

Morton Feldman
For John Cage
(ezz-thetics by Hat Hut, Ltd.)
review by **Brian Olewnick**
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**Morton Feldman
For John Cage
Judith Wegmann
Andreas Kunz**

"For John Cage", written in 1982, is a relatively late work of Feldman's, who died in 1987. While in terms of length it fits in quite comfortably with many of his compositions from the early 70s onward, it's always struck me as standing a bit apart, of having a slightly darker, even Romantic, cast. It also seems to be less frequently recorded than much of late Feldman; a quick survey yields less than ten examples, including an earlier one on hat[now]ART recorded in 1997 by Josie Ter Haar and John Snijders. A standard little look-see this listener does with any new recording of late Feldman is to check on the performance time. Most recordings of "For John Cage" clock in at between 70 - 80 minutes; John Tilbury, who likes to take things slowly, registers 84 minutes on his recording with Darragh

Morgan, for example. Here, over two discs, Judith Wegmann and Andreas Kunz allow the piece to unspool for just over an hour and a half, and the result is stunning, quite possibly my personal favorite version thus far.

Pianist Wegmann, who in 2020 released a superb recording of Feldman's "Triadic Memories" on the same label, is joined here by violinist Andreas Kunz. One immediately ascertains an enormous depth and richness of sound; the room in which they're performing is highly resonant, almost liquid, the sounds retaining a goodly amount of mass as they slowly evanesce. Much of the music is a kind of call and response, the piano initially offering several notes, pausing while the violinist answers with two or three, moving to the next phase. The reverse order occurs, the instruments intertwine for a bit, perhaps play in unison, then the back and forth continues at slightly different tempi with related but subtly altered melodic snippets, generating an overall sense of self-similarity with a paradoxically very different set of individual "pieces" underneath, progressing at a kind of slow simmer. Gorgeous moments abound. For just one brief example, around the 25-minute mark, the piano plays a low, somber two-note pattern, the violin answering with a soft, mid-range sigh. The 2/1 sequence continues for a minute or so, shifting registers, time, accents, the basic plaintiveness remaining but evincing how nuanced and subtle such a "simple" back and forth can be. At other times, as near the conclusion of the first disc, Kunz achieves a kind of languidness rarely heard in Feldman interpretations, a brief snatch of dreamy luxuriousness that is utterly captivating, a fine contrast to the harsher moments that occur about 15 minutes later or the fascinating stop-and-start stuttering section later still. And this is only scratching the surface of the elements in play here.

The relative slowness of Wegmann and Kunz's approach allows a rich expansiveness to bloom and their personal expressiveness on keyboard and strings discloses, as mentioned above, just a hint of Romanticism into a music where that might seem surprising. **I found their strategy absolutely winning and would highly recommend this reading of "For John Cage" to any admirers of the work, Feldman or of any music at all.**