



Elisso Bolkvadze plays Prokofiev and Schubert

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Classica – le meilleur de la musique classique & de la hi-fi n° 175 septembre 2015 (Stéphane Friedrich - 2015.09.01)



De Prokofiev, elle ressent l'oeuvre de manière viscérale. [...] Il est dommage que la discographie de cette artiste soit aussi peu étoffée ... Un album magnifique.

Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.

Der neue Merker September 2015 (Dr. Ingobert Waltenberger - 2015.09.01)



Die große Überraschung der Neuerscheinung bilden [...] die vier wahrlich traumhaften gespielten Impromptus von Schubert. Bei allem experimentellen Gestus und verzweifelter Suche nach pianistischen Neuland der Komposition (der große Beethoven lässt grüßen) ist kaum eine heutig wienerischere Wiedergabe denkbar.

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Fanfare February 2016 (Huntley Dent - 2016.02.01)



The Russian school of pianism rolls forward like an Energizer Bösendorfer bunny, apparently unstoppable. Not that I'd ever want it to stop, as evidenced by Georgian pianist Elisso Bolkvadze, whose powerful, charismatic playing stands on the same level as the far more famous YouTube sensation Valentina Lisitsa. Born in Tblisi in 1967, Bolkvadze is referred to as a national hero in her native Georgia, and she's been named a UNESCO Artist for Peace. If U.S. audiences aren't likely to know her name, she's performed around the world and placed sixth in the 1989 Van Cliburn Competition. Besides making an early album for Sony, there has been a steady stream of later recordings.

What sealed my enthusiasm for this new release was unexpected, a galvanizing reading of the Prokofiev Second Piano Sonata from 1912. We find the composer half-perched as bratty precocious Modernist—at 21, he was already a prominent member of St. Petersburg's contemporary music culture—and an extremely knowing writer for piano, well on his way to developing a unique personal style. The Second Sonata, which stands in sequence between the scandalously raucous Piano Concertos Nos. 1 and 2,

roams freely from Chopin through Liszt and Rachmaninoff, adding zingers and flashes of dissonance that must have sounded incongruous at the time. These innovations are squibs compared with the bombshell Stravinsky would drop the next year in *Le Sacre*, and it's difficult to bring out a sharp profile for the whole work.

Bolkvadze manages to, however, by force of will, playing the first movement on a grander scale than, say Yefim Bronfman in his well-regarded Sony recording from 1995. At times he's freer and more imaginative in his phrasing, but Bolkvadze has more impact. Prokofiev introduces fine-textured filigree as a contrast with power in the first movement, and Bolkvadze makes the two fit naturally together. There's also more energy and personality throughout than with Bronfman.

Being a natural at Prokofiev has no predictive value in Schubert, and no matter how hard I squinted, the two composers don't really belong together. Except for Richter, I don't think of Russians pianists being very attuned to Schubert (even Horowitz made a hash of the late, great B♭ Sonata, on DG). The first set of *Four Impromptus*, D 899, is much loved and much recorded, so what does Bolkvadze have to add? Happily, she passes the bar insofar as her Schubert genuinely sounds like Schubert in its sensitivity, natural flow, and melodic grace. This is immediately apparent in her poised, tender reading of *Impromptu No. 1 in C Minor*.

I don't hear Brendel's refinement of touch, but I'm not sure that's a lack; for all its fame, Brendel's Schubert mostly strikes me as too cool and objective (although his Philips recording of the *Impromptus* is a standout). When an obscure pianist like Bolkvadze competes with great names, you wait for the moment when her imagination or technique falters in comparison. But it doesn't. She builds the *C-Minor Impromptu* to a powerful climax that does justice to Richter's impassioned Schubert, in fact.

Everything goes just as well in the remaining three pieces. In *Impromptu No. 2* her left hand could spring the rhythm with more verve as the right hand is racing along. The middle section is considerably more forceful than the norm, but I count that a plus. This is a pianist with all the intrinsic style that the Russian school stands for, who also adds a lyricism and tenderness, beautifully exemplified in *Impromptu No. 3's* enchanting melody, that even some illustrious Russian pianists didn't possess.

It's a delight to encounter, by chance, really, such a mature artist. Despite the chalk-and-cheese coupling of composers and the skimpy total timing, this recital disc is one to place on a short list of the year's best. Clear, realistic piano sound; slimline cardboard packaging.

Gramophone October 2015 (Patrick Rucker - 2015.10.01)

GRAMOPHONE
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Until now, the Georgian pianist Elisso Bolkvadze has recorded primarily for the Sony Classical Infinity Digital and Cascavelle labels. On her latest release, for Audite, she makes a number of highly original interpretative choices.

Her approach to the opening of Prokofiev's 1912 *Second Sonata* is redolent of Scriabin – plush, full-sounding and rife with detail. The rhythmic vitality of the *Scherzo* becomes waylaid by explorations of colouristic ornament and the misty haze enveloping the slow movement feels more French than Russian. The *moto perpetuo* of the finale rattles along at a splendid clip until it too is bogged down in an expressively overgrown contrasting section. In place of Prokofiev's brightly unambiguous colours and rhythmic elan vital, we encounter over-stuffed decor and aching expressivity.

The Schubert *Impromptus* are prevailingly lyrical, though the rhetorical eloquence and emotional urgency of each is diminished by indecisive rhythmic underpinning. For all its admirably vivid contrasts, the *C minor Impromptu* seems to wander, uncertain of its ultimate goal. The *E flat Impromptu* comes off as more notey

than•fleet, while the abandon of its contrasting section is impeded by undue focus on inner voices. The golden melody of the beloved G flat major threatens to come untethered and float into the ether for lack of an adequately anchoring bass.

