

Ovation

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NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

How Good Is Good?

by Paul Turok

What makes a recording great? The ideal, of course, is a technically perfect, fully convincing musical interpretation, recorded with state-of-the-art sonics. Existing examples can be counted on the fingers of one hand; readers can undoubtedly supply their own candidates. Most often, reality falls far short of the ideal. Listeners and critics alike find it possible to enjoy a wide range of recorded performances, weighing strengths against weaknesses in accordance with their tastes. This column will attempt a glance at that process.

Solo piano works

Unusual repertory can add much to value offered: Although the disc contains only forty-six minutes of music, Donna Amato's CD premieres of rarely heard sonatas by **Dutilleux** and **Balakirev** are worth your attention for the high quality of the music, even if, judging by the Balakirev (where recorded comparisons are available), her playing is competent rather than inspired (Archduke DARC 2, no LP; HM). Similarly, Michael Habermann's disc devoted to three works by **Kaikhosru Sorabji** (b. 1892), including a sizable sonata, would be valuable simply because nobody else bothers with this music; happily, Habermann's work seems penetrating, bringing a sense of shape to these highly amorphous, note-full but always pleasant-sounding pieces (Musicmasters MM 60118W). Contrarily, Sergei Edelman's disc of **Beethoven's** *Appassionata* and Op. 31, No. 3, sonatas is so excitingly played that one hesitates to emphasize its meager forty-five minutes' music (RCA Red Seal 6773-2-RC).

Paul Turok, a composer whose works have been performed by more than eighty American orchestras, has been a professional music journalist and record reviewer for the past twenty years.