



Emotionally speaking, I suspect that Arakawa most readily connects with Scriabin's Third Sonata. Her melody-playing doesn't palpitate like (you guessed it) Horowitz, but the volatile dynamics, the restless inner voices and the unsettled ebb and flow of ideas in the outer movements come across convincingly. If only the recorded sound were warmer and fuller-bodied; the piano's metallic patina in louder moments causes instant aural fatigue.

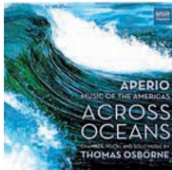
Jed Distler

## T Osborne

And the Waves Sing Because They Are Moving. Dreams of Sky and Sea. Like Still Water. Songs of a Thousand Autumns

Aperio

MSR Classics © MS1494 (61' • DDD)



Each of these Thomas Osborne premiere recordings references the sea; written in

Los Angeles and Honolulu between 2004 and 2012, each is exquisitely played and sung, and explores in delicately charged detail 'the watery horizon' while 'seeking what lies beyond'.

The four works are also united by the alchemical means Osborne brings to combining words, meaning and sounds in short poems and intimate lyrics concerned with matters of the heart; he makes this clear in the resonant opening bars of *Like Still Water*, in which piano and crystal glasses filled with water initiate a high-level deconstructed dialogue that culminates in a compelling final minute of basically silence.

Words and music in Osborne's two song-cycles are similarly integrated – with a difference. *Dreams of Sky and Sea*, focused on beauty and barriers, longing, sadness and joy, is set to objective Korean verses that evoke a purer, less emotional beauty, although the impact can still be devastating, as in soprano Tracy Satterfield's outcry at the end of 'Though the sun is sinking at the mountain crest'.

By contrast, *Songs of a Thousand Autumns*, set to potent texts by two ninth-century poets (one the author of *The Pillow Book*), is a deeply subjective cycle of great fragility which places Satterfield's command of pitch and line against some gorgeous writing for violin, viola, cello and piano, before erupting in a restrained tsunami. Set between the two, Osborne's riveting 12-minute *And the Waves Sing Because They Are Moving*, inspired by lines by the poet Philip Larkin, gives Jason

Hardink a chance to show off his impressively wide range and command.

Laurence Vittes

## Rakowski

Stolen Moments<sup>3</sup>. Piano Concerto No 2<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Sarah Bob, <sup>b</sup>Amy Briggs *pf*

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose

BMOP/sound © BMOPI048 (70' • DDD/DSD)



Although the ambitious symphonic works on David Rakowski's second release by

the Boston Modern Orchestra Project were written in Europe, each has a distinctly American enthusiasm and expertise, as do Gil Rose's excellent performances with the BMOP band and the remarkable booklet-notes by both the composer and Hayes Biggs.

In fact, BMOP commissioned the Piano Concerto No 2, which Rakowski meant as a 'gigantic, monster piano concerto' and wrote while enjoying the scenery and fruits of Cassis on the Mediterranean coast, where he munched on 'the healthy farmer's market food, the inexpensive boxed rosé and the pepperoni pizza potato chips'.

The music itself is less than gigantic, even at more than 42 minutes long, and turns out to be more impulsive and fascinated by moods and sounds than most monsters, enhanced by the wonderful spatial quality of the recording. The second movement pays tribute to Rakowski's teacher and mentor Milton Babbitt: the opening cor anglais solo takes its row from Babbitt's *A Solo Requiem*.

After Rakowski wrote his more intimate *Stolen Moments* for 10 instruments at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Umbria in 2008, studded with gorgeous moments such as the trombone solo in the second movement, he arranged the version recorded here at the request of another ensemble of notable attitude and chops, the US Marine Chamber Orchestra. If you are into piano études and want more of Amy Briggs, Rakowski has not only written 100 such pieces but Bridge has issued the fourth volume in its complete recording – played by Briggs. It's a small world if you're a Rakowski fan.

Laurence Vittes

## Szymanowski

Piano Sonata No 1, Op 8. Mazurkas, Op 50 – excs

Sang Mi Chung *pf*

Centaur © CRC3460 (64' • DDD)



Mention Poland and piano music, and the name Chopin inevitably pops up.

But another Polish pianist-composer also excelled in the genre: Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937), who was inspired by his famous predecessor even as he carved a distinctive niche for himself. On her new recording, pianist Sang Mi Chung performs Szymanowski works from two periods in the composer's career: the First Piano Sonata (1903-04) and 14 of the 20 Mazurkas (1924-25).

The Sonata is a luxurious paean to Romanticism, with robust themes and dense harmonies pointing to previous masters, including Chopin. Szymanowski's free compositional spirit is also evident, especially in the finale's three-voice fugue. Like Chopin, he was an imposing pianist, as the work's difficulties indicate. Chung gives the sonata a richly detailed and expressive account, savouring the intimate writing with the same purposeful intensity she applies to the extrovert gestures.

The Mazurkas also have hints of you-know-who, while heading in daring structural and harmonic directions. Szymanowski stretched the bounds of tonality, not through serial techniques but by adding spicy flavours that captivate the ear. The Mazurkas are concise and direct, establishing their diverse personalities and saying as much as Szymanowski deems they need to say.

Chung's poetic and generous playing of these miniatures advocates for their presence on recital programmes. It would be exciting to hear her in Szymanowski's powerful *Symphonic concertante* (Symphony No 4), his final work in the form, which places the orchestra and solo piano on equal footing.

Donald Rosenberg

## V Thomson

Four Saints in Three Acts

Sarah Pelletier *sop* ..... St Teresa I

Gigi Mitchell-Velasco *mez* ..... St Teresa II

Aaron Engebretth *bar* ..... St Ignatius

Lynn Torgrove *mez* ..... Commère

Tom McNichols *bass* ..... Compère

Deborah Selig *sop* ..... St Settlement

Charles Blandy *ten* ..... St Chavez

Stanley Wilson *ten* ..... St Stephen

Capital Capitals

Charles Blandy *ten* Sumner Thompson,

Andrew Garland *bars* Simon Dyer *bass*