



Scriabin Piano Concerto & Symphony No. 2 **Kirill Gerstein** (pf); Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra/Vassily Petrenko
Lawo Classics LWC1139, 77 mins
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Scriabin's Piano Concerto is an early work (1896). A clear product of the Romantic piano concerto tradition, it seems to speak a similar language as Rachmaninov but with further nods to Chopin in particular. Its earlier recordings featured great pianists (Neuhaus, Solomon) but it seems to have fallen out of favour. This is a pity, and Gerstein makes a strong case for it, his fluent technique reveling in the post-Chopinesque arabesques. The fragrant harmonies alongside the achingly Romantic melodies propel the first movement inexorably; the central Andante takes us to a place of great beauty, while holding a most intriguing digression. A recent entrant, Sudbin, with another Norwegian orchestra fell short of the mark, so it is good to have this filling the gap. Vassily Petrenko directs a taut and noble performance of Scriabin's Second Symphony, recorded in beautiful sound in the Oslo Concert Hall. An excellent disc.
CC

Wanderer Pieces by Mendelssohn, Liszt, Shostakovich, Chabrier, Debussy, Schubert/Liszt and Schubert **Jamina Gerl** (pf)
TYXart 6082, 72 mins
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Superbly recorded in Berlin in 2015, this excellently produced offering is Jamina Gerl's debut disc. The Mendelssohn *Fantasia* Op. 28 is a dream; Gerl's terrific finger-speed towards the end is pure joy. Repertoire choices, too, are wonderful: the three Mendelssohn *Venetian Gondola Songs* unfold beautifully while Liszt's *Two Concert Etudes* (the well-known 'Walde rauschen' and 'Gnomens Reigen') reveal a player capable of great pianistic colour. Her Shostakovich *Fantastic Dances* add pungency to the menu, and Chabrier's *Bourée fantasque* – a work that clearly deserves wider recognition – captures the imagination most compellingly.

There is a parallel here to Ko's recital reviewed below, in that both offer a major piece bettered elsewhere. For Gerl, it is Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* (winningly prefaced by the Schubert Lied of that name in Liszt's transcription); Gerl is, however, remarkably fine in the Adagio, which tips the overall rating to five stars. Unhesitatingly recommended.
CC

Fantastien Works by CPE Bach, Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms **Anna Tsybuleva** (pf)
Champs Hill Records CHRCD 131, 68 mins
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Entitled *Fantastien* Anna Tsybuleva's enterprising recital reflects a pianist of rare gifts. A lover of 'the absence of borders in our dreams' (to quote her own moving and modest accompanying note), this winner of the 2015 Leeds Competition offers the strangeness, not to say eccentricity, of CPE Bach, the explosive whimsy of Beethoven's *Fantasia* Op. 77, the virtuosity of the *Wanderer Fantasy* (unique in Schubert) and the alternating hallucinatory and turbulent world of Brahms' Op. 116. Without forcing pace or sonority but with an easy mastery, Tsybuleva makes her purely musical concern in the Schubert clear in every bar, a far cry from other high-octane virtuoso performances, while in Brahms *Intermezzi* Nos. 4-6 her inwardness and sense of beauty are unforgettable. Not since Murray Perahia's triumph in 1972 has Leeds had a winner of this musical poise and calibre.
BM

She Rose, She let me in Works by Liberatore, Suk, Rabinovitch and Schumann
Eunmi Ko (pf)
Centaur Records CRC 3491, 72 mins
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Following on from Ko's recording of music by Hilary Tann for Centaur, this fascinating recital holds a very special performance of Suk's *O Matince* (About Mother). It comes into competition with both Kvapil and Moravec, but Ko holds her own,

particularly in the striking 'When mother was a young girl', and the astonishingly beautiful 'Once upon a Spring'.

John Liberatore's *Variations and Fugue on a Scottish Folk Song, after F.J. Haydn* begins like a distorted Scarlatti sonata and contains a Bachian capriccio; the original folktune comes into focus at the end of the piece. Ko has the complete measure of the work, as she does for Gilad Rabinovitch's ...star dazzling me, live and elate... with its quotations from Mahler and Messiaen.

The Schumann is well played and paced, a good but not great performance and with such competition (Nat, Gutiérrez for example) it is for the other works one should purchase the disc.
CC

Grey Clouds Music by Liszt, Ravel, Debussy and Stravinsky **Pål Eide** (pf)
CDklassisk 1143, 78 mins
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Norwegian-born pianist Pål Eide takes us on a journey from late Liszt (*La lugubre gondola* V/II, *Nuages gris*) to Impressionism and the huge challenges of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* pieces, with a Liszt *Consolation* as an encore.

Eide is a highly intelligent pianist, realising that clarity is of the utmost importance in late Liszt, imbuing the musical surface with palpable fragility. Eide's low-pedal approach results in a revelatory *Nuages gris*.

From this to Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit* is really not a huge leap. Eide's 'Scarbo' is tremendous, clear in terms of line yet hugely exciting. Four Debussy pieces are offered, with 'Reflets dans l'eau' an ideal companion to 'La cathédrale engloutie'. Interestingly, 'Feux d'artifice' is presented within the set rather than climactically, highly indicative of Eide's approach; instead, 'Clair de lune' offers closing balm. The Stravinsky, while highly characterised, comes against the likes of Pollini, Kissin and Wang and cannot sit alongside them in terms of sheer technical prowess.
CC