

## Feldman

For Bunita Marcos

Lenio Liatsou *pf*

GOD Records ⑤ ② ③ GOD27 (90' • DDD)

## 'The New York School'

E Brown Folio Cage Two Feldman

Why Patterns? Wolff In Between

Pieces (two versions)

Ensemble Avantgarde

Dabringhaus und Grimm ⑤ MDG613 1865-2

(69' • DDD)



Often I wonder whether the unstoppable rise of Morton Feldman would have been possible without the CD. Pieces that run in unbroken stretches, often over hours, don't find vinyl especially favourable to their cause, where the act of flipping the record over, and the mechanics of the needle re-engaging with the spinning grooves, imposes a narrative from outside the music. Vinyl is good for a pop song; good too for a Bruckner symphony with its neat divisions into movements. But Feldman lives or dies by how his music's uncoiling, elaborating structures sustain themselves over time.

This new release – on vinyl – of Feldman's 1985 solo piano *For Bunita Marcus* on the GOD Records label, performed by Lenio Liatsou, challenges us to think again about Feldman and format. With the boutique modern composition label Mode taking the trouble to issue alternate audio-only DVD versions (and in 24-bit stereo with an option to listen in surround sound) of Feldman's extended-duration pieces, a return to vinyl could feel like gas lighting is about to make a comeback; but clear advantages present themselves. That steady stopwatch timer on a CD player counts down in everyday minutes and seconds; and pausing a CD when the time comes to take a tea break is another distraction. Vinyl commands your undivided attention.

And Lenio Liatsou's performance is not to be missed. She cruises through Feldman's labyrinthine grid at a steady tempo, certainly compared to Hildegard Kleeb's classic 1990 performance, administering the sustain pedal sparingly, responsibility resting on the touch of finger against keyboard to carry the music's inherent softness rather than relying on washes of ambient pedal. Vinyl brings an unfussy clarity; those occasional spiky fanfares Feldman embeds as structural

markers register as hardcore shocks. When the spell is broken by needing to turn the records over, yes, it's a nuisance; but there are considerable gains, too.

The main feature on 'The New York School' – music by Feldman, Cage, Earle Brown and Christian Wolff as performed by Ensemble Avantgarde – is Feldman's *Why Patterns?* (inexplicably referred to throughout all the accompanying material as 'Why Pattern?') which, like Liatsou's *For Bunita Marcus*, receives a measured and texturally stark performance. Stefan Stopora's glockenspiel has a shrill edge that complements well Steffen Schleiermacher's forthright piano against the obvious dulcet sweetness of Ralf Mielke's flute. For a time it felt like Feldman interpretation was a done deal – good to see ideas about his music are again on the move.

Philip Clark

Feldman's *For Bunita Marcus* – selected comparison:

Kleeb (HATN) HAT[NOW]ART174

## Hvoslef

'Chamber Works, Vol 1'

Erkejubel<sup>a</sup>. Duo due<sup>b</sup>. Frammenti di Roma<sup>c</sup>.

Scheherazade forteller videre<sup>d</sup>. Canis lagopus<sup>e</sup>

<sup>f</sup>Steinar Hannevold *ob* <sup>g</sup>Christian Stene *cl*

<sup>h</sup>Per Hannevold *bn* <sup>i</sup>Gary Peterson, <sup>j</sup>Britt Pernille

Lindvik *tp* <sup>k</sup>John-Arild Suther, <sup>l</sup>Kjell Erik Husom

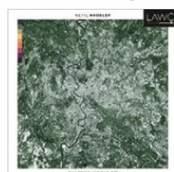
*trbn* <sup>m</sup>Ricardo Odriozola, <sup>n</sup>Māra Šmiukšė *vns*

<sup>o</sup>Ilze Klava *va* <sup>p</sup>John Ehde *vc* <sup>q</sup>Peter Palotai *db*

<sup>r</sup>Marija Kadovič *hp* <sup>s</sup>Einar Røttingen *synth*

<sup>t</sup>Alexander Ulriksen *perc*

LAWO Classics ⑤ LWCI066 (62' • DDD)



Now in his mid-seventies, Ketil Hvoslef has long been a respected presence

on the contemporary music scene and a highly influential one in Norway: as was his father Harald Sæverud, with whom Hvoslef shares a liking for sharply etched textures and bracing harmonic astringency. This disc, the first in a projected series of his chamber music, opens with *Erkejubel* (1982) – its gritty exchanges between trumpets and trombones given 'edge' by the role of percussion and a synthesiser whose chordal textures suggest a nod to Kraftwerk amid the Stravinskian discourse. *Duo Due* (1993) finds violin and cello locked in confrontation, whose angularity is never at the expense of that subtlety of interplay which finds these instruments taking on the guise of each other to an intriguing degree, while *Frammenti di Roma* (1986) not dissimilarly features oboe, clarinet and bassoon during a sequence of exchanges whose aphoristic nature teasingly and

obliquely evokes the historical fragments in which the Italian capital abounds.

Of the other two pieces, *Scheherazade forteller videre* ('Sheherazade continues recounting', 1986) combines violin and harp over six imagined tales, each separated by Rimsky-Korsakov's indelible refrain, and which finally disperse into ethereal realms. *Canis lagopus* (2001) is also the Latin name for the Norwegian mountain fox, an endangered species evoked in terms combative but never aggressive – string quintet pursuing a tensile discourse kept on edge by some militaristic percussion. As with all the performances here, there is little doubt as to the musicians' belief in this music, enhanced by the close-focus yet never airless sound and detailed booklet-notes. Roll on Vol 2.

Richard Whitehouse

## Mykietyn · Szymański

Mykietyn String Quartet No 2

Szymański Two Pieces. Four Pieces. Five Pieces

Royal String Quartet

Hyperion ⑤ CDA68085 (67' • DDD)



The Royal String Quartet have made a good reputation in a fairly wide repertoire,

including their support of modern composers and in particular the avant-garde among their fellow-Poles. This is no light matter, with the experimental ideas much taken up in Poland since the fall of Communism. Two figures prominent in this new wave are Paweł Szymański and Paweł Mykietyn, born respectively in 1954 and 1971 so no longer *enfants terribles*. They share a subtle ear for string textures and a capacity for demanding much of their interpreters' techniques.

Szymański is represented here entirely by short pieces for string quartet, after the fashion of Webern, and indeed sometimes also after Webern's delicacy of texture. He experiments with microtones, with shared slow *glissandos*, with harmonics, with minimalist ideas like the endless ticking of two notes. The longest piece lasts almost 12 minutes; most of them are about four or five minutes long. They are often ingenious, beguiling to the ear, entertaining in their difficult techniques for achieving something very simple. But for a sense of making them the materials for longer pieces of music, one must turn to Mykietyn, and a string quartet lasting over 12 minutes. He too draws on microtones and profuse use of harmonics but the