Liszt - Symphonic Poems (Mehta) [1997]

1.Préludes, S. 97 (LW G3) (16:14) 2.Orpheus, S. 98 (LW G9) (11:53) 3.Mazeppa, S. 100 (LW G7) (17:48) 4.Hamlet, S. 104 (LW G22) (15:47) 5.Hunnenschlacht, S. 105 (LW G17) (14:16) Berliner Philharmoniker Zubin Mehta – conductor

Liszt is accredited with inventing the Symphonic/Tone Poem and these are some of his big ones. Most are inspired by a literary source rather than a visual one, but Liszt paints some very drammatic pictures. This modern recording of Symphonic Poems renders a true picture of Liszt's wild imagination.

His most famous, Les Preludes, is played magnificently, featuring a quirky little melody, erupting in a glorious ending.

Hamlet and Orpheus are the quieter selections of this recording and played with stunning beauty. The harps of Orpheus bring a brilliant shine to the music, and the drama of Hamlet is wrung-out in a truly revolutionary, yet Shakespearian manner.

The two showstoppers, however, are Mazeppa and Hunnenschlacht. In both the brass takes over and blasts away the rest of the program. While both are truly exciting, it is the Battle of the Huns that features organ in a most majesterial manner, on this particular recording, it creates a gothic feeling, adding to the wild Bohemian nature of Liszt's writing.

No need to worry, Zubin Mehta, as the wrangler of the Berlin Philharmonic, has let his wild

steeds buck in this recording while keeping them fenced in. All aspects of the sound, interpretation, and performance are pristine, with great color and imagination. If you are a true music lover this CD is a must. If you are new to the orchestral music of Liszt this will be far from a disappointment. If you love exciting music in a romantic fashion, click on order this CD. --- Brett A. Kniess (Madison, WI)

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