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BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

SILVESTROV

...TOUCHING THE MEMORY...

Alexei Lubimov *piano*

Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles
Jean-Paul Dessy *conductor*

Valentin Silvestrov b.1937
Touching the Memory

Четыре постлюдии · Four Postludes for piano and string orchestra (2004/2007)
To Valery Matyukhin

- | | |
|-----------------------|------|
| 1. Larghetto, Andante | 3'55 |
| 2. Moderato | 2'55 |
| 3. Larghetto | 2'09 |
| 4. Larghetto | 3'33 |

Мгновения поэзии и музыки · Moments of Poetry and Music for soprano, piano and string orchestra (2003)

To Sergey Vakulenko

- | | |
|---|------|
| 5. "Keine Stimme" poem by Paul Celan from the cycle "Stimmen", for soprano and piano
<i>Russian translation by Mark Belorusetz</i> | 2'21 |
| 6. Melody-Postscriptum for string orchestra | 3'43 |

Три постлюдии (посв. Пярту) · Three Postludes for piano Op.64 (2005)
To Arvo Pärt

- | | |
|--------------|------|
| 7. Andantino | 1'32 |
| 8. Adagio | 2'18 |
| 9. Larghetto | 1'17 |

10. **Эпитафия. · Epitaph** for piano and string orchestra (1999)
To Larisa Bondarenko 8'06

Три вальса (посв. Шенбергу, Веберну, Бергу) · Three Waltzes for piano Op.54 (2005)

- | | |
|----------------------------|------|
| 11. Hommage à A. Schönberg | 1'19 |
| 12. Hommage à A. Webern | 0'54 |
| 13. Hommage à A. Berg | 1'34 |

Две элегии (2005) · Two Elegies for piano Op.60 (2005)

- | | |
|--------------|------|
| 14. Moderato | 1'46 |
| 15. Andante | 3'02 |

Мгновения памяти III · Moments of Memory III 6 pieces for string orchestra (2003)

- | | |
|--|------|
| 16. Serenade of Childhood (1954...2003)
<i>To Grigory Khoroshilov</i> | 3'25 |
| 17. Elegy
<i>To Oleh Kiva</i> | 4'02 |
| 18. Farewell Waltz
<i>To Vadim Khrapachov</i> | 2'57 |
| 19. Postlude
<i>To Evgeny Stankovitch</i> | 2'45 |
| 20. Autumn Serenade
<i>To Larisa Bondarenko</i> | 2'22 |
| 21. Pastoral
<i>To Inga N.</i> | 2'46 |

Мгновения памяти II · Moments of Memory II 3 pieces for piano Op.27 (2004)

- | | |
|----------------|------|
| 22. Elegy | 3'21 |
| 23. Intermezzo | 1'50 |
| 24. Serenade | 2'20 |

25. **Гимн-2001 · Hymn-2001** for string orchestra (1999)
To Giya Kancheli 4'44

BONUS TRACKS:

- Three Waltzes for piano
Dedicated to Jean-Paul Dessy
 Performed by the composer (recorded at the composer's home).
- | | |
|----------|------|
| 26. I. | 1'43 |
| 27. II. | 1'56 |
| 28. III. | 2'04 |

“...TOUCHING THE MEMORY...”

«...прикасаюсь к памяти»

In the mid-1970s Valentin Silvestrov, one of the most radical members of the so-called Soviet avant-garde (b. 1937), took a U-turn (dramatic turn) in his artistic approach and made a seemingly fresh start. Not only did he compose his song cycle “Quiet Songs” (1974-77) in the “low style” of romance, he also used textbook poetry and turned to “outdated” music gestures that called associations with such obsolete layers of musical culture as Schubert’s *Lied*, Tchaikovsky’s Romance and Russian music before Glinka.

In his piano cycle “Kitsch - Musik” (1977) Silvestrov once again appealed to the past, this time to what sounds like Schumann, Brahms, Chopin. The performance notes to this cycle characteristically state: “To be played very softly, as if from afar (...), as if barely touching the listener’s memory, so that the music plays inside the conscience of the listener, as if his memory was singing this music itself”.

The idea of “memory” naturally generated the genre of “postlude”, so dear to Silvestrov. It is his favorite technique and grows from long reverberating piano solos, often found in the closing sections of his songs.

