

PERSPECTIVES

WEBERN Five Movements op.5
PÄRT Cantus in memoriam
 Benjamin Britten **KURTÁG** Aus der Ferne III **HÖGBERG** Hitting the First Base **LUTOSLAWSKI** Musique funèbre
Dan Styffe (double bass)
Tromsø Chamber Orchestra/ Kolbjørn Holthe

SIMAX PSC 1302

A contemplative northern view on music from central Europe and beyond



The booklet note for this disc tries a little too hard to relate what is primarily a

programme of music from eastern Europe to the fact that the performers are based north of the Arctic Circle: 'Perspectives from Music's Northernmost Boundary'. Whether in interpretative terms this perspective has any more relevance than one from, say, Tasmania is a moot point. What is unarguable is the firmness and distinction of the Tromsø Chamber Orchestra's playing in these five works for string orchestra, recorded in an atmospheric church acoustic.

The Norwegian-based players capture the aphoristic, condensed emotionalism of Webern's op.5 as successfully as they toll the melancholy scales of Pärt's *Cantus* and breathe the sighs of Kurtág's brief *Aus der Ferne III*. The intensity of Lutoslawski's *Musique funèbre* is unrelieved, in a performance that combines finely attuned solo work alongside unisons as sonically deep as a passing bell.

The general funereal gloom is relieved by the one Nordic work here, a double bass concerto by the Swedish composer Fredrik Högborg. It's a work that perhaps relies too much on persistent arrhythmia rather than lyricism but it gives the energetic bassist Dan Styffe plenty of opportunities to let rip in music with such sections as 'Like a pizza with everything on' and 'Premature cadenza'.

MATTHEW RYE

THE ART OF INSTRUMENTATION: HOMAGE TO GLENN GOULD

WORKS AND BACH arrangements by Silvestrov, Pelecis, Raskatov, Wustin, Vine, Serksnyte, Kancheli, Desyatnikov, Poleva, Tickmayer & Kissine
Gidon Kremer (violin)
Kremerata Baltica

NONESUCH 528982

A tribute to the Canadian pianist proves more of a homage to Bach



Coinciding with the 80th anniversary of Glenn Gould's birth this autumn,

this 'homage' is a collection of eleven works, mostly arrangements specially made for Kremerata Baltica of Bach pieces that featured in the discography of the Canadian pianist. It's an album that clearly reflects Gidon Kremer's musical roots as well as his individual musical curiosity – the arrangers are mostly Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian and Latvian, among them Valentin Silvestrov and Giya Kancheli – but one that would also seem more a homage to Bach than to Gould. For some, these pieces may steer a frustrating course between straight arrangements and brand-new Bach-inspired compositions. Kremer and his players don't get much chance to show off their technical skills: the only track that allows them this is Stevan Kovacs Tickmayer's *After Gould*, which interrupts a handful of *Goldberg Variations* with rude interjections from Schoenberg. Here Kremerata Baltica shows a collective force as well as contrapuntalism that is fleet-footed.

What does emerge is an interconnected Bachian sequence, spiked with 20th-century colourings (the vibraphone, for example, is often present). And it's hard not to be touched by the ghostly emergence of Gould himself in the last item, Victor Kissine's version of the *Aria* from the *Goldberg Variations*, as Kremer

gently duets with a recording of the pianist. The close but spacious sound complements the meditative mood.

EDWARD BHESANIA

A DIFFERENT WORLD Works by Barkauskas, Balsys, Schittino, Salonen, Sher, MacMillan, Watkins & Bacewicz
Diana Galvydyte (violin)
Christopher Guild (piano)

CHAMPS HILL RECORDS CHRCD 039

A fascinating survey of modern bravura violin repertoire



For this diverse and intriguing disc, Lithuanian violinist Diana Galvydyte brings

together contemporary works from the mid-20th century onwards, exploring the notion of bravura violin. Many of the pieces are from the Baltic region, and familiar names appear alongside the less well known.

The opening five-movement solo *Partita* is a case of the latter, written by Vytautas Barkauskas, a leading light in Lithuania's avant-garde in the 1960s. It's detailed and gritty, and shot through with hints of rumba and blues. Galvydyte tackles it with incisive energy.

Joe Schittino's *Poem 'Eglė'*, a premiere recording, stands out for its gorgeously impressionistic piano textures under the violin's melancholy wanderings – although some intrusive breathing mars the performance here a little, the recording is otherwise appealing for the clarity and immediacy of its sound. Salonen's *Lachen verlernt* is full of taut expressivity, carefully unfolded, and MacMillan's *A Different World* – which provides the title of the disc – is dreamlike and beautifully paced. Huw Watkins's *Partita* shatters the mood with snarling, triple-stopped dissonance, although the violin soon takes off into more expressive explorations. It's all fiercely virtuosic stuff – Galvydyte certainly proves her mettle on

that score, with sensitive support from pianist Christopher Guild – but it's also a disc of lesser explored treasures, with beauty radiating from the most unexpected corners.

CATHERINE NELSON

IMAGINARY ROOM
Adam Baldych (violin)
The Baltic Gang

ACT MUSIC 9532-2

A generally enjoyable album from an up-and-coming Polish jazz violinist



Young Polish violinist Adam Baldych is beginning to make a name

for himself, and the calibre of this line-up – featuring leading Scandinavian jazz musicians such as bass player Lars Danielsson and the acclaimed young saxophonist Marius Neset – certainly promises good things.

In fact, the odd feature aside, the more established stars aren't overly prominent, more often adding chamber colour to Baldych's brand of groove music that dips its toe into rock and Eastern European folk. Baldych himself has the range of tone and style to carry this off with aplomb: his meaty, earthy sound on the opening *Village Underground* gives way to a more languid approach in *Mirrors*, before becoming hazier and wispy later on.

In *K8* the odd pitch-bend and melodic turn suggest but never ape the swing and folk traditions, while his long, fluid lines of improvisation throughout the album, though occasionally resorting to filler material, are hip and unusually fluent. His writing and sextet arrangements are good rather than knockout, and the same could be said of the ensemble, where the group playing is strong but the solos are a little unmemorable. But it's worth hearing just for Baldych – definitely a jazz violinist to keep an eye on.

JAMES CREL