

his moving cycle *Voices from World War II*, five poems based on reminiscences set to an appealing extended tonal style, with flowing lyricism enhanced by depictive accompaniments. The beautiful harmony of *Holding Each Other* was contrasted with the more acerbic gritty textures of *The German U-boat Captain* and the rollicking jazzy ebullience of *At Howard Hawks' House*, though more stirring was the often stark and reflective *Omaha Beach*.

For sheer fun and brilliant *pastiche* cabaret-style William Bolcom's *Three Songs* were a highlight, the intricate rhythmic bounce of *Fur and Black Max* interspersed with the soupy *Over the Piano*, in which Gunn humorously acted out the sleazy bar player's late night *au revoir* to his audience!

The final selection featured *Shenandoah*, projected with a broad warm tone, and also touching songs by Ned Rorem and Charles Ives, though the highpoint was Jay Gorney's *Brother Can You spare a Dime*, with its American Broadway repartee and jazz style conveyed with suave polish, after which a modern *We'll Gather by the River* formed a fitting encore to a programme that affirmed not only impressive vocal artistry but also real dramatic promise, some of which has just been released on EMI.

MALCOLM MILLER

CHRISTINE BÖRSCH AT ST JOHN'S

The choice of programme by the young German pianist Christine Börsch at St John's, Smith Square, on 6 March at once prepared us for a recital by an artist of genuine musicianship, anticipation which was wholly borne out by the quality of her interpretations and pianism.

Beethoven's Opus 126 *Bagatelles* are at the opposite time-scale to his far larger contemporary works, demonstrating, as if it were necessary, his mastery of all aspects of composition, but which, because of their comparative brevity, are not so often heard in recital. Christine Börsch was admirable in these six short pieces, giving each it's distinctive character, enhanced by rare phrasing.



Christine Börsch

The Premiere of William Attwood's *Balises* could hardly have had a more persuasive advocacy than on this occasion. The piece is well written for the instrument and shows a genuinely imaginative composer whose work was not out of place in the company of Beethoven, Debussy and Schubert. The composer should have been well pleased with Christine Börsch's intelligent and expressive projection of his work.

The second half began with five of Debussy's *Préludes*, selected from both Books, and again this pianist showed a fine grasp of the

music's individual personalities.

The crown of the recital, however, was a compelling account of Schubert's C minor Sonata D 958, which brought a thoroughly satisfying programme to a memorable conclusion.

ROBERT MATTHEW-WALKER

JOHN CADMAN IN ELY CATHEDRAL

John Cadman's *Diversion*, a single movement in his *Five Partitas for Guitar*, is reason enough to make every effort to hear this fine Guitarist who played in Ely Cathedral on 5 April. In this movement alone he gives clear insight into his potential as a *composer extraordinaire* and not in any sense being unusual for the sake of being unusual. Here there is true music. With a unique style of pure understanding and performance John Cadman gives the impression that underlying a deceptively sparse texture there beats an insistent and effective force in terms of rhythm and unspoken musical genius. With a twinkle in his eye and using a variety of textures, dynamics and rhythmic infusion he merely hints at a structure and source of inspiration that encompasses both the most attractive features of Jazz syncopation and the essence of Blue's melancholy.

The remaining movements, although not specifically jazz-like, certainly stand well as individual ingredients: *Evolution and Revolution* for its thematic exploration and evocative persistent percussive drills; *Reflection and Tango Simpatico* for its haunting melodies descending towards the enlightened and joyful ending and *Elegy and Reverie* for the strong traditional harmonies and bold open outline in the thematic material, combined with a sense of a three-dimensional texture. The final movement, *Seascape and Storm*, was noticeably picturesque, especially in its representation of an idyllic scene on the seashore: the rippling waves and the warmth of the sunshine in the early morning produced by beautifully controlled broken chords flowing smoothly and softly within the musical texture.

This fine composer exhibited not only a flair for composition, but his knowledge and performing skills were undeniably exemplary as he moved easily from lute to guitar and as he demonstrated an affinity with the music of John Dowland and Johann Sebastian Bach. In the transcription of Bach's monumental *Chaconne* John Cadman added considerable depth, colour and varied melodic dimensions. Here is an artist not to be missed!

ROSEMARY WESTWELL

ESTER PINEDA AT THE WIGMORE

The Spanish Pianist Esther Pineda made her Wigmore Hall debut on 12 April in a programme made up entirely of Spanish music. This proved to be the most problematic element of the whole undertaking. Had we heard at least one familiar or maybe classical work we would have had some benchmark by which to judge the others. As it was we were left floundering in a sea of essentially second-rate music, so can only give this pianist the benefit of the doubt. Certainly she has an impressive CV, having represented her country at UNESCO in 1991 and given recitals throughout Europe and Latin-America.

In London her approach to the scores seemed lacking in communication. She opened with three movements from Albeniz' *Iberia Suite* in which the opening *Evocacion* had little sense of structure and simply came to a halt. *El Puerto* was more vibrant though the expected vitality never really showed through. The darkly romantic *El Albaicin* proved more attractive and it was immediately obvious why Debussy had been impressed by its shifting and discordant harmonies.

Granados' *The Maiden and the Nightingale* would make useful music for a silent film but had on its own. The same composer's *Allegro de concierto*, a test piece for a Madrid Music Competition, proved the most exciting music of the evening and at last allowed the pianist to show something of her technical wizardry. Had all of the evening been on this level it might have been more rewarding.

The second half brought more of the same with short pieces by Mompou and *Tres Divertimentos* by Montsalvatge which proved pleasant and atmospheric if lacking in any sense of purpose. Manuel de Falla might have rescued the whole with the virtuosity of *Fantasia Baetica*, but by this stage the evening had been lost: to these ears.

I would welcome an opportunity to hear Esther Pineda again as I really believe this evening did not do her justice.

BRIAN HICK