

CHOPIN Concertos for Piano and Orchestra: No. 1 in E Minor, op. 11; No. 2 in F Minor, op. 21. • Bruno Rigutto, piano; Erich Bergel, conductor; Budapest Philharmonic Orchestra. • DENON CO-75637 [DDD]; 71:13. Produced by Takashi Baba and Holger Urbach.

CHOPIN Nocturnes: in B^b Minor, op. 9, no. 1; in E^b, op. 9, no. 2; in B, op. 9, no. 3; in F, op. 15, no. 1; In F[#], op. 15, no. 2; In G Minor, op. 15, no. 3; in C^{ff} Minor, op. 27, no. 1; in D^b, op. 27, no. 2; in B, op. 32, no. 1; in A^b, op. 32, no. 2; in G Minor, op. 37, no. 1; in G, op. 37, no. 2. • Luc Devos, piano. • RICERCAR RIC132116 [DDD]; 56:01. Produced by Ruthi Simons and Jérôme Lejeune. (Distributed by Qualiton.)

Rigutto's playing is forthright, vigorous, poetic, and full of color. His lucid phrasing clarifies the inventive developments of each work. He gets deeply into the music and, as is the norm these days, his technique is scintillating. The orchestra is alert and has a full-bodied sound, molded expertly by Bergel to Rigutto's playing. These are among the better performances of the concertos. But, as with so many of the standard works," the competition is overwhelming. I can't say that Rigutto's versions are better than those by Ax, Perahia, Pollini, Argerich, Rubinstein, Ohlsson, Harasiewicz, Zimerman, and some others. For collectors, Cortot's famous old performance of the F-Minor Concerto is available on CD; so too are unique performances of both works by Josef Hofmann. This flood of duplications is becoming difficult to handle.

With the nocturnes, Devos plays fluently in a kind of ordinary, standard way. His playing would have to be transcendent to make me recommend this recording. Try as I might—and I've tried over and over again—I can't get my ears in tune with the use of "authentic, period instruments." Devos uses here a Broadwood piano built around 1845. The fact that Chopin's music was written for the instruments of his time has no meaning for me. The shallow treble and the tubby bass of these instruments do not produce, for me, effective realizations of the music. I want to hear Chopin on a modern piano, with its warmth and fullness, its evenness, its power and projection. And I want to hear the nocturnes played by Rubinstein, Livia Rév, Arrau, Ivan Moravec, Jan Smeterlin, and others on such an instrument.

Howard Kornblum

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