

**AVNI Piano Concerto.**<sup>1</sup> *In Spite Of All That. Sonata Brevis. Autumn Interludes. On The Verge Of Time. From There and Then Prelude and Passacaglia. Andante meditativo* • Heidrun Holtmann (pn); <sup>1</sup>Jamie Phillips, cond; <sup>1</sup>Deutsche RP Saarbrücken Kaiserlautern • HÄNSSLER 20040 (73:10)

Tzvi Avni studied with Ben-Haim, Seter, Ussachevsky, Copland, and Foss. While there are recordings of his music conducted by Mehta and Bertini, relatively few of his compositions have been recorded. With his educational background one would expect a composer versed in much of the aesthetic and expressive vocabulary of his time. Indeed, his music is reflective of that wide range of tendencies of the early part of the 20th century. While great stylistic diversity can be found in the Piano Concerto, one of its remote stylistic relatives can be found in the Piano Concerto of Schoenberg. Avni's work has, nonetheless, a character of its own. One can find plenty of moments of exoticism and lyricism. There is music that is quite haunting, yet the bulk of it will provide many with challenging listening. To my ears, there are too many ideas and not enough of an overall sense of shape to the music. That is not to say that the music should be, in any way, dismissed. This is expression of fine musical mind. Oddly, the work ends with something of an affirmation of tonality.

The remainder of the disc is filled with works for solo piano. This is music of great intensity and introspection. While much of the expression speaks to the world of the non-tonal, it still maintains the trappings of a broad sense of functionality in the harmony.

Heidrun Holtmann brings great expression to the music. Everything she plays seems to come from a genuine appreciation for the music. Her playing reflects a reverence that one might associate with interpretations of the sonatas of Beethoven. The Deutsche Radio Philharmonie play the concerto as though this music has been in their repertoire for years. Likewise, conductor Jamie Phillips navigates the music with a clear understanding of the expressive content. The sound quality is excellent. **Karl F. Miller**

This article originally appeared in Issue 44:3 (Jan/Feb 2021) of *Fanfare Magazine*.