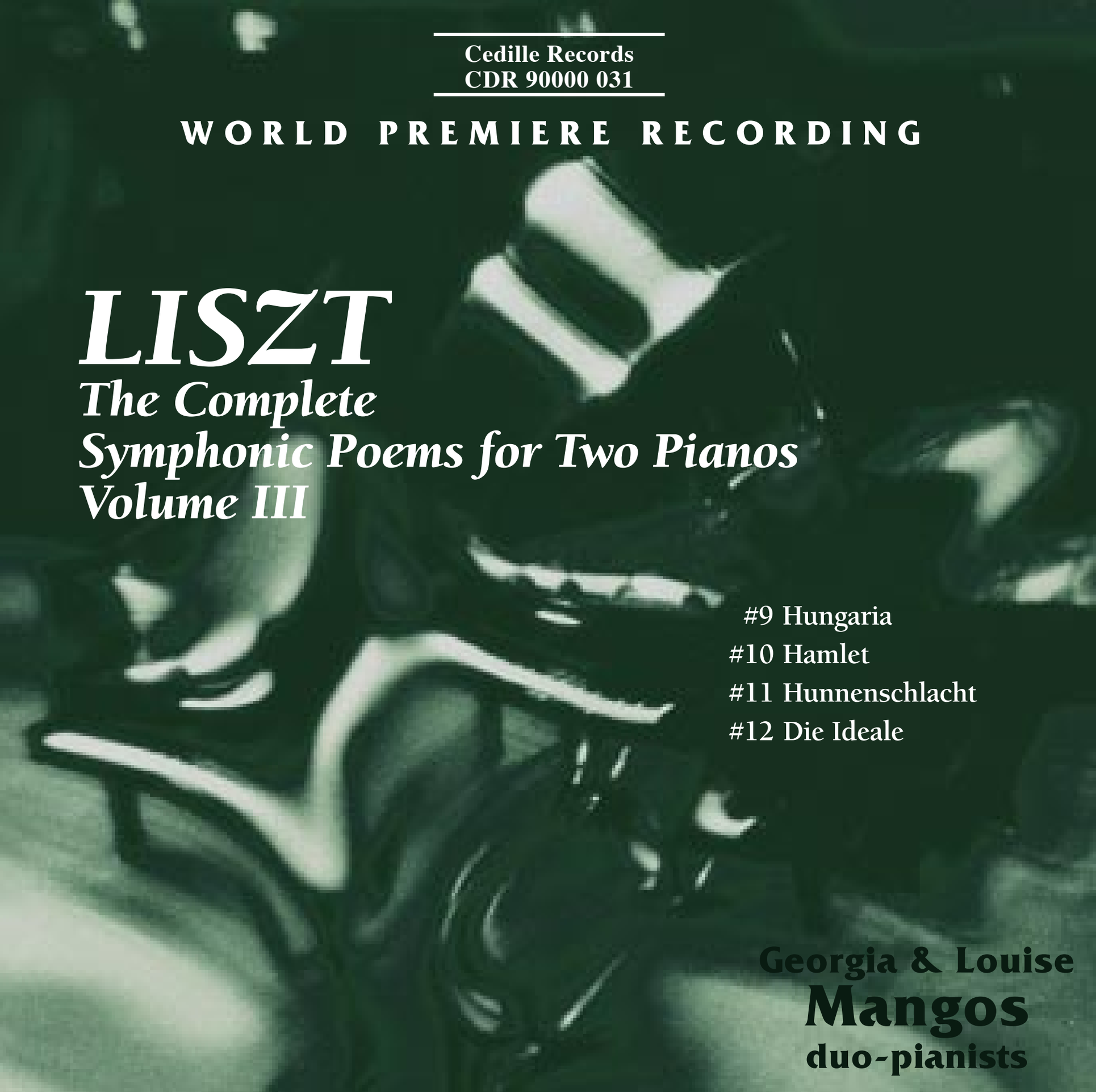

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WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

LISZT

The Complete Symphonic Poems for Two Pianos Volume III

#9 Hungaria
#10 Hamlet
#11 Hunnenschlacht
#12 Die Ideale

Georgia & Louise
Mangos
duo-pianists

DDD *Absolutely Digital* CDR 90000 031

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING

THE SYMPHONIC POEMS FOR ORCHESTRA OF FRANZ LISZT AS TRANSCRIBED FOR TWO PIANOS BY THE COMPOSER

1. Hungaria (17:25)
2. Hamlet (12:02)
3. Hunnenschlacht (12:48)
4. Die Ideale (22:32)

Georgia & Louise Mangos, duo-pianists **TT: (65:17)**

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Franz Liszt: Evangelical Priest of Music

Robert Silverman

Thomas Edison said genius is "one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." While this may be as close as one can get to defining the term in general, it hardly begins to explain the incredible combination of skills that Franz Liszt displayed. Liszt's prowess as a performer — perhaps the greatest pianist who ever lived — is the stuff of legend. He could read at sight handwritten manuscripts that others would find illegible; and his ability to memorize vast amounts of music undoubtedly indicates a photographic memory. But it was as a composer that his inborn skills truly eclipsed those of mere mortals.

