

## **Rachmaninov: Complete Piano Music CD review – Zlata Chochieva is the real discovery - The Guardian Review**

Interpretations as fine as any on disc ... the pianist Zlata Chochieva. Photograph: Andrej Grilc

**Chochieva/Gavrylyuk/Geniušas/Ghindin/Lugansky/Tomellini (Piano Classics, six CDs) - RATING: 4\*/5\***

**Andrew Clements**

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Though not explicitly intended as such, **Piano Classics' comprehensive Rachmaninov set** is a brilliant showcase of what the label has done so successfully over the last five years – identifying and recording some of brightest talents among today's exceptional generation of young pianists. With six different musicians involved on these discs there are unevennesses, but none of the playing is less than very good, and some is breathtaking.

Most of the recordings were made during the past five years. Some have been released by Piano Classics as single discs, while some, such as **Elisa Tomellini's** busy roundup of Rachmaninov's early piano pieces, are new. There are exceptions: **Alexander Ghindin's** collection of the early Morceaux de Fantaisie and Rachmaninov's assorted transcriptions dates back to the mid 1990s, while **Nikolai Lugansky's** performances of the Second Piano Sonata (in the revised 1931 version) and the Corelli Variations, come from a Channel Classics disc made before Lugansky won the silver medal at the 1994 Tchaikovsky competition. While it's odd that none of the label's regular stable of pianists have made recent recordings of the sonata and the variations, which are two of Rachmaninov's greatest works, the young Lugansky's torrential playing doesn't seem out of place among the precocious brilliance here.

Lucidity and poise ... Lukas Geniušas. Photograph: Wiesława Dalecka

The discs that really stand out are from **Lukas Geniušas** and **Zlata Chochieva**. Geniušas, who came second in the 2010 Chopin and 2015 Tchaikovsky piano competitions, plays the complete preludes with such wonderful control, lucidity and poise it's hard to believe the recording was taken live from a recital at the Moscow Conservatory in 2013. Chochieva, though, is the real discovery; her account of the two sets of Études-Tableaux, performances of huge emotional scope and intense drama, are as fine as any on disc, while she revels in the dark textures of the First Sonata and makes the Chopin Variations seem a much more convincing work than it can often seem. It's worth buying this set just for Chochieva and Geniušas's performances, though the rest of it isn't exactly shabby.

## **Big Boxes: A Rachmaninov Bargain - ClassicsToday**

Review by: Jed Distler   *Artistic Quality: 8*   *Sound Quality: 8*

Note that this boxed set is not identical to Brilliant Classics' 2010 complete Rachmaninov piano music edition issued in the label's deleted Piano Library series. Its contents largely stem from the Piano Classics label's 2016 Rachmaninov box. Included are Lukas Geniušas' sensitive, musicianly readings of the complete Preludes; Zlata Chochieva's formidable virtuosity throughout her dramatic and full-bodied Etudes-Tableaux, Chopin Variations, and Piano Sonata No. 1; and Elisa Tomellini's idiomatic readings of a group of early piano pieces. While Rachmaninov's own recordings of his transcriptions convey palpable force and projection, Alexander Ghindin, by contrast, is all relaxation and elegance. The Piano Classics box featured Nikolai Lugansky's Rachmaninov Piano Sonata No. 2 and Corelli Variations, first issued by Channel Classics, replaced here by Santiago Rodriguez's far more exciting interpretations (sound clip) originally released on the Elan label (all of Rodriguez's Elan releases are worth seeking out). Ingryd Thorson and Julian Thurber's solid performances of the piano duo works are familiar from the earlier Brilliant Classics' collection. A pity that harsh and blurry sonics compromise the pianists' expertly synchronized teamwork. Still, it's good to have high-level performances of the solo works under one roof, at a super-bargain price.