

International Record Review "OUTSTANDING"  
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This is a superlative recording which has impressed me greatly. To many people, the notion of an entire CD being devoted to music for unaccompanied oboe might seem a somewhat *recherché* idea, but in this instance the result is wholly successful. Céline Moinet, not yet 30 years old, is clearly one of the finest oboists in the world; this disc is of such consistent musical and technical quality as to hold the attention throughout. Admittedly, she plays two eighteenth-century works by J.S and C.P.E Bach (father and son, of course), which were originally written for unaccompanied Baroque flute and are played here on the modern oboe, but such is her outstanding musicianship that the results fully justify her decisions.

J.S. Bach's Partita is his only work for solo wind instrument, composed around the same time as his unaccompanied violin music, and is a major work in its own right – in four movements, lasting around 18 minutes – and Moinet gives an utterly compelling performance of considerable musical distinction. C.P.E Bach's Sonata is more immediately "attractive", so to speak, but it is by no means wholly inferior, and its three movements approach the lengths (16 minutes) of his father's composition, making a truly delightful conclusion to this engrossing programme, especially in such a musical performance as Moinet's.

Between these late-Baroque pieces come three twentieth-century works. Berio's *Sequenza VII* (1969) is an astonishingly original conception, magnificently imagined for solo oboe (composed for Heinz Holliger) and is an absorbing work, fully exploring the resources of the modern oboe, but doing so wholly in a musical manner, free from "tricks" or unnatural-sounding devices. It is a fascinating and in its way important work by a great composer.

As, indeed, is Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* of 1951, written for *alfresco* performance by Joy Boughton (Rutland Boughton's daughter and the dedicatee of the work) on the River Meare at Thorpeness, near Aldeburgh: the first performance had performer and audience sitting in punts, as the water lapped around the craft. Moinet is quite superb in these extraordinary miniature "portraits", so amazingly full of atmosphere, as she is in the most recent music, Elliott Carter's *Inner Song* of 1992, also written for Holliger. This seems to me to be the least successful music on the disc – simply as a work of art – for Carter appears to veer off into technical display about two-thirds of the way into this piece, avoiding (or running out of) the musical implications of his invention. However, Moinet's performance is one which all admirers of this composer and players of the instrument will wish to hear, for I cannot imagine it being improved upon.

Apart from the superb quality of Moinet's playing, the recording quality is absolutely outstanding – the instrument is perfectly placed and caught in just the right acoustic, so that the ear never tires. The booklet notes are also first-class, making this an astonishingly successful release on all counts. The result is very strongly recommended.

**Robert Matthew-Walker**