



Jameson Cooper and Ketevan Badridze have recorded Prokofiev for Afinat

The metamorphosis can be heard to most vivid effect in the Second Violin Sonata, which abounds in characteristic Prokofievian poetry, irony and exuberance. The score is among the sunniest in the composer's canon, with a classical design that remains rooted in the 20th century. Cooper treats the lyrical lines with loving sensitivity and manages the tricky feats as if they are natural extensions of his nimble artistry. In the *Five Melodies*, his sweetness of tone and seamless phrasing are reminders of the music's beginnings as vocalises.

Far removed from these worlds is the First Violin Sonata in F minor, Op 80, in which Prokofiev inhabits an emotional abyss. Did dire events of the Second World War prompt feelings the composer incorporated into this music? Whatever the case, it is a deeply affecting score that Cooper and Badridze, a pianist of bold accomplishment, shape as a series of sombre and reflective scenes. One can only imagine the impact that the first and third movements, as played by David Oistrakh and Samuil Feinberg, must have had at Prokofiev's funeral in 1953 (the same day as Stalin's). **Donald Rosenberg**

Natasha Paremksi

Balakirev *Islamey* **Brahms** Piano Sonata No 2, Op 2^a **Kahane** Piano Sonata^a **Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 7, Op 83^a

Natasha Paremksi *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30063 (69' • DDD)

^aFrom Arioso ARIOSOI3



Originally released in 2011 on the Arioso label, Natasha Paremksi's solo debut

CD has been picked up by Steinway & Sons, which provides completely new and improved packaging, along with an additional musical selection.

Paremksi dives into the monster octaves in the first movement of Brahms's F sharp minor Sonata with steely assurance and the rhythmic incisiveness of a pouncing tigress. In the beautiful *Andante con espressione*, she keeps the textural shifts between melody and accompaniment in well-contoured perspective. The rapid octaves and chords in the Scherzo's outer sections retain body and definition even in the softest moments (no small feat), although Paremksi's lingering over the Trio's theme dissipates the profile of its phrase structure. The long finale unfolds straightforwardly, if without the dynamic contrasts and long-lined shaping one hears in Sviatoslav Richter's live Decca and Praga readings.

The strong personality characterising Gabriel Kahane's genre-bending work as a singer-songwriter is less consistently

apparent throughout his three movement Piano Sonata, written for Paremksi. I'm particularly intrigued by its central movement, where slow and steady left-hand chords are pitted against stark, agonised right-hand lines, generating gripping tension and release.

In the Prokofiev, Paremksi's spiky, glib and undifferentiated outer movements go in one ear and out the other. However, her sonority and expressive instincts open up in the *Andante caloroso*, where the central climax builds with unrelenting intensity. Like many young pianists, Paremksi sacrifices tonal allure for speed, ferocity and excitement in Balakirev's *Islamey*, yet an undercurrent of nervous energy gives her approach an appreciable edge. In short, Paremksi still is a work-in-progress, artistically speaking, but the talent is unquestionably there.

Jed Distler

'American Romantics'

Bonvin Christmas Night's Dream, Op 10
Busch Four North American Legends - Omaha Indian Love Song; Shippewa Lullaby **Converse** Serenade **Dédé** Bees and Bumblebees, Op 562 **Foote** Air. Gavotte **Hillman** Lullaby, Op 21 **Miersch** Pleasant Memories **H Parker** Scherzo **Schoenefeld** Characteristic Suite, Op 15 - Scherzo **Gowanus Arts Ensemble / Reuben Blundell** New Focus © FCR166 (52' • DDD)