

To the distant beloved...

Evgenia Rubinova presents her new Beethoven CD

An interview with Gabriele Luster

Ms. Rubinova, you are a wanderer between worlds: you were born in Tashkent (Uzbekistan), studied in Moscow and moved to Frankfurt when you were twenty. Why did you want to pursue your studies in Germany?

Evgenia Rubinova: I wanted to learn new things. Of course, music training in Moscow is on a very high level: I moved all by myself

from Tashkent to Moscow to study there when I was just fourteen. Still, I felt that Germany had other horizons to offer. In hindsight, the combined experience in Moscow and Frankfurt has turned out to be ideal.

You didn't feel the urge to go the United States?

E.R.: There was also the possibility of going to the US or to Italy, but my family always felt a strong connection with Germany.

My grandmother, a comparative linguistics professor, specialized in German.

You had already won several piano competitions in Russia and Italy before you garnered the Silver Medal at the highly renowned Leeds Piano Competition in 2003. Can that be considered as your breakthrough?

E.R.: Indeed, such a prize helps one become noticed. In the wake of that event, I was able to perform with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and with the Hallé, and was invited to play with the radio symphony orchestras of Stuttgart and Berlin.

Since then, you have made guest appearances all over Europe, Asia and America. Would you regard your collaboration with certain other outstanding conductors or orchestras as a further milestone in your career?

E.R.: I wouldn't put it that way. Every encounter with a new conductor or orchestra is a major step forward in my development as an artist. Each new meeting of minds is a challenge that helps me grow. When you work with other artists, you try to reconcile your positions and find common ground. That can considerably influence the music in ways you can't predict. Together you embark, time and again, on a new musical journey. That releases a kind of spontaneity I find extremely important.

In what way?

E.R.: I think there are two major factors in music-making. First of all, having a clear conception of what you want to do; and, second of all, spontaneity – a free, improvisational, playful aspect. By moving along both tracks simultaneously you can achieve aesthetic unity.



Your first Beethoven CD for telos music with the Hammerklavier Sonata and op. 109 was a live recording. Your new CD, featuring rare, forgotten or seldom performed Beethoven works such as the Waldmädchen Variations, the Variations op. 76, the two early sonatas in C Minor and F Major, Liszt's paraphrases of the "Distant Beloved" song cycle and the Capriccio alla Turca on themes from "The Ruins of Athens" was made in the recording studio. What are the advantages and drawbacks of recording live or in the studio?

When making a live recording, I know that I will be able to play the work only once. Of course that creates a high degree of tension. In the studio I need to "spread out" the tension, I need to try to picture myself in an imaginary concert situation during the entire session, which can last up to six hours. If you relax too much, knowing you will be allowed to repeat takes, the life gets sucked out of the music.

The technicians are nevertheless able to distill the perfect recording from the different takes...

E.R.: There is no perfection if the music lacks fire.

How do you go about building your repertoire?

There are certain times or life phases in which I intensely focus on a certain composer. Thus I have devoted my attentions to Rachmaninoff and also to Prokofiev; my current focus is on Beethoven.

As a Russian, aren't you predestined for Russian repertoire?

E.R.: That would confirm the cliché, but I am wary of adapting to such molds. Of course, on my first Beethoven CD I ran the risk of presenting two monumental late works. But in my head and in my heart I had spent so much time with Beethoven and played him so often that I was convinced I had something to say, so I took up the challenge. Fortunately, I was rewarded. I'm so grateful that telos music offered me the chance to



make that release, and that the recording was so well received by the critics.

Do you have further plans?

E.R.: Yes, there are further hidden Beethoven treasures I would like to bring out from under the shadows.

Pianists don't necessarily need a music partner in order to perform. Still, don't you search now and then for fellow players to embark with on chamber music excursions?

E.R.: Chamber music is my great passion: it's like an oxygen cure for me. In human and musical exchanges with colleagues, new thoughts spring forth and you can gather new perspectives. I have frequently performed with Albrecht Mayer, the principal oboist of the Berlin Philharmonic – a thoroughly enriching experience. For the future I am also concretely planning to form a piano quartet ensemble.

You teach at the Leopold Mozart Center for Music at Augsburg University...

E.R.: ... and teaching is one of my great passions, an important aspect of my work.

When you teach, do you also learn something in the process?

E.R.: The most interesting thing is developing new approaches to artistic and technical issues by explaining them. Whenever that joint creative process results in success, it's something truly wonderful.

Those who visit your website can get to know you as a thoughtful

musician: there, in your own writings, you analyze works and discuss their interpretation.

E.R.: That deeper exploration helps me deal with music and with life. I write the liner notes for my CD booklets myself. My CDs and my recitals are by no means "fast" products: they need time to turn out exactly the way I want them to. I select repertoire and arrange my programmes myself; then I conduct research on the works, and only then do I start to play them.

I also edit the CD recordings myself. In that way, I can truly state that all of these projects have my full backing. Fotos: Marco Borggreve



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