



Wölfl: Piano Sonatas, Op. 25 & 33

Jon Nakamatsu, piano
Harmonia Mundi

I'm a sucker for the brilliant piano sonatas of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert—music that has imagination, bold melodic ideas and clever harmonic turns. Their lesser-known contemporaries wrote a few masterpieces but more often produced flowery, graceful (and dull) pieces. Then there are these rediscovered sonatas by Beethoven's friend and rival, Joseph Wölfl (1773–1812). Wölfl was a virtuoso admired across Europe but unjustly neglected at the end of his short life. Jon Nakamatsu has recorded four of Wölfl's engaging sonatas. This is music that boldly speaks in the contemporary language of the early 19th century rather than harkening back to the rococo style. The mood is reflective yet incisive—musical substance from an unknown composer who heard Beethoven's sonatas and liked them.

—Greg La Traille