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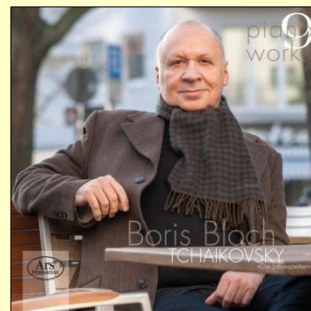
Beethoven: Piano Concertos 1 & 2  
Boris Giltburg; Vasily Petrenko, Royal Liverpool  
Philharmonic (Naxos)

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A welcome early entry in the 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration for Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) is this fine new account of the composer's first two piano concertos with Boris Giltburg on piano and Vasily Petrenko at the podium of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Neither are strangers to this column, where each makes his sixth appearance here in nuanced performances of Beethoven standards that show us we shouldn't take the old boy for granted.

It's well known that Beethoven actually "completed" the published version of Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 19, before he finished No. 1 in C Major, Op. 15. The reason may have been because of differing audience tastes in Leipzig and Vienna, respectively. Beethoven also agonized over the original (1793) Rondo finale of No. 2 before setting it aside entirely in favor of another. In any event, Concerto No. 1, with its open mien and relatively more straightforward appeal to the listener, proved a better calling-card to the world at large.

This concerto, which opens the album, is even sunnier (befitting the traditional sunlight association of the key of C Major), more richly scored and expansive than is No. 2. In his always-perceptive program notes, Giltburg describes the piano part as "richly characterised," right from its very entrance where it discourses on the opening motif set by the orchestra – one long note, followed by three repeated short notes an octave higher (which is virtually impossible to forget!) The slow movement, a Largo filled with poetry and tenderness, has a warmth of lyricism in which the clarinet is often partnered with the piano in a way that Mozart (for instance) was careful to avoid. Here it makes for the kind of personal reverie that is so very typical of Beethoven. The finale is filled with invention, high spirits, and rhythmic hijinks, with even a distant dreamlike melody in



Tchaikovsky, 9 Piano Works, including The Seasons,  
Boris Bloch, piano  
(Ars Produktion)

Boris Bloch, eminent Russian pianist still very much at the height of his powers, returns to a first, enduring love in the music of Peter Illytch Tchaikovsky. Why this composer? "When I listen to Tchaikovsky," Bloch writes, "the beauty, sincerity and simplicity of his melodies touch my soul like no other music." Referring specifically to *The Seasons*, he adds "These pieces, especially played as a cycle, are the finest revelations of Tchaikovsky's intimate lyricism, some of the diary's most deeply felt entries."

High regard for a piano cycle by a composer who himself was never noted as a concert pianist! On the evidence of the selections we have here, that may be more a reflection of Tchaikovsky's habitual reticence as a personality rather than any deficit in his own keyboard skills. On the present album, Bloch presents the composer as one whose knowledge of what the piano could be made to do is so carefully sublimated to the purpose of bringing out the lyricism in the music that we are scarcely aware how technically difficult these pieces really are.

Let's clear away a mis-conception: despite the title, *The Seasons* is really a cycle of 12 lyric pieces celebrating each of the months of the year. Tchaikovsky composed them to be printed in monthly installments in a magazine for music enthusiasts. Despite their journalistic origin, there is nothing pedestrian about this cycle of polished gems, each dealing with the world of nature and typical activities and emotions people might experience in each month of the year, beginning with the deep beauty and warmth of "By the Fireside" (January) the tone of which would have reminded Tchaikovsky's readers of Tatiana's intimate Letter Scene as she daydreams of her lover, the title character of the opera *Eugene Onegin*.

The procession of the months continues with a bustling "Shrovetide Fair" (February), an utterly charming "Song of the Lark" with its evocation of the bird's distinctive

an uncharacteristically slow cadenza before the orchestra swings in again at the very end. ("Sheer fun to perform," observes Giltburg.)

As opposed to the C Major Concerto, which seems to have been born for the greatest popularity, one has to work a little harder to mine the rich vein of ore from No. 2 in B-flat Major, but the reward is well worth the effort. Giltburg describes the music of the opening Allegro con brio as poised perfectly between energetic and elegant, with the piano part at times light-footed, or else ostentatiously virtuosic. The cadenza, which he wrote many years after he published this concerto in 1801, arguably has more to do with his later, more contrapuntal style, but Giltburg and Petrenko are careful to smooth out any potential stylistic incongruities in an attractive cadenza that combines a twilight atmosphere, distant rumbling, and a brilliant set of scales up and down the keyboard before ending quietly and sweetly.

