



Tchaikovsky Dumka. Six morceaux op.19. Deux morceaux op.10. Grand Sonata in G major op.37. Dmitri Rachmanov (pf).

Vista Vera WCD-00097 79 minutes

Notwithstanding *that* concerto's unassailable place in the repertoire, the one hundred or so solo pieces Tchaikovsky wrote for the instrument mostly inhabit the piano literature's byways. Often written to order for the lucrative amateur market, the composer himself had a low opinion of them and in this recital Dmitry Rachmanov couples some of these underrated 'cash converter' miniatures with the epic rhetoric of the Grand Sonata.

Dumka is probably Tchaikovsky's most substantial miniature and Rachmanov certainly captures the rustic, 'dirt-under-the-fingernails' character the piece demands; the sprightly peasant dance pungently folksy and his delivery of the sombre first motif highly atmospheric. Rachmanov confirms his sure-footed way with the idiom in the set of six *Morceaux op.19*; 'Réveries du soir' for instance displaying a simple, unforced intimacy while the likes of 'Scherzo humoristique' and 'Capriccioso' find him responsive to the charm and mood change these pearls require.

In the Grand Sonata op.37—Tchaikovsky's self-conscious attempt at a 'big' piano work - the writing is ratcheted up to the symphonic scale. Not the first to plead advocacy for this flawed creation, the disjointed sprawl of the first movement proves a little too much for Rachmanov in terms of sustaining forward momentum and in the Andante the undermining whiff of the prosaic is never far away. That said, Rachmanov makes the most of Tchaikovsky's quicksilver charm in the Scherzo and in the finale the virtuosic sections and Russian song element are artfully jockeyed to end on a buoyant note.

So, while Rachmanov is by no means an unconvincing evangeliser for this curate's egg, I prefer Ginsburg, Richter or, more recently, the excellent Ayako Uehara. This particular disc's strengths lie in the variegated moods of the smaller pieces and it is to these I shall return. The liner notes (penned by Rachmanov) are informative, while Vista Vera's recorded sound has a slightly dry, 'drawing-room' edge.

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