

International press review



GRAMOPHONE

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

[REVIEWS](#) | [NEWS](#) | [FEATURES](#) | [COMPOSERS](#) | [ARTISTS](#) | [MAGAZINE](#) | [AWARDS](#)

[Home](#) » [Reviews](#) » SAINT-SAËNS Piano Concertos 3-5 (Kantorow)

SAINT-SAËNS Piano Concertos 3-5 (Kantorow)

► [View record and artist details](#)

Author: Jeremy Nicholas

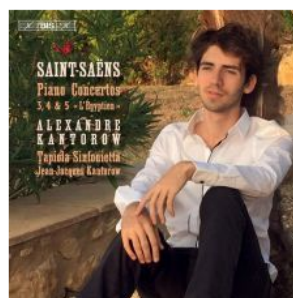
It is no hardship to review yet another Saint-Saëns piano concerto recording when it is as good as this, and one which, moreover, has managed to accommodate these three on a single disc lasting a generous 80'37", a first for these particular works, so far as I know.

The soloist is the young (b1997) son of the distinguished violinist-conductor and, believe me, he is the real deal – a fire-breathing virtuoso with a poetic charm and innate stylistic mastery, as anyone will confirm who has heard his Liszt concertos (A/15) and, on his 'À la Russe' disc (7/17), an *Islamey* which is among the finest ever recorded.

One hardly needs to be told, listening to the opening of Op 29, that it was inspired by an Alpine torrent, so beautifully conjured is it by Kantorow *père et fils* and the Tapiola players, a passage which also immediately establishes the ideal balance between piano and orchestra – a further plus for this recording (tip of the hat to producer Jens Braun and sound engineer Martin Nagorni). 'Prodigiously uneven' though the Third Concerto may be (in the opinion of Alfred Cortot), this team papers over the cracks and the exuberant high spirits of the finale, as bracing as a splash of cold mountain water, are hard to resist.

Arguably the greatest of the five concertos, No 4 sets out on an uncertain journey, improvisatory, discursive, as if trying out and then discarding certain themes and ideas before pulling them all together in the second half. It begins, like the famous *Organ* Symphony (No 3), written a decade later, in C minor and ends in a triumphant C major. I had forgotten just how demanding is some of the piano-writing (for example, several passages of rapid sixths or thirds played simultaneously in both hands) but I have rarely heard it delivered with such commanding ease and infectious delight.

For further evidence of Kantorow's skill, listen to the first few minutes of the Fifth Concerto and you'll hear soufflé-light *leggerissimo* scale passages contrasted with *fortissimo* octaves of penetrating depth and weight. Yes, they are in the score but you will rarely hear them delineated as well as this. The exotic second movement, with its references to various musical genres – a Nubian love song, a gamelan, a Spanish guitar – is, again, among the best on disc and in fact my only quibble about the whole recording is the unmarked *accelerando* through the coda which renders the peroration inappropriately lightweight, a concern which does not disqualify it from sitting beside Hough (Hyperion, 11/01) and Darré (in all three), Cortot (in No 4) and Chamayou (in No 5 – Erato, 10/18).



SAINT-SAËNS Piano Concertos 3-5 (Kantorow)

SAINT-SAËNS Piano Concertos 3-5 (Kantorow)

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 3

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 4

Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 5, 'Egyptian'

[Buy from Amazon](#)

FOR THE RECORD

Tchaikovsky win for pianist Alexandre Kantorow

The 22-year-old French pianist, Alexandre Kantorow, has won the Grand Prix at the 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition. He'd already clinched the Gold Medal in the piano category, but Valery Gergiev made this extra award (worth \$100,000), one in his gift, to the pianist following the laureate's gala in St Petersburg; this additional prize has only been made three times in the competition's history, including in 2011 to the pianist Daniil Trifonov.



Alexandre Kantorow: the winning pianist at the 16th Tchaikovsky Competition

Kantorow had been the only entrant to opt to play Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concerto (rather than the First) – Vasily Petrenko conducted the State Academic SO, 'Evgeni Svetlanov', magnificently in all 14 concertante works in the finals – which he supplemented with Brahms's Second (a tour de force of stamina, as well as superior musicianship, as he played non-stop for nearly an hour and a half).

