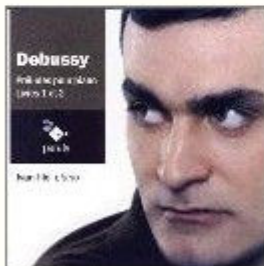


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Debussy, Claude - Preludes pour piano, Livre 1 et 2

Keine Bildergeschichte

Label/Verlag: Paraty
VÖ: 05/2008

Das französische Label paraty, bekannt für die Förderung vielversprechenden Nachwuchses, veröffentlicht Claude Debussys *Préludes pour piano* mit dem amerikanisch-serbischen Pianisten Ivan Ilić.

Claude Debussy sagte einst, dass Musik Mathematik sei, deren Elemente am Unendlichen teilhaben. Er unterstellt Musik folglich Berechnung wie Berechenbarkeit, die dann aber in ihrer Gesamtheit die rein intellektuelle Erfassung überschreitet. Für seine 24 *Préludes pour piano* aus der

Debussy, Claude - *Préludes pour Piano*, Livre 1 et 2

A Story Without Images [[link to the original article in German](#)]

Label/Publisher: Paraty

Released: May 2008

The French label **Paraty**, known for promoting promising young talents, releases Claude Debussy's *Préludes pour Piano* by the Serbian-American pianist Ivan Ilić.

Claude Debussy once said that music is a mathematical process whose elements are part of Infinity. Accordingly, he subordinates music to calculation and predictability, but ultimately makes it exceed a purely intellectual apprehension in its entirety. For his 24 *Préludes pour Piano* from the period between 1909 and 1912, composed rather with the brain than with the heart, Debussy also demanded more distance to the recipient's feelings. In order to actually protect the listener from indulging in images, he entered the extra-musical titles that inspired him in different ways while composing only at the end of the score. At the beginning there only is the number of the *Prélude* and the indication of its tempo.

In this album, Ivan Ilić, a learned mathematician and pianist, only uses the titles instead of the tempo indications in the booklet. A misunderstanding? A relapse to romanticization of music by reducing it to its program? The response of the 28-year old pianist is a clear "No". With

the first bars of the first track he already wipes away any connotation of voluminous sound squadrons. “Les Collines d'Ancapari” has been chosen by Ivan Ilić, a Serbian American living in Paris, for starters. This way he even orders the Préludes in his own way, emphasizing the autonomy of each piece.

The first listening impression of an interpretation based on clarity, purified of any wrong interpretation of Impressionism consolidates itself in the following Voiles, as well as at seductive places (e.g. the broken chords and runs in Brouillards), where Ilić manages to produce even the tiniest transparent sound.

The rising star - as we read in numerous press releases – seems to confront the musical material with his picturesque titles and prioritizes mental work over pastel paintings.

At the same time he does not limit his mental work to a clearly superior playing technique, but also includes pushing creativity to its limits regarding interpretative liberty.

While the material is reproduced in the most precise manner and is also comprehensible to the smallest note by the marginal use of the pedal, he uses the few playing instructions to take them literally to the limit of overstimulation, filling in the silences creating a sound that is at times more reminiscent of jazz or Bartok's Mikrococosmos than of Debussy.

Ilić already introduces the listener both to his technical brilliance and his eagerness to experiment in the Collines d'Ancapari. The lyrical, rather introspective moments, still sound a lot like Debussy without seeming a cliché, despite little use of the pedal and harder keystrokes, while the dotted notes of the left hand in the middle part feel close to a triplet jazz phrasing. At the same time Ilić slows the tempo down. The piece gets a new character.

His version of La Puerta del Vino sounds downright sexy, shimmering with suspense. The young pianist chooses an overall high basic tempo and builds his version upon an increased contrast between the different components of the piece. He plays the arpeggi at the start in a very hard and loud way, the staccato are extremely short. In comparison, he shapes the melody in a very cantabile way and with the pedal. He allows the arpeggio to break out loudly again and again in this line. Ilić places the contrasts without transitions one beside the other. This gives the Habanera a sharp sound, but becomes almost physically ownable for the listener.

The entire album is consistently pervaded by the creative principles of dialectics and clarity. This approach is courageous, because Ivan Ilić is particularly vulnerable to playing shortcomings, because of his reduced use of the pedal and because his clear attitude towards this work forces the listener to adopt one himself. And just like nuances hardly occur in this interpretation, this album either delights or scares off.

Even if sometimes a little sound diversity gets lost because of the partly borderline hard playing, I like this very unpretentious and at the same time direct way of piano playing very much. It often sounds rough, but has an artistic sensual effect despite its superficial coolness.

Interpretation: ★★★★★
Sound quality: ★★★★★
Repertoire value: ★★★★★
Booklet: ★★

Review by **Judith Pielsticker**, 30 October 2008