

CD Reviews The Transcendentalist (2014)

Art does not describe; it suggests. This rule clearly applies to this very personal recording, which reveals pianist Ivan Ilić's great sensitivity, his artistic rigour as much as his interpretative zeal and questioning. With subtle use of the pedal, carefully treading passages of crisscrossing tonalities and the transitions between episodes, he convinces thanks to a truly superlative suggestive intelligence... This recital is one of the most successful interior voyages ever heard. Measured gestures, honed sensitivity: Ivan Ilić seduces and captivates us from the beginning to the end of this tremendous programme.

CLIC Award / Top 5 CD of the Month
Classique News, France



A bold solo piano disc... Ilić's classy keyboard sound [is] full, rounded and beautiful from start to finish. Not many classical releases combine a genuinely searching musical experience with an effective antidote to a frazzling day at the office. This one fascinatingly does.

Top 5 CD of the Month ★★★★★
Sinfini Music, UK

When you push "play", it's as if a breath of wind brushes the piano keys. With this CD the mechanical processes are quickly forgotten. Are those really hammers striking the strings? You hear delicate tone clouds that float by, form figures, and dissolve again... Astonishingly, at the end you have the feeling that the one hour plus CD was only half as long, although objectively so little happens on the piano keys. Here virtuosity is a question of the mind and of independence, not of technical finesse. The same can be said of Ivan Ilić, a sound philosopher on the piano. After the final note of "The Transcendentalist" has faded, you actually feel: enlightened.

Critic's Choice – CD Tipp
BR Klassik, Germany

This CD guides the listener into a world of calm and thus confronts us with a musical cosmos from which the essential power of mystery arises, and, for those who are ready, even a mythical journey to the Divine, with the help of music. The piano flows, not to lull us, but to ask us questions. Ivan Ilić succeeds in filling out the music of calm, in proclaiming a message, in creating a link between the world we come from, and the one we will one day return to.

Supersonic Pizzicato Award
Pizzicato Magazine, Luxembourg

Ilić is armed with indubitable talents. Here he created a mosaic of introspective, even meditative pieces. Though the pieces come from different epochs, Ilić succeeded in making their selection and especially their interpretation appear as an uninterrupted musical flow, a sanctuary of tranquility.

★★★★★
Harmonie Magazine, Czech Republic

"Ilić makes his case with unflinching poise... his theory, one that remembers the endless repetitions of Satie's Vexations, finally leads to silence, the negation of sound itself. Ilić is well recorded and will prompt even the most enterprising musicians to think again."

Gramophone, UK

Mysteries, dreams, symbols: pianist Ivan Ilić's programme is inspired by American Transcendentalism and his elegant, concentrated playing reveals the depth of this transparent music.

Classical CD of the Month

TGV Magazine, France

It is absolutely incredible how close some of Scriabin's pieces come to the musical worlds of Morton Feldman and John Cage. Ivan Ilić, who studied with the great François-René Duchâble, proves to be an outstanding performer with a moving personal touch. A thoroughly interesting album.

Crescendo Magazine, Germany

Serbian-American Ivan Ilić presents John Cage (before his 'chance music' phase) rubbing against the limpid chromatics of Scriabin. For those susceptible, bodies and souls will be uplifted the furthest in the 22 minutes of *Palais de Mari* by Cage's friend Morton Feldman. Ilić's subtlety of touch comes into its own here, though he's also impressive in the limpid flow of Scriabin's Opus 16 No 1.

BBC Music Magazine, UK

A truly special album...at the end there is Feldman's 22-Minute "Palais de Mari". It is fascinating, sensual, unpretentious music with an immediate connection to the hereafter. Ilić presents himself as your close confidant and the beauty of his sound is a phenomenon.

★★★★★

Aachener Zeitung, Germany

Ivan Ilić is a singular pianist...he is as profound as he is multifaceted, mischievous and full of surprises...there is no distance left between the instrument, the score, the sound, the performance, the exhalations of sound. Everything is encapsulated in everything else.

CD of the Month

Présent Continu, France

What we are treated to is the most varying sound juxtapositions, interpretive finesse and a fairy tale-like interplay between dream and zest...each detail has been contemplated, in conjunction with an astounding spontaneity. A true interpreter can't do a better job proving himself than in this rich juxtaposition of miniatures, in which a barely perceptible rubato, or the slightest dynamic gradation, can make the difference between night and day.

Opus Klassiek, The Netherlands

The music of this "composite" program offers a unique atmosphere, a very gentle one filled with slow melodies that stretch out, and sometimes repeat themselves, in a halo of sound. Don't hesitate to purchase this album to fully appreciate these 20th and 21st century works. They will offer you lovely moments of peace and meditation, spiced with the pleasure of discovery!