The Tchaikovsky Competition has long been seen as one of the most prestigious in classical music, and Kantorow's triumph at this year's event gives further recognition to a pianist who has already been attracting attention for his virtuosity and musicality. His recordings for the BIS label have earned critical praise in our pages. Following his Liszt concertos in 2015 – 'His virile sense of drama ... [is] electrifying,' wrote Jeremy Nicholas – his

most recent release was of Saint-Saëns's Piano Concertos Nos 3-5. 'He is the real deal', wrote JN in June, 'a fire-breathing virtuoso with a poetic charm and innate stylistic mastery'.

The piano was just one of several categories in the competition, which took place in Moscow and St Petersburg across nearly two weeks and featured more than 40 finalists. The violin category was won by Sergey Dogadin, 30, from Russia – the first time in three competitions that a Gold Medal had been given in this

category – while Zlatomir Fung, 20, from the USA, took the Gold Medal in the cello category. The male vocal Gold medal went to Georgios Alexandros Stavrakakis, 30, from Greece, while the female vocal Gold went to Maria Barakova, 21, from Russia.

This edition of the competition saw two new categories added – woodwind (the Gold Medal going to Russian flautist Demin Matvey, 25, Co-Principal Flautist in Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra), and brass (Gold jointly awarded to Russian trombonist Alexey Lobikov, 32, and Chinese horn player Yun Zeng, 19).

This year's Tchaikovsky Competition was streamed in its entirety by Medici TV, and attracted 18.5 million video views from 2.6 million individual users, from nearly 200 countries. The coverage is available at tch16.medici.tv – free of charge.

Horowitz: The Great Comeback

Sony Classical is releasing a fascinating set celebrating Horowitz's return to the concert hall after an absence of 12 years. On May 9, 1965, the great pianist stepped out onto the stage of Carnegie Hall in New York, having not played in public since 1953, and having suffered badly from depression in the intervening years. This was one of the most famous piano recitals of the 20th century (tickets went on sale at 10am on April 26, but by 7am that morning there was already a queue of 1500 people), and Columbia Masterworks was on hand to record it. 'Horowitz at Carnegie Hall: An Historic Return' won three Grammy Awards, including Classical Album of the Year.

The new set contains this recital, remastered, but the real interest lies in material that has never been issued before. In the months running up to this concert,

Horowitz went to Carnegie Hall four times to play for his wife and close friends – as *Gramophone's* Jed Distler puts it, he had the rare benefit of playing in 'an ideal concert venue without the onus of a paying public and critics'. Columbia Masterworks also recorded these private, intimate recitals. As producer Robert Russ says, 'The present edition invites the listener to enter the circle of the few Horowitz confidants who attended these events in the darkened, almost deserted hall: we hear Horowitz enjoying the freedom of improvisation in previously unheard, sparkling performances, his complete recordings in the brilliant sound of the concert hall and many witty conversations recorded in an intimate working atmosphere.'

