



LISZT

Piano Sonata in B minor; Petrarch Sonnets; Dante Sonata
 Angela Hewitt (piano)
 Hyperion CDA 68067 74:37 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.99

In her booklet note Angela Hewitt identifies Liszt's lifelong absorption in music by Beethoven and Bach, and her approach to the B minor Sonata reveals a work much closer, in its virtuoso way, to Beethoven than to vintage Liszt barnstormers like the *Transcendental Studies*. Hewitt allows its huge single-movement span to unfold with a sense of space and a purposeful clarity – qualities akin to the manner of Beethoven's late sonatas. There's much upside in individual passages too. The fugato leading to the restatement of the Sonata's main *Allegro* material (after the slow central section) is too often used by pianists as an excuse to show how fast they can play; Hewitt, a hugely experienced Bach-performer, delivers its part-writing at an unexaggerated pace, and with a precisely articulated vividness that works superbly.

If she doesn't quite conjure musical poetry with the poise that the Sonata's most haunting moments need, this is nonetheless an interpretation whose

strengths outweigh any such blind spots – as is also the case with Hewitt's way with the *Petrarch Sonnets*, at once passionate and unaffected. The limitations of her approach are more evident in the *Dante Sonata*: her musical armoury doesn't include the kind of virtuoso keyboard devilry on which much of the music insists.

Malcolm Hayes
PERFORMANCES (SONATA, PETRARCH SONNETS) ★★★★★
(DANTE SONATA) ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



MUSORGSKY

Pictures at an Exhibition
SCHUMANN

Fantasie in C
 Paul Lewis (piano)
 Harmonia Mundi HMC 902096
 64:43 mins
BBC Music Direct £14.99

Musorgsky and Schumann may seem very strange bedfellows, their music stemming from completely different traditions. Yet hearing these two great 19th-century piano works side by side reveals closer connections than one might have expected. In particular, both composers grapple with the creative challenge of attempting to marry programmatic inspiration (the visual arts in the case of Musorgsky and poetry for Schumann) with intellectually satisfying musical structures.

Paul Lewis has a natural empathy for Schumann, revelling in the first movement's impulsive changes of mood and projecting wonderfully calm inner reflection at the outset of the third. He emphasises the cogency of Musorgsky's *Pictures* with a performance of granitic strength and wonderful tonal variety. After a brisk and very purposeful 'Promenade', he plunges us into the sinister world of 'Gnomus' with playing that is boldly dramatic and uncomfortable in its violent dynamic contrasts. He is similarly effective in delineating the world-weary trudge of 'Bydlo', the grotesque musical imagery of 'Baba-Yaga' and the spectral writing of 'Cum mortuis in lingua morta', the latter's insistent tremolos executed far more idiomatically than in many other recordings. Also impressive is his handling of 'The Great Gate of Kiev'. Whereas others produce a massive quasi-orchestral sound from the outset, Lewis is comparatively restrained, carefully building up the

intensity and thus making the final triumphant climax of pealing bells all the more effective.

Perhaps some of Musorgsky's lighter movements, such as the 'Ballet of Unhatched Chicks', could have been projected with greater whimsy and charm, and the recording sounds a bit bright-edged for the piano's upper registers. But these are minor reservations when considered against the overall excellence of this release.

Erik Levi
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



BACH TO PARKER

Works by Bach, Muhly, Meredith, Borenstein, Campbell et al
 Thomas Gould (violin)
 Champs Hill Records CHRCD 078
 69:43 mins
BBC Music Direct £11.99

Thomas Gould's commitment to composers of his generation is impressive. It was possibly a mistake, though, to begin a disc with Bach's Chaconne in D minor, a mighty hard act to follow. I imagine his original recital programme, in which new works were dispersed among movements from Bach Partitas, made for a better listen.

The title *Bach to Parker* is also rather misleading: we start with an absorbing, if slightly hard-edged, performance of the Bach Chaconne, end with Miles Davis's *Donna Lee*, and in between come contemporary works. Some of these refer directly to the Baroque model, such as Nimrod Borenstein's lavish 'romantic' Baroque *Quasi una cadenza*, and Aziza Sadikova's punchy deconstruction *La Baroque*. Dai Fujikura's *Kusmetche* is a finely-crafted gem, while Anna Meredith's provocative *Charged* suppresses and explodes energy to great effect. In Nico Muhly's seductive *A Long Line* the solo line gradually intensifies over electronic chord drones, more successfully than in Mark Bowden's *Lines written a few lines below* in which a menacing track of recorded sounds from London's Underground provides a dynamic, urban backdrop; here the violin's improvisatory-style line disappoints. *BoBop* by John Hawkins doesn't quite take off, but *Donna Lee* has an insouciant zest, and releases real suppleness in Gould's playing. *Helen Wallace*
PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

REISSUES

Reviewed by Michael Church

HOROWITZ

Works by Mozart, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt et al
 Vladimir Horowitz (piano)
 Alto ALC 1257 (various) 75:38 mins
BBC Music Direct £7.99



Primitive sound can't dissipate the magical authority of Horowitz's playing here, with magnificent Chopin, Liszt where the outbursts of virtuosity come with careful deliberation, and Scriabin at his juiciest.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★

NADIA REISENBERG

Works by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Kabalevsky
 Nadia Reisenberg (piano)
 Roméo 7309/10 (1950s, 1980) 157:26 mins
BBC Music Direct £15.99 (2 discs)



This renowned Lithuanian artist was champion of the new – even when, like Kabalevsky's music, it wasn't top-notch – but the glory of this double CD lies in its exquisite Tchaikovsky miniatures.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★

MARTHA ARGERICH

Vol. 3: works by Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt and Prokofiev
 Martha Argerich (piano); Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra/Carl Melles
 Doremi DHR-8030 (1957-65) 73:33 mins
BBC Music Direct £12.99



Playing Liszt at 16, Beethoven and Schumann at 18, and Prokofiev at 23, Argerich was already breathtaking, but there was no vanity in her playing – just poetry.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★

LISZT • SCHUBERT

Années de pèlerinage; Hungarian Rhapsody No. 9; Schubert: Lieder transcriptions (arr. Liszt)
 Lazar Berman (piano)
 Eloquence 480 7079 (1977) 222:42 mins
BBC Music Direct £28.99 (4 discs)



Here is the virtuoso in his youthful prime, playing with the authority of a god. Each piece is characterised with loving insight; the transcriptions perfectly catch Schubert's spirit.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

BACKGROUND TO...



Modest Musorgsky
 (1839-81)

Musorgsky has been widely acclaimed by scholars and composers

(notably Shostakovich) as Russia's first and perhaps greatest 'realist' in music, exemplified by such psychologically acute works as his opera *Boris Godunov*, and songs such as 'With Nanny', which opens the cycle *The Nursery*. Yet, as that song cycle demonstrates, Musorgsky was also attracted to childhood's imagination, which he portrayed without the sentimentality typical of his era. 'Baba-Yaga' in *Pictures at an Exhibition*, for instance, vividly evokes a child's horrified fascination with monsters.