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CLASSICS

RACHMANINOV

MUSIC FOR PIANO

Jeremy Filsell



RACHMANINOV MUSIC FOR PIANO

from Cinq Morceaux Op. 3

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Elegie no. 1 | [6.03] |
| 2 | Prelude in C# minor no. 2 | [4.55] |

Two Song Transcriptions

- | | | |
|---|--|--------|
| 3 | What Wealth of Rapture Op. 34 no. 12 (<i>transcribed Francis Pott</i>) | [5.53] |
| 4 | Lilacs Op. 21 no. 5 (<i>transcribed Rachmaninov</i>) | [2.46] |

from Preludes Op. 23

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--------|
| 5 | D major no. 4 | [5.04] |
| 6 | G minor no. 5 | [4.01] |
| 7 | Eb major no. 6 | [3.29] |

from Preludes Op. 32

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------|
| 8 | F minor no. 6 | [1.41] |
| 9 | B minor no. 10 | [6.08] |
| 10 | G# minor no. 12 | [2.55] |

Sonata no. 2 in Bb minor Op. 36

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|--------|
| 11 | <i>Allegro agitato</i> | [9.13] |
| 12 | <i>Lento</i> | [6.30] |
| 13 | <i>Allegro molto</i> | [6.29] |

Total timings: [65.15]

JEREMY FILSELL PIANO

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ARTIST'S NOTE

The surfeit of Rachmaninov's piano music in the recording catalogue nowadays testifies to the enduring allure of his music for pianists since his death nearly seventy years ago. As its appeal has marked my own pianistic journey, this recording reflects my personal enthrallment with it over a thirty-year period. Its attraction for me began with a treasured leather hardbound copy of the Preludes that I inherited from my maternal grandfather. To my regret, I never knew him – he died a few months before my birth – for in his day, he enjoyed a reputation as a pianist, organist and conductor in the black country region of England and accompanied many singers of that time (including Heddle Nash and the young Kathleen Ferrier).

His music library included all the standard keyboard repertoire of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms and Rachmaninov, a musical treasure-trove that, after his death, became my parents' property. Thus, this collection came to illuminate my own youthful, burgeoning appetite for music *per se*. As a pianistic novice I 'played' all of it, well before I could comprehend any of its aesthetic or technical substance or indeed grant it any kind of artistic justice.

I remember vividly the hard-bound edition of Rachmaninov's Preludes, which seemed to provoke a greater fascination in me above other music. Was this because of its expensive-looking and unique dark blue leather cover, I wonder? It urged special handling, for sure, and I suspect that youthful innocence made the natural extension to assume that the music it contained therein was also special. I was not mistaken, of course, and I recall being struck by the elegance of the way this music looked on the page and being enticed by the intricacy of its contrapuntal detail – not that I was able to articulate such things at a tender age.

Beyond this, my parents' LP collection included a recording of the Preludes played by Moura Lypany and their outsize sleeves remain indelibly imprinted on my memory, as much for the rather stiff, but perhaps now iconic, black and white images of Lypany that adorned the front cover, as for the performances themselves. Nonetheless, listening to Rachmaninov's music on the ancient record player and trying to follow the music, I do recall how vivid and sophisticated this music's detail seemed to be. Inevitably I desperately wanted to play it and I recall trying to pick out lines of the Eb Prelude Op. 23 no. 6,

attempting – unsuccessfully – to mimic the sweep and energy of Lympany's performances.

Thus, this present recording is the sum of a personal musical journey and whilst the programme is something of a pot-pourri, it represents not only much of the music that has remained, *leitmotif*-like, in my musical consciousness since I could first reach the piano's keys and the pedals simultaneously, but, *en route*, the inexhaustible variety of Rachmaninov's expression.

