

IVETA APKALNA LIVE. III/86 Friedrich Weigle organ (1948) of Johanneskirche, Stuttgart, Germany. Edition Hera 02114.

Recorded live in concert on July 13, 2003, prizewinner Iveta Apkalna proves to be a formidable talent. Born in 1976 in Latvia, she has already established a busy recital career in Europe. She combines sensitivity with virtuosity. While she has technique to burn, she avoids empty virtuosic display. Thus, she infuses Bach's *Fantasia in G Minor*, BWV 542, with rhetorical drama, while the Fugue is played with gusto and well-controlled articulation. Liszt's *Prelude and Fugue on B-A-C-H* is fully in the Romantic spirit, alternating poetry with fire. Latvian composer Péteris Vasks's 1946 *Viatore* ("The Voyager," in homage to Arvo Pärt) is pensive and quasi hypnotic. Apkalna achieves a similar trance-like mood in the final section of *Satyagraha* (1980) by Philip Glass. Her performance of Naji Hakim's 1955 *Hommage a Stravinsky (Finale)* is spellbinding. The instrument serves up all the music splendidly in one of Europe's great liturgical/acoustical spaces.

HIMMEL & HÖLLE (HEAVEN & HELL). Iveta Apkalna, organist. III/54 Rieger organ (1987) of the Parish Church of St. Martin, Wangen, Allgäu, Germany. Edition Hera 02117. The grandiosity of Iveta Apkalna's topic is matched by her brilliant playing in this display of technical fireworks. Her background as a concert pianist is in evidence; she offers two transcribed piano works of Liszt, *Légendes* Nos. 1 and 2 (St. Francis of Paola Walking on the Waves; St. Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds). Heaven is further represented by a scintillating *Toccata on "Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr',"* a transcribed improvisation by Latvian Aivars Kalejs. Hell is represented both literally and figuratively in Eben's *Walpurgisnacht*, Duruflé's "Toccata" from the *Suite*, Op. 5, Hakim's *Quatre Études-Caprices*, Thalben-Ball's *Variations on a Theme of Paganini* (the latter two displaying Apkalna's deftness of feet), and Prokofiev's devilishly difficult *Toccata*, transcribed by Jean Guillou. Prokofiev's "March" from *The Love of Three Oranges* closes the program; the forces of good win over those of evil. The well-chosen instrument, with its German/French tonalities, speaks with brilliance, color, and power in a lively acoustic. Apkalna must have earned a star in her crown for this one!