CD of the Moment

Pianobleu, France

It is music that like all on Ilić's fascinating disc, completely "transcends" all idea of virtuosity altogether. Thesis and antithesis in perfect balance. You do the synthesis.

Buffalo News, USA

I can't think of any other living pianist who would match up eight Scriabin miniatures with works of John Cage, Morton Feldman and a young New Yorker named Scott Wollschleger. Ilić approaches these small pieces with heightened sensitivity and great economy of dynamics. Half the attraction is the mingling of resonances that Ilić patiently allows to form between notes and phrases. Ilić succeeds in transcending the clamor of modern life with his exquisite quietude.

Facts & Arts, Finland

He had already flabbergasted us with his excellent technique; here he elevates our spirit with a captivating and profound new disc, "The Transcendentalist".

Classique Mais Pas Has Been, France

The Transcendentalist, with Ivan Ilić at the piano, is as enigmatic a recital as it is experimental. The work calls for a veritable inner journey through a maze of mysticism in suspension. This album reveals the exceptional sensitivity of the American pianist, combined with a high artistic standard. This ethereal performance, with its captivating tension, leads us to invisible and intimate horizons.

Qobuz, France

Ivan Ilić brings a Debussian flow and charm in an entirely beguiling performance, beautifully judged with a fine touch. Those who think they don't like Cage's music will surely be persuaded by Ilić's sensitively exquisite performance, as the music gently rises and falls, mesmerizingly beautiful and with such fine use of pedal. Ilić's choice of works has one constantly re-assessing what is modern. This is a tremendously cohesive recital that surprises and enlightens at every turn.

The Classical Reviewer, UK

Ivan Ilić reinvents himself by presenting "The Transcendentalist". With an assured technique, and inspiration above all else, this is a distinguished pianist who will attract large crowds of people for years to come.

Médiapart, France

Ilić saved his wonderful icing on the cake for the end, where he finally 'reveals his true colors' and offers the listener elements of tonal culture and colorfulness. Ilić succeeds in achieving a precise illusion of transcendence. His success is due perhaps to an emotional prudence, distance and effort towards unfussiness.

Hudobný Život, Slovakia

Scott Wollschleger's *Music Without Metaphor* has a stark Feldmanesque sound. His piece is a fascinating exploration of simple melodic fragments played seemingly without rhythm. ...the sound Ilić gets from his Steinway D is rich and complex. Ivan Ilić has created a fine program. This should appeal strongly to those who want a piano disc to make them think.

MusicWeb International, UK



The Transcendentalist has been broadcast on:

- Deutschlandfunk, Germany
- Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk MDR, Germany
- France Musique, France
- France Culture, France
- BBC Radio 3, UK
- RTHK Radio 3 Hong Kong
- RTHK Radio 4, Hong Kong
- Classic FM, Czech Republic
- Rádio Devín, Slovakia
- Finnish National Radio YLE1
- Australian ABC Classic FM
- Irish RTE Lyric FM
- Classic FM South Africa
- Radio Filarmonia, Peru
- IMER Opus, Mexico
- Delmarva Public Radio, USA

UPCOMING INTERVIEWS and BROADCASTS

Classic FM South Africa, Slovak Rádio Devín, France 3 TV, RTS Switzerland, Colombian Radio HJCK, Belgian RTBF Musiq'3, MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk), RTHK 4 Radio Hong Kong, Video interview with German Piano News, French Classique News, Serbian Ilustrovana Politika...

RELATED INTERVIEWS

Klassik TV (DE) – [link](#)

France Musique (FR) – [audio](#) – [transcript](#)

Piano Bleu (FR) – [link](#) – [English translation](#)

The Listener (DE) – [part 1](#) – [part 2](#) – [English translation](#)

Melanie Spanswick (UK) – [transcript](#)

Radio Hong Kong (HK) – [link](#)

RTÉ Ireland (IR) – [part 1](#) – [part 2](#)

Maxine Frost (USA) – [transcript](#)

In September 2014, Ivan Ilić was invited by Swiss Radio – RTS Espace 2 to record a 5-part series of radio shows (5 hours) about the New York School of Music.

Listen here: Swiss Radio RTS – [part 1](#) – [part 2](#) – [part 3](#) – [part 4](#) – [part 5](#)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

Ivan Ilić [writes about the importance of research](#) for Gramophone Magazine

Ivan Ilić [interviews composer Scott Wollschleger](#) for Facts and Arts