

## OPPENS plays CARTER

Elliott Carter at 100

The Complete  
Piano Music



### 'Oppens Plays Carter: Elliott Carter at 100, the Complete Piano Music'

*Ursula Oppens, pianist. Cedille  
CDR 90000 108; CD.*

**E**VEN as Elliott Carter cruises toward his 100th birthday on Dec. 11, it seems premature to call a collection of his works "complete" without at least a parenthetical "so far." Ursula Oppens, at least, makes her claim of completeness a secondary subtitle, and rightly so. Mr. Carter is writing more prolifically than ever, and given that four of the eight works in this set were composed after 2000, it seems likely that he will contribute more.

That said, Mr. Carter's piano portfolio is oddly proportioned, with two titanic works — the Piano Sonata (1946) and "Night Fantasies" (1980) — as the earliest entries, and a handful of high-powered miniatures embracing his latest thoughts. The sonata is very nearly the work of

a different composer. Completed about five years before Mr. Carter discovered what would become his signature style while composing his First String Quartet, this energetic early score embraces motoric regular rhythms, the mildest of dissonances and even a few Neo-Classical touches.

Ms. Oppens has long been devoted to Mr. Carter's work, and it's hard to tell whether she has grown with it or it has grown with her. Her view of "Night Fantasies," for example, has changed considerably since she presented the work's premiere. Early on she gave the dreamy side of this fevered 20-minute score greater prominence. Here its anxious energy, borderline nightmarishness and sense of unfolding drama take a greater share of the spotlight.

In a way, the energy and chiseled pointillism of the later works — particularly "90+" (1994) and the sizzling "Caténaires" (2006) — come through on this closely focused recording with a sharpness and clarity lost in a concert hall. If you want to get to know this music (and you should), listen to this disc with headphones. **ALLAN KOZINN**