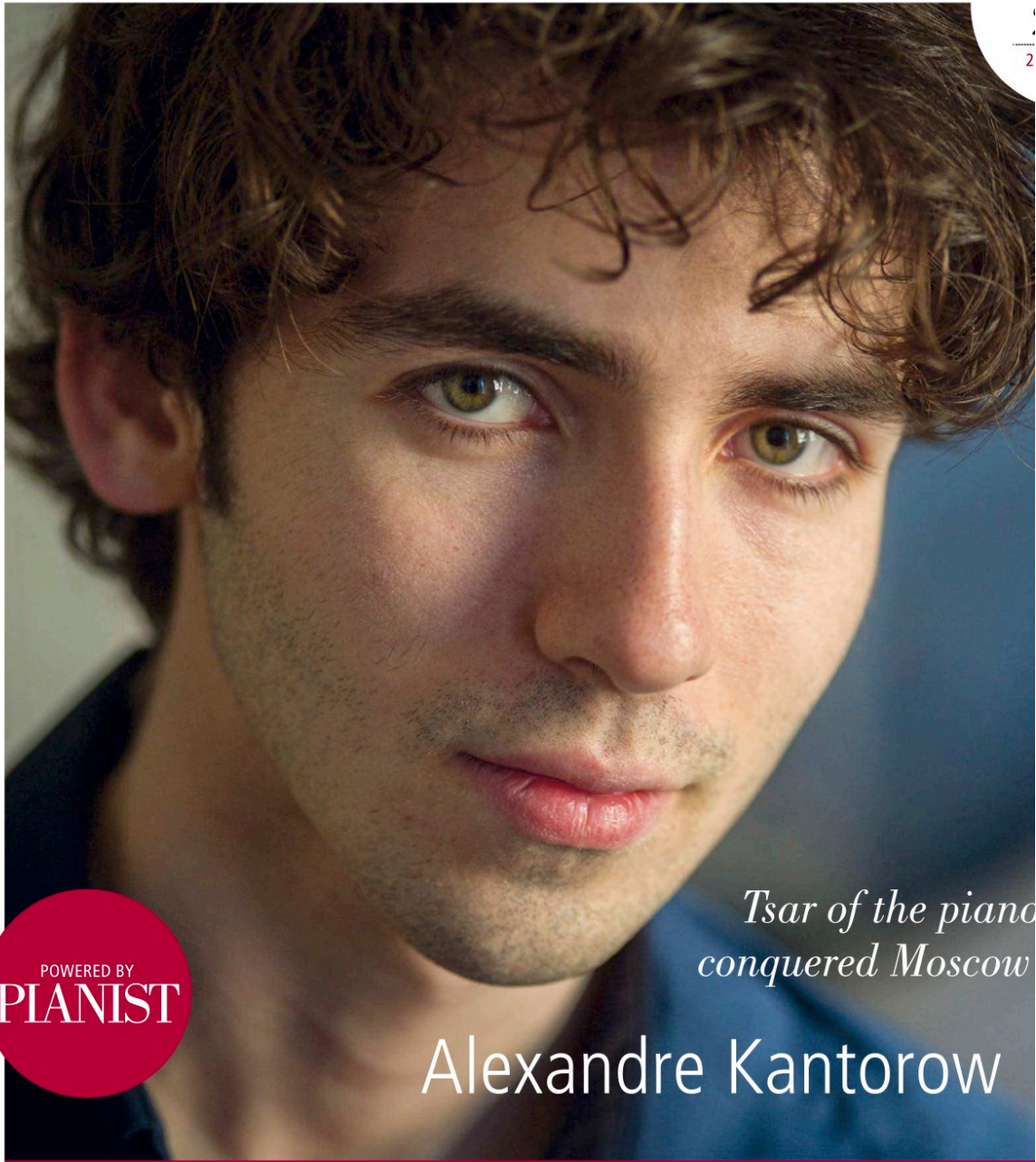


Also included are the rehearsal and recital from the same hall in 1966, two previously unissued recording sessions from Columbia's 30th Street Studio from January 1965 and May 1966, and an extensive interview with Horowitz's friend, the pianist Abram Chasins, from June 1965.

This enticing and lavishly presented 15-disc set is available on August 23, and will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of *Gramophone*.

The World of Piano Competitions October 2019

THE WORLD OF PIANO COMPETITIONS



POWERED BY
PIANIST

*Tsar of the piano
conquered Moscow*

Alexandre Kantorow


STEINWAY & SONS

 THE WORLD FEDERATION
OF INTERNATIONAL
MUSIC COMPETITIONS


C. BECHSTEIN

Tchaikovsky International Music Competition

The Tchaikovsky International Music Competition has been full of surprises and controversies throughout its history. From its first edition when the American Van Cliburn won, the competition has never ceased to surprise and shock people. The XVI edition that concluded in a chilly, rainy Moscow was no exception.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in the entire competition was for An Tianxu (20) in the finals. An had earlier made a request to change the program order to play Tchaikovsky first, which was then approved by the committee. The change, however, was not communicated to the orchestra. In addition, the announcer announced that he would play Tchaikovsky, then corrected himself in Russian only, creating further confusion. It took An a split second to realize what had happened, arriving at the first note a beat late. An sat bewildered during the orchestra introduction, but the jury chairman Denis Matsuev was seen speaking to other jury members at the same time. An was then offered a second performance to allow him to perform his pieces again; he declined but was later given a special award for courage.

The jury selected 7 finalists instead of 6. There was again an inevitable uproar, about who the 7th was and should have been. There was again a strong voice that at least one woman should have made the finals. However, the competition had to go on and choose the winner.

Lyrical lines

The first day of the finals began with a confident reading of the Prokofiev Third Concerto by Konstantin Yemelyanov, almost as a warm up for the Tchaikovsky No. 1. Yemelyanov was cunning and daring at times, pulling back the dynamics when playing solo,

as if to pull the audience's attention.

