

Heiner Goebbels

The Italian Concerto

ReR CD

I fell in love with Heiner Goebbels's work immediately on experiencing his wonderful *Hashirigaki*, which brought together The Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*, Japanese music and Gertrude Stein. The composer, a genuine man of the theatre, is a supreme collagist, working with montage and exploiting contrasting musical languages, with the crucial ability to synthesise beyond the level of cultural tourism.

Experiencing his work live is essential – no recording can convey its full breadth – but the relative irregularity of Goebbels productions makes the recorded medium necessary. This disc features four world premiere recordings from an Italian festival in 2007. In *The Italian Concerto*, which

segues into *Writing II*, Goebbels reprises his earlier career as keyboardist, improvising piano in duo with Chris Cutler on drums and electrified drums. In the latter piece they're joined by The Icarus Ensemble. Parts of the slow movement of Bach's *Italian Concerto*, as well as the opening of Berg's late Romantic *Piano Sonata*, emerge quietly from the improvised fabric, against the increasingly urgent chattering of Cutler's percussion and electronics.

Ou Bien Sunyatta, for kora, voice and orchestra, features griots Sira and Boubacar Diébaté with The Orchestra Of The Teatro Popoli, Bologna – a clash of African and Western classical cultures, with more substantive results than Kronos have achieved. *Die Faust Im Wappen* is for trombonist Johannes Bauer plus orchestra, and opens with several extraordinary minutes of broadside pyrotechnics from the soloist, before the entry of the orchestra raises the dramatic temperature even further. This piece was originally included in Goebbels's *Surrogate Cities*, while *So That The Blood Dropped To The Earth*, for orchestra and voice, is also adapted from it. It features Jocelyn B Smith as bombastic vocalist – but then Goebbels can rarely be accused of bashfulness and restraint. This challenging compilation is an excellent introduction to his recent work.

Andy Hamilton