wq49/2 H31; Wq57 - No 2 H247; No 6 H173; Wq59/1 H281; Wq61/2 H286; Wq62 No 12 H66. March, BWV Anh124. La Prinzette, Wq117/21 H91. Rondos - Wq57/1 H265; Wq58 - No 3 H274; No 5 H267; Wq59/4 H283. Solfeggio, Wq117/2

Marc-André Hamelin pf

Hyperion ⑤ ② CDA68381/2 (141' • DDD)



Certain performers seem to find a *Being John Malkovich*-like secret portal to the

brain of every composer they play. Marc-André Hamelin is certainly among them. And when the brain is that of the maverick of the Bach dynasty, Carl Philipp Emanuel, we can expect extraordinary things.

With music that is rooted in his father's legacy yet looks as far ahead as Brahms and Schumann, CPE is one of those figures who challenges the linear view of music history. Hamelin's two generously filled discs make a strong case not only for the composer's historic significance but also for the modern piano's suitability to his limitless flights of imagination and unsettling juxtapositions. In this Hamelin joins Danny Driver (Hyperion) and Mikhail Pletnev (DG) among the most distinguished of modern exponents.

Where parallel listening is possible, the differences in approach only highlight the infinite variety of the works themselves. Take, for example, the E minor Sonata, H281, where Pletnev's powdered-and-wigged stylisation is as delightful as Hamelin's greater willingness to allow the music's playfulness to do the job on its own. Hamelin and Pletnev excel equally in chameleon-like changes of colour and touch, tailored to the character of each

piece and the detail of each phrase. With Hamelin especially, this quality, in a highly contrasting and rich programme, makes for an exhilarating illusion of the music being created on the spot. This is no less true of the heartfelt expressiveness of the sighing motifs in the Rondo *Farewell to my Silbermann Clavier* and the Couperin-like articulations in *L'Herrmann*.

Alongside sonatas and rondos, Hamelin also samples fantasias and character pieces. Highly improvisatory and free, Bach's fantasias are summations of his inventiveness and his demands on the performer's brilliance and empathy, from the mischievous sudden arrests in the *Presto di molto* of the C major Fantasia (H291) to the majestic *Freie Fantasie* in F sharp minor (H300), which seemingly reaches beyond *Sturm and Drang* all the way to the 19th-century Romantics. This aspect is where the constraints of the harpsichord, and even of the 'tangent piano' so beautifully deployed by Alexei Lubimov, become most obvious. Still, no one interested in this repertoire should miss the famous *Solfeggio* (or *Solfegietto*, as it is popularly known) as strummed with cimbalom-like fluidity by Lubimov's instrument. Not even Hamelin can recreate the full piquancy of this effect.

Among the character pieces in Hamelin's selection, a highlight is the wacky *L'Aly Rupalich* (H95), brought to life here with great zest and wit. Is it possible to listen to this piece without moving your body? I doubt it. This is surely an 18th-century equivalent to hip hop. Throughout the programme, Hamelin's delight and relish are highly infectious. The informative booklet essay is by Mahan Esfahani, himself a seasoned CPE Bach exponent on the harpsichord. In short, I cannot think of a better introduction to CPE Bach on the modern piano than these two joyous discs. **Michelle Assay**

Keyboard Works - selected comparisons:

Pletnev (2/02) (DG) 459 614-2GH2

Driver (7/10) (HYPER) CDA67786/67908 (ous)

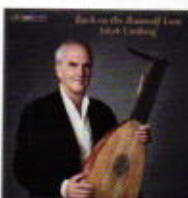
Lubimov (10/17) (ECM) 476 3652

## JS Bach

'Bach on the Rauwolf Lute'  
Prelude, BWV999. Solo Cello Suite No 1, BWV1007. Solo Violin Partita No 2, BWV1004 - Chaconne. Solo Violin Sonatas: No 1, BWV1001; No 3, BWV1005 - Fugue; Largo. Suite, BWV1006a

Jakob Lindberg lute

BIS ⑤ ② BIS2552 (88' • DDD/DSD)



With time, a musical work takes on the character of a character. It's played

by players who, often aided by equally characterful instruments, as is the case here, imbue it with unique qualities that are in essence embellishments.

