

Metamorphoses

Françaix Trio Mozart Trio, 'Kegelstatt', K498

Schumann Märchenerzählungen, Op 132

Smit Trio

Metamorphoses (Jean Johnson *cl*

Roeland Jagers *va* Ilona Timchenko *pf*)

Music & Media Consulting © MMC122 (72' • DDD)



'Metamorphoses': a curious name for an ensemble devoted to the rather limited

repertoire for clarinet, viola and piano, of which two of the most familiar landmarks are included on this disc. That's probably not why you'd buy it, though, but rather for the lyrical, moodily atmospheric Trio (1938) by the Dutch composer Leo Smit, who was murdered in Sobibor. This isn't quite its first outing on disc but it's sufficiently rare that a new recording as poised, as characterful and as expressive as this one is emphatically worth hearing.

The other must-have here is the Trio by Jean Françaix; and if you find Françaix's music as irresistible as I do, you'll be both amused and wholly unsurprised to learn that it dates from 1990, even though it unmistakably breathes the air of Les Six. In other words, it's an utter delight, and Johnson, Timchenko and Jagers get its anarchic, gleefully subversive wit off to perfection, gliding artlessly from Impressionist dissonance to elegant, lopsided waltzes and circus gallops.

And, it has to be said, there's an engaging guilelessness about the trio's Schumann and Mozart too; always inside the style but never at the expense of the players' own lively musical personalities. Johnson (on clarinet) has a winningly sweet tone and there's nothing backward about Jagers's viola sound either. Schumann would surely have relished the sense of newness (as well as blossoming lyricism) that they bring to his *Fairy Tales*, and the way they let the first movement of the *Kegelstatt* Trio play out like unwinding clockwork suggests three players on the same wavelength and thoroughly enjoying themselves. These performances are sincere, imaginative and fresh as paint. **Richard Bratby**