

as in a dream, and a subtly tremoloing conversation with the dead is the inevitable heart and soul of Mussorgsky's tribute to his late friend, the architect Viktor Hartmann.

The rest of Kuschnerova's admirable all-Mussorgsky programme is salon music without much pretence to the quirky nuances for which the composer is so exhaustively fitted. At the end of *Souvenir d'enfance* No. 1 there's a surprise Russian cadence, and the late *Méditation* has a frozen lyricism about it which initially startles, but the real rough-hewn diamond, *Intermezzo in modo classico*, is absent, and I, for one, would rather have heard the variations composed for Kuschnerova by Alexander Lokhin, a fascinating figure. Maybe next time. *David Nice*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
 Pictures: Richter Philips 464 734-2
 • BBC Music Magazine Direct £15.99

RODRIGO

Piano Works (complete)
 Sara Marianovich (piano)
 Sony SKZ 89828
 154:29 mins (2 discs) £££



That there was more to Joaquín Rodrigo than his famous *Concierto de Aranjuez* has always been known, but was conclusively restated by Artur Pizarro a few years ago with his limpid recording of a selection of Rodrigo's piano works (Collins). Sara Marianovich introduces us to a vista beyond that horizon with the complete Rodrigo piano output, including one piece never before recorded. The set confirms the evidence supplied by Pizarro, that Rodrigo's is essentially a small, quiet canvas, rarely calling for feats of expansive pianism but requiring great depths of calm and control. The longest single movement he wrote for the piano lasts under six minutes, and even then has the feel of a miniature. Marianovich – who knew the composer during his last years – shows from the outset that she has the right qualities: an exquisite sense of shape and an unhurried coolness, notes dropping from her fingers like raindrops, each one weighed and assessed. Her survey highlights the unexpected harmonic kinship of the young Rodrigo and Messiaen and the increasing irruption of Spanish indigenous music into Rodrigo's writing. All in all, much to savour. *Christopher Wood*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
 • BBC Music Magazine Direct £16.99

SCHUBERT

Piano Sonatas in A minor, D537, & in A, D664; German Dances, D820 & D790
 Mitsuko Uchida (piano)
 Philips 470 265-2 63:34 mins £££



More Schubert from Uchida – and, once more, performances that are immediately distinctive, distinguished and characterised by her almost palpable empathy with the melancholy, shadow-side of the composer's sensibility. But in these two sonatas I found her tendency to hesitate 'expressively' at the start of a phrase, to indulge in moments of rubato just when one longs for the music to sing on uncontrivedly, both mannered and at times obstructive.

In the central movement of D537, for instance, this tendency combines with an over-clipped left-hand staccato to make Schubert's tender theme sound ill at ease. And in the corresponding movement of D664 one longs, too, for a greater clarity of recorded sound. Back to D537, and Uchida succeeds well in fusing the driving rhythms of the opening with a lilt straight from the Vienna woods; and I enjoyed the impassioned, impulsive quality of her scalding energy in the finale. But, again, in the finale of D664, Uchida's rubato impedes rather than enhances the momentum. Despite some high-fibre counterpointing, and attractively headstrong episodes, there is simply too much pianistic mopping and mowing here for my taste. This tendency to mannerism is less damaging in Uchida's vividly characterised *German Dances*.

From the point of view of recording quality and interpretative interest, the obvious benchmark is Andrés Schiff. In both sonatas he is disarmingly direct and clearer of speech, balancing touch and tempo with an art that truly conceals art. The sound is more clearly focused, too – and Schiff faithfully performs all the repeats as well. *Hilary Finch*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
SOUND ★★★
 Schiff Decca 440 309-2 (D537)
 Decca 440 311-2 (D664)

• BBC Music Magazine Direct call for price

SHOSTAKOVICH

Five Preludes, Op. 2; Three Fantastic Dances, Op. 5; Ten Aphorisms, Op. 13
PANUFNIK

12 Miniature Studies; Pentasonata, etc
 Raymond Clarke (piano)
 The Divine Art 25018 77:29 mins £££



There are more tangible connections between Shostakovich and Panufnik than one might imagine, not least the fact that for part of their lives, both composers struggled to

preserve some kind of creative integrity in the light of Stalinist repression.

