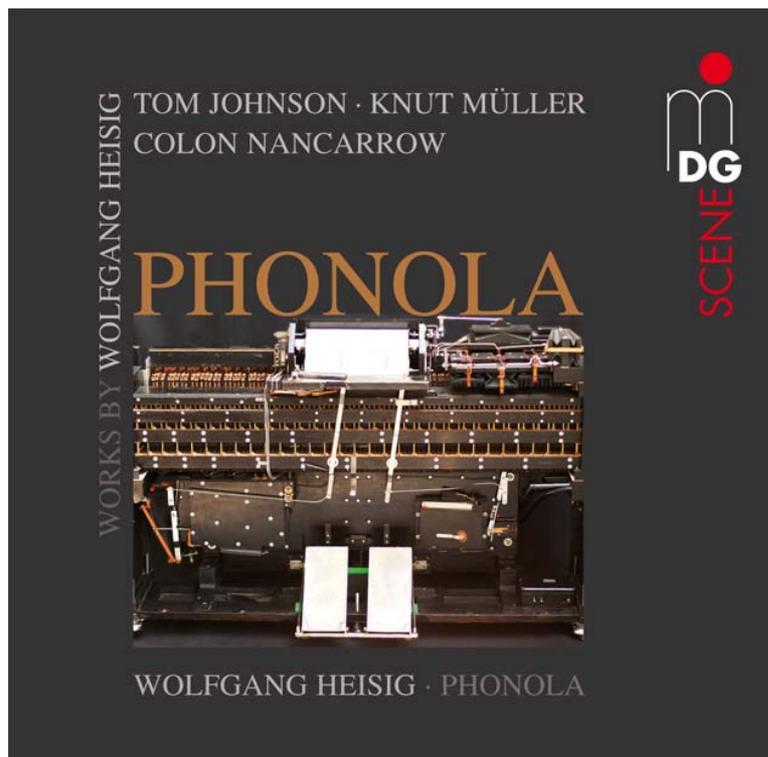


NEW • NOUVEAUTE • NEUHEIT

3
DG
SCENE



11/11-(5)

Contemporary Music for Phonola

Works by Wolfgang Heisig, Tom Johnson, Knut Müller and Conlon Nancarrow

Wolfgang Heisig, phonola

1 CD

Order No.: MDG 626 1716-2

UPC-Code:



LC06768

Rare Breed

A hundred years ago phonolas and player pianos were all the rage. The phonola was placed in front of the piano, and mechanism driven by low pressure enabled it to play the keys of any piano. Nowadays such instruments are rare relicts from a bygone era. Wolfgang Heisig keeps some of these rarities ready for performance and has initiated contemporary music for phonola, written such music himself, and recorded it in the best acoustics on a "period" Steinway concert grand piano from 1901.

Fine Touch

Records and radios, not to the mention the computer, had not yet been invented when at the beginning of the twentieth century a great many creative minds in the United States and Germany began occupying themselves with the development of automatic pianos capable of rising to the challenge of high keyboard demands. In 1902 the Ludwig Hupfeld Company marketed the first art player piano, calling it the phonola and celebrating great successes with it. A foot-operated bellows unit (or a suction motor) produced the low pressure with which perforated rolls activated a mechanism for the striking of all eighty-eight piano keys. In contrast to the fully automatic player piano, on the phonola the player can influence the tempo, volume, and stress but otherwise relies on the same fascinating technical resources that continue to function today.

X-Ray Vision

It was above all Conlon Nancarrow who recognized the opportunities offered by automatic pianos and committed his complete oeuvre to such instruments. His *Studies for Player Piano* continue to be regarded today as a key compositional work of the twentieth century. In the selection presented by Heisig the famous "X-ray," his Study No. 21, with a velocity and multiplicity of tones meaning that it will never be playable manually, is also heard.

Euro Zone

Wolfgang Heisig likewise explores interesting new keyboard territory. Tom Johnson experiments with the transfer of geometric figures to perforated rolls, Knut Müller is inspired by ancient perforated discs representing the sun's course, and Heisig supplies a whole series of his own compositions, including settings of poems by Heinz D. Heisl and "Wut über den verlorenen Groschen" – a reflection on the introduction of the euro and the passing of the German mark (DM). Valued added tax regulating the rate of acceleration and retardation and the conversion of all D notes into € notes also number among its features.