

Gramophone

May 2010

'For David and Wu Han'

Jalbert Cello Sonata **Auerbach** Cello Sonata, Op 69

Adolphe Couple **Tsontakis** *Mirror Image*

Wu Han *pf* **David Finckel** *vc*

ArtistLed © 11001-2 (74' • DDD)

Happy partnerships abound in a recital of rewarding, if challenging, new music



After a dozen releases on their ArtistLed label of more or less conventional repertoire, David Finckel and Wu Han embark on a programme composed entirely of music

commissioned for them in the years since 1998 and receiving their first recordings. It is sensitively played with the kind of intimacy that sometimes marries musicians, whether they are married or not.

The music is not entirely accessible at first hearing. Perhaps because each of the works consists of four movements and runs between 15 and 20 minutes or just because I always listen to new CDs as if they were meant to be played as one continuous piece, the introspective nature of the four commissions, coupled with the cello's restricted tonal and dynamic palette, creates a sense of sameness which takes time and repeated listenings to dissipate. Only George Tsontakis's *Mirror Image*, masterful and fresh and exciting at the same time, breaks the spell at the end.

In addition to musical riches, the very existence of this music at all depended on teamwork between ArtistLed and the country's enormous educational and not-for-profit resources: Jalbert was commissioned by American Public Media, Auerbach by the University of Iowa, Adolphe by La Jolla SummerFest and Tsontakis by Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama.

The recording captures the bite of Finckel's Samuel Zygmuntowicz cello (Brooklyn, 1992) and the glorious golden sounds of Wu Han's Steinway with a superbly musical sense of balance and an almost surrealistic one of space. The composers' programme-notes convey insights about love and intimacy that are interesting to the listener and indispensable to the performers.

Laurence Vittes