Like Mozart, Liszt would often have a piece fully conceptualized in his mind before he began writing. A visitor to Liszt's apartment reported that while he chatted with the composer he noticed Liszt writing an orchestral score, working vertically: instead of drafting the melodic line first and then filling out the accompanying parts, Liszt was working up from the lowest instruments in the orchestra, simply putting notes on paper as quickly as possible.

While Liszt orchestrated a few early orchestral works with the help of others, it appears that nearly all of Liszt's subsequent compositions, transcriptions, arrangements, and adaptations were written in his own hand. Liszt would often ask his best pupils to check his proofs (this was a prudent idea, since it is difficult for a composer to detect his mistakes: his ear will frequently deceive his eyes as he hears the "correct" notes). Still, just putting all those hundreds of thousands of notes to paper would be a Herculean task for any scribe, much less a composer who has to invent the notes first!

Liszt's status as a celebrity and "sex symbol" is legendary. Among the pupils at his famous master classes (a concept he originated) were many young women, most of whom were allowed to audit the class, but who never played for Liszt. When the pianist, conductor, and critic Hans van Bülow took over Liszt's class for a short time, he attempted to weed out the hangers-on, but Liszt soon allowed them to return. Tales of his affairs with women traveled far, not always with the approbation of other musicians. Clara Schumann so disapproved of Liszt's behavior that it colored her appreciation of his music. Liszt was nonetheless always generous and kind to the Schumanns, frequently playing Robert's music and inviting Clara to perform with him when he was conducting.

Of course, Liszt's aesthetic differences with the Schumanns ran deeper than this. Liszt, Wagner, and their fellow travelers were said to represent Zukunftsmusik — the music of the future — which referred both to a highly chromatic treatment of tonality, and a synthesis of music with other arts such as literature. This group contended that music was an expression in sound of human emotion, and therefore could incorporate aspects of "narrative" in order to represent such emotion (the idea of the "symphonic poem" is an outgrowth of this syncretic concept of art). The Schumanns' side must have seemed conservative by comparison. While adherents of the two camps exchanged angry words, Liszt's personal gentleness allowed him to rise above the fray.

Liszt's fabulous success occurred during a period of tremendous growth for concert music. The gradual transformation of serious music as a means of entertainment for large numbers of people coincided with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. As more people began to acquire a modicum of wealth, the acquisition of a piano became a stamp of middle-class legitimacy. "Proper" young women began to

play piano, and the teaching of piano became a flourishing profession. Competition between piano manufacturers became fierce. Simultaneously, piano companies added technical innovations as prices came down. As the piano became the center of home entertainment, new audiences were created for the music of the great composers, and more and larger concert halls were built. Also, transcriptions of larger works for solo piano or piano four-hands became common practice. Brahms, for example, transcribed many of his symphonies, concertos, chamber works, and songs for solo piano and four-hands. For Liszt, however, the importance of piano transcription ran much deeper.

If ever there was an "evangelical priest" of music, it was Franz Liszt. (Liszt was deeply imbued to the Catholic faith from childhood. In the last years of his life he went so far as to take priestly orders to the fourth degree (there are seven orders) but stopped there: reaching the fourth degree allowed him to wear the priestly habit but did not require celibacy). Already as a young virtuoso, Liszt evinced a deep sense of mission. He considered it his responsibility to spread the word on behalf of other composers. From his pen came an immense outpouring of transcriptions and arrangements for the keyboard of songs and orchestral works of composers both "major" and "minor". Today it is hard to imagine that much of the music of Beethoven and Schubert was still not widely known to musical connoisseurs in the middle of the nineteenth century. Liszt did much to popularize their music with piano transcriptions such as those of all nine Beethoven symphonies. Liszt also transcribed much of his own music for keyboard, including the Symphonic Poems. Most of Liszt's self-transcriptions were for solo piano, but there are at least twenty-three transcriptions for two pianos, and numerous transcriptions for four hands.

Liszt's two-piano transcriptions of his tone poems are monumental in scope. These major works take on a whole new meaning when the musical palette is pared down to its essentials. The architecture and various melodic strands are clear to the ear, and are as refreshing as the transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies. Yet the use of two pianos allows for great outpourings of sound — comparable to that of a full orchestra. Like the Beethoven symphony transcriptions, the Symphonic Poem transfers are true to the source. Only a true master of the keyboard could so successfully re-engineer such orchestral monuments as piano transcriptions. This genius is most evident in the last four tone poems: *Hungaria*, *Hamlet*, *Hunnenschlacht*, and *Die Ideale*.

