

SOUNDS OF AMERICA



of Music demonstrate that point in a very convincing manner. From the richly haunted playing of the Jupiter String Quartet, Oberlin's visiting quartet-in-residence, to the exquisite sounds made by flautist Alexa Still and the lovely singing of Oberlin alumna soprano Ellie Dehn, the results are unabashedly romantic in what might be considered a healthy, American way.

Head of the Conservatory's harp department herself, Kondonassis contributes precise articulation and a dazzling palette of colours and styles in occasionally Technicolor swirls of sound. Dehn is similarly impressive, powerfully projecting the raw emotions of 'Aoua!' before switching into a higher, creamier gear for the third of the *Chansons madécasses*, then alternatively delightfully and breathlessly in love throughout the *Cinq Mélodies populaires grecques*.

This is Kondonassis's 18th album and it helps launch the Conservatory's new Oberlin Music CD label (the other release is Lorenzo Palomo's *Dr Seuss' The Sneetches*, a symphonic poem for narrator and orchestra) which, in true guerrilla marketing style, was celebrated with a November concert at trendy SubCulture in New York City's Greenwich Village.

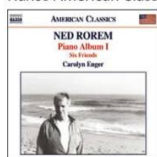
Recorded at Oberlin's Clonick Hall, the detailed sound responds particularly well at the lower volume levels appropriate to intimate masterpieces. James O'Leary's serious booklet-notes provide a provocative historical context for the music focused on Ravel's aesthetic tendencies midway between Debussy and César Franck. **Laurence Vittes**

Rorem

Piano Album I. Six Friends

Carolyn Enger *pf*

Naxos American Classics © 8 559761 (51' • DDD)



The intriguing notion of a CD containing 33 short piano pieces by the engagingly

reflective American composer Ned Rorem, each professing love or devotion, has been affectionately realised by the American pianist Carolyn Enger. Playing on a beautifully recorded Steinway in Greenfield Hall at the Manhattan School of Music, Enger raises the miniatures to a higher level by taking the time and care to recapture the emotional impact each must have had when their dedicatees read the inscription and title, and then heard the music for the first time. Taken together, the effect is pleasantly, intimately discursive, although the pleasure takes a while to kick in.

gramophone.co.uk



Magical moments: Jory Vinikour (left), José Lemos and Deborah Fox at the Sono Luminus studio, Virginia

Rorem's *Piano Album I* contains 27 compositions written between 1978 and 2001, 22 of which are receiving their world premiere recordings. They were composed as gifts for Rorem's longtime companion Jim Holmes, as well as a few for other friends and colleagues. Each piece's affectionate subtitle, such as 'On Christmas with love from Ned. For Jim to teach to Sonny on rainy afternoons' ('Serenade for Two Paws'), enhances the modest listening experience and makes the imagining more fun. 'Each piece fits on to one page which I decorated in bright colors, and framed,' Rorem wrote, and Enger reflects this thought in the charm of her playing.

There is no distinction in tone or language between *Piano Album I* and *Six Friends*, which are similar pieces written in 2006 and 2007 for friends and colleagues including the actor Marian Seldes and the pianist Jerome Lowenthal on his 75th birthday.

Laurence Vittes

'Io vidi in terra'

Ferrari Ardo Frescobaldi Così mi disprezzate. Se l'aura spira Gagliano Io vidi in terra Merula Canzonetta spirituale, 'Hor ch'è il tempo di dormire'. Su la cetra amorosa Monteverdi Madrigals, Book 9 - Se dolce è'l tormento. Scherzi musicali - Quel sguardo sdegnosetto Piccinini Partite B Storace Balletto. Spagnoletta Strozzi L'amante segreto

José Lemos *countertenor*

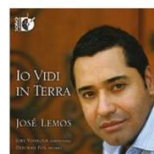
Deborah Fox *theo* Jory Vinikour *hpd*

Sono Luminus © (CD +) DSL92172

(53' • DDD • T/D). Blu-ray Disc contains

programme in 7.1 DTS-HD MA 24/96kHz

and 5.1 DTS-HD MA 24/192kHz



Marvellous as it is to encounter the Brazilian countertenor José Lemos in opera,

chamber concerts and song recitals arguably reveal the fuller scope of his effortless technical agility and uncanny word-painting, such as in this collection of 17th-century Italian vocal works. The first thing you'll notice is the unusually resonant engineering. The recording captures how his sensitive and stylish collaborators sound in a resplendent hall but also reveals how Lemos's vocal nuances mesh with the acoustic ambience. This is as true of the conventional two-channel presentation as it is of the even more lifelike Blu-ray audio bonus disc.

The programme opens and closes with vocally elaborate pieces by Tarquinio Merula. The rapid runs and offhand melismas in 'Su la cetra amorosa' are playful and incisive, while 'Hor ch'è il tempo di dormire' unravels in dark tones that create an intimate, conversational scenario quite different from Kožená's more stately conception (DG, A/10). Barbara Strozzi's 'L'amante segreto' is a *tour de force* that runs the gamut between lyrical brooding and an upbeat conclusion. Space precludes describing all of Lemos's magical moments but let me direct you to the title selection, where the word 'concento' is set to a sudden, unexpected major chord, and Lemos duly adjusts his timbre to acknowledge its harmonic incongruity without milking the effect. Good notes plus full texts and translations enhance one of 2013's most rewarding releases. **Jed Distler**

GRAMOPHONE FEBRUARY 2014 V