

esting, giving a popular history of the tango's evolution, sorting out the Old Guard style from the adaptations to a newer style initiated by Piazzolla. However, except for Piazzolla, the notes refer to only one of the other composers by name and simply imply that some of the other tangos are in old, authentic style. Not being a tango expert, I found this very confusing after digesting the entire album. It seemed to me that Piazzolla's style was the real thing and the others the diluted imposters. But then I've never been seduced by such tags as "authentic". What counts first is good music well performed. I can only say that Tango 7 certainly meets the second requirement and only some of these tangos the first.

FRENCH

Earplay

MAMLOK: *Rhapsody*; **FESTINGER:** *Septet*; **PETERSON:** *Labyrinth*; **CARTER:** *Esprit rude/esprit doux*; **FRANK:** *Points of Departure*; **VAYO:** *Poem*; **MORETTO:** *Silenciosamente*

Centaur 2274 (Qualiton) 67 minutes

If you follow contemporary American music, you'll want to investigate this collection of eclectic, high-quality composing and outstanding playing. I enjoyed Mamlok's *Rhapsody* more than any of her other chamber pieces, was fascinated by Richard Festinger's "little-orchestra" approach to the chamber ensemble, and charmed by Elliott Carter's bittersweet birthday portrait of Pierre Boulez. The program as a whole demonstrates that modern American chamber music is in a fairly healthy and listenable state.

RAYMOND

Music On and Off the Keys

FOSS: *Fantasy Rondo*; **TOGAWA:** *Kaze No Ha*; **FRANKEL:** *Solo Violin Sonata 1*; **HOFMANN-ENGL:** *Sonata 1* **KERSHNER:** *Bassoon Sonata*; **LOEVENDIE:** *3 Pieces*

Michael Davis, v; Brian Kershner, bn; Ananda Sukarlan, Paul Hoffmann, Yoshiko Takase, Susan Thomson, p

Vienna Modern Masters 2016 (Jem) 73 minutes

Another of VMM's unclassifiable but interesting hodgepodes. I guess you could gather these items under the rubric of "new music", but do you really consider compositions more than half a century old (as both the Foss and Frankel pieces are) "new"? Anyway, here is a variegated collection of four solo piano pieces, one bassoon-and-piano duo, and one solo violin sonata, all of them recorded premieres (though sonics vary from piece to piece).

First, the four piano works: Lukas Foss's *Fantasy Rondo* is a pleasant diversion in Stravinskian quasi-ragtime; Yoichi Togawa's *Kaze No Ha* (The Edge of the Wind) an exoti-

cally tinged, wistful mood-piece spun out of a questioning, capricious figure; Ludger Hoffmann-Engl's *Sonata* a somber, Germanically ponderous but mercifully short fast-slow two-movement pair; and Theo Loevendie's *Three Pieces* a long and repetitive sequence of low grumbles, chordal washes, spastic gestures, high trills, and other assorted paraphernalia of 60s piano music, somewhat mitigated by bouncy jazz riffs and an energetic central toccata. I found the Foss dandy and the Togawa winsome and involving. The other two pieces are less satisfying and hampered as well by clangorous sound, though Ananda Sukarlan's virtuosity in the Loevendie is impressive.

Brian Kershner's *Bassoon Sonata* is user-friendly and Hindemithian, and I had no trouble enjoying its tuneful counterpoint and chortling ebassoonics. Even better—and the real discovery here—is Benjamin Frankel's dulcet and lovingly-shaped *First Sonata* for Solo Violin; violinist Michael Davis (whom I've had occasion to praise several times before in these pages) brings out its Mozartean poise and Prokofieffian high spirits very well indeed.

LEHMAN

Ragtime

STRAVINSKY: *Octet; Ragtime; Danses Concertantes; 8 Instrumental Miniatures*; **MCCAULEY:** *8 Miniatures*; **MILHAUD:** *La Creation du Monde*

Canadian Chamber Ensemble, Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony/Raffi Armenian

CBC 5159 (Allegro) 77 minutes

These pieces play off one another well, though only one of them has anything to do with ragtime. The recording is bright and the playing excellent, but the much-recorded Stravinsky and Milhaud pieces aren't very competitive. Stravinsky even at his most relaxed needs a core of nervous energy, or the music seems aimless; these performances are just too polite. In the chamber works, it's possible to overlook that to enjoy the excellent playing, especially by the two busy bassoonists in the *Octet*. In the orchestral *Danses Concertantes* (one of Stravinsky's oddball forays into American showbiz, but a charming score) Armenian's slow tempos and over relaxed quality make it seem to last forever—two minutes longer than Dutoit's on London, a big difference in music like this. Ditto *La Creation du Monde*, though the performance loosens up a bit after a too-metrical and literal introduction. The chamber sound is OK, but in this piece the big-band versions (Bernstein, Munch) sweep the field. The witty "miniatures" come off best, William McCauley's little pieces for flute and strings providing the recording's requisite Canadian content. An imaginative but disappointing collection.

RAYMOND

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