



American Recital, Vol. II

aud 97.740

EAN: 4022143977403



Gramophone (Jed Distler - 2017.09.01)

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 virtuoso 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.

'American Recital, Vol 2'

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
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