

one concentrating on the music rather than – in the case of Zimerman particularly – the performer's extraordinary dexterity. This should not imply any lack of virtuosity from Korstick, for it's there in abundance: his is a less vivid and demonstrative approach but one that is no less valid or effective.

Likewise, in the rest of the programme, Korstick provides an honest guide to the riches of Debussy's keyboard works. He includes two other préludes (in all but name), the charming miniature *Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon*, discovered only in 2001, a gift from Debussy to his coal supplier during the severe winter of 1916-17, and *Toomai des Éléphants*, originally intended as the eleventh *Prélude* in Book 2. This is one of three world premieres on this disc, together with the *Intermède* (a transcription of the second movement of a trio that the 18-year-old wrote in 1880 for a group assembled by Nadezhda von Meck, patron of both Tchaikovsky and Debussy), and the *Petite valse*, an incomplete work dating from c.1915 that appeared for auction in Paris in 2004. The *Valse* and *Toomai des Éléphants* were both reconstructed by the leading Debussy scholar Robert Orledge, whose wonderfully discursive and brilliantly well-informed programme notes are one of the many highlights of this disc.

The comprehensive and inclusive nature of this survey is further displayed in Debussy's arrangement of his ballet *Khamma*, a virtuosic tour de force in itself, but for which Korstick uses playback technology to superimpose added layers from the orchestral score in the closing bars 'to avoid having to create a slimmed-down reduction'.

In short, I would not be without Bavouzet's survey, but that of Michael Korstick is similarly rewarding and hopefully the collaboration with Orledge will go on to yield further discoveries. *Nicholas Salwey*

## Godowsky

New

22 Studies on Chopin's Études for the left hand alone.

Ivan Ilić (piano).

Paraty 311.205 (full price, 1 hour 11 minutes).

Website [www.paraty.fr](http://www.paraty.fr). Producer Bruno Procopio.

Engineer Judith Carpentier-Dupont. Dates July 2009, July 2010.

The theatricality of Ivan Ilić's playing is rapidly becoming a force to reckon with, and in this vein I note with intrigue that the young Serbian-American pianist is now beginning to make a mark for himself as an actor, having already debuted in two short French films. Having crafted his exceptional pianism from the redoubtable legacy of François-René Duchâble, Ilić has notched up triumphs in recordings of Bach through to Debussy, the 24 *Préludes* featuring in a much-lauded disc (reviewed in October 2008). Ilić's strong affinity with French music continues in this latest recording, albeit tenuously, drawing

as it does from the inspiration of Chopin and tempered massively by the ingenious reworkings of Leopold Godowsky, a native of Vilnius in the then Russian Empire.

So much has been conjectured about Godowsky's motivations for constructing these 22 technically hair-raising *Studies* for the left hand alone adapted from Chopin's *Études*. Whether one subscribes to the cynical view that they amount to little more than lily-gilding invasions of pieces already more than sufficiently endowed with technical challenges, or the more charitable opinion that Godowsky was attempting to evolve a new level of pianism for the benefit of generations to come, is perhaps ultimately not important. What surely matters is the music itself, which is every bit as impactful as it is notable for its burden of finger-busting pyrotechnics.

If one considers for a moment the overall set of 53 *Studies on Chopin's Études*, written between 1894 and 1914, one cannot fail to appreciate Godowsky's astonishing affinity with Chopin's individualized brand of pianism, and I infer from Ilić's notes that he too feels this was not borne out of an egocentric or competitive streak. Godowsky's ingenuity for stitching together two studies at once, nudging the music into new, more lucrative keys, shifting the difficulties from one hand to the other, or introducing new counter-melodies contrapuntally, would have required a highly sophisticated, insightful musical brain and indeed the same might be said of any prospective performer.

Ilić acknowledges that he did not at first find these pieces at all suited to his technique, formidable though it already was, but in a sense this goes only to spotlight Godowsky's raison d'être in taking the pianist from the unknown to the known by forcing him to reimagine what can be done with five digits alone. What emerges in this recording on Paraty is the sheer joy of overcoming all those conundrums, one by one.