Dmitry Shishkin followed with the same repertoire, but in the reverse order. Shishkin showed off his characteristic attention to details, placing precisely calibrated emphasis on each note in phrases and chords. Lyrical lines soared in Tchaikovsky, though he at times emphasized dissonant notes for added colour. Prokofiev was filled with colourful punches, sarcasm and laughter. Shishkin also remained faithful to the distribution of notes in the score in the second movement, clearly bringing out the piercing accents in the second variation in particular.

The aforementioned performance by Tianxu An followed. Though bewildered by the shock, An recollected himself during the orchestra introduction in Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody, and remained cool, and almost at ease. An navigated through the first movement of Tchaikovsky No. 1 confidently, particularly delivering fast runs with a delicate touch. However, anxiety seemed to creep in, and the last movement was barely held together due to excessive rubato and very fast tempo.

Chamber music

On the following day, Alexey Melnikov's poetic reading of Tchaikovsky No. 1 was sincere and sentimental. Here there were few surprises. The dark, tragic reading of Rachmaninoff No. 3 illus-



trated the composer's struggles with depression, with the lyrical line gasping, though the sense of futility was pervasive. Yet, the climb to the climax in the last movement was carefully measured, with a strong sense of self-awareness and healing. Alexandre Kantorow had been unique throughout the competition: he was the only competitor to play a Kawai in the earlier stages, and the only one to play Tchaikovsky No. 2 and a non-Russian concerto: Brahms No. 2. The highlight of his performance was the second movement of the Tchaikovsky, where Kantorow was no longer a soloist, but a chamber musician with violin and cello. Kantorow exhibited his sensitivity, remaining keenly attuned to the orchestra, to blend in and to stand out, as the music dictates. The furious second movement of Brahms was delivered with emotional stability and confidence.

Luxuriant sonority

Maō Fujita opened the last day of the competition, and the ardent fans couldn't get enough of him. Clear voicing in thundering chords in Tchaikovsky No. 1's opening provided a clear definition of its outline. Such clarity was carried throughout his performance, but Fujita showed off his keen sense of ensemble, particularly with a cellist in the second movement of Tchaikovsky. Fujita's characteristic sincerity and transparency was carried through the Rachma-

ninoff No. 3, where he often executed fast lines sans pedale, showing off the intricate structure within the dense score.

American Kenneth Broberg played the same program as Tianxu An. Broberg and conductor Petrenko verbally confirmed that they would begin with Rachmaninoff Rhapsody, as a nod to the earlier incident with An. Broberg delivered a polished and probing performance with more generous pedalling that contrasted with Fujita's drier, articulated approach. Resonant, with some extra notes added in the bass, Broberg projected an expansive, luxuriant sonority particularly in Tchaikovsky.

In the end, a winner had to be chosen, and the rest of the field had to be ranked. The jury awarded the first prize to Alexandre Kantorow. The second prize was shared between Shishkin and Fujita, with the third prize distributed to Broberg, Yemelyanov and Melnikov, and the fourth prize awarded to An, along with a special prize for "Self Confidence and Bravery." At the Saint-Petersburg gala concert that lasted until 1:30 am under the white night, Kantorow was declared the over-all Grand Prix winner. It was the first time that a non-Russian was awarded the first prize in piano since Ayako Uehara in 2002, and the audience exploded into a raucous applause.

KEN HISAKA

Live stream still available at: <https://tch16.medici.tv/en/>

GRAMOPHONE

Founded in 1923 by Sir Compton Mackenzie and Christopher Stone as 'an organ of candid opinion for the numerous possessors of gramophones'

Today's major competitions can reach millions

Opinion isn't unanimous about competitions. Those who see positives in the pressure (a taste, after all, of what lies ahead throughout a career) are countered by others who feel it's an artificial way of assessing art. But competitions are given major prominence: at *Gramophone*, we regularly report on them, and annually focus on the sector in a special supplement. And two competitions this month illustrate why.

The International Tchaikovsky Competition has long been held up as one of the greatest of musical accolades, its winners etched not just on the trophy but in our consciousness. This is, after all, a competition that opened its First Prize alumni list with Van Cliburn and has included John Ogdon, Grigory Sokolov and Daniil Trifonov. And that's just in the piano category – glimpse at the other categories and the likes of Gidon Kremer, Viktoria Mullova and Deborah Voigt immediately leap out.

