

LUCIA NEGRO has been described in reviews as a "very precise, articulate and technically accomplished" pianist, whose interpretations are "intimate, alive, dynamic and profound". Today Lucia Negro is one of Sweden's leading pianists. She has worked with conductors such as Kyrill Kondrashin, Rafael Kubelik and Esa-Pekka Salonen as well as instrumentalists like Frans Helmerson, Jaap Schröder, Nils-Erik Sparf and Arve Tellefsen. She has recorded some twenty records, many of them with music by Swedish composers such as Kraus, Rosenberg, Blomdahl, and others. She has also made an internationally acclaimed recording of Stenhammar's complete works for solo piano. Future projects include recordings of Swedish female turn-of-the-century composers and chamber music by Stenhammar. Lucia Negro was born in Italy in 1938. After studying at the conservatory in Naples she received her diploma with highest honours in piano, composition and conducting. She later studied for Carlo Zecchi and Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli amongst others. She received much

attention at international competitions in the 1960s and was awarded a first prize in sight-reading in München in 1965. Three years later she settled in Sweden. She has appeared both with piano evenings and as soloist with orchestras in several countries. In Sweden, she has had several concerts and appeared on both radio and television. Lucia Negro has been pianist at the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic Orchestra since 1982. In the Spring of 1994 she was elected a fellow of the Stockholm Royal Musical Academy.

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SCD 1053



LUCIA NEGRO
plays
TCHAIKOVSKY

Piano Sonata
op. postum
Grand Sonata
op. 37



TCHAIKOVSKY

Much has been written about Tchaikovsky as a person – his emotional distress, his repressed homosexuality, his presumed suicide – but the fact remains that he was first and foremost a hard-working craftsman. He sat down with inkpot, pen and paper and composed for six hours every day for more than thirty years: “To me, work is the greatest good... without work, sadness and melancholy would take the upper hand”, he explained. This dedication resulted in a large body of work. We all know the first piano concerto, the violin concerto, the six symphonies and the great ballets, but the piano music is surprisingly unknown. Some pieces from the Seasons are regularly played but the piano sonatas very seldom are. They have been put at a disadvantage and unfairly judged. It is high time that they were rehabilitated.

The two sonatas are separated by a span of thirteen years and considerable personal development. The sonata in C sharp minor was written by a young and

hopeful twenty-five year-old in his second year at the St Petersburg Conservatory. This student’s work was only published in 1900, hence the later erroneous designation op. 80. In this piece, Tchaikovsky has not yet developed his own tone language, but the sonata is full of “lyrical ideas” and beautiful themes. The sonata in C sharp minor is in many respects representative of 19th century salon music, composed as it is in the shadow of Chopin and Schumann. It starts off with a first movement that is both captivating and melancholy, followed by a sonorous andante with glittering arpeggios and sharply contrasted fanfares. The third movement is a playful, dancing, scherzo that Tchaikovsky was so pleased with it that he included it in his first symphony a year later. The finale, however, is problematic: though powerful and strong-willed, it does not know where it is heading. The ideas are bunched together into something that occasionally resembles a series of musical collisions. Perhaps Tchaikovsky finally gave up: the sonata ends abruptly and unexpectedly.

Tchaikovsky wrote the sonata in G major during five months in 1878. Only a year had passed since his catastrophic marriage to Antonina Milyukova. Tchaikovsky had probably hoped to soften the guilt and shame concerning his homosexuality with the marriage, but he had a nervous breakdown after only three weeks, and left the persistent Antonina. He fled to Switzerland where he lived on funds provided by his reclusive patron Nadezhda Von Meck. He returned to Russia after having finished the fourth symphony, the opera Eugene Onegin and the violin concerto. The piano sonata in G major was ready in August of 1878. If one expects a full-bodied, romantic, soulful confession one will be surprised. Sentiment has been overpowered by philosophy: the central idea in the sonata is battle, and stubborn repetition is its stylistic means. The rhythmic tenacity of the first bars already indicate the tone. This theme is frequently recurrent, as if Tchaikovsky wanted to test its capacity and break new ground. A Liszt-inspired gypsy theme breaks the tension, as well as some lyrical digressions, but the

introductory theme, engine-like, soon takes control again. The fascinating futuristic music must have seemed brutal and curious to a contemporary audience. The melancholy andante shows kinship with Chopin’s prelude in E minor, while the scherzo, with its clever shifts and single-minded, ravaging progression, paves the way for the final movement, a rondo that unflaggingly grips the listener. Phrases and themes are repeated and tried, and the battle between the composer and his material is occasionally evocative of Beethoven. The whole sonata throbs with Tchaikovsky’s decision to carry on struggling and never surrender. But the finale is ambiguous. The theme in the last few bars could just as well be a triumphant fanfare as a sorrowful quotation of Chopin’s Funeral March.

Stefan Nävermyr

Translation: Isabel Thomson