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ALBUM REVIEW

Classical review: Federico Colli: Scarlatti

The clarity of Colli's touch impresses as he speeds through Scarlatti's hurtling rhythms, startling modulations and dissonant crunches

Geoff Brown

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BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

Federico Colli paints Scarlatti with intoxicating vivacity

★★★★★

Performers of Domenico Scarlatti's brief and characterful sonatas often bore the austere countenance of the Dutch keyboard player Gustav Leonhardt, to whom a smile came very hard, even when the music winked. Federico Colli, new to the Chandos label's roster, is something else. His hair is a mass of unruly curls. To record the 16 sonatas here (out of a total of 555) he took to a shirt splattered with big spots. He also took to a Steinway piano, not the authentic harpsichord of Leonhardt or the wonderful Wanda Landowska. The result is 18th-century Scarlatti all set up for the 21st, racing ahead with intoxicating vivacity, shimmering with poetry and painted a thousand colours.

The album is announced as volume one. If Chandos plans on the complete haul, there will need to be about 33 more. That's fine by me. Cleverly structured according to mood, the present selection first impresses with the clarity of Colli's touch as he speeds through Scarlatti's hurtling rhythms, startling modulations and dissonant crunches — the more brazen aspects of the composer's art. However, the best playing comes in the final group, which are slow in tempo and fragile in texture, especially in K.208, an A major adagio in which we seem to be listening to music unravelling. Colli's delicacy at such points is miraculous. Roll on the next 16 sonatas, or the full remaining 539. (*Chandos*)

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