

Rachmaninov

Piano Sonata No. 1; Preludes, Op. 32

Lukas Geniušas (piano)

Alpha Classics ALPHA997 55:45 mins



There's no playing to the gallery in Lukas Geniušas's Rachmaninov with a difference, though he

could certainly reach to the back of the largest concert hall with his resonant *fortissimos*. Playing on the Steinway D which was a 60th birthday present to Rachmaninov in the spacious-but-still-intimate main downstairs room of the composer's remarkable modernist Lake Lucerne villa, Geniušas has brought the original manuscript of the First Piano Sonata back to life. Not an early work as the number might suggest, but contemporary with the Second Symphony, as the pianist explains in the booklet note, an unusual epic built from short, even repetitive phrases, and the first version – not usually an option as is the case with the much-more-easily graspable Second Sonata – runs to even greater length. There are no longueurs, though, in this compelling interpretation, with Geniušas running the dynamic

gamut in the first two minutes. More than that, or the usual soft-veined poetry, there's a uniqueness about the sound which sets this recording in a class of its own: an otherworldly, often bell-like quality, of crescendos building naturally to climaxes that don't bash you over the head (as this work can do).

The cover misleadingly suggests we get all 13 Op. 32 Preludes; there are in fact only four, but they evoke different worlds, too, and again first thoughts give us some differences – notably the unison at the start of the majestic No. 13 in D flat major. More from this pianist in this unique venue, please. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

RECORDING ★★★★★