

Vladimir Horowitz - The Legendary Berlin Concert 1986

Written by bluesever

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CD 1 [48:18] 01. *Auftrittsapplaus* 02. *Scarlatti - Sonate h-Moll L33* 03. *Scarlatti - Sonate E-Dur L23: Andante* 04. *Scarlatti - Sonate E-Dur L224: Allegro* 05. *Schumann - Kreisleriana op.16* 06. *Liszt - Valse caprice d'apres Schubert Nr.6 aus Soirees de Vienne*

CD 2 [42:38]

01. *Rachmaninov - Prelude in G major, Op.32 no.5* 02. *Rachmaninov - Prelude in G sharp minor, Op.32 no.12* 03. *Skrjabin - Etude in C sharp minor, Op.2 no.1* 04. *Skrjabin - Etude in D sharp minor, Op.8 no.12* 05. *Liszt - Sonetto del Petrarca No.104* 06. *Chopin - Mazurka in A minor, Op.17 no.4* 07. *Chopin - Mazurka in F minor, Op.7 no.3* 08. *Chopin - Polonaise in A flat major, Op.53* 09. *Schumann - Kinderszenen, Op.15 no.7 Traumerei* 10. *Liszt - Valse oubliee No.1 in F sharp major* 11. *Moszkowski - Morceaux, Op.36 no.6 Etincelles*

Vladimir Horowitz – piano Berlin Concert May 18, 1986

For the most part Vladimir Horowitz is on his best late-period form in this previously unreleased (and presumably unedited) Berlin concert from May 18, 1986, held just weeks after the pianist's much heralded Moscow return. The Scarlatti sonatas, the Sonetto del Petrarca No. 104, and the Valse caprice are a little more sedate yet better controlled than their Moscow counterparts, while the two Scriabin etudes similarly prove more sure-footed (the D-sharp minor's difficult, soft opening, for example).

Despite a few wrong notes and pounded-out passages, Kreisleriana emerges as direct and coherent as in Horowitz's 1985 DG studio version, with even more inner voices popping out from Schumann's textural thickets. I like how Horowitz enhances the syncopated effect of the final piece's accented bass notes by playing them slightly ahead of the beat. Once past a stumble at the outset, Rachmaninov's G major Prelude coddles the ear as it nearly always did in Horowitz's hands (if the chromatic coda doesn't make you drool, see your doctor!), while the G-sharp minor is broader, more massively contoured than in Horowitz's leaner 1967 Columbia Masterworks live recording.

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I've never warmed to Horowitz's post-1985 Chopin A-flat Polonaise performances, with their poky phrasings and contrived accentuations (his equally fustian yet more taut 1971 Columbia studio version is far superior), yet he's more comfortable here with the Trio's notorious octaves than in Moscow or in his 1987 Vienna and Hamburg recitals. But Horowitz's technicolor abilities truly come home to roost in the two gorgeously stretched-out Chopin Mazurkas.

The acoustics of the Berliner Philharmonie's Grosse Saal flatter Horowitz's ravishing, variegated tone, together with his genius for dynamic projection. Three extensive booklet essays discuss the event, the music-making, and the pianist's Berlin connection in thorough detail. One complaint: Kreisleriana's eight movements are banded together as a single track. ---Jed Distler, ClassicsToday.com

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