As Silvestrov formed his “new”, or as he put it himself, “metaphorical style” or “metamusic”, his music acquired a specific mode of musical expression, composed of fragments, “moments”, rather than of whole themes. The notion of “moment” is crucial to the late, so called “bagatelle” period in the composer’s work. As he clearly stated, the main impulse to creating music is generally just a moment, a sparkle that will not go out, a call, a simple motive. The “bagatelle” is a pure chance to capture a moment, without loading it with the so-called thematic transformation, a sort of Faustian “Ah, stay a while!...”. The term “moment” is so frequently used in Silvestrov’s music that it has become almost a genre designation, along with the recurring waltzes, postludes, elegies, serenades. It occurs three times on this album alone.

The timbre characteristics of the “musical moment”, on the other hand, are of lesser importance to the composer. Many of the pieces, including some on this disc, i.e. *Two elegies*, *Epitaph*, *Hymn-2001*, *Moments of Poetry and Music*, exist in more than one setting. It is the melodic clarity, the potential to be recognized, remembered, sung, that really matters. It is not by chance that Silvestrov often appeals to another idiom – “a song without words”. The song, and the underlying strophic structure of poetry, have determined his instrumental music as well. He repeats the same motive over and over again, as if he was holding to the memory of what he had seen, or rather heard, in a dream. It becomes not a clear image but, in his own words, “a shadow in profile”, where the melodic outline is preserved, but a little vague, dim, as if on an old daguerreotype. A simple, or as Silvestrov calls it, a “weak” text is formulated and spoken in a special way. The stanzas are never literally repeated. Everything is slightly shifting in time and space, “softly, lightly, distantly, almost a dream”, as it is often stated in the composer’s directions.

The music flow is constantly changing, now speeding up, now slowing down, almost coming to a stop, a moment extended and arrested! The harmonic sequences are also unpredictable, not only in the willingly dissonant *Three Waltzes. Dedication to Schoenberg, ...to Webern, ...to Berg or Epitaph*, but also in such seemingly tonal and clear *Four Postludes*, *Two Elegies*, or *Moments of Memory III*. The dynamic scale is constantly fluctuating from pppp to a “soft *mf*”, most of the times *una corda*. Another of Silvestrov’s special techniques is the so-called “acoustic harmony”: the reverberating sounds of previous chords sustained by an almost constant pedal, that is meant to be an independent part of the texture. The composer uses very particular indications, such as “half-pedal, slight change of pedal, so that a soft echo lingers on”, “hold the pedal with a light vibration, so that the layers of sound fade out and replace each other”, “leave the pedal until the sound fades out completely”, etc. The parts of the cycles are performed *attacca*, thus creating the effect of an “endless” range of ellipses. This effect is enhanced by the absence of “solid” cadences that are

replaced by hanging silences. Each slightest agogic gesture counts, be it a breath, an accent or an articulation. Alongside the usual markings, we can see all sorts of “half” –legato, –tenuto, –staccato. All the performance indications are meticulously marked in the score, a heritage of Silvestrov’s avant-garde pointillist and serial past. This “extreme”, as the composer himself admits, writing calls the performer to an equal precision and, ultimately, to freedom on the verge of improvisation.

The program of this disc contains one vocal work: the first movement of the diptych *Moments of Poetry and Music - a Poem of Paul Celan*, a text from the cycle “Voices” in the collection “Speech-Grille”.

„Sprachgitter“ (1959)
Stimmen im Inneren der Arche:

*Keine
Stimme* – ein
Spätgeräusch, stundenfremd, deinen
Gedanken geschenkt, hier, endlich
herbeigewacht: ein
Fruchtblatt, augengroß, tief
geritzt; es
harzt, will nicht
vernarben.

«Решетка языка».
Голоса внутри ковчега:

*Нет,
не голос* – а
поздний шорох, дан, чужевременно,
твоим помыслам в дар,
наконец пробужденный сюда,
он-зародыш листа, сообразного оку,
сочится, глубоко процарапан,
живицей,
не рубцуясь.

Перевод Марка Белорусца

The torn recitative, thinned with silence, according to the metaphor of the title of the poem, is opposed by the contrasting “singing” theme of the strings. Through the “grille of speech”, appropriated by Silvestrov (*dolcissimo, leggiirro, very tenderly, delicately and discreetly*) – a unique world shines, of the composer’s own creation. One who can look beyond the grille and see, or rather hear, his world, will stay there for a while.

© Tatjana Frumkis, Berlin

Translated by Elizaveta Miller. Moscow



Born in Moscow, pianist **Alexei Lubimov** is one of the most strikingly original musicians performing today. His large repertoire combined with his dedication to principle and musical morals make him a notable exception in today's music scene.

