

Multiple talents à la Liszt The pianist and composer Dejan Lazić releases his first Liszt album



Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

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VENEZIA E NAPOLI FROM ANNEES DE PELERINAGE II (SUPPLEMENT) S.162
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Dejan Lazić *Piano*

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Franz Liszt is considered to have been one of the greatest multiply talented musicians in history: he was equally unique, innovative and fascinating both as a virtuoso pianist and as a composer. And the 40-year-old Croatian-born **Dejan Lazić** is well on his way towards following in the footsteps of this Hungarian romantic, as he has demonstrated for years as a brilliant and acclaimed pianist and, increasingly, with his own compositions: on 28 April 2017, his symphonic poem “Mozart und Salieri” op. 21 was premièred in Indianapolis (USA) by the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Krzysztof Urbański. Incidentally, it is none other than Franz Liszt who is considered the father of this musical genre. And it is also Liszt to whom Lazić has dedicated his most recent solo album, with the subtitle “Life, Love and Afterlife”, on the label Onyx.

Dejan Lazić is one of the most versatile musicians of his generation. Born into a Croatian family of musicians, he showed an exceptional talent on clarinet and piano early on (for the Mozart Year in 1991, he recorded both the Clarinet Concerto and a piano concerto by Mozart with the Zagreb Soloists), as well as displaying considerable enthusiasm for composition even in his younger years – then as now writing down his pieces “in the old-fashioned way using paper, pencil and eraser – and to do that you need, above all, a lot of time,” says Lazić. While still studying at the Salzburg Mozarteum, he already performed in the 1990s both as a soloist and a chamber musician, before his first solo CD came out in 1999. Today, Lazić, a winner of the ECHO Klassik award, is one of the most sought-after virtuosos on his instrument, performing with international symphony orchestras across the world and giving solo recitals in prestigious venues such as London's Wigmore Hall, at the Schubertiade in Hohenems, Austria, in the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, at the Melbourne Recital Centre or at “Le Poisson Rouge” in New York. In the current 2016/17 season, he made his début at the legendary Tanglewood Music Festival with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Andris Nelsons, and in recent days went on a European tour with Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra.

And it is also a European sensibility and sense of identity, an openness to and fascination with the continent's rich national musical diversity, that goes to make up the artist Dejan Lazić and, again, connects him with Franz Liszt: *“The programme on this CD was inspired by Franz Liszt's distinctive versatility and unique spontaneity. Of course, he was an exceptional piano virtuoso and a pioneering composer, but also an organist, conductor, arranger, improviser, teacher, author, philanthropist and*

avid traveller – that is why his strong musical influences do not just come from his native land of Hungary, but also from Austria, Germany, Italy and many other European countries. With this album, I wanted to honour and document Liszt's highly productive, eclectic, revolutionary genius.”

The selection of works recorded here by Lazić does indeed provide a splendid visiting card of this extraordinarily innovative composer, who was not afraid to make arrangements of masterpieces by famous fellow composers – from Mozart's Requiem and Schubert lieder to Wagner operas – to open up completely new pianistic worlds that can also be heard here. But the CD begins with a stylistic focus on the influence of Liszt's country of origin with the “Hungarian Rhapsody” No. 18 and two “Csárdás”; in his youth, Lazić was, incidentally, frequently himself in Hungary as a guest at the Bartók Festival in Szombathely, where he got to know the pianists Zoltán Kocsis and Imre Rohmann, who gave him some formative instruction. Both of them contributed to the Croatian pianist's very individual, captivating piano sound, which FonoForum described as follows: “His playing combines a clarity, informed by an extremely precise piano technique, that serves to bring out the structure, with an excellent legato culture and sensitive pianissimo touch.” That is an ideal basis for the other works recorded here as well: with selections from the volumes of the “Années de Pèlerinage”, the now Amsterdam-based pianist presents vivid musical impressions of travel in Italy, rounded out by Liszt's big audience favourite: the “Liebestraum” No. 3. After the 85-minute-long listening experience provided by this CD, listeners will arrive at the conviction that the connection between Lazić and Liszt is a very special and, indeed, deeply personal one, going far beyond any mere perfection of piano technique. And that the Croatian virtuoso's plan to “do justice to Liszt's changeable, multi-faceted and revolutionary spirit and to make the music sound as unconstrained as he was” has completely succeeded.

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