



Brian Olewnick

### Judith Wegmann *Le Souffle Du Temps II – Réflexion*

Swiss composer/pianist Wegmann's first release was a 2017 collection of solo works, 'Le Souffle du Temps — X (Rétro-) Perspectives', issued on hat[now]ART. For this recording, she asked four other composers, Daniel Andres, Cyrill Lim, Edu

Haubensak and Hans Koch (each also Swiss) to compose new works, "reflections" on her earlier music. She, in turn, offers her own commentary on these reflections, one per composer (all of the music is for solo piano, played by Wegmann). Meta— and more meta—.

In an odd bit of track sequencing, Wegmann's responses precede the other composers'. Andres' suite of five short pieces, 'Souvenirs d'un instant I-V', are contemplative, somber and serene, richly melodic, evoking Debussy. They're quite lovely in their own right, causing this listener, who had never previously heard Andres, to investigate further. Wegmann's 'Réflexion I' utilizes preparations and inside-piano approaches (the Andres suite didn't) to fashion a ghostly, smoky atmosphere, less overtly melodic but just as rich, dark moans coursing through a soundscape of crinkles and strummed strings. The relationship of the pairing is not obvious at all but unquantifiably appropriate. 'Weben', by Lim, is brief and crystalline, single, clear notes struck and allowed to hover, with a faint hum in the background; very moving. The affiliated response, more than twice as long, seems to continue from where the first left off, painting a similarly deep, mysterious picture. Again a fine, if unexpected, reaction to its source.

Haubensak's 'Manga', while still slow, even stately, is somewhat more brightly colored than its predecessors with gentle, perhaps gamelan-inspired chords set off against softer, deeper notes and gong-like tones generated from the stringboard. It has something of a subdued ritual feel. Wegmann's commentary is, though restrained, more agitated than the others, with nervous, wooden taps on the piano's body, quickly strummed strings and other skitterish sounds. As with all these pieces, she generates a sense of palpable atmosphere that envelops everything, softening and even, attractively, blurring the proceedings. Koch, more widely known for his work as a reed player in largely free jazz arenas, contributes the most dissonant work here, 'L'ombre du jour', Wegmann working almost entirely inside the piano, scraping, rubbing and rattling the strings. For all its extended technique, it might be the most archaic piece presented here, sounding not unlike any number of works from preceding decades. But again, Wegmann's reaction, 'Réflexion IV', is very effective. Throughout her reflections, the listener has a sense of a deep and pervasive musicality in her persona, of a touch that elicits a wealth of richness and oblique melodiousness where she chooses to investigate.

A fine concept, wonderfully executed.