

Zeitsprünge: A Journey Through 200 Years of Austrian Flute Music. Includes KRENEK: Suite for flute and piano, op. 147; GRETE VON ZIERITZ: 2 pieces from *Bilder vom Jahrmarkt* (*Pictures from the Fair*). Also works by HUMMEL, MOZART, HAYDN, DOPPLER. Ulrike Anton (fl), Russell Ryan (pno). Preiser Records PR 90738.

Ulrike Anton – Austrian flautist, musicologist and teacher of the Instrumental Performance Class at the Institute for the International Education of Students in Vienna – frequently performs and gives lecture-recitals of modern music. Her second CD, on which she is partnered by the excellent, stylish and musical American pianist Russell Ryan, includes two 20th-century works. It also includes sonata by Johann Nepomuk Hummel, pupil and friend of Mozart's and Haydn's successor at Esterházy; a convincing arrangement by Frans Vester of seven of Haydn's 12 pieces for musical clock; an effective arrangement by Waltraut and Gerhard Kirchner of Mozart's piano variations on that ubiquitous tune which the French call 'Ah, vous dirai-je Maman' and we in Britain (take your pick as to whether you prefer it binary or ternary, decorated or plain) know as 'Ba, ba, black sheep' or 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star', in which the right hand of the piano is only here and there impoverished by the transference of its music to the flute; and two brilliant Doppler pieces which make a most effective conclusion to the disc. They are unashamed display pieces for the salon – and none the worse for that – and it would be hard not to share the performers' evident enjoyment of them.

Throughout this recording, what strikes one most is the perfect unanimity of interpretation and articulation of the two players and their rhythmic poise and strength are most impressive. As far as articulation is concerned, it is not easy for a flautist and a pianist to make runs of detached notes sound perfectly matched in attack and separation, but Anton and Ryan achieve this, and perfect intonation and – helped by excellent recording quality – impeccable balance, too, apparently without effort. Ulrike Anton studied the flute both in Paris and in Manchester. That she can play with French intensity of upper partials and vibrato is evidenced by her performance of *Syrinx* on her previous CD.² Her tone in the present Austrian repertoire is for the most part more velvety and her vibrato is sensitive and restrained.

Ernst Krenek's ability to write convincingly in an astonishing variety of styles is well-known. The Suite for Flute and Piano dates from around 1954. In his mostly excellent notes in the CD booklet, Morten Solvik applauds Krenek's ability to 'set lightness and grace within an atonal setting' ('charm' might be a better translation of 'Liebreiz' than 'grace'; the translation, which reads well, is not credited). But the immediate effect of the music is not atonal. It is full of diatonic runs and figures, but it has little sense of tonal directedness. The result, in combination with Krenek's brilliant and effective writing for the instruments, is that the music has none of the aural difficulty commonly associated with atonal music, while possessing a tantalizing unpredictability that belongs distinctly to the 20th century. The performance of the Suite is effortlessly virtuosic, as is that of the concluding Doppler pieces.

The rarity on this disk is the pair of pieces from the four-movement suite of 1936, *Bilder vom Jahrmarkt* (*Pictures from the Fair*), by Grete von Zieritz. Who? Well, *Grove* has not heard of her either. But she achieved the improbable feat of spanning three centuries, having been born in 1899 and dying in 2001. Though of Austrian birth, she lived for much of her life in Germany; she seems particularly to have enjoyed (in Morten Solvik's words) 'rendering visual impressions in terms of music'. The first piece on the CD, 'Vagabond Child', sets short diatonic flute phrases against static, subtly dissonant piano chords, and ends poetically with the flute alone; Ulrike Anton plays it with a particularly varied palette of tone-colours. The second, 'Snake Charming', only succumbs to 19th-century pseudo-orientalism for one brief chromatic passage. For the rest, its maintenance of clear tonality within scales made of different interlocking octatonic fragments, its counterpointing of very different musics in the flute and piano parts and its effective use of portamento and flutter-tongue create an expressive and individual tone-picture that makes one wish to hear more of Grete von Zieritz's music.

The strength, unostentatious subtlety, sheer beauty and integrity of all the performances on this CD demand and reward close listening, and the Krenek and Zieritz pieces, though perhaps not major works, are valuable and attractive complements to more familiar areas of 20th-century repertoire.

Michael Graubart

² 'Follow your Dreams', Artis, CSM 9829-F2.