Take *Study* No. 5 in D flat as a worthy starting point, which is actually a clever refashioning of Chopin's delicious *Étude* No. 3 in E, Op. 10, in which the thumb has to

become a lyrical servant as well as a patient negotiator of harmony and texture. While it can hardly be claimed that, as a musical work, Godowsky's paraphrase works as satisfyingly as the original in terms of its breadth of sonority or effectiveness in stirring the senses in the central climax, what Ilić manages to do with it is certainly highly praiseworthy. The ability to voice chords, whether played broken or unbroken, becomes an increasingly indispensable facet of piano technique and, with only one's left hand in play, there is nowhere to hide in this music, even when judicious employment of the pedals is managed.

If one glances through the keys of Godowsky's *Studies* it becomes clear that the continual presence of black notes as landmarks or footholds is absolutely essential to pulling off these works. One might be forgiven for imagining that white keys are easier to grapple with en masse (and of course there are the well-known examples of Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata and Schubert's *Impromptu* in G flat, both of which have, in bygone times, been transposed into adjacent white keys by well-intentioned editors), but this is most definitely not the case, especially when one hand is having to do all of the work. Composers clearly attach great importance to the dovetailing of keys and moods, although one cannot overestimate how such choices bear upon the technical requirements of the music, too (Liszt's 'La Campanella', for example, would be virtually unconscionable in, say, A minor, as opposed to the original key of G sharp minor).

Such points would have needed a constant re-evaluation by Godowsky in order to weigh up the pros and cons of moving away from Chopin's key choices, and let us not forget that Chopin originally wanted to echo Bach's use of all major and minor keys, albeit in a different order. What we end up with, therefore, is a complete re-evaluation and idealization of the original Chopin *Études* to take account of what is geographically achievable on the instrument with just one hand in play, while coming plausibly close to

how the original can sound with two hands. This point transfers well to No. 18a in F sharp minor (Chopin's Op. 10 in F minor), which Ilić pulls off superbly, threading through it a consistently clear melodic line while carefully subduing the inner parts.

No. 41 in B minor is kept in the original key (Chopin's Op. 25 No. 10, the 'octaves' study) and Ilić delivers the music's essential dramatic message with considerable aplomb. No. 43 in C sharp minor, again shifted up a semitone from the original by Godowsky (Chopin's Op. 25 No. 12 in C minor, the 'ocean' study), is brilliantly fulfilled by Ilić; he stitches together all the sweeping shifts in register consummately in what must surely rank as one of the most strenuous of Godowsky's re-creations. One really has to applaud Ilić for setting himself this daunting task – one can just imagine the fatigue factor of multiple retakes in recording these *Studies* (made at the Marcel Landowski Auditorium in Paris during July 2009 and 2010).

As my attention darts between repeated playings of this magnificent CD and the ongoing Olympic Games, I can't help wanting to award Ivan Ilić a medal for his purposeful, intelligent grasp of this taxing music, not to mention his feat of endurance and openness regarding the process of learning the music, demanding many hours of painstaking diligence. The recording quality is excellent, too, allowing all the strands to ease forward with brilliance and warmth. *Mark Tanner*

## Haydn

New

Piano Sonatas, Volume 4.

Piano Sonatas – No. 30 in D, Hob. XVI/19. No. 38 in F, Hob. XVI/23; No. 40 in E flat, Hob. XVI/25. Variations in F minor, Hob. XVII/6 (with alternative conclusion).

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano).

Chandos CHAN10736 (full price, 1 hour 9 minutes).

Website [www.chandos.net](http://www.chandos.net) Producer Rachel Smith.

Engineer Jonathan Cooper. Date February 21st, 2012.

### Comparison:

Brautigam (BIS) CD1731/33

(1998-2002, 15 discs)

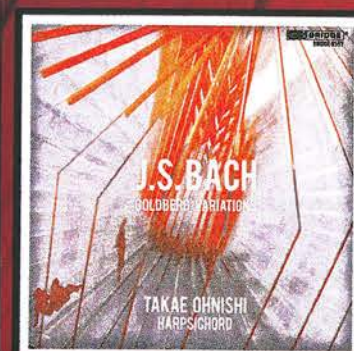


J.S. Bach  
Sonatas & Partitas  
Cecylia Arzewski, violin  
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Arcangelo Corelli  
Twelve Suonati, Op. 5  
Trio Corelli  
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