For more than twenty years, Robert Silverman was editor and publisher of The Piano Quarterly. As a composer Silverman is known for his score to the ballet Persephone, choreographed by Robert Joffrey and performed by the Joffrey Ballet. As director of publications at several major music publishers, Silverman published music of Sessions, Dello Joio, Gould and many other American composers. Now in his retirement, he still adjudicates piano competitions, writes articles, and serves on the boards of several music organizations. Mr. Silver-

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

Georgia and Louise Mangos

Symphonic Poem No. 9: *Hungaria* (1854)

This symphonic poem was composed in response to the poem of homage that Mihaly Vorosmarty addressed to Liszt in 1840 for his first and most triumphant return to Hungary (he left as a child prodigy in 1821). His return was so cherished that the nation presented him with its famous "Sword of Honor".

Of all the symphonic poems, Hungaria reflects

most directly the Hungarian elements of Liszt's compositional style, and even shares material with his nationalistic Heroic March. Its long rhapsodic sections are reminiscent of Gypsy violins, while the central march theme reflects Hungary's native music in both rhythmic shape and tonal structure. Its lyrically improvisatory nature makes it sound much like an expanded version of one of the Hungarian Rhapsodies.

The sectional headings in the score give the impression of a war legend, and the music supports this idea. The soulful opening laments suggest an outcry from Hungary's oppressed masses. The various "March" sections that follow imply a "call to arms". Several battles ensue, marked by increasingly powerful climaxes. Liszt accelerates tempo and volume through octave doubling and registral changes as the battles become more frequent and intense. A tender tribute to those lost follows. This section, titled "Funeral March", contains a gorgeous single-voiced melody first heard in the bass. When this melody is transposed up several octaves, it suggests a wailing cry for those fallen in battle. A final march sequence occurs with a stunning crescendo of matched chromatic octaves between the two pianos culminating in the "Allegro Trionfante" section, marking the soldiers' triumphant return. The final "Presto Giocoso" presents a playful Hungarian folk melody and ends with a military flourish.

This most exciting work enthralled the audience at its premiere on September 8, 1856, when Liszt conducted the symphonic version at the Hungarian National Theatre. Liszt wrote afterwards, "There was better than applause. All wept, both men and women!" As performers, we feel the excitement behind this work will not diminish in the years to come.

Symphonic Poem No. 10: *Hamlet*

This is a remarkable work for several reasons. First, the poem deals with the psychological profile of Hamlet as a character, not just the well-known story line. The work is also fascinating for what is not there: it is relatively short in length and spare in texture — a distinct departure from Liszt's tendency towards large, unfolding forms. The frequent silences and dramatic pauses are breathtaking, while the sparse textures (outside the Allegro sections) are almost otherworldly in atmosphere. This ethereal quality baffled most conductors and listeners in Liszt's time. Hans von Bülow, a student and strong supporter of Liszt, wrote of conducting Hamlet: "Frankly, I do not regard myself as sufficiently capable of interpreting [Hamlet] as [it] require[s]". Later Bülow pronounced the piece "unperformable".

Although Hamlet does not conclude the cycle of twelve symphonic poems from the Weimar period numerically, Liszt wrote it last, after seeing the play performed in Weimar in 1856. Liszt conceived the piece as an overture to the play, but it was never performed as such. Its first performance did not come until 1876 at Sonderhausen, more than twenty years after its composition.

The depiction of the play's action is not essential to the music; rather, the work deals with how Hamlet's mind is tormented by his father's murder. The opening statement sounds fearful and uncertain; it seems to ask, "Who goes there?" The rumblings of the second piano part give a ghostly response: the voice of Hamlet's father. As in the opening of the Allegro Appasionato ed Agitato Assai section, it creeps up on the listener, only to unleash a whirlwind of octaves. The triplet theme that follows evokes a sense of inevitability, as though Hamlet's actions are fated long before they happen. Hamlet's ghostly father is always with him, reminding him and demanding that he take action.

At the end of the second large Allegro section, the murder of Claudius is portrayed. Strident, crashing chords depict the violence of Hamlet's action, followed by a long silence. The question-

ing theme returns, and once again the otherworldly rumbles respond: the ghost is still with us. After the pesante lugubre "fate" theme, a death-rattle-like tremolo is followed by high-pitched unison octaves, sounding more like a shriek of horror than notes from a piano! The plaintive, questioning theme and deadly dark response return. There is a final shriek of horror, followed by two unison octaves and a final silence. Is this simply Hamlet's death, or the ghosts of his uncle and father driving him to madness? The listener must decide.

