Crescendo Magazine · 5 January 2022 · Christophe Steyne

Contemporary harpsichord: two new releases by Luca Quintavalle and Guy Penson

English translation of the complete available article text, prepared with local machine translation and checked against the source. The original PDF remains the reference.

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Italian contemporary music for harpsichord. Francesco Filidei (*1973) : Preludio e Filastrocca. Ennio Morricone (1928-2020) : Mordenti ; Neumi. Maurilio Cacciatore (*1981) : Toccatina. Leonardo Marino (*1992) : Quando il passato era ancora presente. Ivan Fedele (*1953) : Suite francese. Carlo Galante (*1959) : Petit Ordre. Alessandro Solbiati (*1956) : Undici variazioni per Ruggero. Luca Francesconi (*1956) : Mambo. Silvia Colasanti (*1975) : Rumbling gears. Fabio Vacchi (*1949) : Ricercare ; 3 Post per Scarlatti. Francesco Antonioni (*1971) : Blues. Giorgio Colombo Taccani (*1961) : Giannizzeri e Gendarmi. Mauro Lanza (*1975) : Chop Suey. Vita Palumbo (*1972) : Speaking. Fabio Massimo Capogrosso (*1984) : Techno Scene. Vittorio Montalti (*1984): Short Stories. Stefano Gervasoni (*1962): Preliminary Suite. Jacopo Baboni Schilingi (*1971): Scarlet K 141. Luca Quintavalle, harpsichord. September 2020 to June 2021. Book in English. TT 78

Johan Huys (*1942): This is not a passacaille; Four studies in the shape of... ; Tomb for Mr. Brewaeys ; Three pieces for harpsichord... ; Landscapes with some banalities ; Fantasy on a defended interval. Guy Penson, harpsichord. Book in English, French, Dutch. May 2021. TT 55□05. Passacaille 1116

The soloist discography of Luca Quintavalle has more than one rope with its bow and bears witness to a multi-faceted talent. After remarkable albums dedicated to the 18th century keyboard (Barrière & De Bury, then Eberl whom we had greeted by a Joker Discoveries), after having recently directed the ensemble Concerto Köln for an admirable Halendelian recital with Jeanine de Bique (Mirrors at Berlin Classics), here the native musician of Como offers us a vast anthology of contemporary Italian production for harpsichord. Knowing that some pieces derive from the piano and even from the cymbalum (Chop Suey). More than two and a half hours, eighteen composers and composers, from Ennio Morricone to Leonardo Marino born in 1992. The oldest piece (Mambo de Luca Francesconi) dates back to 1987, the most recent date of last year; seven are also dedicated to Luca Quintavalle.

It is impossible in these few lines to summarize the diversity of this florileg, but the notice summarizes the context, language and performance issues. It is a pity, however, that the structure of the explanations, which is clearly arranged, does not follow the order of the works as they follow each other on the two discs. Some are experimental, including electronic (Short Stories; Scarlet K 141) or percussive effects, while others come from an assumed tradition which refers to the great hours of the classical repertoire (particularly seductive and accessible, Suite francese and Petit Ordre). We will appreciate the variety and invention of the series Undici variazioni per Ruggero, whose writing has spread over a decade, as well as the contrasting vignettes of "Janissars and Gendarmes", or humor (at least literal) that emerges from the collection of incholastic moments from the Preliminary Suite. We will not miss the Techno Scene, obstinate and concluded with fracs.

Neither the rich and psychedelic universe of Short Stories.

The album is dedicated to Ernesto Esposito, a former teacher of the performer. The intriguing cover illustration is a "bodyscore": Jacopo Baboni Schilingi's score is written directly on the body of a female model. One imagines the time spent selecting this florilège, preparing its recording to achieve a virtuoso but above all eloquent result. The choice of a unique (and enduring) harpsichord, built by Andreas Restelli in 2014 after a Pierre Donzelague, allows to focus attention on the specificity of each score. The intelligence, the sensitivity, and the physical impact given to the pages that require it, generate a listening where attention does not weaken. Luca Quintavalle is the wise guide of this panorama whose execution, accompanied by an instructive perspective, facilitates us first without fading or betraying the more demanding moments.

Johan Huys has long been a musician on the keyboard of the ensemble Parnassus since 1966, an eminent partner of the baroque scene. He is also the chairman of the jury of the International Musica Antiqua Competition in Bruges, where he sat for some 40 years since the early 1980s, accompanied by James David Christie, Odile Bailleux, Ton Koopman, Simon Preston, Gustav Leonhardt, Scott Ross and Kenneth Gilbert. He also became director of the Ghent Conservatory of which he had graduated. But perhaps he is less known as a composer, in which case the present album entirely dedicated to all recent harpsichord works comes to repair this ignorance. The title of the record, obvious wink to Magritte, corresponds to a play of 2018 and is well chosen to designate this anthology that does not escape the malicious false-likers, the allusions to brush-poil (on the cover the escarpins photographed from upside down are a visual translation) or the traits of mind.

Érik Satie is never named in the notice, yet his humour permeates names like "Four studies in the form of". No, no pear: in the form of "dialogue with oneself" for a elaboration with the left hand alone. And even a "study-shaped study", tautological in the text, explosive in fact, which is inspired by Debussy (Movement) and Ligeti. The Three Pieces of 2019 include an interrupted Cantilene which, we are assured, only maintains a nominal relationship with a certain Serenade of similar epithet. The Dadaist piece does not refer to the mutin artistic movement of the last century, no, but refers to the four re-re-la-la-la-la notes of its seminal motif (d-a-d-a, in German notation). The program also includes a Fantasy on a defended interval based on the Honni triton as diabolus in musica. Landscapes with some banalities still reflect the Auspice of the Solitaire d'Arcueil, while the tribute to Luc Brewaeys (disappeared in 2015) reconnects with the genus Tomb and exempts irony, following a disturbing procession, with dark glas.

This portrait is performed by Guy Penson, a former student of Johan Huys, with whom he found his musical vocation at the age of thirteen, with whom he has already performed in duo, and has even recorded (For Two to play, by John Bull to Muzio Clementi, by PMP Records, 2005). A sumptuous William Dowd after Blanchet, superbly captured, is the accomplice of an interpretation that is so perfect and legitimate that the booklet shows a photograph of the composer attending the sessions. The sharpness of the game impresses and meets the percussive requirements (the Martellato de Étude in the form of a toccata!) with both fergue and precision, finding the right balance between tension and violence. The often atonal language expresses without drought on this brilliant instrument, tickling harmonics, supple and robust in the grave. Guy Penson shares these rhetorical universes and sometimes clamp-free-laughing (the nonchalance lascive of the Habanera), whose juices he refines without sweetening the aridities.

Brilliant: Sound: 8 – Booklet: 9 – Repertory: 7-9 – Interpretation: 9.5

Passacaille : Sound : 9.5 – Booklet : 9 – Directory : 8 – Interpretation : 10

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