Julien Marchal - Insight IV (2019)

1 Insight XXXIV 2 Insight XXXV 3 Insight XXXVI 4 Insight XXXVII 5 Insight XXXVIII 6 Insight XXXIX 7 Insight XL 8 Insight XLI 9 Insight XLII 10 Insight XLIII
Composed By, Recorded By, Mixed By, Performer – Julien Marchal

Julian Marchal states in the liner notes of Insight IV that each of its ten pieces are titled only by number so that listeners find their own insight into the music. This blank slate philosophy, combined with the use of just a single, unaccompanied piano for the duration of the album (the same as the previous three Insights) makes it a daunting prospect not to tread on the toes of this carefully–nurtured intimacy by trying to shoehorn it into words. (This is true for all music but truer for some). However, besides Marchal touching on the limitations of language here when it comes to describing music and emotion – dancing about architecture, so to speak – his philosophy also neatly points out that the feelings that Insight IV inspire are bigger and deeper than the everyday. As is maybe a cliché for classical music, even at its most dramatic Insight IV is both a cleansing and empowering listen. The mood generally hovers between melancholy and a brooding ambiguity (XXXVIII) and at points (XXXVII and the pickup melody of XL) Marchal's playing is reminiscent of composer and pianist Ludovico Einaudi. (To explain – the tracks are numbered continuously on from the three previous Insight albums). Marchal shows a similar knack for melody (XXXV), and even when busy, avoids flashy playing (XXXVI) whilst also avoiding wispiness even at his most delicate (XLII). Opening number XXXIV starts the album by using similar phrasing to XXIV, from previous album Insight III, with sections throughout the piece referring back to this earlier number, a clever way of using this connection as a springboard to something new.

In terms of mastering, the album is panned so that the treble and the bass sides of the piano sit, respectively, on the right and left. With hindsight, this seems like an obvious choice, as it naturally duplicates seeing a piano being played, but to someone unaccustomed to classical music, figuring this out is quite exciting, a bit like hearing double kick for the first time or finding out that the singer of Rush was actually a man. Insights can come in unexpected forms. Which

will you find in Insight IV? ---gregmbrooks, mathematicaldeathgrindfromfrance.wordpress.com

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