



## American Recital, Vol. II

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Gramophone (Jed Distler - 01.09.2017)

### GRAMOPHONE

Ulrich Roman Murtfeld commences his second release devoted to American piano music with Alexander Reinagle's charming two-movement D major Sonata. Despite its Philadelphia nickname, the work is little more than a Haydn knock-off. Still, it's a skilfully put-together Classical sonata, and there's much to enjoy in Murtfeld's stylish, refined fingerwork. However, his performance yields to Cecile Licad's altogether crisper, more incisive 2016 release (Danacord, A/16). Murtfeld's Edward MacDowell interpretations likewise face strong recorded competition. Compare his pleasantly symmetrical Op 46 *moto perpetuo* Etude to, say, Charles Fierro's lighter, fleeter reading (Delos) or his broad and heavy way with the *New England Idylls* next to the late James Barbagallo's vivid characterisations (Naxos) and you'll hear what I mean.

However, Murtfeld totally 'gets' the brash earnestness and boisterous energy of George Antheil's less-than-two-minute 1922 Jazz Sonata. He brings out the emotional contrasts between the Ives Three Page Sonata's opening *Allegro moderato* and reposeful *Adagio*. But his tempo for the march-time *Allegro* lacks spirit and determination, while the *Piu moto* ragtime send-up is thick, texturally undifferentiated and humourless. In *From My Diary*, one cannot fault Murtfeld's seriousness of purpose and dedication. That said, his forceful dynamism in the *Allegro pesante* finale sounds relatively foursquare alongside the late Robert Helps's more varied articulation. Likewise, Murtfeld reduces the *Allegro con brio*'s virtuosic passagework to a comfortable *mezzo-forte* lope, whereas Helps's fiery sweep occupies a whole different sound world. It's a pity that Murtfeld's energy and inspiration in the Antheil don't extend elsewhere in this excellently annotated and engineered release.

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Antheil Jazz Sonata Ives Three-Page Sonata  
MacDowell New England Idylls, Op 62. Virtuoso  
Etudes, Op 46 - No 2; No 10. Woodland Sketches,  
Op 51 - No 1, No 6 Reinagle Piano Sonata No 1,  
'Philadelphia' Sessions From My Diary  
Ulrich Roman Murtfeld  
Audite © AUDITE97 740 (6T - DDD)



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