

# HIGH FIDELITY

MAY 1977  
and musical america.

ICD ● 08391

## Etsuko Tazaki, piano

Etsuko Tazaki's piano recital (Tully Hall, December 13) featured as its centerpiece George Rochberg's *Partita-Variations*, a work commissioned by Miss Tazaki on a grant from the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation. Rochberg has been writing in an idiom that stresses the continuity with the past, and one of his other piano compositions, *Nach Bach*, offered another example of the updated classicism heard to even finer advantage in the *Partita-Variations* (1976). The work comprises thirteen sections, played nonstop. The remarkable thing about this music is that its extreme eclecticism somehow works. One can find just about any musical period and style: this listener detected an over-all Busoni-like mysticism, the slow movement of Schubert's Fifth Symphony, the very opening bars of Brahms' Piano Quintet, the "Gnomus" section from Mussorgsky's *Pictures*, the first movement of Prokofiev's F minor Violin Sonata, and so forth. The composer has purposely juxtaposed atonal and tonal, homophonic and contrapuntal. There is, however, an ultimate sense of relationship, and the final section sums it all up. Miss Tazaki performed the technically demanding opus with a marvelous sense of climax and expansion. She is very much the *bravura* pianist, and obviously at home in such complexities.

She also programed two of the Preludes—No. 6 (*Allegro Mystico*) and No. 8 (*Leggiero*)—by Ruth Crawford Seeger. The renditions had clarity, probity, and the kind of gnarled, uncompromising moral fiber to do justice to what was, for the 1920s, very forward-looking writing.

The Liszt *Fantasia quasi sonata, Après une lecture de Dante*, abounds in the kind of melodrama and structural padding (all those pianola-like *tremolandi* and empty-sounding diminished seventh chords!) that the composer somehow transcended in his B minor Piano Sonata but not here. For all that, the piece has many adherents and, aside from a few minor slips undoubtedly attributable to fatigue, Miss Tazaki's rhetorical, committed pianism came close to satisfying their every wish. The opening work, Beethoven's sublime D major Sonata, Op. 10 No. 3, received a vibrant, warm-hearted, exciting reading, with good voicing and idiomatic thrust. An additional palette of tonal color would have transformed a conscientious, musicianly reading into a truly memorable one, but Miss Tazaki, as a Beethovenian, is still head and shoulders above the run-of-the-hall pianist.

H.G.