

RACHMANINOV
PIANO CONCERTO No 3 in D minor opus 30

Peter Bradley-Fulgoni – Piano
Sinfonia of Leeds – David Greed

Foxglove Audio – FOX 089cd
(An independent review by Richard Kenwood-Herriott)

Fabulous! – Brilliant! – In short, this outstanding release could be considered to be the recording which Sviatoslav Richter never made of this, the “Everest” of all piano concerti.

Bradley-fulgoni is a passionate player with a keen ear for detail, details which in many performances of this work, tend to be overlooked, thus robbing the listener of the precious thematic links which are so vital to the work’s overall architecture. But not here. It is Bradley-Fulgoni’s artistry punctuated by a profoundly cultured intelligence which guide the listener through Rachmaninov’s epic tale, holding the main plot whilst giving equal and uncanny priority to the various sub-plots; with the commanding and authoritative vision of a film director.

As with so much of Richter’s work, one is less aware of great pianism than of the greatness of the music. For Bradley-Fulgoni, it is more a battle of the soul than a battle with the keyboard; he simply tears one apart in Rachmaninov’s emotional roller-coaster ride. The two real bonuses here are that it is a performance without cuts, as well as using the relatively lesser used “Ossia” cadenza in the first movement. Bradley-Fulgoni performs here with a magisterial presence reminiscent of Ashkenazy’s celebrated recording of the concerto.

To go into a detailed analysis of Bradley-Fulgoni’s performance would be rather like giving away the story-line of a good book or fine film. There are so many priceless little gems which lead us around Sergei’s huge castle, it must be experienced to be believed.

The excellent orchestral support is provided by the Sinfonia of Leeds under the very sensitive direction of David Greed, whose sense of rubato must be the envy of many a conductor. There is a real sense of community about this performance, it is after all a concerto for both piano and orchestra; sadly one of those little details which is all too often overlooked.

Greed, the Sinfonia of Leeds and Bradley-Fulgoni all share a common interest here which is even more staggering when one considers that this was all achieved in virtually one take. It could be said, that an assault on the summit of “Everest” can only be undertaken in one “take” providing the weather is right. For this mercurial recording, however, the weather was indeed right thus providing for the terrific adventure which is Rachmaninov’s third piano concerto. Praise also for Peter Hill of Foxglove Audio for the provision of a most sensitive and clear sound-frame.

Moreover, it remains to be said, that in the opinion of this writer (also a pianist) Peter Bradley-Fulgoni is probably one of the most important pianists to emerge from this country since John Ogdon. His vast repertoire supported by a highly cultured intellect and considerable technical backbone is evidence enough to suggest this it is time for Peter Bradley-Fulgoni to be recognised as a true leader of British pianism in the twenty-first century. There are those who can play the piano, and there are those few who have been touched by the hand of God. Bradley-Fulgoni falls into the latter category.

Richard Kenwood-Herriott (Pianist and Composer)

Richard Kenwood-Herriot is a pianist, composer, conductor and occasional music critic. He has written for publications in eastern Canada (Newfoundland and Toronto) as well as in western Canadian for the Banff Centre for Fine Arts.

With his wife, British oboist Elizabeth Kenwood-Herriot, the "Kenwood-Herriot Duo" have given numerous concerts to international acclaim. Richard also ran a successful lunchtime concert series for the Theatre Royal, Wakefield, He is also a specialist in the art of improvisation as well as being an active concert pianist in his own right with an extensive repertoire ranging from J.S. Bach to Keith Emerson.