

music and to create, as appropriate, hocketing effects. Initially, I grumbled at the idea of dispensing with a paper booklet in lieu of the 12th disc, which is a CD-ROM. However, when I inserted the CD-ROM into my laptop, I was impressed with what it had to offer. There are 14 pages of commentary on the music, most of it by van Veen, although Alan Swanson's January 2010 comments, in *Fanfare*, on Simeon ten Holt's *Canto Ostinato* also are included. (Van Veen's idiosyncratic command of written English is such that Brilliant should have hired an editor or proofreader, however.) There are biographical notes on all of the composers and performers, and a few photographs of these individuals. Also, there are reproductions of small excerpts from many of the printed scores, and there are much larger excerpts of the scores by ten Holt, Meijering, and ter Veldhuis. (All of van Veen's *Incanto No. 1* is included, so if you like, print it out, find another piano and a friend, and play it yourself!)

Perhaps it is surprising that many of these works are available in alternative recordings; there are few premieres in this set. Nevertheless, the performances are excellent, and there is no collection like this available anywhere else, and certainly not at this price. It is both encyclopedic and joyous, and I spent a happy week listening to its contents, and taking notes about composers (Eisenga in particular) whose work I'd like to know better. I also should point out that the van Veen's and friends have recorded an 11-CD set devoted to ten Holt's multiple piano works (Brilliant Classics 7795). This includes a four-piano version of *Canto Ostinato* that stretches to 145 minutes! Heaven! **Raymond Tuttle**

RECITAL FAVORITES BY NISSMAN, Vol. 8 • Barbara Nissman (pn) • PIERIAN RECORDING SOCIETY 46 (78:03)

PROKOFIEV Piano Sonata No. 1 in f. **SCHUMANN** Piano Sonata No. 1 in #. **CHOPIN** Ballade No. 4. **LEES** *Visage*. **ALBÉNIZ** *Navarra*. **GINASTERA** Piano Sonata No. 1. **GERSHWIN** Prelude No. 2

We seem to be living in an era where great pianists (as well as cellists, and occasionally violinists) are popping out of the woodwork. Having discovered one such for this issue in Vladimir Nielsen, I've run across another in Barbara Nissman, born in Philadelphia in 1944. Her teachers included György Sándor. According to the notes, she is both a "pianist of a bygone era" in the tradition of romantic playing as well as a champion of certain modern music. She has given complete recitals of the sonatas of Prokofiev, and has long been associated with the music of Ginastera, whose last work, the Sonata No. 3, was dedicated to her.

Thus it is with some chagrin that I admit my prior lack of knowledge of her. If this CD is any indication, and I believe it is, Nissman is a pianist of formidable talents. She combines the bravura approach of a pianist like Argerich with the warmth and sensitivity of artists such as Schiff or Perahia. She has a bold, rich, deep-in-the-keys approach that makes the Prokofiev First Sonata—a brief, one-movement work—sound like an entire universe of sound, and she can change and adapt her approach to music depending on era and style. Her performances of the Schumann sonata and Chopin ballade contain many touches of rubato that are well suited to the music, yet she never loses track of the structure of each piece. Everything is built around a long view of the music, knowing where she is going and knowing how each piece of the score fits in.

Nissman takes the Gershwin Prelude No. 2 at a faster clip than most modern pianists, but this is exactly the tempo that Oscar Levant played it at. Albéniz's *Navarra* breathes the sighs of Spanish breezes while Ginastera's early Sonata No. 1 (1952) is given an outstanding reading, the repeated left-hand rhythms played not only with the proper feel but also with smoldering intensity. In the second movement, the unusual rhythmic motion, combined with Nissman's musical approach, almost makes it sound in the beginning as if a tape were running backward—an interesting effect. The Adagio has not only the proper quietude, but a deep, mysterious quality that the music strongly suggests, while the final *Ruvido ed ostinato* moves with an almost impatient, restless energy. Benjamin Lees's almost stark *Visage*, which was also written for Nissman, is given its first recording here, played with appropriate feeling. The opening sounds Russian-romantic (the liner notes suggest Rachmaninoff), but the music soon moves into darker territory, skimming the outer edges of tonality, working its way through busy 16ths to loud, staccato passages that suggest great inner angst. Clipped chords, first loud but then soft, centered on D Minor, end the piece.

