

and intimacy is what Isabelle Faust and Freiburg Baroque offer here. That bewitching opening is spun on a silver thread so fine you strain to hear it, but the guttural power that follows reveals Faust's expressive range. Some may find her use of portamento a challenge (the result of research into contemporary marked scores, and Joachim's 1905 *Violinschule*). In the *Andante*, particularly, there's a sourness to her subtle sliding between notes, but her elastic rubato compels. She finds insouciant comedy in the *Allegro*, playing both Puck and Ariel, matched by Freiburg's quick-witted winds. Faust is the Wise Child of the violin world, combining the innocent exuberance of a prodigy with a commanding intellectual depth that carries all before it.

If the *Reformation* is harder to love than its predecessors (and decisively rejected by its composer), it's in part due to the heavy piety that clings to its Lutheran programme. Heras-Casado strips off its Sunday best: all is fiery warmth and immediacy, with brindled horns and bristlingly articulate strings; they even manage a 'Dresden Amen' that isn't unbearably portentous, and their *Allegro vivace* is a miracle of light and colour. I missed some weight in a wistful, but rather naked *Andante*, but it's a nakedness that makes the transition into 'Ein feste burg' so effective. Mendelssohn's occasionally gawky tribute to Bach has a rustic, town-band feel here, with dry timpani and nasal winds, but it's a joyously heartfelt finale.

A brilliantly storm-tossed *Hebrides* is, perhaps, the highlight of the disc. *Helen Wallace*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★
★★★★★

Mozart

Piano Concertos, Vol. 2:
No. 14 in E flat; No. 19 in F;
Divertimentos, K 136 & 138
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano),
Manchester Camerata/
Gábor Takács-Nagy
Chandos CHAN10958 69:34 mins



Jean-Efflam Bavouzet and the Manchester Camerata under Gábor Takács-Nagy have here

designed a programme similar to their first volume: two concertos from 1784, that *annus mirabilis* of Mozart keyboard-concerto production, interspersed with divertimentos from 12 years earlier. One might have preferred the middle space occupied by a third concerto, above all because in the two on offer Bavouzet reveals himself a Mozartian every bit as mercurially imaginative and technically audacious as he already has been in the piano music of Haydn. But the lighter charms of the string pieces, especially those of the D major, offer appealing contrast, the more so given the combination of strength and delicacy in playing and interpretation.

The collaborative vigour of the concerto readings proves still more attractive. Particularly in the finales, buoyancy and moments of relaxation are balanced in a way that brought smiles of pleasure to this listener's face. The F major Concerto, one of Mozart's most purely delightful, seems to me the disc's high point: tempos expertly chosen (the second movement a true *Allegretto*), the underlying boldness and subtlety of structural design vibrantly communicated.

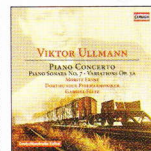
For my taste the more daringly original K449 doesn't quite attain the same level of completeness: the middle movement feels slightly slower and more laboured than the *Andantino* marking suggests it should. Still, the CD as a whole offers Mozart music-making of altogether superior quality. *Max Loppert*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★
★★★★

Ullmann

Piano Concerto, Op. 25; Piano Sonata No. 7; Variations and Double Fugue, Op. 3a
Moritz Ernst (piano); Dortmund Philharmonic/Gabriel Feltz
Capriccio C5294 56:32 mins



Viktor Ullmann's Piano Concerto was composed in Prague 1939 during the dark days of the

German occupation. It is curiously proportioned with the opening *Allegro con fuoco* and *Andante tranquillo* lasting twice as long as the two pithy fast movements that follow. Perhaps the frenzied energy of that first movement and the almost Bartókian percussiveness of the final two reflect Ullmann's underlying anxiety at the external political situation. Yet this is counteracted by the serenity and sensuality of the *Andante tranquillo* with its ravishing almost French orchestral timbres. Moritz Ernst makes the best possible case for wider exposure of this work, and the orchestral playing of the Dortmund Philharmonic under Gabriel Feltz is sharp and incisive.

By the time Ullmann composed his Piano Sonata No. 7 in 1944, he had been incarcerated in Terezín for two years, and was soon to be sent to Auschwitz. The bright and breezy first movement hardly betrays the desperate circumstances in which he was living, though one may detect a strong element of defiance in the final movement, a set of Variations on a Hebrew Song which in the concluding Fugue ingeniously combines the Hebrew melody with a Protestant chorale and the Hussite melody 'You warriors of God' previously used by Smetana and Dvořák. Once again, Ernst presents authoritative accounts of the Sonata and the earlier Schoenberg Variations. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★
★★★★

Edinburgh 1742

Barsanti: Concerto grosso Nos 1-5; A Collection of Old Scots Tunes; **Handel:** *Sta nell'Ircana pietrosa tana*; Concerto for French horns in F Emilie Renard (mezzo-soprano), Alec Franck-Gemmell, James Walters (horn), Alan Emslie (timpani); Ensemble Marsyas/Peter Whelan
Linn CKD 567 67:36 mins



Handel's *Six French Horn Songs in Seven Parts*? After hearing this recording, I

wager you'll lament the loss of that manuscript. For Ensemble Marsyas, the archives of the Edinburgh Musical Society (1728-1797) that noted this lost repertoire certainly provide a fruitful and fascinating lens into 18th-century Scottish taste. Under the incisive direction of Peter Whelan, the group is on ebullient form as it explores the vogue for the French horn in Scotland, though works by Handel and Edinburgh-based Italian, Francesco Barsanti.

Handel's *Water Music* features a good deal here. His Concerto for Two French Horns in F is an adaptation of the *Allegro - Alla Hornpipe*, brilliantly and effortlessly delivered by Alec Franck-Gemmell and Joseph Walters. The *Water Music* also indirectly steers the vim and vigour of the horn and timpani concertino in Barsanti's five Op. 3 Italian-style concerti grossi. The first concertos to be published in Scotland by the well-travelled and unjustly-neglected Barsanti, they are the mainstay of the programme. Ensemble Marsyas afford all due splendour to ravishing *largos*, martial pomp to rousing *allegros*, and high-spirited dance steps to Menuets as Barsanti emerges as a worthy rival to Handel's festive verve. But his varied output is also beautifully captured in four *Old Scots Tunes*: Colin Scobie's fiddle perfectly fusing the soul and lilt of these traditional melodies with an 18th-century aesthetic. In a fleeting snapshot of the opera house beloved of both composers, mezzo-soprano Emilie Renard's fiery performance of Handel's aria 'Sta nell'Ircana' from *Alcina* completes an assured disc of horn-infused Baroque finery. *Hannah French*

PERFORMANCE
RECORDING

★★★★
★★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (b1962)

Bavouzet studied piano at the Paris Conservatoire under Pierre Sancan (whose pupils include Michel Béroff and Jean-Philippe Collard). He impressed Georg Solti when they met in 1995, and the Hungarian-born conductor invited him to perform Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3, but died before that plan could be realised. Bavouzet has since made critically acclaimed recordings of all Bartók's concertos, Joseph Haydn's complete piano sonatas, and Debussy's complete piano works of which Vol. 3 won a 2009 BBC Music Magazine Award.