The Adagio combines poetry and tranquility with the tension of a surprisingly dramatic episode before the piano opens up with a beautifully sustained singing tone for which Beethoven was famous (and which, observes Giltburg, was all the more remarkable considering the smaller dynamic range and shorter tone duration of the pianos Beethoven had at his disposal).

For the Rondo finale, Giltburg includes as an extra track in the present album the original 1793 version which Beethoven later removed, probably feeling that its jovial galanterie was out of keeping with the deeply poetic beauty of the preceding Adagio. While fully agreeing with Beethoven's decision to replace this earlier version, Giltburg feels that its infectious, carefree substance makes it ideal as a stand-alone concert piece (currently listed in the catalog as WoO 6). His performance, in which he adds some short transitions and a cadenza following Beethoven's indications, makes a persuasive case for this assessment. At any rate, we are given the replacement Rondo on Track 6 and the 1793 original on Track 7, so you may decide for yourself which you prefer.

song as a chain of notes (March), "Snowdrop," a little flower swaying in the breeze as gracefully as a ballerina (April), and "White Nights", referring to the phenomenon one experiences in St. Petersburg, northernmost of the world's great cities, at a time of year when the sun never dips below the horizon (May).

There follow: "Barcarolle," a gently swaying Venetian boatman's song with rising emotion in the middle (June), "Reapers' Song," evoking the choral scene from Act I of Eugene Onegin (July), "Harvest," with its mood of anticipation in the expectation of bounty (August), "The Hunt," replete with sounds of horns recalling the hunt at the opening of the second act of the Sleeping Beauty ballet (September), and "Autumn Song," filled with the vague nostalgic sadness we might feel at the end of a season (October). "Sleigh Ride" (November) recalls the sort of wintry-weather thrill (hold your sweetheart close!) that you and I will never experience here in Georgia. "On Christmas Eve" (December) depicts the gaiety of a party – in waltz time, of course – on the eve of Christmas Day.

Opposed to The Seasons, new recordings of which keep popping up in my mail, attesting to the increasing popularity of this rediscovered gem, the rest of the pieces in this recital were as little-known to me as they were welcome. "Dumka," which Tchaikovsky subtitled in French *scène rustique russe*, actually has multiple connotations in Russian as reverie, elegy, lament, and meditation. There is much diversity of material in this 9-minute piece that Boris Bloch confesses was "the first piece in my youth that presented me with real technical challenges." The mature Bloch long ago surmounted them, as he does the pleasant hazards of a Natcha-Waltz with exuberantly flowing figurations that still preserves the characteristic waltz tempo. *Momento lirico*, a charming impromptu, is followed by a pleasant *Valse sentimental*, a *Dialogue* that may contain one of the composer's most personal utterances, a whimsically titled *Un poco di Chopin* in the form of a vivacious waltz; and a transcription by Paul Pabst of a very touching *Wiegenlied* (Lullaby).

Summing up, Boris Bloch has drawn a very rich and varied hand of cards for himself in a generous 80-minute program. And he plays it with style.

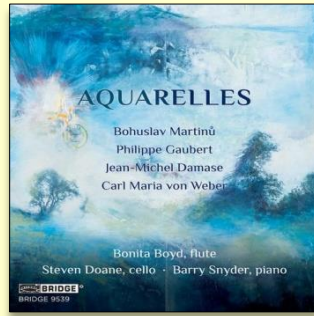


“Reflections 1892,” music by Debussy, Albeniz, Grieg, Brahms  
Uta Weyand, piano  
(Ars Produktion)

Uta Weyand was born to musical parents in Reutlingen, Germany. In the course of her development, the petite pianist has been suspected of having fallen in love with the instrument on which she performs in these recordings, an 1892 Steinway Model B belonging to the House of Hesse-Kassel, and which was much in need of the restoration it received in 2014, financed through private donations and a benefit concert by Weyand herself.

