



Michael Habermann: "I like to solve those scores."

Le Jardin Parfumé: You've Got to Stop and Decipher the Roses

Passages of Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji's piano music have been called almost "completely unplayable." In fact, the Indian composer, who lives in England, became so frustrated with other pianists' interpretations of his work that he levied a ban on all public performances of his keyboard compositions about forty years ago.

He didn't lift it until 1976, when **Michael Habermann** sent a tape of his performances of a couple of Sorabji pieces he had come across in a music shop. The composer was so impressed that he allowed Habermann not only to perform his works but also to record two world-premiere albums. The most recent, a recording of the work "Le Jardin Parfumé," was released in December on the Music Masters label.

Fanfare magazine calls the record a "spectacular achievement" and speculates that Habermann must have ten fingers on each hand. (In fact, Sorabji admits he never has been able to perform his own music accurately.)

Habermann, a 33-year-old doctoral candidate at Baltimore's Peabody Conservatory of Music, describes

Sorabji's music as impressionistic like Debussy's or Ravel's, but much more complicated—a mixture of German, Italian, and French styles "with an Oriental element in there." "His music has nothing to do with the avant-garde. It's very intuitive. So even at his most modern he's not terribly, terribly offensive," Habermann says. "But it does take a little bit of getting used to."

"It's amazing that he's been so neglected, because the music is very worthwhile. He's a very creative individual," says Habermann, who is currently recording a third album of Sorabji's music (to be released next year) as well as completing his dissertation on "Le Jardin Parfumé."—"to show how it's put together, the logic behind the music," says Habermann.

While the music is good to listen to, he says, part of his interest is cerebral. "I like to solve those scores."

Paul Mandelbaum.