

AUDIOPHILE AUDITION

Joel Fan, piano - World Keys - Works by SAYGUN, PROKOFIEV, SUCCARI, EL-DABH, CHEN, LISZT, BOLCOM, SCULTHORPE, SCHUMANN, VASKS - Reference Recordings HDCD RR-106 (Distr. Allegro), 67:00 **:**

Again, nice to Reference Recordings back in the game. The label is proudly presenting this recital by pianist Fan, who is a member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble and has performed at Carnegie Hall and the Concertgebouw. Fan approached the program like a travel film maker; he decided to make most of it world premieres of compositions from around the world. In World Keys he performs seven premieres which explore various world musics, including Turkish, Syrian, Egyptian, Chinese, Latvian and Australian. Interspersed among them are standard piano works, including Prokofiev's Third Sonata (representing Russia), Liszt's Concert Paraphrase of Verdi's Rigoletto (representing Hungary), and a Bagatelle by Wm. Bolcom (representing the U.S.). For Germany, Fan plays the major work in the recital - Schumann's Sonata No. 2 in G Minor.

Fan exhibits a high degree of musicianship and his program keeps the listener on one's toes much more than does the typical solo piano recital. He has selected works of great musical interest, and switches from one style to another quite contrasting one with the greatest aplomb. His playing of the 18-minute Schumann Sonata is right up there with the classic keyboardists. Another good point in the disc's favor is the very natural piano sound captured by engineer Keith Johnson. The disc is HDCD encoded, but don't be concerned about the lack of decoding available for that technology anymore; discs sound great without decoding the completely compatible codec.

- John Sunier