

and dazzle later on (but tends far too often to thump the pedals to distracting effect!). Boulez's famed clarity pays many dividends in the orchestral writing. Concerto No.2 is a bit sluggish at times, the poetic moments coming off best, while the orchestra's dark-toned cellos are particularly fine. Concerto No.1 is also hefty, but the symphonic approach is convincing and enlightening. The recording is excellent in its openness and immediacy, with well-judged balance between piano and orchestra. The disc plays for an ungenerous 50 minutes and ends with two short piano pieces as encores, Consolation No.3 and Valse oubliée No.1, both given intimate and refined distillations by Barenboim.

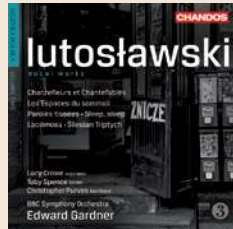
Aimard's Liszt Project takes numerous examples of his works, including the B minor Sonata, and juxtaposes them with works by Bartók, Berg (his Sonata), Ravel, Messiaen, Scriabin (Black Mass Sonata) and Wagner. Two well-filled CDs, totalling nearly 150 minutes, make for diverting and complementary listening, not least those visionary 'late' works of Liszt that seem dangerously anticipatory of later musical developments, here side by side. Aimard makes a great job of Alban Berg's Opus 1 Sonata (although he surprisingly omits its exposition repeat), is fully inside the sinister machinations of Scriabin's piece, and is triumphant in the B minor Liszt, one of the piano's monuments. The recording (made live, it seems, though there is no information) presents a piano incapable of making a harsh sound, and is full of colour and dynamic contrast. Its beautifully rounded timbre is a pleasure in itself and it comes into its own in a wonderfully fragrant and evocative *Les Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este*; Liszt anticipating impressionism. An interview with Aimard in the booklet helps us get closer to this fascinating venture.

LUTOSLAWSKI

Silesian Triptych; Lacrimosa; Paroles tissées; Sleep, Sleep; Les Espaces du sommeil; Chantefleurs et Chantefables

Lucy Crowe (soprano), Toby Spence (tenor), Christopher Purves (baritone); BBC Symphony Orchestra/Edward Gardner

Chandos CHAN 10688



music. Some of the selection here is accessible through being from his earlier works: folksong is evident; so too orchestrations that are wonderfully kaleidoscopic and descriptive. The Silesian Triptych is upbeat and lyrical, with a strong rhythmic impulse. *Lacrimosa* is deeply beautiful and contemplative.

There are more-demanding works in the form of *Paroles tissées* and *Les Espaces du sommeil* – written respectively for Peter Pears and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (and both with French texts) – yet the textures and colours that Lutosławski creates are exquisitely judged and often beguiling as well as emotionally charged. There really is nothing here to frighten the horses; rather these are worlds to become immersed in.

From 1990, *Chantefleurs et Chantefables* (also French – Robert Desnos's prose was originally aimed at children) is appealing music that delights and also creates a magical atmosphere; flowers and animals are the subjects. The three solo singers are each superb. The BBC Symphony Orchestra is very precise (as it needs to be to reveal Lutosławski's painstaking colours and blends), with Edward Gardner clearly relishing conducting these scores. The recording is top class in its immediacy, clarity, natural balance and perspectives; a window fully open onto the performances. There is some very individual music here.

MENDELSSOHN

Cello Sonatas 1 & 2; Variations concertantes; Lied ohne Worte

Paul Watkins (cello) & Huw Watkins (piano)

Chandos CHAN 10701

Both of Mendelssohn's cello sonatas are splendid works, especially the expansive second one. But the first also enjoys dramatic thrust, lively expression and shapely curves. It's a good listen. The brothers Watkins (Paul also conducts and Huw is a fine composer) bring a close musical relationship to their

Anyone resisting the music of Witold Lutosławski (1913–94) up to now might just find this release the perfect entry into the Polish composer's

performances. They find heroism and ardour in the second cello sonata, and their passion and sensitivity throughout the recording really brings these works alive.

Paul finds much colour and outreach in his cello, and Huw is a poised pianist; both are well captured by the microphones in equal and focused balance – cello *and* piano (not cello 'with') – and knock sparks off each other. Dynamics grow naturally and cellist Paul employs a distinctive palette of modern-instrument colour. And, boy, could Mendelssohn write tunes; and know how to romance and thrill listeners. The Variations keep the magic coming and the gentle *Song Without Words* is a charmer.



SCHUBERT

Piano Sonatas – in C (D840, Reliquie) & in D (D850)

Shai Wosner (piano)

ONYX 4073

Shai Wosner is alive to the enigma and ambiguities of the unfinished *Reliquie* Sonata. He explores its two movements with an enquiring mind. The great D major Sonata finds Wosner exaggerating accents, something compounded by a recording that is just a little cold and aggressive. That said, the artistry is considerable, the interpretation fluent and fully-formed, and there is shape and sensitivity in abundance. Wosner is a major talent, and I recommend his previous Brahms disc, also for Onyx. On the present release, as attractive interludes, Wosner delights with some of Schubert's German Dances and his Hungarian Melody.