We can readily understand the emotional bond between pianist and instrument when we hear its characteristic tone, full and wide in range, with the capacity for the artist to draw forth a broad spectrum of colors and sonorities and still leave the impression that it has much in reserve. The title of the present album, “Reflections 1892,” refers both to the year of its birth and also the fact that the program is comprised entirely of pieces that were new and exciting at that time.

For instance, we are given Claude Debussy’s Nocturne. The fulness of sound, directness of expression, and strong accents accompanying the melody proclaim the fact that its composer was still very much a romantic and had not yet developed the misty impressionist traits with which we now identify his music. Perhaps “Nocturne” itself is an appropriate metaphor, being both a “night piece” and also a symbol of the end of one day and the dawn of another in the vocabulary of music.



“Aquarelles,” music of Martinů, Gaubert, Damase, Weber  
Bonita Boyd, flute; Steven Doane, cello; Barry Snyder, piano (Bridge)

Flutist Bonita Boyd, cellist Steven Doane, and pianist Barry Snyder have all enjoyed long careers as performers and faculty members at the Eastman School of Music. All appear remarkably youthful in their group picture on the back of the new Bridge CD “Aquarelles.” Is that a tribute to the power of classical music to keep one vitally engaged in a profession? For sure, “Acquarelles” (water colors) lives up to its name as a collection of refreshing exercises in music of two centuries in which an endless assortment of delights and surprises keep popping out at us.

We begin with the 1944 Trio for Flute, Cello, and Piano by Bohuslav Martinů, who was then visiting Tanglewood in the United States. He was in the process of recovering from a bout of depression, no doubt occasioned in part by the fact that his beloved homeland, Czechoslovakia, was still occupied by the Nazis, its fate much in doubt. This finely wrought Trio may have been just the thing to help him through it.

The work is authentic Martinů in its invigorating mix of influences that include French Impressionism, Neo-Classicism, American jazz, and his own Bohemian and Moravian folk idioms. A very attractive work with a wide range of moods, textures, dynamics and rhythmic figurations, it gives all three instruments ample opportunity to make their presence felt. The finale, *Andante-Allegretto scherzando*, is remarkable for its bouncing, whirling, and chirping motives, plus a gentle waltz that



“Klavier Romantik,” Schumann, Brahms, & Chopin  
Shorena Tsintsabadze, piano  
(Ars Produktion)

Shorena Tsintsabadze was born in Moscow to parents from Georgia. She was educated at the Moscow Conservatory where she studied with the late Professor Sergei Dorensky, to whom she dedicates the present album *Klavier Romantik* (Romantic Piano). To this program of works by Schumann, Brahms and Chopin, she gives much of herself in the way of feeling, intelligence, and style.

She begins with Robert Schumann’s Symphonic Etudes, Op. 13, which was first published in 1837. The principle of organization he applied here was not that of the usual variations on a theme, but consisted of variations (called “etudes”) that were based on previous variations, or more precisely, drawn from a musical cell or cells. Consequently, the first-time listener may detect a family resemblance among all these etudes without understanding why.

With its seemingly endless wealth of color and techniques for blending, contrasting, and superimposing timbres, Symphonic Etudes has long been considered one of the most difficult works in the repertoire, a fact which does not deter Shorena. In the past decade, I can recall reviewing only one other recording by any pianist. Interestingly, it was by her compatriot David Aladashvili (Phil’s Reviews, 3/2014). Hmm... maybe these Georgians don’t scare easily.

The present account incorporates the five so-called “Posthumous Etudes” that were left out of the original edition but were restored at

Spanish composer Isaac Albeniz, up next, is represented by three pieces (Prelude, Cordoba, and Seguidillas) that are steeped in Iberian folk tradition and are also very difficult to perform as well as Weyand puts them across here. For instance, Albeniz frequently has the hands playing over and through each other, occasioning the pianist to continually re-think hand placements. The middle piece, Cordoba, my personal favorite, conjures up depths of passionate feeling and nostalgia appropriate to the subject, while the Seguidillas is a fast Catalan dance in triple time.

