

vertigo of the realm between life and death.'

Ländler are those quintessential dances from the countryside around Vienna and further afield, popular in Schubert's day and later absorbed even into the symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler. They are slightly slower than waltzes, of which plenty are also heard on this album, since Schubert was a prolific composer of dances in many forms – highlights include a couple of proto-Chopinesque waltzes, a reminder that the young Chopin visited Vienna just three years after Schubert's death. The sheer brevity of these works (some last no longer than 20 seconds, and many of the 45 tracks group several pieces together) might make monotonous listening in lesser hands, especially since most are in triple time, but Aimard finds something special every time and all are played with utmost tenderness. The sound of the piano, a mid-1950s Steinway that once did service at Rudolfinum in Prague, adds its own magic. *John Allison*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Visée

Theorbo Solos

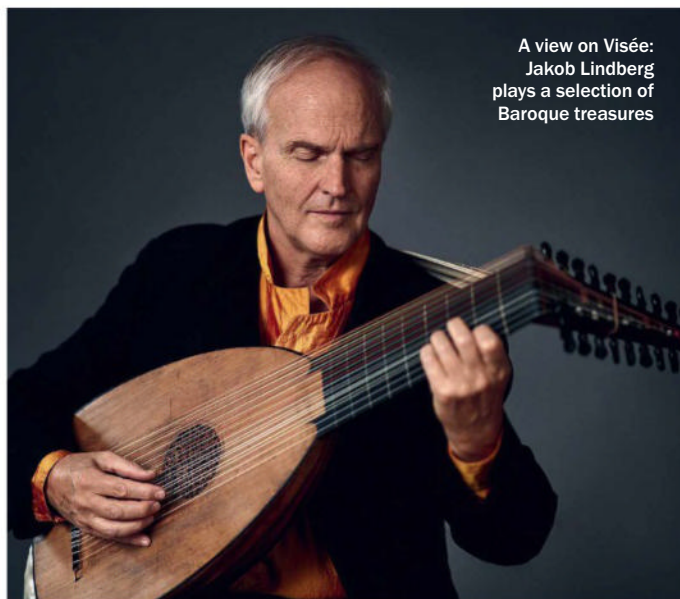
Jakob Lindberg (theorbo)
BIS BIS-2562 78:45 mins



Thanks to the long-standing and successful partnership between BIS and Jakob Lindberg

we have a more representative understanding of the rich repertoire for plucked string instruments composed between the 16th and the 18th centuries. Almost 40 years after his album *Baroque Music for Lute and Guitar* Lindberg again turns his attention to the music of Robert de Visée. Devoted entirely to de Visée, this latest release presents original works as well as arrangements of pieces by Jean-Baptiste Lully, Henry Purcell and François Couperin. Lindberg performs on the 14-course theorbo made for him in 1979 by Michael Lowe, after 17th-century Venetian instruments by members of the Sellas family.

This selection of suites allows Lindberg majestically and authoritatively to traverse a range of affects and styles. Among such treasures it is impossible to assign a hierarchy to these lithe,



A view on Visée:
Jakob Lindberg
plays a selection of
Baroque treasures

mercurial and delicately nuanced offerings. This repertoire demands and rewards deep, contemplative and repeated listening. Neither Hopkinson Smith, recorded in 1989 for Astrée (now Naïve) nor Johannes Ötzbrugger, for Fra Bernardo from 2020, manage to achieve Lindberg's clarity of articulation and depth of sonority. As expected, Lindberg's liner notes are equally engaging and informative. They should serve as both a model and inspiration for other performers to utilise the medium of words to strengthen their connection with listeners. This is sublime music played and recorded to perfection. Bravo! *Ingrid Pearson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Armenian Miniatures

Komitas: Seven Songs; Pieces for Children; Seven Folk Dances;
Khachaturian: Children's Album No. 1; **Babajanian:** Six Pictures
Tsovinar Suflyan (piano)

Prospero PROSP0096 64:42 mins



What is it about Komitas that draws ever more champions to his cause? The answer seems

to be a mixture of pity – for the heroic tragedy of his life – and curiosity about his compositions and arrangements which were mostly destroyed in the Armenian Genocide of 1915. All Armenian musicians perform his works, and on Armenian Holocaust Day Armenians everywhere

sing the songs he collected and set. Meanwhile ever-increasing numbers of non-Armenian musicians are pinning his colours to their mast.

In Tsovinar Suflyan's album of *Armenian Miniatures* Komitas is the connecting element, but it's a very slender chain. *Seven Folk Dances* are the only solo piano compositions he is known to have left behind, when incarcerated in the French psychiatric hospital where he died; the *Seven Songs* which Suflyan plays started life as instrumental pieces. And if *Pieces for Children* were composed by him in the form presented here, rather than arranged by someone else, that would very much interest the musicologists.

Unfortunately there is no musicological information of any kind in the liner booklet here: just a few moody images of the pianist, and an uninformative little personal essay. All we have is the music, which itself is very thin gruel.

Komitas's songs and dances cry out to be heard as he would have heard them, arranged for flute, drum and oboe; his piano versions are almost painfully simple, with single bass notes underpinning pared-down melodies above. Khachaturian's children's pieces have charm, and inhabit the Komitas soundworld, but Babajanian's *Six Pictures* belong in the 20th-century canon of virtuosic pianism, and seem oddly placed here. *Michael Church*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★

Shifting Ground

Works by JS Bach, Matteis, Angélica Negrón et al

Alexi Kenney (violin)

Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0205
66:31 mins



Bach works woven together with more contemporary offerings is not a new concept

in the recorded music world: it's a treatment that many artists and labels have used to great effect. *Shifting Ground* is another release in this format, with violinist Alexi Kenney presenting a conversation between works across the centuries. The raw, unfiltered recorded quality offers Kenney no place to hide, but the former Avery Fisher Career Grant winner rises admirably to the challenge, presenting thoughtful (if perhaps not revelatory) new interpretations of the sonatas and partitas of Bach.

The surprise here is the arrangements of songs by pop artist Ariana Grande and singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell. While this programming might send many listeners' eyes rolling before they've even pressed 'play', the results are much more engaging than you might expect. While Grande's 'thank u, next' is perhaps a pinch too reminiscent of the slightly saccharine Vitamin String Quartet version made famous in Netflix's *Bridgerton*, Kenney's arrangement of Mitchell's 'Blue' offers an excellent piece of music that strays away from the original to offer an enlightening new take.

There are premiere recordings here too, with Angélica Negrón's *The Violinist* utilising electronic soundscapes and Matthew Burtner's poignant *Elegy* presenting a haunting violin melody backed by the sounds of running water. The juxtaposition of old and new occasionally falls down with some of the placements of tracks: the relentless arpeggio patterns in the pieces by Beglarian and Matteis Jr tire the ear when placed almost side by side, for instance. The Bach pieces do offer clever pacesetters, however, and there is much to applaud here as a showcase of Kenney's handling of a wide range of repertoire. *Freya Parr*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★