

Le Souffle Du Temps II - Réflexion
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Judith Wegmann
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Swiss pianist Judith Wegmann released *Le Souffle Du Temps* (The Breath of Time) in 2017, a recording of solo prepared piano that combined elements of composition and improvisation. For this follow-up, Wegmann chose four Swiss composers, Daniel Andres, Cyrill Lim, Edu Haubensak, and Hans Koch, to write solo piano works reflecting on the original release. And to add an additional wrinkle, Wegmann performs “Réflexions” which serve as comments on the composed works. In the liner notes, she discusses the process. “I rehearsed the written compositions, simultaneously improvising and reflecting to see what compositions I myself could elicit. I made sketches to show how I would like to organize my improvisation ... With practice and preparation, and later playing the concerts, these activities [became] a natural process.”

Starting out with “Réflexion I,” the pianist draws out a dark, brooding sound world, with deep bass reverberations, string scrapes, creaks and knocks, and hanging layers of sustain. Daniel Andres’ five part “Souvenirs d’un instant” follows, laying out compact pieces with slowly evolving lines of lyrical abstraction. As the pieces progress, layers of sustain provide harmonic depth to simple frameworks. “Réflexion II” draws on the areas charted on the opener while pushing things further into textural abstractions. There is a strong spatial element as well, as the array of sounds Wegmann elicits from the instrument are hung against the dusky sonic field. Cyrill Lim’s brief “Weben” weaves wafts of subtle feedback into the long sustain of the piano and Wegmann astutely lets the harmonic overlaps and intersections and subtle ripples of decay recede against each other.

“Réflexion III” adds more agitated activity into the mix, with percussive sputters, hammered raps, and string preparations plied against the hanging string resonance to particularly strong effect. Like the piece that preceded it, Edu Haubensak’s “Manga” makes use of subtle preparations against abstracted harmonic structures, charting out a piece full of poised introspection. “Réflexion IV” follows the arc toward abstraction Wegmann has charted, with contemplative refractions shuddering and echoing against each other. The recording concludes with Hans Koch’s “L’ombre du Jour,” and the creaking timbres and abraded sheets of activity provide a contrast to the darker colorations of the other pieces. The pianist seems to relish the more open structures as she probes and pushes with prepared and amplified textures. Taken as a whole, it is a worthy document of the pianist’s playing and conceptual explorations. Judith—*Michael Rosenstein*