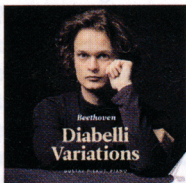


GUSTAV PIEKUT

Beethoven: Diabelli Variations Op 120

Danacord DACOCD 837

★★★★★



It's quite something for a 24-year-old performer to make his debut recording with the work which Alfred Brendel famously described as 'the greatest of all piano pieces'. The young Dane proves himself worthy of the risk, and provides the listener with an increasingly compelling journey through Beethoven's challenging stop-start musical landscape. He begins attractively enough with a spirited account of the early variations (although his decision not to make any alterations in the repeats pulls the tension down somewhat) but then he really comes into his own during the slow and mysterious 14th variation, with its curious shivering little hemidemisemiquavers. His sound is as quiet and controlled as it is possible to be, and the effect is truly luminous. After this the energy levels soar, the playfulness leaps out, and the dramatic tension – that elusive 'through-line' which holds the variations together – remains impressively taut and gripping. **WT**