


CD Review by [Richard A. Kaplan](#)

 **SIBELIUS** *Valse triste*. 3 Sonatinas, op. 67. 6 Bagatelles, op. 97. 5 *Characteristic Impressions*, op. 103. 4 *Lyric Pieces*, op. 74. **Piano Sonata**, op. 12 • Joseph Tong (pn) • QUARTZ 2123 (73:22)

This is Volume 2 of Joseph Tong's recordings of Sibelius piano works; I reviewed Volume 1 positively in *Fanfare* 39:3. There is no indication from Quartz that this will turn into a complete recording of Sibelius's piano music, which would take four or five CDs.

Tong is somewhat more dynamic in this music than Folke Gräsbeck, who recorded the complete piano music for BIS. In the ever-popular *Valse triste*, played in Sibelius's own arrangement, Tong begins very slowly and plays up the piece's drama. The Three Sonatinas, written in 1912, are Sibelius at his most ascetic—this is the time of the Fourth Symphony, his most severe score. By contrast, the Bagatelles, op. 97, written in 1920, are among Sibelius's most accessible piano compositions. Tong is also far more dynamic in the *Five Characteristic Impressions*, op. 103, than Kyoko Tabe, whose Chandos recording of late Sibelius piano works (reviewed by Peter Burwasser in 24:2) is apparently being newly distributed in the U.S.

Sibelius's lone piano sonata, his op. 12, composed in 1893, is the sole early work here; it is also in many ways the most attractive, and it belies the commonplace that Sibelius could not write idiomatic piano music. Tong's treatment of dynamics and voicing here is excellent.

The lucid and detailed program notes are by Tong himself. The recording is very fine. This is a first-rate production from beginning to end.

Recommended! **Richard A. Kaplan**