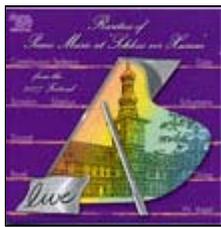




Rarities of Piano Music - Live recordings from the 2007 Festival at Schloss vor Husum - Works of GRIEG, VOGEL, EISLER, MEDTNER, CHOPIN, RAVEL, **SCRIABIN**, SIBELIUS, CASTELNUOVO-TEDESCO, DOUCET, JURMANN, STANCHINSKY - Danacord

*An annual festival in Germany dedicated to rare works of the past for the piano.*



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First, since the note booklet is no help, Husum is a German town on the North Sea south of Denmark. In 1987 a festival was launched there dedicated solely to rare works for piano, at a time when the major labels were concentrating mainly on the core repertory. Since then many small classical labels have sprung up or expanded their coverage of rare repertory - different from new compositions. And other festivals have offered programs in this esoteric area.

Evidently a compilation CD of prime selections from the live recitals at Husum are released each year, and this is the one for last year. Nearly all the short works are fascinating and make me want to hear the entire series. Several of the composers are extremely well known, but their selections are not. Grieg arranged three of his own songs for piano solo, and these are some lovely melodies. The little ten-minute ballet suite for piano by Ravel was composed early on, when he was a student of Faure. *Parade* sounds nothing like later Ravel and has no connection with Satie's later ballet score with the same name. Scriabin's *Nocturne in D flat Major* was written after the composer injured his right arm in a carriage accident. It is an early work, showing a strong Chopin influence.

The Castelnuovo-Tedesco piece, *Voce luntana*, is a sequence of five short pieces subtitled *Rapsodia napoletana*, and one of the Neapolitan traditional songs quoted had been recorded by Caruso. The first of the two lighter final selections is for me the gem of the entire CD: An arrangement by the Belgian composer Clement Doucet - who was a close friend of Gershwin's - turns the famous *Liebestod* from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* into a stride piano fox-trot! Wagnerians may be shocked, but I was captivated. The works from both the big names and the unknowns are all attractive, sometimes exciting, and always interesting.

- John Sunier

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