

Orchestral



Stephen Plaistow on the Brahms concertos from Stephen Hough:

'He has become a warmer player of increased range in Brahms, and unafraid to take risks'

► REVIEW ON PAGE 26



Geoffrey Norris on Mendelssohn concertos from the Midlands:

'All the witty repartee is there, as is the charm, the brilliance, the drama and the infectious sense of fun' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 32

J Anderson

Fantasias^a, The Crazy Moon^b.

The Discovery of Heaven^c

London Philharmonic Orchestra /

^aVladimir Jurowski, ^cRyan Wigglesworth

LPO Ⓜ LPO0074 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London,

^bMarch 19, ^aDecember 3, 2011; ^cMarch 24, 2012



Julian Anderson (b1967) is Mark-Anthony Turnage's successor as the

London Philharmonic's resident composer. While his own music is not untouched by vernacular elements, it has its own carefully crafted way of reconciling old and new. A forthcoming evening-length opera for ENO seems likely to bring wider recognition to a key player who has not broken with the modernist inheritance yet recognises the potency of consonance. No apology need be made for the quality of these live recordings. The sound is warmer than that actually experienced in the Royal Festival Hall and applause has been excised.

Given that there have been only two previous discs devoted exclusively to Anderson's music, it is perhaps surprising to find a piece duplicated here. That said, *The Crazy Moon* (1997) is well worth revisiting. Written as a tribute to Graeme Smith, a young composer pupil and friend who died suddenly with potential unrealised, its title is taken from a Yeats poem which contains a frightening vision of 'the moon, crazed through much childbirth / staggering through the sky'. There are traces of Birtwistle and Knussen's influence is as strongly felt as it is in Turnage's early work but the voice is already quite distinct, the structure at once full of jump-cuts and giving the sense of an unbroken 14-minute arc.

Before this we have *Fantasias* (2009), a five-movement concerto for orchestra commissioned for Cleveland and exhibiting brighter acrylic surfaces, sparser undergrowth and rather less

obvious heart. There are fantastical quasi-reminders of Tippett, Stravinsky, Bartók, Ligeti, Messiaen, Boulez et al en route to an extended wild rumpus. The players sound as if they are enjoying what is, at the very least, a glittering workout. (In concert the brass section stood to deliver the opening movement.)

The comparably brilliant performance of *The Discovery of Heaven* (2011) belies the fact that it is taken from the work's very first outing, under Ryan Wigglesworth. Dedicated to the late Jonathan Harvey, its starting points are the eponymous epic novel by Dutch writer Harry Mulisch and the ancient Japanese court music known as *gagaku*. In three movements, the second and third played without a break, it's a gripping journey through an even wider range of contending sonorities, harmonies and moods, from static oriental contemplation via febrile urban invention to magical, string-based, not-quite-transcendence.

Neither effete nor vulgar, this might just be the new music you've been waiting for, its wow-factor surface fluency only part of the story. Strongly recommended.

David Gutman

The Crazy Moon – selected comparison:

BBC SO, Knussen (9/06) (ONDI) ODE1012-2

CPE Bach

Symphonies – Wq178 H653; Wq183/1 H663.

Oboe Concerto, Wq165 H468^a.

Keyboard Concerto, Wq17 H420^b

^bChristian Kjos *hpd*

Barokkanerne / Alfredo Bernardini ^aob

LAWO Classics Ⓜ LWC1038 (58' • DDD/DSD)



'Fantastical and far-fetched' was how one 18th-century writer described the music of CPE Bach, whose most personal music epitomises the north German cult of *Empfindsamkeit* (roughly 'heightened sensibility'). You can hear what he meant, with a vengeance, in the two symphonies

on this disc. With their ferociously driven *tuttis*, fragile shards of lyricism and weird harmonic and rhythmic dislocations, both the troubled, turbulent E minor of 1756 (Wq178) and the ever-astonishing D major from the 'Hamburg' set of 1775-76 (Wq183/1) subvert contemporary norms at every stage. The young players of the Oslo-based Barokkanerne hurl themselves into this inspired craziness with a thrilling mix of precision and heady abandon. CPE's violent, disorienting contrasts are played up for all they're worth. Strings crackle and seethe, natural horns lour and holler through the texture. Yet the players are equally alive to the brief moments of lyricism in this most restless of composers, whether in the D major Symphony's *Largo* – *Empfindsamkeit* at its most eloquent – or the warm *cantabile* theme that brings respite in the E minor's spiky, splenetic minuet finale.

By comparison, the two concertos sound saner, more 'normal', though the finale of the D minor Harpsichord Concerto is splendidly fiery. Using an attractive copy of an 18th-century Ruckers harpsichord, Christian Kjos plays with skill and verve, though subtler use of *rubato* would have helped the rather mechanical sequences in the first movement. In the E flat Oboe Concerto – a work that leavens compliant *galanterie* with touches of CPE's trademark quirkiness – Alfredo Bernardini is puckish and euphonious in the outer movements, and phrases and colours eloquently in the plaintive C minor *Adagio*. The recording is clear and convincingly balanced. CPE fans will want this above all for the Oboe Concerto and for the viscerally exciting performances of the two symphonies.

Richard Wigmore

Bartók

The Miraculous Mandarin, Op 19 Sz73 – Suite.

Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, Sz106.

Four Orchestral Pieces, Op 12 Sz51

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra /

Edward Gardner

Chandos Ⓜ CHSA5130 (73' • DDD/DSD)