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BUSONI: Bach Transcriptions 2

Chromatic Fantasy & Fugue; Prelude & Fugue in E-flat (St Anne); 6 Choral Preludes; Little Prelude & Fugue in D

Maurizio Baglini, p—Tudor 7156—65 minutes

Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) wrote three times as much original music as transcriptions, but is perhaps still best remembered for

volumes of Bach's keyboard music and, over a 30-year period, published seven volumes of *Arrangements, Transcriptions, and Free Transcriptions*. Baglini recorded Volume 1 of this series in 2006 (Tudor 7139, Mar/Apr 2007). That was favorably reviewed in these pages, and I regularly listen to it. It was well worth the five-year wait for Volume 2. To the complete concert transcriptions of Bach, this disc adds one of Busoni's most interesting editorial efforts, the *Chromatic Fantasy & Fugue*. I found it very enlightening to compare my modern, scholarly edition of this masterpiece to the Busoni edition performed here. While there is little difference in the notation of the Fugue, the Fantasy has a number of sections that do not sound like the same piece.

Since keyboard players get very little guidance from Bach's manuscripts in terms of phrasing or dynamics, there are multitudinous editions with vastly different approaches to the music. Busoni's musical intellect makes his editions worth performance and analysis. In his essay, *Wert der Bearbeitung* (The of Arrangements, 1910), Busoni states "Every notation is already a transcription of an abstract thought. As soon as the pen takes over, the thought loses its original shape." Even though historically accurate performance practice has been in the forefront of both teaching and playing of Bach in the past few decades, Busoni's 100-year-old approach can now be viewed as just another historical performance practice. We rely on the pianism of Baglini to faithfully follow all of the markings, additions of notes, realization of ornaments, altering of harmonies that Busoni did. Through these exceptional performances, we can experience another era of pianistic performance.

Baglini (b. 1975) has studied with both Lazar Berman and Maurizio Pollini and is one of the finest young pianists before the public today. He has all the musicianship and technical expertise to be logically considered an Italian pianist in the line that goes back through Pollini and Michelangeli to Busoni. The massive sonorities called for by Busoni are never harsh. The intricate voices, so often doubled at the octave, still are shaped and phrased with all the skill one might expect of a great organist playing single notes. Special mention should be made of the excellent booklet notes and the spectacular sound of the Fazioli concert grand, recorded at the Fazioli Concert Hall. Taken all together, this is an essential release, and should be enjoyed in tandem with the earlier volume.

HARRINGTON