Looking over other available recordings by Nissman, I would be very curious to hear the complete Prokofiev sonatas (Pierian 007-009), the complete Ginastera music for solo piano (005-006), and possibly *Recital Favorites Vol. 2*, which contains music of Bach-Busoni, Barber, Franck, Granados, Debussy, and also Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. One final note: On the back of the CD it says, "No compression has been used in this recording. Therefore, to capture the full frequency range one must listen at a higher than normal dynamic level," but I find that I don't have to turn up the volume very high. In fact, the engineers seem to have accomplished a small miracle in that they managed to record the piano in such a way that, if you listen through headphones, you can actually hear the upper end of the keyboard through the right channel while the bass is in the left, with the middle of the keyboard spread through the center. Any way you approach it, this is one remarkable recording. **Lynn René Bayley**

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I welcomed Volumes 6 and 7 a couple of issues back, and I am just as enthusiastic about Volume 8, which was recorded in May 2010 at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Nissman is revisiting some repertory with which she has been associated for many years, on these *Recital Favorites* discs. For example, she already has recorded Ginastera's complete piano music, and all of Prokofiev's piano sonatas, and those collections remain available from Pierian. What is especially nice about these new discs, however, is that each one of them contains an intriguing mix of music, such as one might hear on a cleverly constructed—certainly not garden-variety!—recital program. For example, juxtaposing Prokofiev's and Schumann's first piano sonatas might seem a little odd, but in doing so, Nissman allows them to talk to each other, and they are less dissimilar than one might think. Similarly, the hallucinatory qualities of Benjamin Lees's *Visage* unexpectedly bleed over into Isaac Albéniz's *Navarra*, which in turn serves as a foil for Ginastera's First Sonata. This is the sort of disc that really profits from being heard in one sitting ... and then being played all over again.

The Lees, by the way, was composed for Nissman in 2009. This was his final composition, as he died the following year. This is its first recording, and Nissman makes it her own. Lees was a very interesting composer and I don't think his music is as valued as it ought to be. With advocates like Nissman, his time will come.

Throughout this CD, Nissman's playing has an engagingly live quality, as if it were recorded in relatively few takes. Sometimes it is a little rough around the edges, but I think this is a very acceptable trade-off, given the apparent spontaneity of the music-making. She is at her best in the Prokofiev, the Schumann, the Lees, and the Ginastera, and only slightly less so in the other works. Her Chopin ballade is slightly cool and studied, and the Gershwin, which serves as a sort of encore, is pushed along a little faster than one expects it to be. (Actually, I think the work benefits from not being played with self-conscious bluesiness.) Nissman might not be a familiar name to many, but I don't think anyone hearing this disc will find themselves wishing they were listening to one of the big-name pianists instead.

As before, a blurb on the CD's back advises us that "no compression was used on this recording" and that "to capture the full frequency range one must listen at a higher than normal dynamic level." I'm happy to do so. Again, the insightful booklet notes are by Nissman herself. Strongly recommended. **Raymond Tuttle**

DEBUT • Joseph Rackers (pn) • MSR 1364 (67:40)

BACH Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue. **SCHUMANN** Fantasy in C. **RAVEL** *La Valse*. **BARTÓK** Piano Sonata

BLAUE BLUME • Rune Alver (pn) • LAWO 1019 (58:59)

CHOPIN Mazurka in #, op 6/1. Ballade in A^b, op. 47. **SCHUMANN** Fantasy in C. **AAGAARD-NILSEN** *Blue Traces*

Joseph Rackers is a member of the faculty of the University of South Carolina in Columbia. This debut disc is an adventurous one, and he must be commended for its variety and linked theme of the fantasy. All of these pieces have a somewhat fantastical nature about them, and each in its own way leads us down the romantic path of juxtaposed contradictions and conformities, beginning with the well-known Bach work.