After completing his studies with Heinrich Neuhaus, he was the first to awaken interest at the Moscow Conservatory in Baroque music (particularly performed on period instruments) and contemporary music. He is also an outstanding interpreter of Classical and Romantic works. During the 80s, when political restrictions in Russia were gradually loosening, he began performing in Western Europe, Japan and the US, becoming one of the world's leading pianists. He has performed with such orchestras as the philharmonic orchestras of Israel, Los Angeles, Munich and St Petersburg, the Royal Philharmonic in London, Russian National

Orchestra, Orchestre National de France and Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, working with such conductors as Vladimir Ashkenazy, Neeme Järvi, Kirill Kondrashin, Christopher Hogwood, Roger Norrington, Mikhail Pletnev, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Vladimir Jurowski and Iván Fischer. In historical performance he has been working with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Wiener Akademie, Concerto Köln, Anima Eterna Brugge and Finnish Baroque Orchestra.

Alexei Lubimov also performs as a chamber musician with leading soloists and ensembles, taking part in festivals around the world. Recent highlights in his artistic

work include the stage project of *This is (not) a Dream* with music by Erik Satie and John Cage, directed and performed by the French actress Louise Moaty (presented in Europe and Mexico), performances in duet with Alexey Zuev (Diaghilev Festival Perm, Mustonen Fest Tallinn), concerts in repertoire including contemporary Russian music, and also recitals and chamber concerts on period instruments, including in Bruges, Potsdam, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Moscow and Yale. In 2015, he received the Cage-Cunningham Fellowship. Several Russian composers have written or dedicated works for Alexei Lubimov: Silvestrov, Denisov, Karmanov, Ustvolskaya, Suslin, Martynov.

He is founder and artistic director of several Festivals of modern and contemporary music: "Alternativa" (Moscow 1988-1991), Arnold-Schoenberg-Festival (Moscow 1999 and 2002), Sankt-Gallen Kammermusikfest (Austria, Steiermark since 1991), John Cage Centenary (Moscow 2012), and others.

Mr. Lubimov has worked with many renowned record labels, including Melodia, Erato, BIS and Sony, his recordings including the complete Mozart piano sonatas, as well as piano works by Schubert, Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms and twentieth-century composers. Since 2003, he has recorded regularly for ECM, and recent albums have included Debussy's Preludes and John Cage's *As It Is* (with Natalia Pschenitschnikova). His discography also includes recordings made on period instruments (Schubert's impromptus, Beethoven's last sonatas, Mozart's complete works for two pianos, with Yuri Martynov, and a piano version of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*) released on ZZT/Outthere France. Very last releases on CD include "Tangere" - a program of C.P.E. Bach played on a tangent piano (ECM), works by Stravinsky and Satie for two pianos with Slava Poprugun (ALPHA/Outthere) and two Sonatas by J.L. Dussek (BRILLIANT CLASSICS)

Alexei Lubimov has been teaching at University Mozarteum (1998-2011) and in Moscow State Tchaikovsky Conservatory, where he is founder of the Department for Historical and Contemporary Performance Practice (since 1997).



As well as being a conductor, a composer, and a cellist, **Jean-Paul Dessy** also has a Master's Degree in Philosophy and Literature.

He has conducted more than two hundred and fifty worldwide contemporary music creations and has recorded more than fifty CDs of classic contemporary pieces, receiving numerous awards (Choc from Monde de la Musique and Classica, Five Stars from the BBC Magazine, etc.). He has composed symphonies, chamber music, electronic music and an opera, *Kilda, l'île des hommes-oiseaux*, which he conducted at the opening of the Edinburgh Festival in 2009.

His work *L'Ombre du son* was awarded the Paul Gilson Prize by French Language Public Radio Stations. He also composed a large body of incidental music for directors including Jacques Lasalle, Denis Marleau, Anne-Laure Liégeois, David Géry, Lorent Wanson, Frédéric Dussenne and others, for

choreographers including Carolyn Carlson, Frédéric Flamand, Nicole Mossoux and others, for films and catwalk shows by the fashion designer Hussein Chalayan and even for the *Levers de soleil* by Bartabas.

Le Chant du Monde/Harmonia Mundi has released two CDs devoted to his works: *The Present's presents* and *Prophètes*, for solo cello, on which he also plays. Cyprès has also released 2 CDs of his compositions : *O Clock* and *Requiems*.

His musical quest lies firmly in the domain of the sacred, viewing concerts as a liturgy, playing an instrument as a way of meditating, composition as a type of prophecy and sound as a revelation.

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