

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

BEETHOVEN PIANO SONATAS

Jed Distler surveys a range of recent releases of this eternal repertoire from both established players and newcomers



David Korevaar offers dynamic and expansive readings of the later Beethoven sonatas

Judging from a flurry of recent releases, the Beethoven business continues to boom insofar as physical discs are concerned. The Canadian pianist **Richard Raymond**'s Beethoven last surfaced on CD in 2004 with an excellent *Waldstein* Sonata intriguingly coupled with Reubke's Piano Sonata (Analekta, 5/04). His new Centaur release featuring the three 'name' sonatas (*Moonlight*, *Pathétique* and *Appassionata*) plus Op 27 No 1 reveals him to be more assertive and engaging in this repertoire than before. Raymond's inflections of phrase and wide dynamic contrasts in the *Pathétique*'s first-movement introduction foreshadow the angularity and sweep he brings to the main section and to his driving Rondo. His *sforzando* chords in the Op 27 No 1 first movement's fast music and throughout the *Moonlight* and *Appassionata* finales jolt like bombs, while a forthright, unsentimental demeanour presides over the *Pathétique*'s *Adagio cantabile* and the *Moonlight*'s *Adagio sostenuto*. My only quibble is that Raymond doesn't play softly enough the *Appassionata*'s *Andante con moto*.

Like Raymond, **Young Hyun Cho** takes the *Moonlight*'s *Adagio sostenuto* in a true *alla breve* tempo, but her literal and foursquare phrasing transpires on a less imaginative plane here and elsewhere

throughout this disc. Except for a well-sustained and concentrated Funeral March movement, her Op 26 proves as monotonously monochrome as her Op 27 and Op 28 traversals. **Julian Jaeyoung Kim** is a suppler technician, yet he remains as tense a pianist and musician in Beethoven as I remember from a Brahms release that I reviewed in these pages (KNS, 2/24). Notice, for example, his tendency to rush crescendos in Op 2 No 3's Scherzo, the *Waldstein* first movement's centred yet inflexible rhythmic core and the lack of variety in his tone despite sufficiently crisp articulation in the finale of *Les adieux*. Nor, for that matter, do his animated slow movements rise above the perfunctory and matter-of-fact.

Tomoko Ogasawara's cultivated readings of the last three sonatas are in a whole different league, even if her dynamic range doesn't extend to the extremes indicated in the scores. But that could be the recorded sound, which is attractively resonant yet lacks bottom. In any case, her well-timed poetry in Op 109's opening dovetails into a *Presto* where she proves to be one of the few pianists on disc besides Annie Fischer, Charles Rosen and Freddy Kempf to make clear distinctions between Beethoven's slurred and non-slurred markings. Her pacing and building of Op 110's *Arioso dolente*

and fugue conveys an organic ebb and flow, yet repeated hearings reveal carefully considered tempo relationships. However, Ogasawara's intense, large-scale Op 111 is the disc's prize, from the first-movement introduction's probing downward suspensions to the Arietta's grandly expanding and contracting chains of trills.

David Korevaar first recorded Beethoven's Sonata Op 101 for a 2007 release on Ivory Classics. Returning to this work along with Op 106 plus the Op 53, 54 and 57 Sonatas for a release entitled 'Heroic to Hammerklavier', it appears that Korevaar's style has broadened, while gaining considerable dynamic and expressive scope. You hear this in the astute voice-leading and warm *cantabiles* in Op 101's first and third movements, while his scrupulous trills and precise leaps in the March don't preclude room to breathe. His moderately paced *Hammerklavier* Sonata outer movements aren't about to outrun Murray Perahia or Peter Serkin, yet Korevaar's strong inner rhythm and attentive left hand keep the music moving forwards and ever alive. Energy somewhat flags in the *Waldstein*'s first movement, but the second-movement introduction's hushed repose beautifully dovetails into a Rondo where the pianist makes a compelling case for taking Beethoven's long pedal indications on

THE RECORDINGS

	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 8, 13, 14 & 23 Richard Raymond Centaur CRC4113
	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 12-15 Young Hyun Cho Blue Griffin BGR685
	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 3, 21 & 26 Julian Jaeyoung Kim Hänssler Classic HC24017
	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 30-32 Tomoko Ogasawara Genuin GEN24906
	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 21-23, 28 & 29 David Korevaar Prospero ② PROSP0111
	Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 1 & 29 Aleck Karis Romeo 7344
	Beethoven Cpte Pf Sons HieYon Choi Decca ④ 485 9813

complete rather than modified faith. Conversely, Op 54 finds Korevaar pedalling discreetly and investing Beethoven's rests and accentuations with purpose and meaning. Although Korevaar keeps relatively strict tempo in the *Appassionata*'s first movement, his dynamic outbursts still manage to sound spontaneous and combustible. The volatility of Richard Raymond's third movement contrasts with Korevaar's steadily tempered yet assiduously building trajectory.

When it comes to 20th- and 21st-century music, **Aleck Karis** yields to none of his colleagues for textual integrity and staggering virtuosity. Yet like other so-called 'new music' pianists who attempt Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*, Karis seems content to play and place the notes as honestly and accurately as possible, as if he were looking at the music as a detached outsider. He couples his recent recording with a proficient and poised yet comparably cool F minor Sonata, Op 2 No 1. You can't deny that Karis is a serious musician and formidable pianist, yet I respect his Beethoven more than I enjoy it.

