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‘Everything you can imagine is real.’ - Pablo Picasso



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RACHMANINOFF PIANO DUOS CPO 555326-2

Sergei Rachmaninoff was one of the most popular composers of the twentieth century and his music is redolent of his Russian homeland, full of lush melodies that define the term ‘romantic’. He was a fine pianist and conductor as well as a great composer. Influenced by Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov and other Russian composers, his music is imbued with remarkable lyricism and expressiveness. As well as excellent vocal music and orchestral pieces, he wrote a good deal for the piano, including two suites for two pianos. Suite No. 1 in G Minor was initially titled *Fantaisie-tableaux* because Rachmaninoff intended it as a series of musical pictures. The music illustrates four extracts of poems, written by Mikhail Lermontov, Lord Byron, Fyodor Tyutchev and Aleksey Khomyakov, and the work was dedicated to Tchaikovsky. Rachmaninoff himself, together with Pavel Pabst, gave the first performance in Moscow in 1893. Suite No. 2 was composed in Italy in 1901 and alongside the second piano concerto it confirmed the comeback of the creativity of the composer, after four years of non-activity caused by negative critical reception towards his first symphony. First performed by the composer and his cousin Alexander Siloti, this second suite work is not based on literature and is more traditional in form tends. In Los Angeles in the early 1940s, just before Rachmaninoff’s death, he and Vladimir Horowitz were at a party and played the piece together for the first and only time. To celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, the impressive Piano Duo of Aglika Genova and Liuben Dimitrov has recorded Rachmaninoff’s complete oeuvre for piano duo as an homage to their idol’s work. Their cpo double CD reveals the manifold colours in these pieces full of musical ideas, include resonant performances of both the Suites. The other eight compositions include Rachmaninoff’s symphonic poem, *The Rock* (inspired by a poem by Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov), *Six Pieces* (featuring a delightful *Barcarolle*) and the lively *Symphonic Dances*. The outstanding Bulgarian duo of Genova & Dimitrov interpret the composer’s wide-ranging music in all its emotionally incredible, supercharged glory. Highly recommended.