



FANFARE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016

CHOPIN Nocturnes: in c, op. 48/1; in E \flat , op. 55/2; in D \flat , op. 27/2; in F \sharp , op. 15/2. Ballades Nos. 1 and 3. Mazurkas, op. 50/1–3. Barcarolle. Berceuse. Scherzo No. 4 • David Korevaar (pn) • MSR 1626 (76:53)

I find it endearing that a pianist like David Korevaar should wait to record Chopin until he has reached his 50s. It seems that every week we are bombarded with Chopin CDs featuring a teenybopper's photo on the cover, with musical results that are instantly forgettable. Korevaar's album is a textbook case of how much is to be gained by having Chopin played by a pianist in his artistic maturity. It's not just the greater consideration and emotional substance to be heard in the interpretations. It even affects something as distinctive as tone. I was fortunate enough to hear two of Korevaar's great teachers, Earl Wild and Abbey Simon, in concert. From them he must have learned how tone can be created not by using the forearms but actually from the back and shoulders. Throughout this CD one hears Korevaar weighing his chords so that he creates a tone always suitable to the substance of the music. If you want to see what this both sounds and looks like, I strongly recommend [Korevaar's YouTube concert video](#) of Mozart's 25th Piano Concerto, with the pianist conducting the Shonan Chamber Orchestra. The video's production values are not great, but it's a terrific performance that lets you see how Korevaar creates his tone with his posture. Korevaar is an especially searching and inquisitive artist. A wonderful example of this is his CD The Ricardo Viñes Collection, a selection of little-known scores from the great Catalan pianist's library. Dedicated artist that he is, Korevaar performs the music of Louis Aubert and Henry Woollett with as much commitment as he shows in Mozart and Chopin. Korevaar is a pianist who has earned our attentiveness to his Chopin, instead of a nymphet in a designer gown.

The lovely sound Korevaar gets is due in part to the beautiful Kawai piano he plays, superbly prepared by Ted Mulcahey. The pianist has an especially slow and gorgeous approach to Chopin's nocturnes. The op. 48/1 Nocturne is like a solitary, at times agitated, walk in the moonlight. Next comes a loose, fluid account of the First Ballade, which occasionally has the quality of a poetic recitation. The op. 55/2 Nocturne possesses the colors of a dark bouquet of flowers. The Third Ballade is as beautifully controlled in its structure as a Shakespeare sonnet. A plea for consolation comes from the op. 27/2 Nocturne. Korevaar's mazurkas are not as spiky as Alexander Brailowsky or Nadia Reisenberg's, but they have a beguiling rhythmic lift. Op. 50/3 is like a contorted mask worn at a costume ball. In the Barcarolle, you can hear the water rippling alongside the gondola in all kinds of patterns. Korevaar's Berceuse is the best I've ever heard. The counterpoint is beautifully captured without interrupting the music's bel canto flow. A youthful pensiveness is evoked by the op. 15/2 Nocturne. Concluding the recital, the Fourth Scherzo is like a carriage ride on a lovely day, interrupted by a reflection on loss and grief.

The CD's sound engineering is excellent. My favorite single disc Chopin collection is Naum Starkman's on Pope Music, unusual in its color and dynamism. David Korevaar's album is almost as good. I would recommend it to anyone for whom Chopin is not a momentary melodic gratification, but rather a deeply considered condensation of reality. It ain't kid stuff.

Dave Saemann

This article originally appeared in Issue 40:2 (Nov/Dec 2016) of Fanfare Magazine.