From that perspective, Jakob Lindberg's arrangement for lute of Bach's D minor Chaconne, with which this recital ends, is one of the loveliest on record. Profound yet unpretentious, exquisitely limned yet shot through with darkness, it feels like a summation not just of Bach's science but of Lindberg's: craft for craft's sake. The preceding works - also (mostly) arrangements from Bach's solo violin and cello sonatas, partitas and suites, are equally satisfying. Yet more for being in a state of becoming, as they roll inexorably towards the terminal Chaconne.

Lindberg has been here before, although his 1994 release features those works ostensibly written or arranged by Bach for the lute/lute-harpsichord. There is little overlap with the present recording. Back then, Lindberg also used a 13-course lute with a second pegbox. Now he takes up his beloved Sixtus Rauwolf, built in the late 16th century as a seven- or eight-course lute and modified in the early 18th century as an 11-course instrument.

Lindberg has some friendly rivals in this field. Among my favourites are Thomas Dunhill, Hopkinson Smith, Paul O'Dette, Nigel North, Stephen Stubbs and Rolf Lislevand. Some are more demonstrative than Lindberg in their feelings about

character. Others are more liberal in their ornamentation, or with their rubato.

What sets Lindberg apart is his instinct for realising the texture of a particular passage according to those aspects of the music's character he wants to emphasise. The effect, as in the Allemande and Courante of the C major Suite (BWV1007, originally in G), is as subtle and beguiling as the mellow timbre of the Sixtus Rauwolf itself. **William Yeoman**

## Beethoven

Piano Sonatas - No 29, 'Hammerklavier', Op 106; No 32, Op 111

Angela Hewitt *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68374 (78' • DDD)



Now that Angela Hewitt has concluded her Beethoven sonata cycle with two of its 'biggest guns', it appears that she has also saved her best for last, interpretatively speaking. She doesn't approach the *Hammerklavier's* opening *Allegro* with Beethoven's controversially optimistic metronome marking in mind (nor does she play the first note as a quaver), yet her flexible and fluid exposition abounds with vitality and variety of articulation, plus spontaneous-sounding accents and points of emphasis. By contrast, Hewitt wields tighter rhythmic reins over the fughetto's development section, conveying an altogether different character, as if her fingers had morphed into a woodwind ensemble. Hewitt's own brilliant booklet essay offers cogent reasons for her choosing the A natural rather than the misprinted A sharp in the rising chains of broken fifths and sixths at bars 224-26 (I remain an unrepentant A sharp guy!).

Hewitt's meticulously aligned phrase groupings in the Scherzo's outer sections seem inhibited and studio-bound compared alongside the angular swagger of Steven Osborne's earlier Hyperion traversal. Yet the ferocity of Hewitt's upward scales and sardonic tremolo chords at the end of the Trio compensate. A heartfelt, sensitively nuanced *Adagio sostenuto* gorgeously showcases Hewitt's refined finger legato technique. Like Murray Perahia, Hewitt trusts the silences between the *Largo's* fragmentary gestures, although, unlike her older colleague, she paces the fugue conservatively. One readily perceives Hewitt's linear cognisance and consistently uniform trills and turns, plus the fact that she does not get slower and thicker as the music gains complexity.



Flights of imagination: Marc-André Hamelin enters the world of CPE Bach with joyous results

I suspect that Hewitt has lived longer with as well as within Op 111. She takes her time over the *Maestoso* introduction, where the descending suspensions in bars 11-15 evoke the gravitas and harmonic tension of Annie Fischer's classic EMI recording. The *Allegro* proper sounds faster than it is actually played, due to Hewitt's ability to follow each gnarly line through to its final destination, and without sweeping little details under the carpet, so to speak. The same goes for the Arietta variations' carefully plotted tempo relationships, to

say nothing of the pianist's rapt concentration, hypnotic continuity and sustaining power. At 21 minutes, Hewitt's Arietta is longer than most, yet there is not one slack or indulgent moment. Hewitt's longtime producer Ludger Böckenhoff does full justice to both pianist and her resplendent new Fazioli grand. **Jed Distler**

*'Hammerklavier' - selected comparison:*

Osborne (10/16) (HYPER) CDA68073

Perahia (3/18) (DG) 479 8353

Op 111 - selected comparison:

A Fischer (6/63\*) (WARN) 2564 63412-3