

TAKEMITSU: Complete Piano Works
Woodward
(Etcetera KTC 1103)
FELDMAN: Triadic Memories/Piano
Woodward
(Etcetera KTC 2015) 2 discs

The two Etcetera recordings of Roger Woodward were made at the time of last year's Sydney Spring Festival. Woodward, as a pianist, cops more than his share of criticism for his playing of the classics — any genuinely intelligent player does — but his evangelical commitment to the music of our time is beyond criticism, indeed it verges on the selfless. The kind of advocacy he provides (like that of other internationally famous musicians — Pollini, Rostropovich, Kremer) is invaluable.

Woodward has worked extensively with both Takemitsu and the late American composer Morton Feldman, and much of the music recorded here is dedicated to him. In the past I have had reservations about the recording quality of certain Etcetera discs made here in Australia. It may be Woodward's influence, but on these recordings my reservations evaporate.

The Takemitsu disc makes a fine companion to the Virgin Classics disc and is the more important for being a 'collected' works. Feldman's 90-minute *Triadic Memories*, like Stockhausen's *Stimmung* and other quiet, meditative, repetitious works, belies its epic length as it draws you into its domain. I particularly admired the way the works on the Feldman set were arranged so that the notes seem to become scarcer as the second disc spins to its end.

16 + ABC RADIO 24 HOURS

FELDMAN

TRIADIC MEMORIES
PIANO - TWO PIANOS
PIANO FOUR HANDS
PIANO THREE HANDS

Roger Woodward, piano et Ralph Lane pour les deux derniers morceaux. 2 CD - Etcetera, 2015 - dist. Media 7

— ffff —

Alors, on se lance ? On plonge ensemble dans ce large lac immobile, loin du bruit et de la fureur des villes ? *Triadic memories* appartient à l'ultime période de travail de Morton Feldman, ce New-Yorkais mort il y a quatre ans à l'âge de 61 ans.

Très lié à John Cage dès 1949, Feldman utilisa plusieurs « méthodes », dont celle de la musique aléatoire (qui donnait toute liberté à l'interprète quant au choix des solutions proposées ou non-proposées), avant d'en arriver à celle qui nous occupe, cela depuis les années 80, et qui déclencha des prises de position violentes et très contradictoires : vivement intéressé par l'étude des dessins des tapis turcs du XIX^e siècle qu'il collectionnait, Feldman fut conduit à reconsidérer le rôle des motifs et des répétitions dans ses propres œuvres ; sa conception des « dimensions », des échelles, des proportions étant, elle aussi, sous influence... des tapis turcs.

Il s'ensuivit que les ouvrages de Feldman devinrent de plus en plus longs, atteignant quatre heures pour *For Philip Guston* ou même cinq heures et demie pour son *Quatuor n° 2*. Ne dépassant pas une heure et demie, *Triadic Memories* frise presque la « normalité ». Il faut donc abandonner tout esprit formaliste, briser règles et tabous, et s'immerger dans ce long fleuve tranquille, où un accord peut être répété jusqu'à sept ou huit fois, où la mobilité du tempo est si légère qu'elle apparaît presque comme une illusion. Il sera doux à l'homme pressé d'aujourd'hui de se perdre dans ce tapis sonore tissé par Morton Feldman, dans cet écheveau de fils brouillés par un ange...

Piano qui date de 1977 et qui est une page de transition, et les trois pièces suivantes qui illustrent le début de la carrière de Feldman (1957-58), mettent en lumière une œuvre méconnue en France et pourtant primordiale pour qui veut savoir de quoi est faite la musique de son temps.

Faut-il le préciser ? Roger Woodward — à qui *Triadic Memories* est dédiée — est tout bonnement sublime. (Enrico)

TAKEMITSU: PIANO WORKS. Roger Woodward (pf). Etcetera/Harmonia Mundi Ⓞ Ⓞ KTC1103 (78 minutes: DDD). Items marked * recorded at a performance in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney on September 16th, 1990.

Corona*. The Crossing*. Far Away. Les yeux clos. Litany. Pause uninterrupted. Piano Distance. Rain Tree Sketch.

It's good to see Roger Woodward back in the recording studio after so long an absence. A tireless champion of contemporary music he was once described as "the sacred monster of the avant garde". His pioneering recordings back in the 1970s did much to further awareness of many European and Australian composers, and it's our loss that his brilliant recordings of works like the Barraqué Piano Sonata (*Unicorn-Kanchana*) and Bussotti's masterpiece *Pour clavier*. (EMI) have not found their way on to CD. However, the enterprising Netherlands-based label Etcetera have pounced on this remarkably talented musician, and are bringing us a series of recordings that have resulted from Woodward's own annual Festival of New Music in Sydney, Australia. We already have Xenakis's colossal ballet *Kraanerg* (Etcetera Ⓞ KTC1075, 12/89) with Woodward directing his own Alpha Centauri Ensemble, and Etcetera have promised a two-disc set of Morton Feldman's piano music for release this spring.

Meanwhile we have this recording of Takemitsu's complete piano works to content ourselves with. Woodward is no stranger to this music, having recorded four of these works for Decca's Headline label in the 1970s (nla), and also having worked closely with Takemitsu since 1969. The piano music makes an ideal introduction to that composer's music as it charts particularly well the stylistic changes of this fascinating composer. The earliest of the works on this disc *Pause uninterrupted* (1952-9) owes much to Debussy, Messiaen and Scriabin (influences that played an important role in his development).

In the 1960s and 1970s his music became more experimental *Far Away*, *Piano Distance* (which reflects the European avant-garde trends extolled by composers such as Boulez, Stockhausen and Bussotti) and the graphic scores of *Corona* and *The Crossing* are a good example of Takemitsu's interaction between East and West. Just as John Cage had fallen under the spell of Japanese zen Buddhism in the 1950s, so Takemitsu fell under the spell of Cage, particularly Cage's ideas on aleatoric music and indeterminacy. *Corona* was one of the works featured on Woodward's earlier disc for Decca, and I marginally prefer that version for its wider dynamic range and Woodward's more structural conception of the work. On this disc it's been combined with another graphic score *The Crossing*; in much the same way that Cage's *Furuta Mix* and *Aria* can be performed either separately or combined.

The more recent pieces, *Rain Tree Sketch* (1982) and *Litany* (1990) reflect Takemitsu's return to a less radical approach to composing. The influences of Messiaen, Scriabin and Debussy are still apparent, though these are blended into what has now become an instantly recognizable personal voice.

Roger Woodward's refined pianism and communicative skills allow the listener to enjoy this subtle, fastidious music to its full potential. The sound is on the whole very fine, though the recording of *Corona* and *The Crossing* (taken from a live performance) are less well focused than the studio recordings. M.S.

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GRAMOPHONE