

## INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE



# A beautiful and brave new world

*Kate Wakeling* welcomes Sanae Yoshida's foray into microtonal music

### My Microtonal Piano

Works by Eivind Buene, Andreas Gundersen, Keiko Harada, Øyvind Mæland, Michelle Agnes Magalhaes  
Sanae Yoshida (piano)

Lawo LWC1273 63:03 mins

This fascinating recording project takes us on a beguiling journey through the world of microtonality. Pianist Sanae Yoshida defines the 'microtonal piano' as a piano which includes intervals not found in the standard 12-tone scale, whether this be through de-tuning, string harmonics/preparations or 'other microtonal modes of playing'. She's commissioned five composers to explore it and the results prove intriguing and arresting, while Yoshida's commitment shines in her poised, imaginative playing.

Of the five works featured, perhaps the most accessible is Eivind Buene's *Three Studies for Microtonal Piano*. Buene took as his starting point three

The most unlikely of sounds fizz and shimmer

Schubert piano sonatas, which he then fragmented and re-imagined. The effect is at once magical and disconcerting: Schubert's familiar musical gestures are transformed into something profoundly otherworldly. Several of the works conjure not dissimilar stark, spare soundscapes, including Andreas Gundersen's hypnotic *Microtonal Pieces* and Michelle Agnes Magalhaes's *Snow Soul* – where the piano strings are plucked and strummed to produce something like the sound of a harp.

The playful, jazz-infused *Boiling Web* by Øyvind Mæland provides a welcome contrast, and draws particularly on the piano's percussive possibilities. But perhaps the most mesmerising of the works is 唄-媒-培 (BAI-BAI-BAI) by Keiko Harada. In music of wonderful strangeness, the most unlikely of sounds fizz and shimmer before erupting with violent force.

This is a disc of terrific imagination and daring, and Yoshida deserves every commendation.

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★



Poised pianist: Sanae Yoshida's playing is full of imagination

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## Bruckner

### Symphony No. 9 (transcription)

Hansjörg Albrecht (organ)  
Oehms OC485 101:32 mins (2 discs)



To judge from contemporary reports, Bruckner must have been one of the greatest organists of all time. Yet he set down only a few minor organ works, concentrating instead on choral music and the symphony. A tradition has now evolved of organ transcriptions of Bruckner's orchestral works, such as Erwin Horn's version of the Ninth Symphony.

Presenting the Ninth in this way has unavoidable limitations. The

organ generates musical sound quite differently from the instruments of the orchestra, which phrase and articulate either through the human breath (woodwind and brass) or the bowing arm (strings). The supple flow of Bruckner's huge symphonic spans accordingly feels railroaded here. And there is simply no organ counterpart for the sound of timpani, or string *pizzicatos* or tremolo – all central features of Bruckner's orchestral style.

Some of Hansjörg Albrecht's performance decisions seem odd, too. The registration of the *Scherzo's* opening reduces the music's sense of ominous unease to a tootling cartoon. And the tempo choice for the movement's central Trio section

is bizarrely slow (Bruckner marks it 'very quick').

A major asset, however, is Gerd Schaller's completion of the symphony's unfinished *Finale*. Bruckner left numerous non-continuous sketches for this when he died, and no material for the closing bars. Schaller's version succeeds in conjuring the characteristic flow – somehow both fitful and monumental at once – of a Bruckner finale; and his solution to the conundrum of the coda is strikingly convincing. Among the opening items, Philipp Maintz's *Window on Bruckner's Ninth Symphony* reveals a composer with a superb ear for harmony and organ sonority, vividly portraying Bruckner's tormented

fear of not completing his last and greatest work. *Malcolm Hayes*

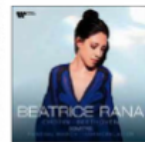
**PERFORMANCE** ★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## Chopin • Beethoven

**Chopin:** Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 35;  
**Beethoven:** Piano Sonata No. 29, Op. 106 'Hammerklavier'

Beatrice Rana (piano)  
Warner Classics 5054197897658

71:20 mins



Chopin's Sonata No. 2 is best-known by its 'Funeral March' moniker, derived from the dark third movement. The brooding main theme has been much