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Jade Simmons is making an interesting entry into the classical music recording arena of circa 2010; she is a graduate of Rice University's Shepherd School of Music, and earned her masters under the guidance of Jon Kimura Parker. She conducts outreach programs for the Van Cliburn Foundation, hosted the live webcast of the Van Cliburn Competition given in 2009 and serves as director of the Impulse Artists Series, which provides exposure to young pianists. She is often described as "drop dead gorgeous" and was a runner up in the Miss America pageant in 2000; she designs her own concert wear and plans to start a clothing line under her brand name. This description only barely scratches the surface of what Jade Simmons is up to and what she has done, however, one thing she has not done before E1's release *Revolutionary Rhythm* is to make a solo piano CD. Often when a person is referred to as a "provocateur" and is quoted as seeking to expand the boundaries of classical music, then the proof is in that particular pudding, the debut CD.

If Revolutionary Rhythm is any indication, then Jade Simmons has not only arrived, but she's here to stay -- this E1 disc is indeed provocative and posits some interesting future directions for classical pianism in addition to establishing her cred in the long bearded tradition of the classics.

Perhaps we should have made it "clean-shaven" tradition because she's not playing Schumann or Brahms here; her repertory choices are Samuel Barber's Op. 26 Piano Sonata and John Corigliano's Etude Fantasy (1976), one modern and one reasonably contemporary work, both American. In her interpretations, Simmons emphasizes the function of rhythm in these pieces, and while her conception of the Barber Sonata may be considerably different from the way Vladimir Horowitz played it -- a little more regular

in tempo, and not quite so much of a romanticized rubato -- there is no question that she brings a fresh perspective to the piece and plays it well. Simmons clearly likes a crisp attack and brings a wide and well managed range of dynamics and touch to the Corigliano.

In the pieces which take the piano a bit outside of its usual solo context, Russell Pinkston's TaleSpin makes reasonably subtle use of prerecorded sounds and ultimately, by the movement marked "Still Spinning," works up into a harmonic texture reminiscent of the English Henry Cow school; progressive minded listeners will truly enjoy it. The hip hop beats employed by composer DBR (Daniel Bernard Roumain) in his 24 Bits are not too distracting, though the first two pieces are rather comfortably poppy and some listeners might find them commercial. Nevertheless, the third Etude in B minor seems more like the right stuff, a merger of classical piano and beat-box that is organic and perhaps what Simmons is aiming for in seeking a combination of the two.

No matter how one feels about *Revolutionary Rhythm*, one has to admire Jade Simmons for the chutzpah that she demonstrates in bringing all these various elements to the table. In addition to that, however, E1's *Revolutionary Rhythm* is also a very enjoyable album for those who like adventure in their music and are interested in seeing classical music, specifically, move forward and shed some of the baggage of the past millennium. Whether or not this is an indication of the direction that classical music might take, **Revolutionary Rhythm is a thought provoking, entertaining and fun debut that easily establishes Jade Simmons as a major talent.**

~ Uncle Dave Lewis