

The principle of contrast

Ji-Yeoun You plays works of reference in the piano literature

For her new CD the Korea-born pianist Ji-Yeoun You chose Beethoven's sonata No. 21 in C major, op. 53 («Waldstein»), Schubert's »Moments musicaux« D 780, op. 94, and Béla Bartók's sonata Sz80. These works describe an exemplary arc from the late classic to classical modernism. One may arrive at a profile of the three composers derived from their treatment of contrast.

About the music

Hence Beethoven's sonata in C major is dominated by a muscular pianistic element, musically rich and charged with virtuosic splendour. Repeated chords, scale runs, hand crossings, extreme finger techniques, and a novel use of the pedal are the technical extravaganzas the composer employed in order to push the boundaries of performers and instruments of his time alike.

The six »Moments musicaux« from Franz Schubert could certainly be classified as »light« music for the educated. In a marked departure from the typical »salon« pieces of the time the composer reduced his material in the extreme. Usually a single pattern or motif predominates, there are constantly repeating melodies, and harmonies return to their point of origin. Contrasts are allowed to develop only in the secondary theme of the four three-part pieces – while movements 3 and 5 have to stand without a middle part, entirely devoid of a variation in mood.

Béla Bartók composed his only sonata in 1926 as an addition to his own repertoire as a concert pianist and dedicated it to his second wife, Ditta Pástory. Ji-Yeoun You regards it as »a very extroverted, expressionist work«. All the same, to her the contrasts in Bartók's sonata do not represent a struggle ending in victorious affect, but rather »in the Daoist sense, the co-existence« of opposing forces.

About the artist

Having received her musical foundation in Korea, Ji-Yeoun You continued her education in Berlin, where she studied with Lazslo Simon, Klaus Bäßler and Georg Sava. She graduated with distinction in performance from the Hochschule für Musik »Hanns Eisler« Berlin. Ji-Yeoun You was a winner of the Bromsgrove International Musicians Competition and of the Berlin Piano Competition. She was awarded further prizes in international competitions such as the Chopin Competition in Göttingen, the Concerteum Competition of Athens, the Viotti Competition in Vercelli and the Brahms Competition in Pörtlach. Ji-Yeoun You performs in both Europe and Asia. She has been invited to the Musica Nova Festival in Glasgow and the Bolzano Festival. In recognition of her contributions to culture she was awarded the Freedom of the City of Yeosu, her hometown. At this time, she teaches at the Berlin University of the Arts as well as at the University of Music »Carl Maria von Weber« Dresden.



Summary

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