

TAKE ONE Meeting the artists as they record

DEJAN LAZIC
pianist

Works Brahms/arr. Lazić Piano Concerto No. 3 in D after Violin Concerto, Op. 77; Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79; Scherzo in E flat minor, Op. 4

Artists Dejan Lazić (piano); Atlanta Symphony Orchestra/Robert Spano

Label Channel Classics

Recorded Symphony Hall, Woodruff Arts Centre, Atlanta (concerto); Frits Philips Muziekcentrum, Eindhoven (solo)

Why did you decided to arrange the Brahms Violin Concerto for piano?

This was the first concerto I ever heard, when I was five or six, in the recording by Jascha Heifetz. Then in summer 2008 I was performing Beethoven's Emperor Concerto with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Robert Spano. When warming up I was playing the eternal second subject of the Brahms first movement. After the concert and dinner, at 2am, I played the whole thing. Spano was impressed and said we had to perform it, even if we just sold one ticket.

What were the challenges of turning a concerto for violin into one for piano?

It took me almost six years because it's not a transcription. With this we're dealing with a partly composed – recreated – piano part in Brahms style. At first it was tempting to transcribe – like many superior scores, the Brahms is like a castle of cards and if you change one little thing it all falls apart. I wanted to give it a fresh, new perspective. That's all. It's not meant to be musical vandalism like Salvador



BRAHMS' CONVERSION:
'I wanted to give a fresh, new perspective'

Dali painting a moustache on the *Mona Lisa*.

And they're very different instruments...

We have a problem. As a violinist it's easier to sustain a note; piano is a percussion instrument. Then again, violinists cannot play polyphony as pianists can – so there's harmonic suggestion in the violin solo and in the piano version you can finally hear the suggested harmony.

How did you tackle the cadenzas?

Thank God Brahms did not leave any cadenzas. The cadenza should be a free space for a pianist to be creative, to show some more polyphony

and use the subjects that strike you personally. There's no sense in arranging a violinistic cadenza, for example by Heifetz or Kreisler.

This is a live recording with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra...

So much can go wrong! We had three rehearsals before that. With the recession in the US it was brave to programme this concerto, but the concert was sold out; that's the ultimate test – how the audience reacts. People who aren't professional musicians should find some joy in the music.

Interview by Rebecca Franks

Disc to be reviewed next month

'Thank God Brahms didn't leave a cadenza!'

Do weigh me so la...

Director deems soprano too bulky for Verdi

Italian soprano Daniela Dessi has quit of a production of Verdi's *La traviata* after director Franco Zeffirelli made rude comments about her weight. The two came to blows when Zeffirelli allegedly said that Dessi, at 52 years old and 10st 3lb (65kg), wasn't 'credible' in the role of Violetta, a young courtesan suffering from consumption. Poor form we say, as larger singers have triumphed in 'skinny' roles in the past, such as when Pavarotti defied his famously ample frame to win huge acclaim as the skint and starving Rodolfo in Puccini's *La bohème* at The Met in 1988. And the director on that occasion? One Franco Zeffirelli...

JONTY CLARK, JEFF ROFFMAN

