

C. P. E. BACH Rondo II in C, Wq 59/4, H 283. **La Borchward**, Wq 117/17, H 79. **La Pott**, Wq 117/18, H 80. **La Gleim**, Wq 117/19, H 80. **La Bergius**, Wq 117/20, H 90. **La Prinzette**, Wq 117/21, H 91. **L'Auguste**, Wq 117/22, H 122. **L'Herrmann**, Wq 117/23, H 92. **La Buchholtz**, Wq 117/24, H 93. **La Stahl**, Wq 117/25, H 94. **La Boehmer**, Wq 117/26, H 81. **Fantasia II in C**, Wq 59/6, H 284. **L'Ally Rupalich**, Wq 117/27, H 95. **La complaisante**, Wq 117/28, H 109. **Les langueurs tendres**, Wq 117/30, H 110. **La capricieuse**, Wq 117/33, H 113. **La Gabriel**, Wq 117/35, H 97. **L'Ernestine**, Wq 117/38, H 124. **La Caroline**, Wq 117/39, H 98. **Rondo III in B \flat** , Wq 58/5, H 267 • Marcia Hadjimarkos (fp, clvd) • ZIG ZAG ZZT 020301 (67:03)

In *Fanfare* 26:4 I reviewed the eighth volume in BIS's series of C. P. E. Bach's solo keyboard works, which I found especially of interest because it contained nine of the "character pieces" that he wrote between 1754 and 1757. My interest in these pieces had been aroused several years ago by Darrell M. Berg's excellent essay, "C. P. E. Bach's Character Pieces and his Friendship Circle," in Stephen L. Clark's *C. P. E. Bach Studies*, published by Oxford in 1988. Yet, I had heard none of them until Miklós Spányi's BIS disc arrived a year ago last December. Then, in *Fanfare* 26:6, my colleague Brian Robins's very interesting interview of keyboardist Marcia Hadjimarkos appeared. I had never heard of Hadjimarkos before, but was most impressed by her liberal and open-minded approach to the choosing of keyboard instruments for 18th- and 19th-century music. "You've come to the wrong person," she firmly told Robins, "if you want me to say that the fortepiano should be used for Mozart, Beethoven, or Schubert. I think it's one of the possibilities, not always the best." Now, with the arrival of the disc here under review, we have 17 of Bach's character pieces, and a chance to judge Hadjimarkos's art.

Despite C. P. E. Bach's rather dour looks in the few well-known pictures of him, he was a man who thrived on the friendship of intellectual and artistically gifted men—for example, the most famous German poets of his day: Lessing, Klopstock, Gleim, Brockes, Gerstenberg (with whom he had a most interesting correspondence about music), and the members of the group known as the "Göttinger Hainbund." And not only the poets, but also the philosopher and theologian Hermann Samuel Reimarus, the mathematician Georg Büsch, and the geographer and musical scholar Christoph Daniel Ebeling. Therefore it is not surprising that Bach, like Virgil Thomson and the Elgar of the *Enigma Variations*, should have seen fit to memorialize many of his friends in short musical sketches that mirror their personalities.

We don't know the identities of all the friends Bach chose, but the sketches of the ones we do know are most interesting to compare with what we know about the people. The first thing to get clear about the "character pieces" is the fact that in their titles, which are all in French, the feminine article *La* (or *L'*) refers not to the gender of the person or character trait portrayed but rather to the word *pièce*, which is implied in every title.

Take a few examples. Ernst Samuel Borchward was a Prussian court councilor, whose sketch is a slightly pompous polonaise, well suited to a public man. Johann Heinrich Pott, a Berlin chemistry professor, is given a florid, self-important little minuet. Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim, as a poet, gets a quiet, meditative rondeau, longer than both its predecessors put together. Friedrich Gottfried Herrmann, privy councilor and clerk, is probably the subject of *L' Herrmann*. He and Samuel Buchholtz, a pastor, are both given restless, active little pieces. Georg Ernst Stahl, court councilor and physician at whose house in Berlin Bach stayed in 1741, is given a moody and dramatic piece, while Johann Samuel Friedrich Böhmer, professor of law, gets one that is fast and vigorous, with a pushy, insistent beat. Then there are the few pieces named not after particular real people but after moods or states of mind, or people who exhibit them—for example, *La complaisante*, which is simply melodic and well-behaved, and *Les langueurs tendres*, which is delicately melancholic and yearning.

So much for the "character pieces" and their extraordinary playfulness and invention. As a bonus, Ms. Hadjimarkos has added three much later (and longer) Bach works, conveniently spaced: one at the beginning of the disc, one at its midpoint, and one at its end. All three were composed in 1785, and published in the late *Kenner und Liebhaber* volumes. Two of them are rondos, and one is a fantasia. By this time in Bach's career, the two forms were so closely related that one must do a full-scale analysis to tell the rondos from the fantasias. All three are great pieces that—as Ms. Hadjimarkos may have intended—show what happened when the playfulness and lightheartedness so evident in the "character pieces" matured and got applied on a grand scale. Ms. Hadjimarkos's playing is superb throughout: dynamic, free, and powerfully shaped. One hopes that she will keep recording C. P. E. Bach's music; she does it as well as any keyboardist now playing.

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