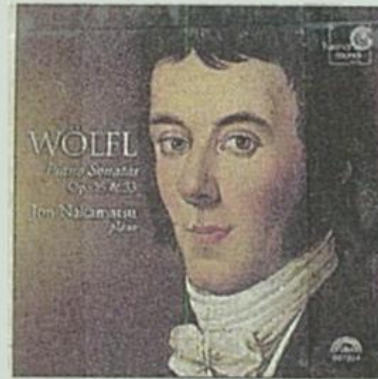


CLASSICAL



Wölfl

B- Piano Sonatas, Op. 25, 33
Nakamatsu (Harmonia Mundi
907324)

The sands of time are littered with composers famous in their own days but now remembered only in reference books — if there. Salzburg-born, like Mozart, Joseph Wölfl was almost as celebrated, as both pianist and composer, as his contemporary Beethoven. In a mere 38 years, moving from Vienna to Paris to London, he produced a sizable output of operas, symphonies, concertos and sonatas, but all of it has disappeared from the repertory.

Jon Nakamatsu, gold medalist of the 1997 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, supplies four Wölfl piano sonatas dating from 1805. As you'd expect, they betray influences from Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, but they have a spunkiness all their own. Mr. Nakamatsu plays with wide-eyed eagerness and impeccable technique, but it's not hard to imagine a freer, more rhetorical approach. Superb sonics.

Scott Cantrell