

FINEBERG *Tremors. Lightening. Fantastic Zoology. Grisaille. Veils. Til Human Voices Wake Us* **DUFOURT** *Erkönig* • Marilyn Nonken (pn) • MÉTIER msv28524 (73:07)

Fans of Marilyn Nonken, and I certainly count myself among them, have certain expectations for her recordings. The music will be dense, intellectually challenging and sensuous, and the performances will be brave and exciting. All of those boxes are checked off for this CD, which features her continuing exploration of the contemporary genre known as spectral music. This musical emerged in the 1970's in France, led by composers Tristan Murail and Gérard Grisey, although the esthetics of the work, emphasizing color and physicality, can certainly be traced back to the Impressionism of Debussy. There is also a strong relationship to the music of the so-called "new complexity" movement, which this pianist also celebrates with gusto. Nonken's two CD set of the complete solo piano music of Murail, also on the Métier label, is a spectacular introduction to this tantalizing world.

With the music of Joshua Fineberg, we get the American version of spectral music. The corners of his music may be a bit sharper than those of his Gallic counterparts, but the sense of deep mystery and an almost three dimensional, visceral quality of structure is shared. Fineberg's specific influences are varied and fascinating, ranging from natural phenomena such as earthquakes and lightening, Renaissance painting, Buddhism and Schumann's *Carnaval*. French composer Hugues Dufourt also evokes a nineteenth century master, Schubert in his case, with his immense *Erkönig*. There is something of the sense of urgency and dread that Schubert expressed in his setting of Goethe here, but it is deconstructed and spread out over a thirty minute trek. Thus, Dufourt makes no attempt whatsoever to honor the superb dramatic concision of Schubert, but instead creates his own vast dramatic soundscape.

At first glance, this highly abstract, very dissonant music seems extraordinarily challenging. It ain't Mozart, that's for sure. But it is so purely expressive, honest and, not least, presented with such passion, that it should be intensely engaging for any music lover with an open mind. For me, this is yet another triumph for one of our greatest champions of living composers. **Peter Burwasser**