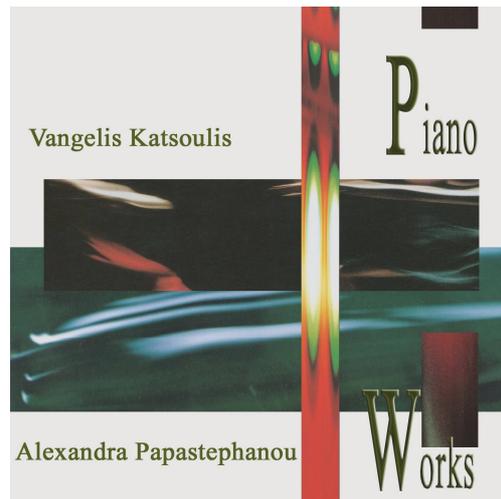


Piano Works - Vangelis Katsoulis

Alexandra Papastefanou (piano)



In this album, one of the most talented and successful pianists, **Alexandra Papastefanou**, gives a unique performance of works by **Vangelis Katsoulis** covering two and a half decades, from 1981 till today. This is not a full collection of piano works, but an anthology which, among others, portrays the development of the composer in the last twenty-five years. Until now we have had numerous chances to see, in his recordings, how his classical education has influenced his own, "personal" jazz. Now we can not only see the reverse, ie how jazz affected in turn his more "classical" writings, but also that these two otherwise separate genres, at a certain point reach out to each other so much that they become one. Also, how when Vangelis Katsoulis operates as a jazz composer, but also when he moves along the lines of modern scholarly music, he flirts with more traditional legacies (especially Bach and Händel) and often draws inspiration from there. In many cases however, he uses tradition as a starting point from which to embark on his own personal journey, which he sees more as an adventure than one with a destination.

"**Alicanto**" for two pianos is certainly the most important piece in the album and it is only reasonable that more time was spent on its composition than for that of any other piece. At the same time, it is the most demanding, technically speaking. For this reason, Alexandra Papastefanou's recording is a real feat, one which nobody else has yet dared, at least as far as piano repertoire is concerned. This of course does in no way imply that her presence in the other works for solo piano is less important or that some of them do not have equally dire demands. On the contrary, her personal touch can be felt even in the simplest and less demanding pieces.

"**Piano Works**" is a production which appeals not only to fans of music by Vangelis Katsoulis or performances by Alexandra Papastefanou and the piano as an instrument in general, but also to the world of musical education as a whole, since the particular works are simultaneously being published as sheet music by F.Nakas Publications.

Born in Athens, **Vangelis Katsoulis** studied music in Greece and Germany. He made his debut in 1975. His compositions have been performed in Greece and abroad ever since.

Up until 1979, Katsoulis' music is influenced by the avant garde movement of that time. After 1979, he turns to minimalism, while three years later he applies elements of jazz into that genre. At the same time, he forms a collective of musicians, enhancing that style as well as improvisation in his new compositions. In 1981 he receives a grant from the AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR PERFORMANCE ARTS.

Since 1983, the use of music technology becomes gradually apparent in his compositions, exploiting technological advancements, without diminishing the importance of the human factor and the creative involvement of the performer. Today, he is striving for simplicity, trying to express the most, using the least.

In addition to symphonic, chamber, choral works and songs, Katsoulis has also composed numerous soundtracks and music for the theatre, as well as for the radio and television. He was awarded the first prize for best soundtrack at the 1994 THESSALONIKI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.

Furthermore, he has collaborated with a number of Greek and international choreographers, a creative impulse that has influenced his music.

Apart from composing, Katsoulis explored the recording production area and founded a small record company as well as a professional recording studio.

He has an extensive discography and for many years was a friend and an associate to Manos Hadjidakis' famous managing of the Third Program of Public Broadcasting Radio.

His previous album, "Through the dark" featuring Markus Stockhausen, Arild Andersen and David Lynch, started as a commission by the Athens Concert Hall Organization (Megaron) and was premiered there in January 1996. A year later it was released by Lyra, and was acclaimed by the music critics as the best jazz CD in the country so far.

His album "Silent Voyage" was elected as one of the best albums of the year, best albums of the last 10 years and best albums of the last 20 years among all kinds of music of international discography.

The last album of his group is called "An Unbearably Short Glance".

His most recent studio work is the album "**Piano Works**", in which the renowned Greek soloist Alexandra Papastephanou performs works of his for solo piano and two pianos and was released in November 2005 by **Subways Music/Eratio Odeon**.

Alexandra Papastephanou was born in Trikala, where she took her first piano lessons from her mother, Terpsichore Papastephanou. She graduated from the Athens Conservatory under the guidance of Aliko Vatikioti and went on to study at the Tchaikowsky Conservatory of Moscow under Olga Zukowa, the Franz Liszt Academy in Budepest under Peter Solymos and, having won an Onassis Foundation scholarship, in Bloomington Indiana, under the renowned professor Gyorgy Sebok, who marked her artistic career and choices. She has at times studied under Alfred Brendel, Hans Leigraff and Andre Marchand. She has won awards at international competitions such as the Bach Competition in Toronto and C.I.E.M. in Geneva as well as the Liebstockl and Fazioli prizes. She was also a finalist at the Clara Haskil international competition. She studied composition under G.A.Papaioannou and has been honoured with the Montsenigos Award of the Academy of Athens.

Her artistic pursuits include participations in orchestras, chamber music concerts, personal recitals and recording sessions in many European countries (Greece, Cyprus, Italy, France, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, the UK, Finland, Romania, Russia), as well as the USA and Mexico. Numerous critics have raved about her performances. Always eclectic, she has repeatedly performed and recorded complete works, such as the "**Well-Tempered Clavier**" by J.S.Bach, Sonatas by Mozart and Schubert and the complete piano works of R.Schumann, as well as those of Greek composers, namely the piano work of G.A.Papaioannou, compositions by G.Sisilianos and the "Big Sonata for Piano" by Dimitris Mitropoulos. As a composer she has made her first album called "**Smalto**" (Enamel).

Her most recent studio work is the album "**Piano Works**", in which she performs works by Vangelis Katsoulis for solo piano and two pianos and was released in November 2005 by **Subways Music/Eratio Odeon**. In particular, her recording of two pianos in "**Alicanto**" is a real feat, one which nobody else has yet dared, at least where piano repertoire is concerned.