

GREAT PIANISTS AS COMPOSERS • Peter Miyamoto (piano) • BLUE
GRIFFIN RECORDS BGR501 (67:20)

SCHNABEL *Piece in Seven Movements*. **GOULD** Sonata. **LIPATTI** *Fantasia*, op. 8.

A new CD on the Blue Griffin Records label features a trio of works by three of the greatest pianists of the 20th century; Artur Schnabel (1882-1951), Glenn Gould (1932-1982), and Dinu Lipatti (1917-1950). In addition to their talents as brilliant concert pianists, all three were serious composers, even if that was never the source of their fame. Peter Miyamoto, a member of the faculty at the University of Missouri School of Music and the pianist on this recording, notes that all of the works embrace the atonal idiom. To this I would add that although that aspect of modernism (can we still call atonality “modernism”?) is evident in these works, the writing for the piano is conventional, without the adoption of any avant-garde techniques. There are distinct stylistic differences between the three compositions. Schnabel’s 1936 *Piece in Seven Movements* seems to me very much in the spirit of a composer he admired, Arnold Schoenberg, with its adoption of 19th-century Romanticism viewed through the prism of atonality. The emotional core of the *Piece in Seven Movements* is the slow-tempo *Adagio* that builds relentlessly to a shattering climax. The Sonata (1948), composed when Gould was only sixteen, is the briefest of the three featured works. Miyamoto notes the influence of Paul Hindemith in this three-movement piece. Lipatti’s *Fantasia*, op. 8, comprises two Parts, the first with three movements, the second containing two. Here, the influence of the French Impressionists seems particularly strong in a work that both revels in pianistic colors, and is the most overtly virtuoso of the three. For me, the Schnabel was the most compelling of the trio, but I was delighted to hear all of them, and will welcome opportunities to repeat the experience.

Peter Miyamoto proves to be a committed and worthy advocate of these works. His technique easily surmounts the challenges of writing (again, the Lipatti being particularly impressive). He performs the pieces with great sensitivity, and also takes care to create a different sound world for each. I am not aware of any recordings of the composer/pianists playing these works. I’d like to think they’d take great pleasure in Miyamoto’s advocacy. The recorded sound is quite fine, with the Steinway Model D reproduced with stunning depth, richness, and detail. Miyamoto’s liner notes give us some overall background on Schnabel, Gould, and Lipatti as composers, in addition to analysis of each featured work. Both the compositions and performances on this disc merit your attention. Recommended.

Ken Meltzer

4 Stars-Fine performances of solo piano works by Schnabel, Gould, and Lipatti.