



Liszt

Piano Concertos
1 & 2

Totentanz

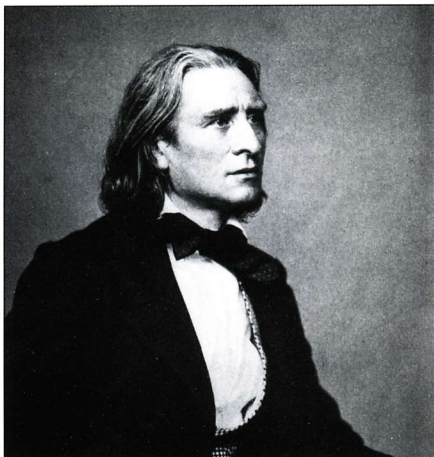
Hungarian Fantasy

Oleg
Marshev

Aalborg Symphony Orchestra

Matthias
Aeschbacher

dacord



Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1 in E flat major (1849) S124 19:06

- [1] Allegro maestoso – 5:23
- [2] Quasi adagio – 4:56
- [3] Allegretto vivace – Allegro animato – 4:22
- [4] Allegro marziale animato 4:21

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2 in A major (1849) S125 21:48

- [5] Adagio sostenuto assai – 5:14
 - [6] Allegro agitato assai – 2:00
 - [7] Allegro moderato – 5:11
 - [8] Allegro deciso – 3:02
 - [9] Marziale, un poco meno allegro – 4:30
 - [10] Allegro animato 1:47
-
- [11] Totentanz – Paraphrase über ‘Dies irae’ (1849) S126 15:58
-
- [12] Fantasie über ungarische Volksmelodien (1852) S123 15:14

Oleg Marshev, piano

Matthias Aeschbacher, conductor
Aalborg Symphony Orchestra

We are in an age when the habitual use of the word 'celebrity' has rendered it meaningless and the phrase 'for the 21st century' is already a tiresome cliché just five years into it (starting from 1 January 2001). Leaving aside such divisions of time, but inevitably viewing him from a 21st-century perspective with all the up-to-date musical awareness available to us, the reputation of Franz (Ferenc) Liszt, dead for 120 years, continues to divide opinion. That he was one of the greatest pianists of his era seems indisputable; that he extended piano techniques and was innovative with musical structures is a fact; but whether his musical invention – some commentators find it trite and melodramatic – stands up to close scrutiny is another matter. Many of Liszt's showier piano works were written to display his talents as a virtuoso rather than as a legacy for posterity, whereas the invention and influence of, say, the Piano Sonata in B minor is far-reaching as is Liszt's development of the symphonic (tone) poem as a musical medium.

Liszt was born in Raiding, which was then in Hungary, and he seems to have lived several lives. His celebrity came from his skills at the piano, the stuff of legend (he undertook frequent and extensive tours until 1848 when conducting took hold), and his numerous romantic liaisons (affairs!) also contributed to him making the headlines, albeit in terms more infamous. Another side of his personality was that he was very generous to fellow composers (he wrote articles praising them and offered practical help), his advice was often sought, and he was quite likely to give lessons without charging a fee. Liszt's daughter, Cosima, married Wagner (following an affair; she was then the wife of Hans von Bülow!) and Liszt himself added to the extremes of his life by taking Holy Orders in the Catholic Church. Liszt died in Bayreuth in 1886 and is buried close to Wagner's grave.

This release embraces the four best-known of Liszt's piano-and-orchestra works, the two concertos (both revised) being compact (each lasts around 20 minutes) and multifaceted, the diversions bounded by Liszt's thematic transformation technique. Both concertos play continuously, Concerto No. 1 being in four sections and No. 2 in six. If some of Liszt's musical ideas are easy to parody (such as in a Hollywood bio-pic) and open to ridicule, each work can also be heard as strategically well-planned and succinct examples of the genre known as 'The Romantic Piano Concerto'.

Concerto No. 1 begins with a commanding call to attention from the orchestra and an equally assertive response from the piano. There follows a dissolve into a quietly purposeful idea in the orchestra that is offset by a sweetly lyrical idea from the piano. Orchestral soloists – clarinet, then the lead violin – make contributions as the pianist floridly decorates. The orchestra returns in full, and with a quickening of pace the music then develops a martial and stormy character while ebbing and flowing between heroic and deft gestures. Tensions having been set up, the ensuing Quasi adagio allows the pianist some tranquil if intensifying reflection that gives way to a skittish and light section featuring a triangle in a rhythmically pertinent appearance; there follows a gathering of resources for a triumphant conclusion.

