



Philip Clark reviews a 1974 performance by Julius Eastman: *'His raison d'être for establishing melodic loops was to torpedo their progress through improvisation'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 73



Harriet Smith listens to the Escher Quartet's Mendelssohn: *'They combine highly disciplined playing, communicative warmth and a clear empathy for the composer in hand'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 74

Babajanian • Clarke • Martin

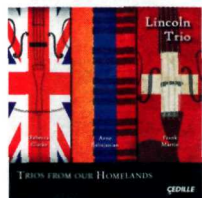
'Trios from Our Homelands'

Babajanian Piano Trio **Clarke** Piano Trio **Martin**

Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises

Lincoln Trio

Cedille © CDR90000 165 (64' • DDD)



It's not exactly a recipe for cohesion – a collection of little-known works from

Armenia, England and Switzerland, representing the players' countries of origin. Not for nothing, though, do the members of the Chicago-based Lincoln Trio pride themselves on their programme-making skills. Each of these pieces draws on folk music without compromising its individuality; each is a mix of lyricism and biting early-20th-century dissonance. Most importantly, each is fascinating in its own right, and deserves far more attention than it gets.

Among them Rebecca Clarke's 1921 Trio stands out. Here is a piece as inventive as it is structurally rigorous, consistently impressive in its inter-related themes. But it is the music's intensity – largely carried by the pungent, late-Romantic harmonies – that grabs us by the shoulders, at least when conveyed as it is here, without inhibition.

Unlike Clarke, who struggled her whole life for artistic success, the Armenian composer Arno Babajanian was a hero in his native land. And yet his music, while less adventurous, similarly evokes an air of deep sadness. It comes to the fore in this trio, which draws on the world of folk, while channelling something of Rachmaninov's songfulness.

So it's perhaps just as well that Frank Martin's *Trio sur des mélodies populaires irlandaises* takes us elsewhere entirely: a world poised somewhere between America and Ireland. Ironically, there's nothing very Swiss about this Swiss piece, which you could see as a problem. In between studying the works of Bach, César Franck, American jazz and folk music and the

rhythmic theories of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze – the founder of the eurhythmics system of teaching music – Martin never quite got round to developing his own voice. Still, there's much to appreciate in this music: the rhythmic ingenuity, its sense of charm. The Lincoln give it all the punch and vigour it deserves but it is the poetry of their playing elsewhere in the programme that really makes this disc. **Hannah Nepil**

Bartók

String Quartets - No 2, Op 17 Sz67;

No 4, Sz91; No 6, Sz114

Jerusalem Quartet

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2235 (79' • DDD)



Relistening to the Emerson Quartet's Gramophone Award-winning Bartók cycle

for September's Classics Reconsidered, I was reminded of how, as recently as 1989, it was still considered remarkable for a Bartók quartet recording to be both accurate and pleasant on the ear. How things change: a generation on, this new recording from the Jerusalem Quartet is precise without ever being inflexible, and at the same time (or so it comes across) effortlessly, luminously beautiful.

– It's not just a question of tone quality, though the Jerusalems make some gorgeous sounds. Listen to the misty quality that cellist Kyril Zlotnikov and viola player Ori Kam, in particular, bring to the opening of the Second Quartet's finale; equally, near the same movement's climax, how firmly and eloquently all four players voice the partially double-stopped answering phrases. There's an assurance about this playing that's satisfying in its own right, giving the Second Quartet an overall feeling of blossoming lyricism and the Fourth an almost playful sense of swing. The acoustic is generous but not exaggeratedly resonant.

It's in the Sixth Quartet that the doubts really begin to crystallise, and much depends upon what you want from a Bartók

quartet recording. I felt a trace of stiffness in those *mesto* opening solos, reinforcing a suspicion that the group isn't, perhaps, finding as much strangeness in this music as certain older recordings do (think of the Véghe or Takács Quartets). Work in progress? Hopefully we'll hear more Bartók from the Jerusalems in future. But meanwhile, these are civilised, outward-looking readings, placing the music firmly in the Classical-Romantic tradition, and there are plenty of listeners who'll respond warmly to playing of such sincerity and beauty. **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

Complete Violin Sonatas

Pierre Fouchenneret *vn* **Romain Descharmes** *pf*

Aparté © AP129 (3h 57' • DDD)

Recorded live at Le Trident, Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, France, March 5-9, 2015



This set of the 10 Beethoven violin sonatas took me by surprise. Let's start

with the sound, which is exceptionally well balanced and clear for a concert recording – superior even to Ibragimova and Tiberghien's superb series from the Wigmore Hall. Not only that, but there's nary a muffled cough or the faintest rustling from the audience. In fact, with applause edited out, I don't think I'd know these were live recordings had they not been labelled as such.

The bigger and better surprise, though, is the unaffected, highly accomplished musicianship of Pierre Fouchenneret and Romain Descharmes, neither of whom I'd heard before. Fouchenneret's tone is warm yet finely focused and with spot-on intonation throughout. Descharmes's touch is unfailingly elegant; he renders even the thickest passages with crystalline clarity. Together, they are in total sympathy, phrasing with an affectionate attention to detail as well as a feeling for architecture. Start, for example, with the slow movement