Compared with his other sets of Lyric Pieces, Edvard Grieg's Book Six, Op. 57 does not have the usual elements for easy popularity: there is no Wedding Day, no March of the Trolls, and no stirring evocation of Norwegian folk fiddling and dancing. But this book has its compensations, being given over mostly to pensive pieces in sombre tones and well-rounded melodies. Grieg's treatment of pieces with titles like "Vanished Days," "Illusion," "Secret," and "Homesickness" paints a deft portrait of him as a musical progressive, a trait that Uta Weyand is quick to recognize.

"She Dances," by contrast, is a piece of delicate charm as befits its subject, a picture of a young girl dancing. The most ebullient piece in this book is, in fact, "Gade," which was Grieg's homage to his recently-deceased friend and mentor Niels Gade, who encouraged him to look into his own folk tradition for inspiration. Far from being a solemn funerary tribute, this piece is filled with warm, good memories in vibrant tones and rhythms.

Weyand finishes the recital with a knowing account of the Fantasien, Op. 116 of Johannes Brahms. They have been described as virtuosic pieces that move towards ever greater clarity and insight. Or, as Clara Schumann observed famously, "in them the composer combines passion and tenderness in the smallest of spaces."

There are two basic types of pieces in Op. 116, which Brahms termed

gives the flute and cello a very fine moment together.

Two key figures in the "French Flute School" follow next. First, *Trois Aquarelles* by Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941) is a marvel of color, texture, and pure joy. Its most remarkable movement is *Par un clair matin* (On a Clear Morning) in which rippling textures in the piano writing evoke a bubbling stream while the flute and cello sing a rapturous duet, a song of the sky and the earth in clear, vibrant octaves. The second movement, *Soir d'automne* (Autumn Evening) with its haunting expressive theme, further exploits the gentle harmonic beauty of the flute and cello moving together in octaves. *Sérénade* (Serenade) is an intimate, highly attractive mix of influences that recalled for Gaubert memories of the folk-rich Basque country.

Next, the 1952 *Sonate en concert* for Flute, Piano, and Cello by Jean-Michel Damase (1928-2013) recalls, with elegance and accessibility, the glorious tradition of 18<sup>th</sup> Century France. Early on, melodic leaps and chirping sounds harken back to the hopping, skipping steps of the Rigaudon. Next, we are given a lovely romantic Aria in the form of a duet for flute and cello over intensely warm accompaniments in the piano, with a ribald Intermezzo occurring between the two statements of the aria. A gently swaying Sicilienne and a Gigue that proves something of a wall-banger in its unaccustomed frenzy, complete a handsome work of remarkable variety.

Lastly, we have the Trio for Piano, Flute, and Cello in G minor, Op. 63 by German romantic composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) who compressed a lot of musical activity into a rather short life. Weber was working on his most famous opera *Der Freischütz* at the time he finished this trio, and the influence really shows in the operatic-like freedom with which he develops the musical motives and the way he assigns them to the instruments. In the opening Allegro moderato, we have contrasted patterns of sunlight and gloom with the flute, first heard in its darker range, partnered by

Brahms' urging in 1873. These etudes add much in the way of moods of exaltation, introspection, and searching, to a program already distinguished by its requirements for bravura, energy, expressiveness, and brilliance. As Shorena performs them, they add gravity to the larger work, increasing its length to more than 40 minutes. In the process they give it a greater breadth that adds significance to the word *Symphonic* in the title.

Brahms' three Intermezzi, Op. 117 have always been a favorite of pianists and their audiences for their different takes on sad, introspective moods. All are intensely lyrical and personal, beginning in No. 1, with its gently rocking mien and decided folk quality that have given it the name "Scotch Lullaby." No. 2, in spiraling filigrees of arpeggio figurations, creates its own world of twilight glints and half-lights, while No. 3 is perhaps the darkest and the most personal of all. Without discounting the technical ability on the part of the artist to put these pieces over, interpretive insight is just as important, and here Tsintsabidze unflinchingly scores high marks.

That leaves the Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise Brillante, Op. 22, by Chopin. This was a reflection of the popularity in the composer's day of joining two contrasted works together, the one serving as a preface to the latter. The themes were typically based on popular operatic or folk melodies in order for pianists to show off their virtuoso capabilities. That is particularly true in the case of the brilliant coda that usually concluded such a showpiece.