Between 2015 and 2023 **HieYon Choi** recorded all 32 Beethoven sonatas at Berlin's Teldex studio. The cycle's physical edition is hard to source outside of South Korea, yet can easily be found via download and streaming platforms. Her Bösendorfer grand's mellow patina and registral distinctions don't match the power and projection one finds in top-flight Steinways, yet they somehow suit Choi's attention to small details of articulation and voicing. She fares best in the first 15 sonatas, with a scurrying brio and harmonic awareness that leave Julian Kim's Op 2 No 3 at the starting gate, along with an Op 10 No 1 finale that takes Beethoven's optimistic *Prestissimo* directive on fundamentalist faith, capping one of this sonata's greatest-ever recorded interpretations. The E flat Sonata, Op 31 No 3, is a model of intelligent bravura. Granted, the pianist can be cautious to a fault (the *Pathétique*'s outer movements, most of the *Hammerklavier*, an over-sedate Op 78 and low-voltage traversals of Op 31 Nos 1 and 2) or too pre-planned (Op 109). And listeners attracted to Ogasawara's spacious Op 111 Arietta may take issue with Choi's terse stringency. Yet I know that I'll be returning with pleasure to much of Choi's cycle, especially in the early sonatas. **G**

PHOTOGRAPHY: JONATHAN GALLE

Echo, conducted by Lapwood in a most moving performance. This quintet of works in the middle of the album is completed by Lapwood's arrangement of Bob Dylan's *Make you feel my love* with the organ making a dramatic entrance to great effect.

All of this is highly commendable and there is much to enjoy. But for me, with the exception of *Limina luminis*, none of the contemporary organ solos (whether arrangements or original organ pieces) are distinguished works of music, enhanced though they are by Lapwood's varied and imaginative registration choices. Moreover, the Vienne and Duruflé works are strange bedfellows in this context, hardly designed to appeal to newcomers. It is surprising that none of these solos reflects the sunny, outgoing disposition of the Lapwood familiar from her many YouTube posts. Rather the reverse, in fact. Such misgivings, though, are unlikely to deter the legions of fans of this inspiring and sassy musician.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Ein Klavierbüchlein'

JS Bach Suite in E minor, BWV996. **Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten**, BWV691 **G Böhm** Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr. Praeludium, Fugue and Postludium in G minor. Suite No 4 in D minor **Bruhns** Praeludium and Fugue in E minor **Buxtehude** Ciacona in C minor, BuxWV159. **Mensch, willst du leben seliglich**, BuxWV206. Toccata in F, BuxWV157 **Petzold** Menuet in G, BWV Anh114 **Reincken** Fugue in G minor

Yoann Moulin hpd

Ricercar (RIC475 • 69')



Yoann Moulin has entitled this selection of works by German keyboard masters from the generation before Bach 'Ein Klavierbüchlein' ('a little keyboard book'), thereby deliberately invoking the spirit of Bach's own manuscript collections of assorted works for the use and instruction of his family. But if you think that means it's all going to be small stuff, such thoughts will not survive the opening track, an expansive Prelude and Fugue for organ by Nicolaus Bruhns, the brilliant Buxtehude pupil who died in 1697 at the age of 32. It's a remarkable piece, actually two fugues set amid free sections, but in which the fugues are in themselves highly individual – the subject of the first features unexpected repeated notes, while the quirky rests and syncopations of the

second's make it one of the most discombobulating fugue subjects ever devised.

There are other organ pieces, too: by Buxtehude a brilliant Toccata, a contemplative chorale-setting and a powerful C minor *Ciacona* that sounds awfully like a precursor to Bach's great Passacaglia and Fugue; and by Georg Böhm – believed to have had at least some hand in the teaching of the school-age Bach – a Prelude, Fugue and Postlude that opens up in massive block-chord build-ups, and another chorale. Alongside these are pieces more clearly for plucked keyboard instruments, including a French-style suite of gentle melancholy by Böhm, Bach's own low-lying E minor Suite for the Lautenwerk or lute-harpsichord (better known, indeed, in its lute colours), and the famous Menuet in G from the *Anna Magdalena Notebook* (here ascribed correctly to Christian Petzold). There's also a virtuoso fugue by the venerable Hamburg organist Johann Adam Reincken, with even more repeated-note pecking in it than the Bruhns.

That all are successfully accommodated on a single instrument is down to the fact that Moulin uses a splendid pedal harpsichord by Philippe Humeau after Carl Conrad Fleischer. Borrowed from Benjamin Alard (who has been using it in his complete Bach keyboard cycle on *Harmonia Mundi*), it is not just some mighty monster but a harpsichord that can speak sweetly in the Böhm Suite and the chorales, and which, if it cannot match an organ for volume and colour, brings clarity and definition to its imposing repertoire. In fact, Moulin does a very good job of adapting the organ's sound world to the more intimate one of the harpsichord – those opening Böhm chords are skilfully spread and tonally managed, the chorale melodies drawn from their surrounding textures and deftly sustained with eloquent rolled and flowing ornamentation, and the single eight-foot register plays as much of a part as does the full kitchen sink. A rewardingly conceived and thoughtfully executed recital.

Lindsay Kemp