The three Shostakovich pieces demonstrate the considerable stylistic distance the composer travelled during the turbulent Twenties, from the Preludes, written when he was barely a teenager, to the radical and ironic *Aphorisms* of 1927 which offer a tantalising glimpse of Shostakovich's possible development had the cultural environment remained more tolerant.

Panufnik's piano music is the more austere. Although the *12 Miniature Studies* present a welcome juxtaposition between moods of aggression and introspection, there is a certain schematic approach to the musical material that lessens the degree of overall contrast. This feature is even more apparent in the *Reflections*, which is the least approachable work on the disc. But the *Pentasonata* is an impressive achievement, illustrating an imaginative exploitation of surprisingly simple ideas.

Pianist Raymond Clarke has long been associated with both of these composers, and gave the first London performance of *Pentasonata* in 1989. He is particularly good at creating a sense of atmosphere in the delicate passages of these works. The recording, made at the University of Newcastle, is warm and ambient, but an out-of-tune octave at the end of the first Panufnik study proves a little disconcerting. *Erik Levi*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
 • BBC Music Magazine Direct £14.99

COLLECTION: MUSICA RICERCATA

Works by Ligeti, Messiaen, Takemitsu & Cage

Alberto Rosado (piano)
 Verso VRS 2006 77:08 mins £££



The big idea here is musical searches, embodied in what the performer – a teacher and contemporary specialist from Salamanca – sees as key works from the Forties and Fifties. By the end you also sense a thesis, that the searching pointed composers around the rigours of Darmstadt and the Boulez influence towards the diversity of post-modern times.

All kinds of directions could have sprung from the young Ligeti's half-hour *Musica ricercata*, only a few pursued by this composer. The first of its 11 pieces consists of accelerating Hungarian rhythmic patterns on a single pitch, until the last note quirkily proves that pitch to have been a dominant. Each successor adds one more pitch and continues to explore textures and rhythms with overwhelming flair and a fascinating cumulative impact. The apparently

simple becomes revealed as complex in thought, but easy to follow.

Seven of Messiaen's *Vingt regards* are a reassertion of nature and spirit, ironically by a musician whose teaching attracted the creators of post-war modernism. Takemitsu appears briefly at his most Messiaen-like on the surface, and his most personal in the free flow of ideas. Two Cage pieces are not so far in sound from the Ligeti: one rhythmic, one surprisingly neo-Romantic though increasingly repetitive. Rosado, a persuasive advocate, plays with power, clarity and a preference for bite over lyricism. *Robert Maycock*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
 • BBC Music Magazine Direct £15.99

COLLECTION: RARITIES OF PIANO MUSIC AT SCHLOSS VOR HUSUM, 2001

Works by Dohnányi, Bartók, Hindemith, Gottschalk, Rzewski, etc
 Giovanni Bellucci, Fredrik Ullén, Konstantin Scherbakov, Alfredo Perl, Kemal Gekic, Frédéric Meinders, Enrico Pace (piano)
 Danacord DACOCD 589
 77:56 mins £££



The Husum Festival is dedicated to those parts of the piano repertoire that other festivals never reach.

The annual disc of highlights offers a now familiar mix of the entertaining and intriguing. As Peter Grove observes in his excellent notes, not all rarities are masterpieces, but Enrico Pace's brilliant advocacy of Hindemith's Sonata No. 3 makes a persuasive case for the work. This is perhaps the most compelling account on disc, the outstanding performance among this selection, from a wonderful pianist captured on top form. Alfredo Perl is almost as convincing in his intense and beautifully sculpted reading of the final Rhapsody of Dohnányi's Op. 11. For pure scintillation turn to Giovanni Bellucci in Gottschalk's *Souvenirs d'Andalousie* – the repeated-note passages are astonishing; for pure beauty of tone, Frédéric Meinders shows his peers how to overcome the customary close inspection by the Danacord microphone and makes the instrument sing round the small concert hall. I could live without the pieces by Bartók, Tajčević and Papandopulo, but a rarity I found utterly enchanting, played by Fredrik Ullén, is *La fileuse*, by one Laura Netzel (1839-1927), who wrote under the pseudonym of 'N. Lago' – typical Husum fare. *Jeremy Nicholas*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
 • BBC Music Magazine Direct call for price