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ANTHONY de MARE: "Out of My Hands"

DEL TREDICI: *Ballad in Yellow; Virtuoso Alice; Wildwood Etude; Opposites Attract; Wedding Song*

KERNIS: *Before Sleep and Dreams; Superstar Etude 1; Speed Limit Rag*

Anthony de Mare--Koch 7553--65 minutes

Anthony de Mare has found a niche as a contemporary music specialist. That designation does him a disservice. He is a formidable pianist by any standards. His limpid tone, exquisite touch, and impassioned beauty of utterance imbue this program of vignettes by David Del Tredici and Aaron Jay Kernis with artistry of the highest order. This is quite simply beautiful playing. If only some of the power pounding competition winners listened to de Mare they might learn something.

I never understood the popularity of Del Tredici's *Final Alice* and its numerous sequels. I always found that work trite and uninspired. (Barbara Hendricks's career was not helped by the recurrent performances, either.) *Virtuoso Alice* is just another variation on that tired score. What *Final Alice* obscured was that Del Tredici is a composer with a real gift for melody.

Ballad in Yellow is beguilingly romantic. *Wildwood Etude* is moody and brooding. Del Tredici deftly reworks themes from Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* in *Opposites Attract*. Only *Wedding Song* is too sentimental.

Aaron Jay Kernis clearly admires Chopin and Liszt. His suite *Before Sleep and Dreams* is deeply expressive, passionate keyboard music. *Superstar Etude No. 1* is a tribute to rock star Jerry Lee Lewis and great fun--a New Age bravura showpiece. *Speed Limit Rag* (written for David Zinman's 65th birthday) owes more than a little to Gershwin. This is mostly lovely music. De Mare plays superbly and is vividly recorded.

(Lawrence Budmen)