

CD REVIEWS

Peter Grahame Woolf, Blackheath, London

Haydn Sonatas Hob. XVI, Nos. 20 (C minor), 32 (B minor), 41 (B major), 42 (D major), 44 (G minor) and 48 (C major)

Marcia Hadjimarkos (clavichord). Zig Zag Territoires ZZT990901. 72'19"

This is a revelatory CD, extending the scope of the clavichord beyond my dreams. I have enjoyed working at some of the smaller Haydn sonatas on my clavichord, and indeed enjoyed a few given in recital (e.g. by Derck Adlam), but had never thought of the instrument as a serious contender in that repertoire. Here we have six sonatas of 1771-89, including some of the grandest of them.

Marcia Hadjimarkos is American-born, active now in the early music scene in Burgundy, where she has presented the French première of the complete Haydn keyboard sonatas, given in a cycle of eight concerts on clavichord, square and grand forte-pianos. It is surprising that it has taken so long for this fascinating oeuvre to become as well known as the, to my ears, far less interesting and less adventurous Mozart sonatas.

On this CD, Ms Hadjimarkos plays a 1992 Thomas Steiner copy of a five-octave, unfretted, double-strung Hubert clavichord of 1772, tuned to Valotti ($a^1 = 415$ Hz), an unequal temperament with six pure fifths. Hubert clavichords respond to the subtlest nuances of touch, producing a wide tonal palette and large dynamic range and are greatly in favour with the leading contemporary makers. This example proves wholly suitable for Haydn, who owned a clavichord from the 1750s on and did not write expressly for the *fortepiano* until 1790.

This player is no bookish antiquarian. She plays with boundless energy and virtuosity, taking risks (but never tumbling) at breakneck tempi, on an instrument which is notoriously difficult to manage. There is rubato a-plenty, sometimes stretching pauses and making the most of the sudden corners and contrasts which are so characteristic of Haydn's fertile imagination. Slow movements are as expressive as one can dare; fast ones boundlessly exhilarating. All the repeats are played, and you never wish she didn't.

The earliest sonatas included, in G minor and C minor, date from 1771. This is music for 'connoisseurs', not 'amateurs'. The C minor, the longest and most difficult of the group, is characteristic of the *Sturm und Drang* aesthetic, as is too the B minor sonata of 1776. Several are in two movements, but that does not make them lightweight. The Sonatas in D major and C major have elaborate variations on highly ornamented themes, with concise, fast finales to follow.

Marcia Hadjimarkos does not tell us which edition she uses, but she gives me confidence that her decisions about ornamentation etc. are soundly based in recent scholarship, yet always at the service of lively communication. The documentation, presented in an attractive slipcase, is adequate and interesting.

I cannot recommend this CD too highly.