

Van Camp

The Feasts of Fear and Agony^a. Music for Three Instruments. Improvisations

^aLiesbeth Devos sop

Het Collectief / Vykintas Baltakas

Fuga Libera © FUG715 (64' • DDD)



Formerly a professional violinist, the Belgian composer Bram Van Camp

(b1980) has established himself as a composer of no mean distinctiveness, as this Fuga Libera disc of works drawn from the past three years confirms. Much the longest piece is *The Feasts of Fear and Agony*, a song-cycle in three parts to poems by Paul Van Ostaïjen whose evocative and often fanciful imagery has been reduced to its semantic essence in music that reflects the emotional volatility of the resulting text via a succession of recitative and arioso passages, the soprano affording continuity across a fragmented and often disjunctive instrumental texture that only really coalesces by the latter stages of the second part. Liesbeth Devos succeeds admirably in this respect, while her feeling for vocal timbre teases out meaning even when the actual words are less than intelligible.

The members of Het Collectief are finely attuned to the demands of this music under the guidance of Vykintas Baltakas, which is no less true of the two instrumental works featured here. *Music for Three Instruments* brings together the Bartókian combination of clarinet, violin and piano, though its 'contrasts' in tempo are elided so as to achieve a seamless continuity – abetted by writing that draws the trio into an indissoluble whole.

Improvisations is even more impressive, its outwardly free evolution given focus by a formal outline with more than a hint of the chaconne to its unfolding – as if Bach and Lachenmann had been brought into an unlikely yet productive accord.

Performances again do justice to these engrossing pieces, heard to advantage in sound whose clarity is not at the expense of overall perspective. The booklet has a laconic interview with Van Camp – whose music, on the basis of this release, is worth getting to know. **Richard Whitehouse**