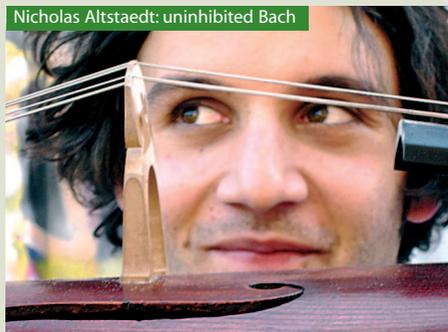


## RECITAL

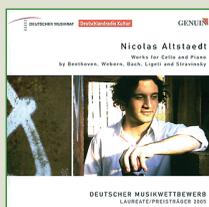


Nicholas Altstaedt: uninhibited Bach



**NICHOLAS ALTSTAEDT** Works by Beethoven, Webern, Bach, Ligeti and Stravinsky

**Nicholas Altstaedt (cello)**  
**Franco Piemontesi (piano)**  
Genuin GEN 87084



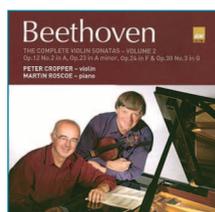
This uncommonly well-planned and well-recorded recital may have arisen from a competition winner (of the 2005 Deutscher Musikwettbewerb) wishing to display the range of his abilities, but it offers a far more satisfying experience than most such showcases. Beethoven's Fourth Cello Sonata teases as it charms, with an almost lazily drawn opening Andante that makes an ideal foil for the nervous energy of the succeeding Allegro. The Adagio moves forward while never forsaking the uneasy calm that is its due property, imperceptibly giving way to the competing claims of violence and elegance in the finale. In short, it's late Beethoven, fully realised as such.

Then come the Webern works for cello and piano, achingly done, and how modern the Fifth Bach Suite sounds when placed between the sonatas by Webern and Ligeti! A swift approach to the dance movements is one reason, but another is the remarkable variety of bowing and articulation that never stands on ceremony: the prelude is startlingly flexible and ruminatory, the sarabande cool and distant, the gigue almost thrown away. So too the opening dialogue of the Ligeti is more intimately conversational than in a similar debut album from the fine Emmanuelle Bertrand on Harmonia Mundi, and the concluding Stravinsky *Suite italienne* reveals a more dashing awareness of its Baroque models than Tatiana Vassilieva's first album for Naxos. Altstaedt is already much more than promising, and anyone interested in a freshly uninhibited approach to Bach should hear him.

PETER QUANTRILL

**BEETHOVEN** Violin Sonatas vol.2: Sonatas in A major op.12 no.2, in A minor op.23, in F major op.24 'Spring' & in G major op.30 no.3

**Peter Cropper (violin) Martin Roscoe (piano)**  
ASV Gold GLD 4024



The new duo partnership formed last year between two long-established musicians is currently touring the UK presenting an on-going Beethoven violin sonata cycle to coincide with this series of recordings. That feel of recently working through each score does bring the benefit of a fresh approach, though at times details are pointed as if major discoveries.

Peter Cropper's approach to all four sonatas on this second volume (the first was reviewed in July) is one of discernment. For example, his uncommonly gentle approach to the early A major Sonata leaves the thrust of the work in the piano part, with the violin happily commenting on the thematic material as the work unfolds. Yet I feel this restraint and chastity goes too far and misses the warmth inherent in the music.

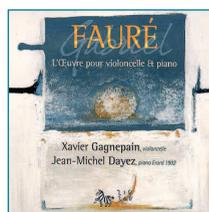
Without exception the slow movements are beautifully handled. Indeed, I cannot recall a more serene Adagio molto espressivo than in this genial approach to the 'Spring' Sonata, or a more gracious Tempo di minuetto than in the G major work of op.30.

Tempos throughout the disc are generally relaxed, though there are fast passages where Cropper's articulation leaves the music sounding breathless, a problem that mars the finale of the G major

Sonata. There are niggling intonation doubts in passages that have wide intervals. It is good to have the violin rather set back in the acoustic, even if in leaving the piano as the dominant instrument the composer's little accentuation marks often stand out with undue emphasis. In such an overcrowded field I always return to the effortless lyricism of Suk-Panenka (Supraphon), or the warmly expressive Oistrakh-Oborin (Philips) with renewed admiration. **DAVID DENTON**

**FAURÉ** Cello Sonatas op.109 in D minor & op.117 in G minor, etc

**Xavier Gagnepain (cello) Jérémie Billet (cello)**  
**Jean-Michel Dayez (piano)**  
Zig-Zag Territoires ZZT 070602



All cellists have a special relationship with Gabriel Fauré at some point in their lives, whether it's sitting on a school stage playing the *Élégie* or *Sicilienne*, or learning salon pieces like *Après un rêve*, or the two late sonatas. He wrote so much for cello – and here it all is, Fauré's complete cello oeuvre on one disc, even down to a charming sightreading exercise for two cellos.

The booklet photo of Xavier Gagnepain, a pupil of Maurice Gendron, and Jean-Michel Dayez reclining on a grassy slope sets a scene of relaxed informality. Musically, though, Gagnepain leans forward rather than back, ever ardent and pushing onwards, so that some of the genre pieces feel almost hurried through. *Papillon* in particular left me giddy, the cello always a fraction ahead of the piano.