

‘Etude’

20th and 21st-century etudes by Unsuk Chin, Nikolai Kapustin, Sergei Lyapunov and Karol Szymanowski.

Clare Hammond for BIS Records

Released Feb 2015



REPORT

‘Etude’, a disc of 20th and 21st-century piano études by Unsuk Chin, Nikolai Kapustin, Sergei Lyapunov and Karol Szymanowski, was released internationally by Clare Hammond on BIS Records in February 2015. The disc was financed using grants from the Fidelio Charitable Trust, British Korean Society, Help Musicians UK, The Stradivari Trust, and the Ambache Charitable Trust. Bob and Elisabeth Boas, and Emmanuel College, hosted fundraising concerts in London and Cambridge respectively, after which a number of private individuals generously donated to the project. The Guildhall School of Music & Drama hosted the CD launch concert in the Music Hall in February 2015.

The disc has been widely featured in the musical press, both in print and online, and on BBC Radio 3. Both International Piano Magazine and the Classical Music Magazine ran extensive feature articles on the disc and BBC Music Magazine nominated Clare as the ‘Rising Star’ in their March issue. Excerpts from the disc were played as part of BBC Radio 3’s ‘CD Review’, who stated that it provided “a tremendously satisfying experience for the listener” and was both “exhilarating and exuberant”. Clare also appeared live on ‘In Tune’ where she performed etudes from the disc and was interviewed by Sean Rafferty.

The disc has received unanimously positive reviews in the Observer (Fiona Maddocks), Sunday Times (Paul Driver), Gramophone (Bryce Morrison), Classical Music Magazine (Editor’s Choice, Feb 2015), BBC Music Magazine (Jessica Duchon), Lady Magazine (CD of the Week), Klassik Heute (Hartmut Lück), Diapason (Bertrand Boissard), Parutions (Jean-Jacques Millo), The Classical Reviewer (Bruce Reader), Classical Notes (Nick Boston), Planet Hugill (Robert Hugill), Cross-Eyed Pianist (Frances Wilson), Quarterly Review (Stuart Millson), MusicWeb International (Dominy Clements), and All Music (Blair Sanderson). Clare has also written about her experiences recording the disc for the Gramophone Magazine and Cross-Eyed Pianist blogs.

Selected press reviews have been included in this report. You can view full reviews and download pdfs of the feature articles at:

www.clarehammond.com/reviews.html



SELECTED PRESS REVIEWS

Visit www.clarehammond.com/reviews.html for a full selection.

Gramophone Magazine UK, Bryce Morrison, “*unfaltering bravura and conviction*”

Simply entitled ‘Etude’, Clare Hammond’s recital is gloriously deceptive. For here is no familiar programme of Chopin and Liszt but an enterprising and enthralling challenge for both pianist and listener. Opening with Nos 4, 5 and 6 from Lyapunov’s 12 *Transcendental Etudes* - a very Russian tribute to Liszt, Hammond then abruptly changes course with Unsuk Chin’s six Piano Etudes (1995-2003) and a world that is ‘abstract and remote’ yet ‘addressing the emotions and communicating joy and warmth’. Then follow Szymanowski’s 12 Op 33 Etudes (already a far cry from the Chopin-inspired earlier set of Op 4) and, finally, Kapustin’s *Five Etudes in Different Intervals*.

All this could set even the most intrepid virtuoso explorer (Marc-André Hamelin?) by the ears, yet Hammond’s musical intention is always paramount. She storms Lyapunov’s ‘Térek’ and ‘Tempête’ with full-blooded romanticism and finds all the sultry and romantic atmosphere of ‘Nuit d’été’. If Chin’s Etudes betray the influence of her teacher Ligeti, they are also highly individual and distinguished, their often playful quality ironically surfacing through a formidable intricacy. Memories of earlier work (the monstrous Second Sonata) flicker through Szymanowski’s Etudes as well as other composers’ (Scriabin’s double-note Study, Op. 8 No 11), while Kapustin recalls Debussy (‘Pour les octaves’ and ‘Pour les notes répétées’). More to the point, Hammond plays with unfaltering bravura and conviction, and she has been superbly recorded.

BBC Music Magazine, Jessica Duchen, “*this array of wizardry is not for the faint hearted*”

Here is a dazzling programme of 20th- and 21st-century Etudes from the young British pianist Clare Hammond, who would deserve many plaudits just for getting through this many notes. With its whirling kaleidoscopes of pianistic effects, this array of wizardry is not for the faint-hearted.

Part of its fascination is hearing the perspective added by the unusual progressions of repertoire; Unsuk Chin’s vividly imagined creations sound closer to the sensual coloration of Szymanowski than one might expect, while the many-layered voicing and driving rhythms of Kapustin’s irresistibly jazzy offerings find plenty of counterparts in the textural patterns of those more elusive soundworlds. The Chin work is especially welcome: the composer studied with Ligeti and seems to have followed him in creating a set of challenging studies that push the instrument’s capacities to the utmost.

It is a gloriously creative programme and Hammond pulls it off without succumbing to any temptations of overt ‘flashiness’ or bombastic technical showing off; instead she favours precision, clarity and seriousness of purpose. ... It is a terrific achievement and the repertoire is fresh and fantastic.

The Observer, “*style and substance*”, Fiona Maddocks

“The real interest is in the set of six Etudes by Unsuk Chin (b 1961), witty, angular, pointillistic...”

The Sunday Times, “*imagination and bravura*”, Paul Driver

“Then comes the startling contrast of the thin treble attack of Chin’s post-tonal Six Etudes, the textural imagination as fascinating as the digital experiments are fiendish.”

Classical Music Magazine UK, “*definition of bravura over barnstorming*” CRITIC’s CHOICE, February 2015

“Full justice is given to Unsuk Chin’s set, in performances that earn the composer’s grateful praise”.

Klassik Heute, “*... a pronounced virtuoso*”, Dr Hartmut Lück

“The previously recorded six Etudes (from a planned 12-part cycle) by the Korean Unsuk Chin, living in Berlin, are technically intricate challenges with varying poetic and narrative characteristics... it must be stressed that the parallel with Chin’s teacher György Ligeti does not get one very far: while Ligeti consistently develops predominantly mathematical ideas in his piano studies, it is the exploration of the expressive potential of sound and registral changes which is preeminent in Unsuk Chin’s.”

Diapason, “*exceptional finesse of articulation, eloquent vitality and force of conviction*”, Bertrand Boissard

“The remarkable études of Unsuk Chin (born in 1961), akin to traversing a frozen mirror (1) or assuming the costume of a diabolic toccata (5), remind one of Ligeti - of whom Chin was a pupil - in their asymmetrical rhythms. The exceptional finesse of articulation, eloquent vitality and the force of Clare Hammond’s conviction - which outclasses the version by Yejin Gil (Solstice) - do justice to the intricacy of the South-Korean musician’s work.”