



THE CLASSICAL REVIEWER

14 DECEMBER 2014

Pianist Tien Hsieh gives a first rate Beethoven C minor Piano Sonata, op.111 combined with Bach and Beethoven transcriptions that are full of wonder and fantasy on a new release from MSR Classics

Pianist Tien Hsieh was born in Taiwan of Chinese parents immigrating to the United States when she was nine years old. She began her musical training with her mother, Sylvia Hsieh. She was a full scholarship student at University of Houston where she received her Bachelor of Music degree, studying with Abbey Simon and Ruth Tomfohrde and was awarded a scholarship to study at the Manhattan School of Music where she received the prestigious Roy M. Rubinstein Award, a Bettingen Corporation Grant and the Professional Studies Diploma and Master of Music degree under the tutelage of Dr Marc Silverman. As a full scholarship student at the St. Louis Conservatory of Music she studied under the guidance of Jane Allen and Carol Tafoya. Tien Hsieh was a prize winner at the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition and has since performed at the Liszt Museum in Budapest, Hungary, in solo recitals and chamber music in China and Germany. Throughout the USA she has appeared as soloist with the Spokane Symphony at The Festival at Sandpoint, Redlands Symphony at Redlands Bowl, Oregon Mozart Players, Manhattan Philharmonia and Houston Civic Orchestra. Her musical collaborations include performances with Czech Republic's Graffe Quartet, with the Schumann Quintet, Sacramento Ballet, Manhattan Symphony Orchestra, UC Davis Symphony Orchestra and State Street Ballet. More recently she has given solo recitals throughout California, Alaska, Washington, Wyoming, Idaho and Oregon.

Volume 2 of her Mostly Transcriptions series has just been released by MSR Classics www.msacd.com and features works by Bach and Beethoven transcribed by Busoni, Liszt and Siloti.

Hsieh opens her recital with **Bach's Prelude and Fugue in D major**, transcribed Busoni. The *Prelude* brings a formidably powerful opening. Hsieh shows very fine phrasing and great dynamic contrasts, though just occasionally I felt she could be a little too direct. She delivers a particularly fine fugue with a lightness of touch and a fine flow, nicely phrased with a lovely spontaneity, as well as some of those formidable dynamic passages.

With Liszt's transcription of **Beethoven** song cycle **An die Ferne Geliebte, Op.98** she gives a performance full of wonder and fantasy, handling the changes of rhythm and mood seamlessly with a beautiful poise and lightness of touch and, again, some fine dynamic passages.

Returning to **Bach** with Liszt's transcription of the **Prelude and Fugue in A minor, BWV 543**, Hsieh builds the *Prelude* wonderfully from its relatively simple beginnings to passages of tremendous power and fluency with a fine breadth of playing. This really is fine Bach. There is a beautifully light and flowing *Fugue* revealing all of Bach's contrapuntal lines with Hsieh bringing all her power to the more dynamic passages.

Tien Hsieh is particularly impressive in the **Adagio** from **Bach's Sonata No.5 in F minor, BWV 1018** as transcribed by Alexander Siloti to which she brings a sense of withheld strength, a finely controlled emotion. This is quite exquisite playing.

Busoni's transcription of **Bach's Chorale Prelude *Ich ruf zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ*** is beautifully done, nicely paced and beautifully shaped.

The final work on this disc is **Beethoven's Piano Sonata No.32 in C minor, Op.111**. There is a finely controlled *Maestoso* before the *Allegro con brio ed appassionato* arrives where Hsieh brings much thought and sense of structure, never allowing the tempo to run away yet with great forward flow. This is beautifully phrased playing with a clarity of line combined with a feeling of spontaneity. The slower, quieter passages are full of care before leading to a finely expressed coda.

With the *Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile* Hsieh really comes into her own bringing all her sensitivity, thought and care, moving seamlessly through the changes of rhythm and tempo with light, restrained playing and lovely control of dynamics. There is some especially fine playing in the faster passages, so fluent with fine clarity as well as moments of fine tension and exquisite sensitivity. Later this pianist brings some beautifully fluent passages full of strong dynamics before leading to a lovely, beautifully set out coda.

This is a first rate Beethoven Op.111. I would like to hear more from this fine pianist. She receives an excellent recording made at Blue Wave Productions, Vancouver, Canada and there are informative booklet notes.

BRUCE READER

<http://theclassicalreviewer.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/pianist-tien-hsieh-gives-first-rate.html>