

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN

PIANIST

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Classical CD of the week

HAYDN

Piano Sonatas

Marc-André Hamelin (piano)

Hyperion CDA67554

The French-Canadian virtuoso is most prized for his technical bravura in the flashy, romantic Klaviertiger repertoire, but recently he has been focusing on the piano-composer heavyweights Schumann and Brahms. His decision to record Haydn is more surprising, not because the composer's piano oeuvre is inferior in quality to his symphonies and string quartets, but because it remains wickedly neglected by leading pianists, with the honourable recent exceptions of Brendel, Schiff and Pletnev.

Hamelin's interpretations deserve their place alongside that exalted trio. All 10 sonatas recorded here are mature works, and they include two of the three blazing masterpieces written in response to Haydn's encounter with Broadwood instruments on his visits to London in the 1790s. The C major and E flat major works (Nos 50 and 52), which open and close the first of these two discs, look back to Mozart and forward to Beethoven and Schubert, yet are utterly Haydnesque in their mercurial shifts of harmony and mood. Hamelin's brilliant fingerwork delights in the filigree decorations of the fast movements, and he makes something magical of the sublime adagios. An unmissable two-for-the-price-of-one bargain. *HC*

Colbert Artists Management Inc.

111 West 57th Street, New York, New York 10019
(212)757-0782 - Fax (212)541-5179 - West Coast (858)794-0182
E-mail: NYC Colbert@ColbertArtists.com