



CRANE

Trio for Ros and Peter; Processional; Len Valley Us; Piano Quintet; Hugo Pine; Jurgen Hip; Air; 10,000 Green Bottles; Klavierstücke Op. 84 or 85 (Keith Miller Project)

Ives Ensemble

Nimbus Alliance NI 6337 73:52 mins

Composer Laurence Crane is enjoying a deserved upsurge in interest and new recordings. Born in Oxford in 1961, his music has a lean and understated poetry that owes much to US/UK experimentalist traditions while signalling a fresh and individual voice.

Contrary to their apparently whimsical simplicity, the nine chamber works on this engaging release are highly structured – and entirely abstract, regardless of personal-sounding titles. Everyday sonic bits and bobs – triads, drones, scraps of melody and scales – are juxtaposed and repeated, perhaps re-scored, creating a false sense of security before sudden shifts delight and discombobulate the ear.

From solo piano to piano quintet via different trio combinations of flute, violin, cello and piano (including the quirky two-performer, three-part *Hugo Pine* and *Jurgen Hip*), these pieces offer a kind of retrospective. The earliest date from 1986, and are typically miniature; the more recent (*Piano Quintet*, 2011, and *Klavierstücke Op. 84 or 85 'Keith Miller Project'*, 2016) show Crane's evolving interest in longer, more complex designs.

The music remains subtly nuanced but decidedly un-fragile. It's surprisingly tricky to play, but the Ives Ensemble prove persuasive. Albeit heavy on reverberation, the recording serves them – and Crane's gently self-deprecating humour – well. *Steph Power*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★