HUMMEL
COMPLETE PIANO SONATAS

Costantino Mastroprimiano fortepiano
Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)
Complete Piano Sonatas

CD1  54'50
Trois Sonates pour le Fortepiano ou Clavecin avec accompagnement de Flûte ou Violon ou Violoncelle composées et dédiées à Sa Majesté la Reine d'Angleterre par Jean Hummel jun. de Vienne Âgé de 14 Ans œuvre 2me
Sonata No.1 in C Op.2 No.3
(for fortepiano solo)
1. I. Allegro spiritoso 7'30
2. II. Adagio 4'20
3. III. Rondo 5'54
4. 7. Fantasina in C Op.124 für das Fortepiano, über ein thema aus Mozart's: die Hochzeit des Figaro 6'36

CD2  52'51
Sonata No.2 in E flat Op.13
1. I. Allegro con brio 9'00
2. II. Adagio con grand Espressione 6'44
3. III. Finale. All(e)gro con Spirito 8'47

CD3  51'08
Grosse Sonate pour le Fortepiano composée et dédiée à Mademoiselle Madeleine de Kurzbeck par J.N.Hummel de Vienne Op.20
Sonata No.3 in F minor Op.20
1. I. Allegro Moderato 9'10
2. II. Adagio Maestoso - attacca 6'56
3. III. Presto - Ancor più presto 4'49

Costantino Mastroprimiano fortepiano
Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837) is a name that’s usually found in conjunction with other composers of the period, such as Mozart or Beethoven, in relation to whom he always comes across as a rival or an underling: the former with respect to Beethoven and the piano, since both were considered masters in Vienna at the time; and the latter because he studied under Mozart from the age of 8, actually living in his home for two years.

Hummel’s unfailing devotion to Mozart comes across clearly in his compositions. His piano works are full of quotations of themes, transcriptions and arrangements that echo the master’s compositions. Evidence of the influence of his teacher goes beyond these homages, however, since Hummel also inherited remarkable skills of improvisation, the fruit of a style of performance and composing that prevailed among keyboard players of the age, although it has yet to be studied in depth by contemporary scholars.

Potential developments in keyboard compositions were often put to the test in improvisations, which were a sort of showcase for musicians. This was common practice for many composers, including Beethoven. The forms of improvisation that worked best were then perfected in written compositions that were ultimately printed. As the spread of music publishing evolved, composers often lived far away from the musicians who played their works. To make sure that what they had in mind was clear to all performers, they increasingly tended to enrich their scores with notes, symbols and indications.

Another musician to play a concrete role in Hummel’s musical education was Haydn, from whom he learnt to use the Ars Rhetorica, as his Sonatas clearly reveal. The main body of these works consists of the 6 Sonatas – Op.2 No.3, Op.13, Op.20, Op.38, Op.81 and Op.106, written between 1792 and 1824. In addition there are also the solo version of the Sonata Op.92 four hands, 3 others of uncertain attribution and the original, unpublished version of Sonata Op.20.

In his Sonatas Hummel was able to experiment with new approaches to the piano and other instruments. The most “modern” of these solutions were then faithfully recorded in his Method for piano, published in 1828. This is a theoretical work with practical implications in which the author attempts to describe not only the correct mechanical approach to playing the notes, but also the overall musical intent.

A feature typical of the Viennese school was discourse, meaning not so much melody as the sense of a spoken inflection in the musical line by means of which certain syntactic and rhetorical devices could be borrowed from speech and applied to sound. This included the practice of Decoration typical of the Biedermeier style.

It is significant the Hummel did not only use Viennese instruments (Walter, C. Graf), but also owned an Erard (now kept at the Hummel Museum in Bratislava), which speaks for his vision as a composer for the piano. Indeed, he was a true piano authority. Liszt (or his father Adam) was keen to study with him, though in the end he fell back on Carl Czerny. As for Schubert, who appreciated the degree of compositional complexity achieved by the school of Hummel, he resolved to dedicate his last three piano sonatas to him. Chopin and Schumann also owed a great deal to him, especially in their early works.

Despite such widespread acclaim, however, in time the popularity of Hummel’s works began to wane, as piano playing tended to become less conceptual and more spectacular. Certain lesser compositions remained in the repertoire, though in general they were considered merely decorative and somewhat dated. For example, the Italian pianist Dino Ciani included the Sonata Op.13 in his programme for a recital held in Milan in July 1966.

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Translation by Kate Singleton
Costantino Mastroprimiano today represents a singular personality in the scene of the fortepiano. After his studies of piano and chamber music with M. Marvulli, Guido Agosti and Riccardo Brengola, he decided to devote himself to the study of the fortepiano.

He has recorded a varied discography (Tactus and Brilliant Classics). Absolute reference is complete recording of the sonatas of Muzio Clementi (18 CDs for Brilliant Classics).

Prompt for its results at festivals and seasons in Italy (Accademia Filarmonica Romana, I Concerti della Normale di Pisa, Società del Quartetto di Milano, Accademia Cristofori di Firenze etc) and Europe (Les Nuits de Septembre – Liège, Noites de Queluz, Uni Mozarteum – Salzburg, etc.)

He is Professor of fortepiano at the Conservatoire of Perugia and visiting professor at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Den Haag, Universitat – Mozarteum Salzburg and other important institutions.

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