Whilst the Preludes here represent an earlier part of my own path (and the famous C# minor represents Rachmaninov's – a piece which plagued him wherever he went), the second Sonata I learnt as a college student. There are many who advocate the authenticity of and preference for Rachmaninov's initial version (1913), yet I have always been drawn by the revisions (1931), symbolising as they do, the leaner and perhaps more condensed style of his later writing. Rachmaninov has rarely been thought of specifically as a *rhythmicien*, but the detailed rhythmic organisation of his scores is a remarkable feature, an approach embodied both in his own precise playing style (where a compelling rhythmic drive was allied to a

natural melodic elegance) and in his later aesthetic draw to a more neo-classical sensibility (exemplified by the textural and episodic clarity found in the Paganini and Corelli Variations, the 3rd *Symphony* and in his last but perhaps most brilliant flowering of orchestral expression, the *Symphonic Dances* Op. 45). In performance itself, Rachmaninov was also not averse to the odd moment of – entirely admissible – textural license and those familiar with his recording will spot the impenitent reference to it here in the cadential peroration in the G minor Prelude Op. 23 no. 5.

One of the Song transcriptions derives from my own friendship with and admiration for the British composer and pianist Francis Pott, a musician whose creativity, artistry and scholarship has proved a continual musical inspiration to me over many years. His understanding and knowledge of all things pianistic is second to none and his engagement with the music of Rachmaninov in particular motivated this 'free' transcription. At times, it appears to surpass the original in gestural extravagance and textural complexity – presenting a significant expansion of, and often harmonic digression from, Rachmaninov's Song – and is more representative of paraphrase than transcription.

Beyond the more obvious and superficial technical demands, however, it reflects the intensity of Pott's creative mind, his absorption of Rachmaninov's textural implications and the predilection for distributing melodic strands across differing voices.

Jeremy Filsell



BIOGRAPHY

JEREMY FILSELL

Jeremy Filsell enjoys a concert career as one of only a few virtuoso performers on both the Piano and the Organ. He has performed as a solo pianist in Russia, the USA and throughout the UK and has appeared regularly at St John's Smith Square and the Conway and Wigmore Halls in London. His Concerto repertoire encompasses Mozart and Beethoven through to Rachmaninov (2nd and 3rd Concertos), Shostakovich and John Ireland and in recent years, he has recorded the solo piano music of Carl Johann Eschmann, Eugene Goossens and the two Sonatas of Liszt's pupil Julius Reubke. In the piano music of Herbert Howells and Bernard Stevens, Classic CD magazine commented that "*he does not attract for his virtuosity but for his ability to make the music unfold with irresistible logic and clarity: music-making of the highest calibre*". He is pianist with the London-based Burghersh Piano Trio and performs and records regularly with Violinist Oliver Lewis (with whom he has recorded discs of Elgar, Ireland, Ferguson and Goossens for *Guild*), with Timothy Travers-Brown (for



Signum) and with baritone Michael Bundy, with whom he has recorded two discs of *Mémoires* by Widor, Vierne and Dupré (for *Naxos*).

Jeremy Filsell has recorded for BBC Radio 3, USA and Scandinavian radio networks in solo and concerto roles as both a pianist and organist and has a discography comprising over 25 solo recordings. Gramophone magazine

commented on the series of 12 CDs (*Guild*) that comprised the premiere recordings of Marcel Dupré's complete organ works in 2000 that it was *one of the greatest achievements in organ recording... Filsell's astonishing interpretative and technical skills make for compulsive listening ... truly distinguished, compelling and unquestionably authoritative performances; Filsell has phenomenal technique*. In 2005, Signum released a 3-disc set on the famous 1890 Cavaillé-Coll organ in St. Ouen Rouen of the complete organ symphonies of Louis Vierne. These were BBC Radio 3's Disc of the Week in September of that year.

Jeremy Filsell studied as an Organ Scholar at Oxford University, then as a post-graduate,

piano under David Parkhouse and Hilary McNamara at the Royal College of Music. He completed a PhD on aesthetic and interpretative issues in the organ music of Marcel Dupré at Birmingham Conservatoire/BCU. Over the course of his career, he has taught piano, organ and academic studies at a number of English schools (including Cranleigh and Eton), given masterclasses at universities and on summer courses in both the UK and USA, served on international competition juries and has held academic and keyboard lectureships at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Academy of Music in London. Currently, he lives in the USA and besides international performing and teaching activities, is Artist-in-Residence at Washington National Cathedral in Washington DC.

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