

Morton Feldman - Triadic Memories (2003)

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1. *Triadic Memories* 67:04 Anton Batagov – piano Recorded February 1992 at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.

At the 1981 premiere of this monumental work (in London, with Roger Woodward at the piano), the composer described it as “the largest butterfly in captivity”. If so, it’s one with very slowly and gently beating wings and little overt sense of being held prisoner. The work, for solo piano, can last as long as 90 minutes, its brief patterns repeating, always with slight – very slight – variations in tempo, the volume never rising above ppp. Its hypnotic quality, the almost delirious sense of languor and beauty, requires an interpreter with an extraordinary degree of both touch and temporal acuity. This performance, a 1992 recording by Anton Batagov, is, somewhat frustratingly, only part of the way there. The piece times in at just over 67 minutes, giving an indication of a bit of a rush-through, a just-apparent disinclination to linger. There is also something less than the ideal understanding of varying the pressure applied to the keys, of creating subtle, even poetic, undulations of overlapping sound waves. The inherent loveliness of the work seeps through to be sure; it’s as gorgeous a composition as one can find in contemporary music. But compared to the version on John Tilbury's *Morton Feldman-All Piano* (1999, London Hall), this disc seems a bit wan. Tilbury allows himself almost 80 minutes to traverse the territory, for instance, and his tactile sensitivity, while less easily measurable, infuses the work with life and pulse. Still, *Triadic Memories* should be universally known and this disc gives enough of a fair treatment to make it recommendable to the new listener. Just don’t forget the Tilbury. ---Brian Olewnick, Rovi

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