

## Giovanni Bertolazzi again as an outstanding Liszt interpreter



**Franz Liszt:** Etude d'exécution transcendante Nr. 12 (Chasse-neige) + Totentanz + Recueillement + Campanella + Un sospiro + Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen (Präludium nach J.S. Bach) + Ungarische Rhapsodien Nr. 2 & 12 + Puszta Wehmut + Spanische Rhapsodie; Richard Wagner / Franz Liszt: Isoldens Liebestod; Kornel Abranyi / Franz Liszt: Chant des fleurs; Franz von Vecsey / Georges Cziffra: La valse triste; Giovanni Bertolazzi, Klavier; 2 CDs Borgato Collection B102022; Recording 11/2022, Publication 07.2023 (94'42) - Review by Remy Franck

The Etude Chasse-neige (Snowstorm), with which Giovanni Bertolazzi begins his program, sounds nervous and threatening and is increased without ever becoming brutal.

This is followed by the rather rarely heard version for solo piano of the Dance of Death. Bertolazzi differentiates the cycle of variations very finely, setting virtuosic, sometimes very excited sounds against quiet, reflective, sometimes poetic ones. The clarity, tonal richness and expressive variety the Italian achieves are stupendous. This is not a raging dance of death, but a dazzling portrait of death that ultimately does not become truly demonic. Perhaps it was precisely the demonic that Liszt wanted to avoid.

After the introverted Recueillement comes the Campanella, very dance-like, very playful, at first with irresistible charm before brilliant virtuosity dominates.

The concert etude Un sospiro is very beautiful, sensitive, almost impressionistic. It is followed by the Bach arrangement 'Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen'. Beautifully breathed, perfectly increased and above all very lyrical, directly transfigured at the end, Isolden's Liebestod concludes the program of the first CD.

Bertolazzi also shows himself to be an outstanding Liszt interpreter in the two Rhapsodies No. 2 and 12. He masters all the technical challenges, and his interpretive flair is also outstanding. His control and subtle use of dynamics, along with his skillful handling of the pedal, are exceptional. Another highlight of the CD is the Spanish Rhapsody, whose rich facets Bertolazzi lays out spectacularly. Absolutely fascinating are the spaciousness and clarity of the recorded sound.

Bertolazzi concludes his program with the Valse Triste by Franz von Vecsey in Georges Cziffra's arrangement. It may not quite achieve the profundity of Cziffra's own recording, but at least there is a palpable nostalgia that already reminds us more of Piazzolla in terms of mood. The clarity of the playing and the sonic splendor of the Borgato grand piano are also astonishing (see the review below).

Like Bertolazzi's first Liszt CD, this one shows that the young pianist understands Liszt, feels at home in his works, and has full command of his wide-ranging compositional style.

He avoids extremes and showmanship, plays intelligently with immense transparency and at the same time never coolly, his chords never sound hard or percussive, but offer nuances and tonal shadings to also give the music the necessary expression.