

Dorman

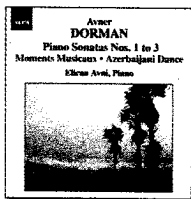
Piano Sonatas – No 1, 'Classical'; No 2; No 3, 'Dance Suite'. Moments musicaux. Prelude No 1.

Azerbaijani Dance

Eliran Avni *pf*

Naxos © 8 579001 (63' • DDD)

Solo piano works show why this fresh young voice is in so much demand



Israeli composer Avner Dorman has achieved his fame much the way Hemingway's character fell into bankruptcy: gradually, then suddenly. At 25 the youngest

composer to win Israel's Prime Minister Award, the now 30-ish Dorman is the youngest composer on publisher G Schirmer's roster, with orchestras, soloists and chamber ensembles vying for his attention.

This survey of his solo piano works falls squarely in the Israeli concert tradition, keeping any innovations fully in line with their predecessors. Dorman, in fact, practically wears his models on his sleeve, with his eclectic First Sonata (1998) revealing a distinct structural similarity to Beethoven's late piano sonatas, and his *Moments musicaux* (2003) being something of a polytonal Schubert.

Although Dorman's earliest and latest pieces here, his Prelude No 1 (1992) and *Azerbaijani Dance* (2005), likewise honour their models – Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier* and Lisztian

barnburners respectively – they are equally based on an omnivorous musical sense that makes modern jazz and central-Asian musical styles equally pianistic.

Perhaps the biggest leap, though, comes between the Second Sonata (2001) and the Third (2005), where Dorman's penchant for using familiar forms as hooks on which to hang disparate stylistic influences – the techniques of jazz pianist Art Tatum, in the case of the Second – give way to having those genres contribute to the structure as well. Stretching the formal principles of his *Azerbaijani Dance* on a broader canvas, the Third Sonata taps into streams of Arabic musical culture and contemporary techno, unfolding a three-movement musical narrative ranging from the contemplative to the dramatic, from the familiar to the exotic.

Dorman is not just a fresh, young voice worth following. He's also a composer whose music, particularly as rendered here by pianist Eliran Avni (for whom several of these works were written), fits well on the instrument and resonates strongly with the musical tradition at large. And there is no surer way for composers to get people to play their music and to listen to it. **Ken Smith**