



## A feeling of raging liberation

The German pianist Fabian Müller is releasing his third studio album, entitled "passionato", on the Berlin Classics label amid the coronavirus shutdown. It is a statement full of musical passion that casts a fresh look at standard classical works by Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Rihm in the here and now. For this multiple-award-winning artist is convinced that "every generation has the right to rediscover these pieces for itself."



### **Robert Schumann (1810-1856)**

Piano Sonata no. 2, op. 22.

- [1] I. SO RASCH WIE MÖGLICH
- [2] II. ANDANTINO. GETRAGEN
- [3] III. SCHERZO. SEHR RASCH UND MARKIERT
- [4] IV. PRESTO PASSIONATO

### **Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

2 Rhapsodies op. 79

- [5] NO. 1 AGITATO
- [6] NO. 2 MOLTO PASSIONATO,  
MA NON TROPPO ALLEGRO

### **Wolfgang Rihm (\*1952)**

Piano Piece no. 5 »Tombeau«

- [7] I. SENZA TEMPO
- [8] II. CIACONA
- [9] III. QUASI CORALE

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Piano Sonata no. 23, op. 57 »Appassionata«

- [10] I. ALLEGRO ASSAI
- [11] II. ANDANTE CON MOTO
- [12] III. ALLEGRO MA NON TROPPO – PRESTO

**Fabian Müller piano | Berlin Classics | Release: March 19, 2021**

### **Personal document of our times**

Perhaps it is this profound time of crisis that is allowing the existential power of music to shine forth with special power. Virtually overnight, artists lost their audiences – the indispensable recipients and partners to whom to communicate their artistic activity. Under these circumstances, how can artists channel their own passion or, better still, transform it? How can personal artistic fervour receive a response from outside?

With his new CD, "passionato", Fabian Müller finds an answer to these questions that is both personal and emotional. "The word 'passionate' derives from the Latin word for 'suffer' – and for me, that is an important aspect of interpretation: **a feeling of raging liberation**. And in the past months, I have often enough gone through feelings of rage, injustice, almost madness." This makes the new album by this musician, who has already performed in New York's Carnegie Hall, a kind of contemporary document that allows listeners to detect the sort of suffering, doubt and questioning in the works of Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Rihm that is currently confronting artists amid the cultural shutdown. According to Müller, while he was recording there was already a strange feeling in the air "of looming danger and the start of a quiet time. For me, every piece of music was a way of breaking free of this fear and, at the same time, an expression of great pain."

And indeed, the Rhineland-born musician, who has just been appointed **professor of piano at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln** (Wuppertal campus), is likely to miss his audience even more than many other fellow musicians do: he is not just a superb pianist, but also a talented communicator and passionate educator in the musical field, and, what's more, an enthusiastic ensemble player who has one particular heartfelt aim: "I want to share this sense of marvelling at art!"

**He himself began marvelling at music** as a child in a home that was full of the joy of music-making. And that home was situated at a location that could have provided the subtext for the current CD: he grew up in the city of his birth, Bonn, in Brahmsstrasse, which is located almost on a line between the Beethoven-Haus and the Schumannhaus. At 15, he was a pupil of Pierre-Laurent Aimard in a pre-college programme, and won three prizes

at the Ferruccio Busoni International Piano Competition in Bolzano (2013) and five at the ARD International Music Competition in Munich (2017) – and these are just some of the milestones in his pianistic career. After his acclaimed Brahms album (2018: the German magazine *concerti* wrote: "With Müller, you hear everything: the unfulfilled yearning, the endless despair, the opening up of existence into the cosmic realm"), he now, with "passionato", is presenting a very personal recording with a clear central theme: "Beethoven combines feeling with a very strong structure, Rihm with an enormous mercilessness, Schumann with a song-like ecstasy and Brahms does it completely differently again."

### **Works of the classical canon: Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Rihm**

The album starts with Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata in G Minor, op. 22, whose long process of composition during the mid-1830s reflects this Romantic composer's struggle to find a way of using this genre to express his emotional attitude to life in a way that fitted in with the times. For Fabian Müller, the very first movement conveys a sense of "dropping everything and playing for his life. A feeling that something is pouring out of oneself." Of particular note is the fact that Müller has recorded the original finale here (Presto passionato) – rather an exception in today's discographical praxis, where the new finale composed by Schumann in 1838 is preferred (the one that was also included in the first edition of the sonata). Incidentally, the Presto passionato was only published posthumously in 1866 as a separate piece – by a protégé of Schumann, a certain Johannes Brahms, whose two Rhapsodies, op. 79, follow in this well-thought-out compilation. Here, there is also a latent regional connection to the Rhineland, as these two pieces were performed for the first time in Krefeld in 1880. In Brahms, Fabian Müller discovers a very different way of approaching emotions. Brahms was "not so much someone who flings himself into this feeling but rather someone who bathes in it, in an ocean of this feeling." According to him, Brahms's music has an especially high firing point, so to speak, because "it could melt its way through anything: because it is always so ardent, profound and piercing, without being panic-stricken." Fabian Müller really makes the pieces his own. This is also the case with the Klavierstück No. 5, "Tombeau", by Wolfgang Rihm, which contrasts strongly with the other emotional depictions on the CD through its darkness and structural ruggedness and which would seem to emblemize the coronavirus crisis in view of Müller's characterization: "It is cruel and persistent; not a nice piece, but actually awful. But so incredibly authentic. And very close to Beethoven in this way." Beethoven's Sonata in F Minor, op. 57, the "Appassionata", is thus both the conclusion and the fulcrum of the entire new CD. For Müller, this work "is simply 100 percent: heart, mind and vision." And what could be more meaningful, particularly at this time, than ending with a vision, a hope that things will get better?

### **Live concerts**

If concerts gradually get under way again in the next few months – something we are all hoping for – audiences can look forward to experiencing Fabian Müller once more live as a pianist and explainer of music: for example, in the opening concert of the Heidelberger Frühling festival (15 April), in a piano concerto performed with the Deutsche Streicherphilharmonie under Marek Janowski in Wuppertal (13 May), with the Festival Strings Lucerne (5 June), in a piano recital at the Rheingau Musik Festival (5 August) and on a short Beethoven tour with the Cologne Chamber Orchestra (29 + 30 September, TauberPhilharmonie, Weikersheim). And, of course, in concerts given as part of the chamber music series "Bonner Zwischentöne" that he himself founded, where he is to perform the entire programme of the new CD on 29 October, 2021. Until then, there is no alternative but to have recourse to your home hi-fi system if you want to be inspired by the uncompromising enthusiasm and emotional power of this outstanding pianist.

 Julia Mauritz

Auf Rheinberg 2  
50676 Köln

+49 (0)221 - 168 796 24  
julia.mauritz@schimmer-pr.de  
www.schimmer-pr.de