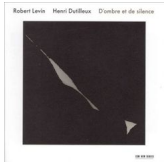


Henri Dutilleux - D'Ombre Et De Silence (Robert Levin) [2008]



01. *Petit Air À Dormir Debout* [0:01:42.00] 02. *Piano Sonata - I. Allegro Con Moto* [0:07:40.24] 03. *II. Lied* [0:06:07.40] 04. *III. Choral Et Variations* [0:10:43.55] 05. *Au Gré Des Ondes - I. Prélude En Berceuse* [0:03:36.00] 06. *III. Improvisation* [0:01:35.61] 07. *Blackbird* [0:01:34.50] 08. *Tous Les Chemins ... Mènent À Rome* [0:01:36.70] 09. *Résonances - Résonances* [0:02:14.18] 10. *Figures De Résonances - I* [0:01:42.37] 11. *II* [0:01:46.10] 12. *III* [0:02:32.70] 13. *IV* [0:02:32.22] 14. *Mini-Prélude En Éventail* [0:00:45.71] 15. *3. Préludes Pour Piano - I. D'ombre Et De Silence* [0:03:42.03] 16. *II. Sur Un Même Accord* [0:03:37.33] 17. *III. Le Jeu Des Contraires* [0:07:42.62] 18. *Bergerie* [0:01:12.60] 19. *Au Gré Des Ondes - I. Prélude En Berceuse* [0:03:36.08] 20. *II. Claquettes* [0:01:08.48] 21. *III. Improvisation* [0:01:32.49] 22. *IV. Mouvement Perpetuel* [0:01:54.01] 23. *V. Hommage À Bach* [0:03:24.16] 24. *VI. Étude* [0:01:24.61] Robert Levin – piano
Ya-Fei Chuang – piano (tracks: 10-13)

Many who know of pianist Robert Levin will readily link his name with that of Mozart, not only as an interpreter but as an expert Mozart editor identified with his controversial take on Mozart's Requiem. However, one aspect of Levin's career that is a little less well known is as one of Nadia Boulanger's former students; as she went into her final illness, Boulanger named Levin to instruct in her stead at the Conservatoire américain in Fontainebleau. There Levin first met Henri Dutilleux and immediately fell under the spell of the older composer's piano music and has ever since wanted to record an album of Dutilleux. In *D'ombre et de silence*, ECM New Series has afforded Levin the opportunity and the timing is appropriate given the passing of Dutilleux's own authoritative interpreter at the piano -- his wife, Geneviève Joy -- in 2009. Levin presses his own spouse, pianist Ya-Fei Chuang, into the service of Dutilleux's four-hand *Figures de résonances* (1970-1976).

The selection spans Dutilleux's practically entire career and even includes little miniatures that Dutilleux wrote for student pianists such as *Blackbird* (1950). Dutilleux's *Piano Sonata* (1946-1948) is given prominent placement, right after the tiny *Petit air à dormir debout* (1981),

which opens the disc and this makes sense, as it is the work that Dutilleux himself considers his own "Opus 1" despite the existence of a whole range of compositions that precede it, and it remains his major keyboard work; only the *Préludes* (1973-1988) come close to emulating its stature in his output. Levin's interpretations of Dutilleux's music are right on target; shimmering, colorful, and sensitive at one end of his spectrum and cold, metallic, spatial, and clangorous at the other, and ECM's recording is very realistic, loud, and crisp. About the only thing that doesn't seem to work here is the front cover image, a photograph of Jean Marc Dellac so conceptual that it may reaffirm for some Americans the myth that Dutilleux's music is hard and unapproachable. Overall, it is not, though some of the thundering chords in *Figures de résonances* have lost little of their shock value since Dutilleux wrote them down in the '70s. Otherwise he is much an acolyte of the keyboard school of Debussy as anyone can imagine among composers active after World War II, a quality Dutilleux shares with his slightly older contemporary Olivier Messiaen. Dutilleux remains kind of antsy about having pre-piano sonata era works recorded, so Levin has placed the earliest pieces at the end, though two of the *Au gré des ondes* (1946) show up also earlier in the program; these do not seem to be the same recordings as the later ones.

There are other full disc surveys of Dutilleux's slim output for piano that are noteworthy, for example those by Anne Queffélec, John Chen, and of course, Geneviève Joy. Levin's contribution represents a fresh perspective on this music and should please both newcomers and experienced listeners alike; as far as that goes, the more the merrier. --- Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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