Symphonic Poem No. 11: *Hunnenschlacht*

Written in 1857, Hunnenschlacht (Huns' Battle) was inspired by a huge William von Kaulbach mural, depicting the 451 A.D. battle between the pagan Huns under Attila and the Christian forces of Emperor Theodoric for the capture of Rome. Kaulbach's works were of such keen interest to Liszt that he once considered writing a series of tone poems after the painter's frescoes, which included Tower of Babylon, Nimrod, Jerusalem, and The Glory of Greece. The battle represented in the Hunnenschlacht fresco is said to have been so fierce that the spirits of the dead were seen continuing to fight in the sky. Liszt had originally intended to depict that idea, but later decided instead to end the work with a full-blown version of the chorale Crux fidelis to represent the victorious Christians.

The work is in two large sections. The first depicts the battle itself, with militaristic themes and horn call motifs thrown wildly back and forth between pianists. The second section develops the chorale theme. One of the most striking moments comes as the music divides into two seemingly separate compositions. One features dotted rhythms that continue the feel of battle, while the other presents an ancient plainchant theme — calm in the midst of a storm of chaos. The effect is most powerful.

Symphonic Poem No. 12: *Die Ideal*

Die Ideal, written in 1857, was first performed (along with the Faust Symphony) at a concert in Weimar in honor of the laying of the foundation stone for a memorial to Goethe's patron, Grand Duke Karl August, and the unveiling of memorials to Goethe, Schiller, and Wieland. Various excerpts of Schiller's poem of the same name appear throughout the score. They guide us through the various moods of the work. Liszt evidently considered his musical intent more important than a faithful account of Schiller's poetry for he changes the order of the poetic selections. Towards the end of the work Liszt even wrote, "I have allowed to add to Schiller's poem by repeating the motifs of the first movement joyously and assertively as an apotheosis." The ending departs totally in intent from Schiller's. It is here that we realize we are learning more about Liszt's personal journey than Schiller's.

The opening section represents the joy of youth, when one is filled with courage, never fearing tomorrow's hurdles. Then come disappointments: loves lost, friends who were not faithful, and the fear of being alone. The final section, Apotheose, is where Liszt departs from Schiller's poem. Here, Liszt elevates the soul of a mortal to that of a God. This is mankind's shining moment, when he sheds his fear of extinction and becomes immortal. Liszt was conscious of his role as a great composer and pianist and wanted to project the idea that his work would survive and become even more vital as time passed.

Returning Liszt's two-piano versions of the twelve symphonic poems from the Weimar period to the concert repertoire has been a long and thrilling journey for us. Having completed the "tour", we are convinced that these landmark works are as vibrant and emotionally compelling as ever.

Georgia & Louise Mangos

Photo: Erik S. Lieber

About the Music

This is third of three CDs comprising first-ever recordings of Franz Liszt's own two-piano transcriptions of his Twelve Symphonic Poems for orchestra. Until recently, even most Liszt scholars were not aware of these transcriptions. The repertoire on this disc constitutes a major historic find, as well as a spectacular addition to the literature for two pianos.

About the Performers

Georgia and Louise Mangos have concertized throughout Europe and the United States, including recitals for the International Chopin Society and performances with the International Chamber Music Festival in Germany and Austria. In 1987, the Mangos sisters had the honor of being selected as one of twelve out of 129 contestant teams to compete in the first Murray Dranoff International Duo-Piano Competition in Miami. The Mangos's many broadcast performances on radio and television have included live performances for Chicago radio station WFMT and an appearance as the selected artists for a television special on duo-pianism for Continental Cablevision.

Chicago area natives, the Mangos are on the piano faculty at Elmhurst College. They have appeared on numerous Chicago area recital series including the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, the Chopin Foundation Concert Series, and the concert series for Chicago's Art Institute. Georgia and Louise have won grants from the Illinois Arts Council, and were chosen to participate in the Illinois Artstour program, a select group of artists that tour the state. The Mangos sisters have earned degrees from the New England Conservatory, Boston University, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. As a two-piano team they continued their studies with Paul Badura-Skoda and Joerg Demus at the Hochschule for Musik in Munich and have coached with Adele Marcus of the Julliard School, Dr. Bela Nagy of Catholic University, and Earl Wild at the University of Ohio, Columbus. Georgia and Louise Mangos are represented by Ovation Management, Chicago, Illinois.

Raves for Volumes I & II (CDR 90000 014/CDR 90000 024)

"An absolutely smashing debut . . . Highest recommendation." — *Fanfare* (on Vol. I)

"Almost surreal musicianship and interpretation are the order of the day on this brilliant CD." — *Chicago Sun-Times* (on Vol. II)

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