Throughout the disc, Bolkvadze's undeniably sensitive playing moves note to note. We are invited to admire each tree, if not each individual leaf, heedless of the magnificent forest surrounding us. Combined with a certain stylistic ambiguity with regard to both composers, the result lacks a strong personal stamp, prompting the question of just how fully Bolkvadze inhabits the music she plays.

As for alternatives in this music, both Frederic Chiu (Harmonia Mundi - nla) and Anne-Marie McDermott's complete Prokofiev cycles are of sustaining interest and Pletnev has a great deal to say in the Second Sonata. In the more personal realm of Schubert preferences, the performances of D899 by Maria-Joao Pires, Imogen Cooper and Vassily Primakov are more compelling.

Mezzo 03.10.2016, 17:50 - 19:15 Uhr (- 2016.10.03)
source: <http://www.tvspielfilm.de/tv-programm/se...>



BROADCAST

Elisso Bolkvadze joue Mozart, Schubert, Sogny et Prokofiev

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Mezzo Sa 22.10. 10:35 - 12:00 (- 2016.10.22)
source: <http://www.tvspielfilm.de/tv-programm/se...>



BROADCAST

Elisso Bolkvadze joue Mozart, Schubert, Sogny et Prokofiev

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Pianiste n° 94 Bimestriel septembre-octobre 2015 (S.F. - 2015.09.01)



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Piano News Januar/Februar 1/2016 (Carsten Dürer - 2016.01.01)



Wenn es zu den Sonaten Sergei Prokofiews kommt, muss der Interpret das Changieren zwischen Zynismus, Sarkasmus und lyrischer Ästhetik beherrschen, Gemütszustände wie Wut und Trauer zum Ausdruck bringen. Genau dies vermag die Georgierin Elisso Bolkvadze eindringlich! Ihre empathische Interpretation der 2. Sonate des jungen Prokofiew atmet den Geist der Zeit. Sie lässt dabei durchaus ihren eigenen Gedanken Raum, forciert und rafft Tempi, doch immer mit dem Blick, jede Nuance transparent mit gutem Klanggespür ins rechte Licht zu rücken. Das ist brillantes Spiel.

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Pizzicato 10/09/2015 (Guy Engels - 2015.09.10)



Filigran und einfühlsam

Seit Januar ist die georgische Pianistin Elisso Bolkvadze UNESCO-Botschafterin für den Frieden. Nun hat sie die damals angekündigte Einspielung mit Prokofiews 2. Sonate und Schuberts Impromptus vorgelegt – eine Aufnahme, in der sie sich als äußerst einfühlsame, sensible Künstlerin verbirgt. Ihr leichter, differenzierter, stets pulsierender Anschlag verleiht Prokofiews anklagender, tragischer Musik viel innere Energie und Spannung. Er verdeutlicht die Achterbahn der Gefühle, die den Komponisten beim Schreiben der Sonate begleitet haben muss. Lediglich im Vivace-Satz mit den stets wiederkehrenden, hämmernden Schicksalschlägen, hätten wir uns eine weniger zahme, mehr virulente Lektüre gewünscht.

Dies scheint jedoch nicht das Naturell der Künstlerin zu sein, die sich in Schuberts Impromptus vor allem von ihrer lyrischen Seite zeigt. Elisso Bolkvadze hat einen ganz entspannten Zugang zu Schubert – unaffektiert, ohne romantisches Brimborium. Ganz selbstverständlich perlt die Musik aus ihren Fingern in den Melodienkaskaden der Impromptus 2 und 4. Dazwischen setzt Elisso Bolkvadze mit kräftigeren Konturen die passenden Kontraste – etwa in der Beethovenschen Schicksalhaftigkeit von Impromptu 1 oder im Mittelteil von Impromptu 4.

Mostly lyrical and thoughtful performances, very suitable for Schubert, a bit too kind for Prokofiev. Yet, at the end, one has a very positive impression from the very sensitive Elisso Bolkvadze.

Stereoplay 09|2016 (Lothar Brandt - 2016.09.01)



HighClass in HiRes

So vital und explosiv die Künstlerin Prokofieff abfeuert, so traumhaft und graziös findet sie den Weg in Schuberts zum Teil ja auch suchende, experimentelle Klangwelt.

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www.artalinna.com 1 décembre 2015 (Jean-Charles Hoffelé - 2015.12.01)



Grand écart

Pas pour Elisso Bolkvadze que je suis si heureux de retrouver dans ce disque où elle fait le grand écart entre Prokofiev et Schubert. Son jeu ample, profond et pourtant alerte, ses timbres si nourris qu'elle hérita de Tatiana Nikolayeva, mais sa touche si fusante tombent parfaitement dans l'écriture iconoclaste qui fait tout le sel de cette grande Sonate – près de vingt minutes – constituée par quatre pièces de caractère dont il faut pouvoir capturer les humeurs.

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www.classical.net 01.11.2015 (Robert Cummings - 2015.11.01)



Graffman, Richter, Glemser and many others have offered fine accounts of this sonata, but this one by Bolkvadze is also a worthy entry, particularly notable for its highly imaginative third movement. Prokofiev mavens will certainly want this.

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www.ilcorrieremusicale.it 14 ottobre 2015 (Santi Calabrò - 2015.10.14)



Ai nostri giorni, tuttavia, Prokofiev non ha bisogno di essere legittimato: ormai viene unanimemente considerato un grande del Novecento, nessuno può metterlo in questione, e da un talento come la pianista georgiana Elisso Bolkvadze può arrivare perciò una chiave di lettura diversa.

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