

Tim Parkinson

Cello Piece

EDITION WANDELWEISER RECORDS CD

Very few composers have made use of the shuffle play function offered by CD players. Tim Parkinson is one who has, and he's used it creatively. His austere and ostensibly minimal *Cello Piece* (2004), written for the cellist Stefan Thut, consists of twelve sections which can be played in any order. This isn't, by any means, a new compositional strategy (Pierre Boulez and Earle Brown, for example, have written compositions that may be tackled in this way), but Parkinson has constructed each of his twelve pages of music so cunningly that there are a number of perspectival shifts within each of the sections, new ideas are introduced when you least expect them, and there are no clear beginnings or endings anywhere in the score. None of the musical events offer any indication as to what has gone before or what will happen next. Even after several listens in standard play it's hard to predict when changes are about to occur, and once the numerous permutations offered by shuffle play have been factored in, the piece assumes a complexity that such minimal materials would seem to deny.

Except, on reflection, the material isn't minimal at all. As with Morton Feldman's works from the 1980s, Parkinson seems to use repetition intuitively rather than according to a fixed compositional logic, and the range of string articulations and sonorities that Thut has to produce is extensive. Perhaps what's more important is that Parkinson has avoided making a music which draws attention to either its or the performer's virtuosity. In its unostentatious, non-Romantic presentation and compositional integrity it reminds me somewhat of Bach's "Cello Suites", a total music.

Brian Marley