

# GRAMOPHONE

## ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

*A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada*

### Chesky

Venetian Concertos - No 1; No 2; No 3; No 4

Orchestra of the 21st Century

Chesky © JD379 (73' • DDD)



David Chesky's four Venetian Concertos for strings and ripieno flute, although they might suggest Vivaldi, are in practice like four versions of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* No 3 in which a struggle is going on for the music's soul. The performances even have their own original-instrument feel, rough, passionate and occasionally a little overwhelmed. And as sequenced by the composer – Nos 3, 1, 2 and 4 – the concertos begin to show an increasingly dark and emotional side.

Written and recorded in 2015, each concerto is in three movements of between four and six minutes, fast-slow-fast, driven by a high-energy, mostly minor-key metric insistence that, in the guise of formal Baroque style, seems intended to sweep listeners along in a flow fuelled by the explosive opening fireworks of No 3. Thereafter, Chesky takes off in virtuoso runs executed usually as one by his pick-up Orchestra of the 21st Century, which leads to unexpectedly sad and beautiful private places. There are no conventional booklet-notes so I contacted the composer, who explained: 'It was a game I made, a crossword puzzle, a complicated jigsaw puzzle to entertain myself. I was listening to the *Brandenburgs* one day and said to myself, to write music in this Baroque fugal style is really hard. Could I do it?'

To answer the question, Chesky worked according to his own set of 'modern concerto grosso' rules: 'If the Baroque style of composition continued, what would it sound like today?' The results could be worse. It could be Hindemith. **Laurence Vittes**

### Kotche

Drum-kit Quartets - No 1; No 3; No 6; No 50;

No 51; No 51 (Chicago Realisation); No 54

Sō Percussion

Cantaloupe © CA21116 (53' • DDD)

### GRAMOPHONE talks to...

#### Bob Lord

The man behind the Ansonica label and its new release of music celebrating Cuba, 'Abrazo'

#### Tell us about your work.

As a CEO, producer, bassist and composer, I'm always seeking new combinations of music – fresh ways of approaching different modes of expression which will appeal to the various aspects of my responsibilities and passions as well as to the public.

#### And where did the idea for 'Abrazo' come from?

An initial exploratory trip to Cuba in May 2015 made clear that great music could be created in Havana, effectively span all manner of genres and styles, and contribute to fostering cultural exchange and understanding.

#### How did you choose the composers?

We held a call for scores to find new, unrecorded works which represented an attractive, engaging cross-section of modern music and could be well matched with the musicians and venues I visited. Virtually all of the composers we selected had been previously produced by Parma in other projects, so there was a high level of familiarity which contributed to the results.



#### How was the atmosphere at the sessions?

It was electric. I've spent years exploring how to blend the aesthetics and strategies of classical, jazz, and even rock/pop recording and production, methods where preparation and spontaneity meld with refinement and rawness to create something fresh and original. I think we achieved that here: it's not often you see a 20+ person big band crowded into a control room listening to a playback, talking about what can be improved and asking questions of the composer and producer.

#### Are you planning a follow-up?

'Abrazo' was recorded in November 2015, and in April of this year we returned to record again. That album, 'Intersections', comes out in October 2016, and we're heading back to Havana just after the New Year to keep on working.



If drum-kits are the centre of your existence, then Glenn Kotche's new

CD will thrill you beyond your wildest imagination. If not, get ready for nine tracks of excitement that whether Sō Percussion whisper, bang or shout, Kotche's music will always be more subtle and varied than you might

expect drum-kits to be, always emotionally and viscerally aligned with the smooth flow of some highly entertaining music and time.

And while the composer's descriptions of his creative processes sound nerdy – each movement of Drum-kit Quartet No 3, for example, 'features a collapsing formal structure as it progresses' – the four members of Sō Percussion play with spontaneous energy as if their own creative juices had been unleashed by Kotche's detailed scores.