*Spianato* is an adjective Chopin never used anywhere else in all his piano works. It implies something low and even-flowing, without any rough dynamic extremes. Here, the Andante makes the greatest contrast with the Grand Polonaise Brillante with all its fast descending thirds, sudden octaves and jumps, rapid arpeggios and the use of a very wide range on the keyboard. Shorena obviously loves this piece, and she really communicates her passion for it to us, making this one of the most

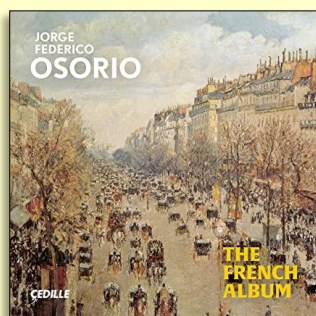
“intermezzi” and “capriccios.” The former are typically quiet and introspective, and the latter more extroverted, although the distinction doesn’t always hold. Pulsating rhythms and stepwise movement mark the Capriccio in D minor, *Presto energico*, which opens the set with one long, arching phrase after another. One other Capriccio in the same key with a plunging and soaring theme closes the set on a dramatic note, though not before we hear a quieter interlude that has more in common with the intermezzi.

At the other extreme, the quiet, echoing cadences of the Intermezzo in A minor exert a soothing effect on the listener, while the Intermezzo in E minor contains rollicking measures that are imbued with a carefree, playful mood. In all these pieces there are enough elements to satisfy the probing intellect of any pianist, even one such as Uta Weyand.

plaintive tones in the cello, though the mood brightens appreciably with the appearance of cascading 16th notes in the flute. In the Scherzo, a disorienting rhythmic upheaval at the outset is soon countered by a sweet waltz-like section in which all three instruments participate.

Well, you get the idea: sunlight versus shadow, hopeful motives opposed to not-quite despairing ones and an ongoing melodic dialogue among all three instruments that develops in the intuitive way these things really *do* develop in an opera. That takes us through the last two movements: an Andante entitled *Schlafer's Klage* (Shepherd's Lament) and a dramatic Finale with lots of meat for all three instruments. The timely entrance of the flute with a joyful melody dispels the darkness and firmly establishes the tonality of G major in a work that began in the minor key. Quite a nice piece of work, this Trio by Weber. The performers give it its just due.

convincing accounts of Op. 22 that I have yet heard.



“The French Album,” Debussy, Chabrier, Fauré, Ravel, Rameau  
Jorge Federico Osorio, piano  
(Cedille Records)



“Appassionata,” Beethoven Sonatas 23, 30; Bagatelles  
Katie Mahan, piano  
(Steinway & Sons)



“Russian Recital,” Prokofiev, Mussorgsky, Shostakovich  
Jorge Federico Osorio, piano  
(Cedille Records)

For me, every new recording by Jorge Federico Osorio is an event. The Mexico City native who has lived in the U.S. for some years plays every piece in a recital as if it were a gem, giving each its proper character and setting. As he shows us right from the outset in Pavane by Gabriel Fauré, the first number in “The French Album,” he isn’t afraid to take this evocation of a courtly 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish dance –two steps forward, one step back with only hands touching– as slowly as required in order to savor its melodic

“Since feeling is first / he who pays attention to the syntax of things / can never wholly kiss you.” It’s a funny thing, but these words of a 20<sup>th</sup> century poet kept coming back to me as I listened to this deeply insightful new album by Katie Mahan. Perhaps it had something to do with the care the American pianist has taken to bring out the emotion as well as the sensual beauty of piano works that meant a lot to their creator, Ludwig Van Beethoven. In the process, we travel with Beethoven on his life’s journey, starting with the last six of

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Jorge Federico Osorio, world-concertizing Mexican pianist who now makes his home in Highland Park, IL, shows once again the prowess that has made him one of the most widely sought-after pianists on the planet. In a program of works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Mussorgsky he sublimates his impressive technique to intelligent interpretations of some of the greatest works to have come out of

beauty in exquisitely rounded tones that serve the music well.

That's just the beginning. In a selection of Preludes from Books I and II plus Clair de Lune from the Suite Bergamasque, Osorio shows us the degree to which their composer, Claude Debussy, was fascinated with the sonorous possibilities of the piano. They include its whole extended range, the way its pedals can be used to change the tone color and dynamics, and the utter brilliance of the fast runs and resonance of the powerful chords that can be achieved on the instrument. For Debussy, the sonic adventure came first, and then he assigned a descriptive title at the end of the piece, so as not to unduly influence a pianist's pre-conception.

