

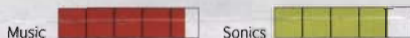
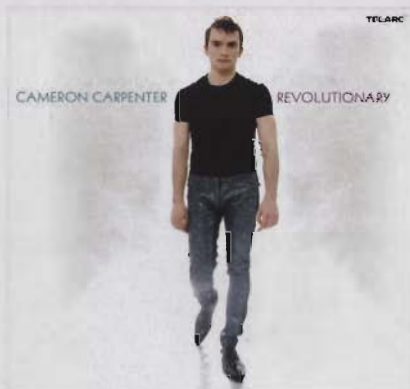
Mirror Canon.

Tor Espen Aspaas, piano. Wolfgang Plagge, producer; Hans Peter L'Orange, engineer. 2L 2L49SACD (hybrid multichannel SACD).

You could call this a concept album. *Mirror Canon* doesn't refer to the compositional technique employed by many composers in the baroque, classical, and modern eras but, rather, to the idea that the music of Beethoven and other members of the "First Viennese School" and that of Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg—the three leading representatives of the Second—"mutually illuminate each other," in the words of the disc's hyper-intellectual liner notes.

Such brainy conceits aside, we get terrific performances from Norwegian pianist Tor Espen Aspaas. He makes intelligible the complexities of Beethoven's great final Sonata, emphasizing the lyrical possibilities while maintaining lucidity of texture and line. The 20th century material—Schoenberg's Six Little Piano Pieces, Op.19, Webern's Five Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op.7 (with Kolbjørn Holthe), and Berg's Op.1 Piano Sonata—fares even better. Aspaas offers clarity but not coldness, lavishing extreme care on dynamics, attack, and tone color.

The soloist's efforts are supported by superb sound courtesy of a 32-bit/352.8 kHz original recording that's very immediate and yet allows for subtle dynamic shadings and timbral nuance. The multichannel gives the acoustic of Sofienberg Church. **AQ**
Further Listening: Beethoven: Piano Sonatas (Kodama) (SACD); Schoenberg: *Jacob's Ladder* (Nagano) (SACD)



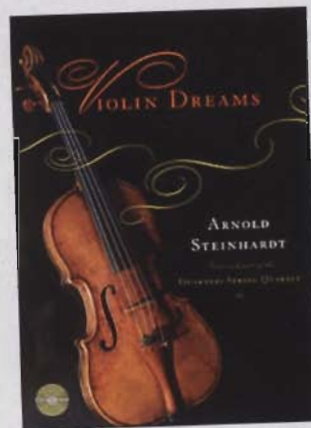
Cameron Carpenter: Revolutionary.

Robert Woods, producer; Robert Friedrich, engineer. Telarc 80711 (CD and DVD).

Like his spiritual ancestor Virgil Fox, who mesmerized lit-up audiences with his "Heavy Organ" performances in the 1970s, Cameron Carpenter is a showman. But he's not just any rail-thin hipster sporting a spangled T-shirt and eyeliner: Carpenter has musical chops that are second to none. "Organists should be überpianists," declares the soloist.

He demonstrates such technical mastery with several unadorned repertoire works by Jeanne Demessieux, Marcel Dupré, and J.S. Bach. But this disc will attract the most attention for the selections where Carpenter applies his hand as arranger/adaptor. With Chopin's "Revolutionary" Étude, Carpenter's white-shoed feet traverse the organ pedalboard as surely as the left hand of a capable pianist; the complex filigree he brings to Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor transcends mere grandstanding and adds to the majesty of the mighty original. The program also features Carpenter's own music, including his vertiginous *Love Song No. 1*.

Carpenter plays a "virtual pipe organ," a digital beast that can mimic a conventional German cathedral instrument or a gaudy theater organ—sometimes in the same piece. Telarc's recording from New York City's Trinity Church is clear and detailed yet massive. Pants-flapping bass. **AQ**
Further Listening: Virgil Fox: *Encores* (SACD); Michael Murray: Dupré/Franck/Widor (SACD)



Violin Dreams

by Arnold Steinhardt. 255 pp. Houghton Mifflin.

Indivisible by Four: A String Quartet in Pursuit of Harmony is a beautifully written memoir by Arnold Steinhardt, the first violinist of the Guarneri String Quartet, about that quartet's lengthy history. Now, in *Violin Dreams*, with a wit and eloquence that match his fiddle playing, Steinhardt weaves together stories from his life as he searches for the "perfect" violin and grapples with Bach's Chaconne, the 15-minute final movement from the Partita No. 2 in D Minor for solo violin.

While tracing his student days, a brief history of the violin, and some of the great players who preceded him, Steinhardt returns again and again to the challenging Chaconne. In one of the book's most delightful passages, he describes a meeting with Alfred Loesser, and how the then-aging scholar and pianist proceeded to dance the D Minor Partita, whose five movements "were fashioned after dances of the French court."

The book includes a CD of Steinhardt playing the entire Partita No. 2, not once but twice, and on two very different instruments. From 1966, we hear a young but less thoughtful player at the beginning of his career. Forty years later, we experience a mature musician's insight into a piece that's become part of his fiber. Liner notes contain a fascinating interview with Steinhardt by his friend, Alan Alda. **Wayne Garcia**
Further Reading: John Marchese: *The Violin Maker: Finding a Centuries-Old Tradition in a Brooklyn Workshop*