

## Roger Woodward – Bach

Reviewed by: Colin Anderson

### Bach

Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue, BWV903  
Partita in C minor, BWV826  
Partita in E minor, BWV830

Think of the Sydney-born pianist Roger Woodward and it's quite likely that cutting-edge contemporary music will be the first association – Boulez, Barraqué, Stockhausen, Xenakis, *et al.* Although Woodward's current recording projects for Celestial Harmonies do not find him renegeing on 'modern music', his breadth of repertoire also encompasses Bach, Chopin and Debussy, and it may come as salutary to mention that Woodward (born 1942) won the 1968 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw and that he has devoted many recitals to his music.

Roger Woodward (piano)

Johann Sebastian Bach is the focus of this release – and singularly impressive it is. Explicitly recorded throughout, Woodward unfolds the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue on a Steinway D with rigour, edge and clarity, a performance richly expressed and fully sounded: quite Romantic in this regard. Woodward is fully alive to the 'danger' of the music, the Fugue unveiled in deliberate terms, a stark approach that pays dividends of analysis.

Recorded January 2007 in  
Wörthsee, Bavaria

### CD Number

CELESTIAL HARMONIES  
13280-2

This absorbed and absorbing account is followed by two Partitas. The opening 'Sinfonia' of the one in C minor revels in rhetoric and harmonic directness, fluency, grateful shapes and a technical bravado that lifts the music off the page – this is Bach-playing for today: busily contrapuntal and also contemplative and transporting.

### Duration

71 minutes

The E minor work is given on a large scale – 35 minutes here – a reading of sublime grandeur, ornaments ruffling the surface, music of import and – sometimes – fancy, the fourth movement 'Air' for example, which has an element of whimsy, which will then be contrasted with the depths of the ensuing 'Sarabande'.

Printer Friendly View

It may be that Woodward's austere and penetrating interpretations will not appeal to all listeners – but it makes for gripping realisations of music that remains so relevant.

Two reservations: although the presentation is smart, and attractively black and white, there are no notes on the music in the booklet, which is solely a biography of Woodward; and although the pianist is pristine in his delivery, the piano's pedal-mechanism is (or is allowed to be) somewhat intrusive. Nevertheless these are stimulating performances, brimful of vivid projection and perceptive insights, which one wants to return to and are persuasive to exploring Woodward's other current enthusiasms.

- Celestial Harmonies
- Roger Woodward