Equally as concise and cyclical is **Piano Concerto No. 2** and, similarly, the piano and orchestra enjoy a meaningful relationship. This first of the concerto's six sections is in complete contrast to the opening of Concerto No. 1; this time the introductory bars are plaintive as a consort of woodwind instruments offers thoughtful contemplation that gently invites the piano to dialogue. This rapt state, including magical solos

from horn, oboe and cello, gives way to material increasingly demonstrative as the pianist establishes a gawky rhythmic idea that becomes tempestuous. Whether the listener is caught up in Liszt's musical designs or in a non-stated but easy to invent drama being enfolded in the music, each of the events is arresting and, typically, thematically related, transformed and without indulgence. In the third section, a solo cello (which maybe influenced Brahms in the third movement of his Piano Concerto No. 2) steals in with an expressive reminiscence of the concerto's opening idea, the piano now accompanying. Maybe this music is suggestive of lovers lost to each other in a fragrant garden under the stars. Such blissful ardour is swept away by a flashback to more agitated climes, and then another martial episode erupts – the 'hero' returning from war the victor, perhaps. There remains a further opportunity to muse on matters of the heart before an uninhibited dash to the finishing post is started and takes no breath; the pianist glissandos up and down the keyboard and the orchestra issues forth trumpet fanfares and a gleeful piccolo.

Liszt could have reasonably added the subtitle of 'quasi una fantasia' to his concertos, just as Beethoven had done to his pair of piano sonatas, Opus 27 (the second of them known as the Moonlight). Liszt, however, did append 'Paraphrase on Dies Irae' to the work entitled **Totentanz** (Dance of Death), the opening of which pounds the 'Day of Judgement' theme that so fascinated Rachmaninov. Indeed, Liszt seems to anticipate so much of the later composer's soulful and tingling nerve-ends in this music. Flashy cadenzas interrupt the diabolic journey of this fiery and striking work, but the pianist's solo spots are never an excuse for mindless exhibitionism, for the imposing Dies Irae theme is not lost sight of

during Liszt's variants of it. The composer seems so feverishly engaged by it both as music and in its prophetic import – death and judgement – that his impassioned imagination seems unstoppable as he potently knocks on the door marked 'extending musical boundaries'.

Indeed in some of his late and enigmatic solo piano pieces, Liszt seemed to stare into the maelstrom of change that engulfed 20th-century music. If Totentanz is a thunderous contrast to the two concertos, then the **Hungarian Fantasia** is pure and simple pleasure, a potpourri of tunes. A pianissimo timpani roll and a purposeful figure in the lower strings immediately suggests a story from Magyar history being enacted in the music. The bassoons intone a melancholic song, the clarinet lightens the mood and the piano enters with a glittering display, one maybe in imitation of a Hungarian instrument, the cimbalom. Liszt's confection of indigenous tunes, both soulful and defiant, is an unashamed showpiece that exhilarates and raises a smile.

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Born in Baku, ex-USSR, **Oleg Marshev** trained with Valentina Aristova at the Gnesin School for Highly Gifted Children and with Mikhail Voskresensky at the Moscow Conservatory where he completed his Performance Doctorate in 1988 gaining the Diploma with Honour. Marshev is thus a direct representative of the fifth generation of Russian pianists since Liszt, through Alexander Siloti, Konstantin Igumnov and Voskresensky's teacher, Lev Oborin.

Marshev's First Prize in the 1988 "Pilar Bayona" International Piano Competition (Spain) proved the first in a series of illustrious competition victories which have confirmed the artist's reputation as one of the most talented Russian pianists of his generation: in 1990 he took First Prize and the Gold Medal at the AMSA World Piano Competition of Cincinnati; in 1991 First Prize at the Concorso Pianistico Internazionale "Citta di Marsala" and the following year he was awarded the coveted *Primo Premio Assoluto* in the Italian capital's premier competition, the Concorso Pianistico Internazionale "Roma 1992".

In addition to numerous engagements in his native country, Marshev has performed in Hungary, Poland, Spain, Germany, Holland, France, Scandinavia, Japan, New Zealand and in the United States and Canada. 1991 saw his New York debut with a highly acclaimed recital at the Lincoln Center "Alice Tully Hall" which led to an invitation to perform at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. Resident in Italy, the artist gives concerts regularly in that country's leading music centres, from Messina, Catania and Palermo in the south, via Rome and Tuscany to the major cities of the north such as Turin and Milan. He is also in increasing demand as a teacher, holding masterclasses in Spain, Italy and the USA, and as a competition jury member (including that of the World Piano Competition in Cincinnati).

Marshev's activities also extend to the recording studio: in addition to the present recordings numerous compact discs are available on Danacord. All these releases have been received to critical acclaim by leading international publications such as *In Tune*, *Gramophone*, *High Fidelity*, *Fanfare*, *Fono Forum*, *Diapason*, *Pianist Magazine*, *Cd Classica* and *Reper-toire des Disques*.

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Matthias Aeschbacher was born in Zurich in 1945 and is from a large family of musicians. He received his basic musical education at the Academy of Music in his home city Zurich and studied the piano with his father, the pianist Adrian Aeschbacher. After initial successes as a pianist in Zurich, Basel and Lucerne he decided to change career and become a conductor. Christian Vöchting, the then music chief of the Zurich opera house, initiated Matthias Aeschbacher in the art of conducting and in 1964 engaged him as solo répétiteur in the Zurich opera house, where he in 1968 succeeded Armin Jordan as chief conductor in the same year. This position he held for almost eight years.