As far as the appropriateness of the titles, even as postscripts, we can readily infer from Jorge Federico Osorio's performances in the present recital that *Les collines d'Anacapri* does in fact evoke the high spirits one might experience from a jaunt on the little hills of the title, the rippling figurations culminating in a brilliant passage in the piano's highest register. Or that the deep top-to-bottom compass of the piano, culminating in the low C that is the bottom note of the Steinway Osorio employs, is beautifully equipped to convey the image of a legendary cathedral rising from the depths of the ocean off the coast of Brittany for one day every hundred years to the sounds of chanting and the deep tolling of bells, then sinking back into the depths of the keyboard at the end as the ocean reclaims its own (*Le Cathédrale engloutie*).

This is not programme music – a concept Debussy loathed because it tended to triviality – but music in which sonority comes first. In most of the other Preludes, the sound-picture equivalents are clear enough after the fact. *Clair de lune* is obviously an evocation of misty moonlight, while the brilliant rising and falling runs and figurations in *Feux d'artifice* (Fireworks) unmistakably depict that subject. The sad tonalities and slowly falling measures of *Feuilles mortes* (Dead Leaves) convey the

24 Bagatelles, Op. 126, and working back to Sonatas No. 30 in E major, Op. 109, and No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57, the famous "Appassionata."

Perhaps because the word itself implies a mere trifle or something ephemeral, pianists don't seem to have paid much attention to the Bagatelles until fairly recent times. Yet Beethoven thought enough of them to take time off from the masterworks that crowned his Late Period – the *Missa Solemnis* and the Ninth Symphony that preceded, and the five last string quartets that followed them, to urge his publisher to bring these pieces out in print.

Mahan sees these short pieces, most of them three to four minutes in duration, as "masterfully self-willed condensations of his late style." She makes good on her assertion with deeply thoughtful performances. For example, she brings out the different ways the quiet beauty of the inner passages are contrasted with the turmoil of the Presto sections of Bagatelles 4 and 6 in the present selection. In the first instance, cool, flowing oases of lyricism make the greatest contrast with the jazzy syncopated passages that precede them. In the second, Beethoven uses a steady march of quietly confident, playful lyricism to offset the turmoil at the beginning and end.

Mahan reveres Op. 109 for its evocation of "an inner peace which has nothing in common with the extroverted, tumultuous persona of the *Appassionata*." The very opening of the first movement gives us the feeling the music has already been going on before we could hear it and that it just floated in gently from some mysterious place. Beethoven is actually setting us up for a more robust, forceful aspect of the sonata, which he springs upon us in the following movement, *Prestissimo*. The heart of the sonata is a theme-and-variations movement, marked in both Italian *Andante molto cantabile ed espressivo* (walking pace, very songlike and expressive) and in German *Gesangvoll, mit innigster Empfindung* (full of song, with innermost feeling), just so we don't miss the point.

Russia.

He begins with Prokofiev's very challenging Sonata No. 6 in A major, Op. 82, which is considered, along with opus numbers 83-84, one of the composer's three "War Sonatas." It actually shows Prokofiev proclivities that were already much in evidence before WWII: his powerful rhythms, dissonance, tonal ambiguity and a melting lyricism that is all the more welcome for being unexpected. The motto in the opening movement is set in parallel major and minor thirds, making for increased dissonance and delaying our recognition of the key signature. Staccato chords dominate the scherzo, and are succeeded in the slow movement by a surprisingly romantic waltz marked *lentissimo* ("very slowly" or "as slowly as possible"). Clashing dissonances mark a spirited finale in which the composer recalls music from the opening. Throughout the sonata, Osorio exerts admirable control over material that often threatens to spin off into chaos.

We're given another side of Prokofiev in "Romeo and Juliet before Parting," the most poignant of the Ten Pieces the composer arranged from the famous ballet. This is a long scene, and Osorio manages its elements of tenderness, gentle pathos, and emotion that are at first understated and then bloom into towering lyricism, with masterful timing and beautifully defined feeling.