In 1976 he was appointed to a post making him responsible for music in the theatres in the city of Essen, and two years later he was unanimously elected by the senate in Lübeck to be the new general music chief there. For almost ten years he had a say in deciding the musical events of the city. Matthias Aeschbacher was several times a guest conductor at the state opera in Bavaria and in Hamburg and for some years on a regular basis at Gran Teatro del Liceo in Barcelona, where he specialized in Wagner.

In concerts and radio productions he has conducted such famous orchestras as the Residentie Orkest in The Hague, NDR-Symphony Orchestra, the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra, the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra and almost all the Swiss orchestras. And he has often conducted the South Jutland Symphony Orchestra and recorded a Jacob Gade CD with the Odense Symphony Orchestra.

In the summer of 1987 he took over the post of principal teacher of the Schleswig-Holstein Music

Festival Orchestra, with whom he often performs, besides directing master classes after Leonard Bernstein and Sergiu Celibidache.

Aeschbacher has over 80 operas and almost 300 orchestral works in his repertoire. From 1991-98 he was the chief conductor of the theatre and Philharmonia in Essen and from the 2005-06 season he is the Chief conductor of the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra.

Aalborg Symfoniorkester

Chief conductor: Matthias Aeschbacher
Principal guest conductor: Lan Shui
General Manager: Palle Kjeldgaard

The Aalborg Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1943 and has since then had the following Chief conductors: Jens Schröder (1943-79), Janos Fürst (1980-83), Peter Erös (1983-89), Owain Arwel Hughes (1995-99) and Moshe Atzmon (1999-2002). Throughout the period 1959-1981 Alf Sjøen was also permanently engaged as conductor. From 2002 to 2005 the distinguished conductors Lan Shui (China) and Ari Rasilainen (Finland) held positions as Principal guest conductors in the Orchestra and from the 2005/2006 season Matthias Aeschbacher began his current position as Chief conductor with Lan Shui continuing in the position as Principal guest conductor.

Many world-famous soloists have appeared with the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra, including Anne-Sophie Mutter, Yehudi Menuhin, Birgit Nilsson, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Victor Borge, Pierre Fournier, Paul Tortelier, Kyung Wha-Chung, José Carreras, David and Igor Oistrakh, Kiri Te Kanawa, Roberto Alagna, Angela Gheorghiu, Nikolaj Znaider and Grigori Sokolov.

The Aalborg Symphony Orchestra has 65 full-time musicians of whom many are also engaged as music teachers at educational institutions in the region - for instance at the Aalborg Academy of Music.

The Aalborg Symphony Orchestra meets the musical requirements of the northern Jutland in many areas, primarily with large symphonic concerts in the Aalborg Hall and around the region. The Orchestra also plays an important role as opera and ballet orchestra at guest performances by the Royal Danish Opera & Ballet, Copenhagen and the Danish National Opera, Århus. Furthermore the Orchestra has a function as 'working material' for the conducting classes of the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Copenhagen.

The youngest music audiences are approached with group concerts at schools and with children & family concerts at the small concert hall the Symphony as well as in the Aalborg Hall. The Orchestra has also collaborated in concerts for pupils at the North Jutland upper secondary schools.

The Aalborg Symphony Orchestra has toured all over Denmark and tours abroad has included France, Switzerland and Germany. Recently the Orchestra went on a Scandinavian tour including four concerts in Sweden and Norway. Appearing with the Orchestra at that occasion was the young and very talented Norwegian violinist Vilde Frang (born 1986).

The Orchestra has made several CD recordings, mainly Danish music, but also of works by Siegfried Wagner and George Gershwin. Worth singling out in the Danish repertoire are first performances of Carl Nielsen's theatre music, brass concertos by Vagn Holmboe, the recordings of Herman D. Koppel's orchestral works and the 9 CD project for Danacord

where the music to the ballets of August Bournonville is recorded (DACOCD 631-639, published 2005).

The recording of Vagn Holmboe's Four Symphonic Metamorphoses was in 1998 elected CD of the year by the British magazine Gramophone and in 2003 the recording of Herman D. Koppel's orchestral works vol. III was nominated to Denmark National Radio's P2-price.

In 2009 the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra will replace the current facilities in the old the Symphony with the brand new facilities of Musikkens Hus (the House of Music). The building will be the new main venue of the Orchestra and besides a new modern concert hall with ideal acoustic conditions designed by the experts from Artec New York, the building will contain modern facilities for practise, recitals etc.

Oleg Marshev & Matthias Aeschbacher:

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Matthias Aeschbacher with Claus Byrith and Oleg Marshev with Morten Mogensen

Recorded Aalborg February 6-10, 2006 · Producer: Morten Mogensen
Recording engineer: Claus Byrith · Executive producer: Jesper Buhl

Fotos: Erik Nielsen · Booklet back: Aalborg Symfoniorkester





DACOCD 651

DIGITAL DDD

Total playing time
72:21

Recorded
Aalborg, Denmark
February 6-10, 2006

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