It is followed in the program by the Prelude and Fugue in D minor, the last item in Dmitri Shostakovich's Opus 87, which was inspired by J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, and which closes the circle of fifths on which the work is based. Powerful left-hand octaves, a slow unfolding of the majestic design, and an intelligent use of folk-like material, culminating in a mighty fugue in four voices, draw on Osorio's well-developed powers of concentration and phrasing.

Osorio concludes with a masterful account of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition in which he unveils before us the fantastic design and incredible variety of moods and deep, rich, orchestral-like hues that

mood of sadness we all might experience at the end of the year. Other pieces, notably *Le terrasse d'audiences du clair de lune* (the terrace in the moonlight) leave it to our imaginations to infer what "story," if any, has transpired.

Next, three pieces originally written for harpsichord by Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) do not sound out of place here in Osorio's piano realizations. They are: *Les Tricotets* (Knitting Needles), Minuets I & II, and *L'Egyptienne* (The Gypsy Girl). Osorio's sensitive performances of these charming pieces helps make clear the remarkable fascination this key 18<sup>th</sup> century figure had for the composers of a later era.

The remainder of the recital is given to music of French composers that was inspired by the vibrant tonalities and stirring, unmistakable rhythms of the music of Spain. In helping us understand this deeply Spanish influence on the pieces we are given here by Emmanuel Chabrier, Claude Debussy, and Maurice Ravel, Osorio's confident piano technique and vibrant imagination come to the fore. Our perception is further enhanced by the informed analysis by annotator Andrea Lamoreaux, music director of Chicago's WFMT, concerning such typically Spanish features as the very unconventional "Arabic" scale. We find it utilized in such pieces as Debussy's *La soirée dans Grenade* (Evening excursion in Grenada) with its evocation of the strumming of Spanish guitars, and Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* (Morning Song of the Jester), with its stunning moment of self-awareness as experienced by a fool.

In this movement, one has the impression of being privileged to eavesdrop on the composer's inmost thoughts and feelings, beginning with its slow, unhurried theme. The variations that follow range from quietly expressive to joyously extroverted and from gentle and comforting to vigorous and robust in the chorale-like fugal variation. We arrive at last at a calm, radiant final variation, ending this voyage into Beethoven's inner world on a note of reassuring simplicity.

As opposed to the pains he has taken with his expressive markings in the slow movement finale of Op. 109, Beethoven merely gives tempo indications in his Sonata in F minor, the "Appassionata," inviting a variety of valid interpretations. Mahan sees this pathbreaking work as "filled with diabolical mood changes, revealing a man who has finally succumbed to his fate." She plays this element in the music for all it is worth, from the four-note drum beat in the opening movement that triggers a steady pulse of repeated notes in fast 12/8 time to the absolutely stunning moment when the second movement ends on a fortissimo diminished seventh chord, like a human shriek, and we are off *attacca* on a pulse-quickening ride upon a magic carpet of six-note gruppetti. In the twenty years separating the "Appassionata" and the Bagatelles, Beethoven underwent a process that Mahan terms "anger transformed into humility and fear transformed into serenity."

characterize this masterwork. Under this pianist's hands, we are aware of the imaginative harmonies, powerful and varied rhythms, and broad range of subjects that must have made Mussorgsky's masterpiece almost incomprehensible to a musical world that was not prepared to receive it. In particular, Mussorgsky often wickedly juxtaposes the ridiculous and the sublime – the lightweight pastel of "Tuileries" with the slow, plodding, toil-bleared progress of a team of oxen in "Bydlo," for example, or the way the caricature of haggling housewives in "Limoges, the Market Place" is brought back to earth by the stunning finality of death in "Catacombs," requiring the pianist to pass *attacca* from one piece to the next for a more vivid contrast of moods.

The troubadour's song in "*Il vecchio castello*" (The Old Castle) is poignantly rendered here as a quiet lament for the vanished glories of the past, and "*Cum mortuis in lingua morta*" (with the dead in a dead language) is as solemnly beautiful in Osorio's rendering as I have ever heard it. On the other hand, the disjunctive rhythms and general ferocity in the awesome "Hut on Fowl's Legs" (Baba Yaga), together with its eerie tremolos in 16th-note triplets, requires the technical skill of the master pianist, and Osorio supplies this, too. The finale, "The Great Gate of Kiev," comes across here in all its sonorous majesty.