But if such a competition has always been a guide to the ones to watch, it's now, quite literally, a 'one to watch'. This year, Tchaikovsky performances were broadcast and extensively contextualised on Medici TV, attracting an astonishing 18.5 million streams. Among the presenters was our own James Jolly, and it was in his interview with Freddy Kempf – third place in 1998, the year Denis Matsuev won – that the pianist captured the nuanced openness with which we should approach these events. 'As a contestant, you're not competing to get a result,' he claimed. 'Most people here, they're here in order to try and build a career ... It's amazing to have a competition which can make [from the same



Matsu

year] two great careers with me and Denis.' I've little doubt that we'll be hearing more from this year's piano winner, Alexandre Kantorow, who may already be known to readers, not least for his Saint-Saëns concerto album earlier this year (an Editor's Choice). His winning performance of the Tchaikovsky Second in the final demonstrated a musical brilliance and almost relaxed confidence that rendered it less a pitch for a prize, and more simply an enjoyable performance in its own right.

Meanwhile, the BBC has hosted its equally famed competition, Cardiff Singer of the World. The BBC's reach is vast and, as with Young Musician of the Year, the coverage embraces this, drawing on the visual language of mainstream television. Ukrainian baritone Andrei Kymach was a deserving winner. But it was the variety of voices on display (both of competitors and commentators), and simply the overriding sense of enjoyment in exploring the art of singing, that defined the competition (which incidentally offers its own example of Freddy Kempf's point above: 1989, when Dmitri Hvorostovsky beat Bryn Terfel to the Prize.)

This month's One to Watch is another recent prize recipient about whom we expect to hear more: the violinist Johan Dalene, winner of this year's Carl Nielsen International Competition. He's soon to release his debut on BIS, a deal signed prior to his triumph. It's also on BIS that we've already been able to hear Kantorow's virtuosity. When it comes to pointers for tomorrow's stars, then, it's clearly not just competitions we need to look to ...

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Writing about Baltic choral music was an excellent opportunity, says *Gramophone* contributor

IVAN MOODY who writes our cover story this issue. 'It enabled me to revisit recordings of some of the most outstanding choirs in the world, and to try and define what it is that makes this sound so unique.'



'My first *Gramophone* interview with William Christie was in 1992, and there have been many since,'

recalls **LINDSAY KEMP**. 'Yet talking to him and Paul Agnew about Les Arts Florissants' 40th anniversary was both stimulating and heart-warming – especially in the elegant confines of Christie's Paris home.'



'Nicola Benedetti stands apart from major international soloists for the huge amount of time she also

devotes to educational outreach,' says **CHARLOTTE GARDNER**, who talks to the violinist about her Marsalis recording. 'Her courageous opinions make her a joy to interview, and this occasion was no exception.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Michelle Assay • Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Liam Cagney • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Iain Fenlon • Neil Fisher • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence • Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Hannah Nepilova • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Mark Pullinger • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Patrick Rucker • Edward Seckerson • Mark Seow • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Musicians To Watch: Winners of the Tchaikovsky competition

The 16th International Competition ended this weekend.



The International Tchaikovsky Competition Press Service

The 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition ended this year with the largest pool of competitors, unquestionably brilliant performances, and one organizational error that a young pianist will never forget.

This year's Grand Prix winner was Alexandre Kantorow from France, a pianist of mesmerizing talent. He won the first prize and the gold medal in the piano category, followed by shared honors: second prize and silver medals were given to Dmitry Shishkin (Russia) and Mao Fujita (Japan); third prize and bronze medals went to Alexei Melnikov (Russia); Kenneth Broberg (U.S.); and Konstantin Yemelyanov (Russia).

The fourth prize and diploma was awarded to Tianxu An (China), who was also given a special prize for courage and self-possession when the organizers reversed the order of the pieces he was about to play. The official responsible for the mishap was later fired.

Among violinists, the first prize and gold medal was awarded to Sergei Dogadin from Russia; Zlatomir Fung (U.S.) was awarded first prize and gold medal for his performance on cello. Russian women took almost all the awards for voice, with first prize and gold medal going to Maria Barakova, but the men's voice awards went to Alexandros Stavrakakis from Greece, who was in first place, and the Korean singer Gihoon Kim in second place. This year the competition included woodwind and brass instruments for the first time. A complete list of all the winners is on the competition [site](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/07/03/tchaikovsky-festival-a66261). In the end, 45 musicians from 19 countries left with prizes. They came from a field of almost 1,000 applicants from 58 countries, with 231 young musicians making it to the first round.

The competition ended with a gala concert of laureates performing in the Zaryadye Concert Hall in Moscow. Enjoy. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/07/03/tchaikovsky-festival-a66261>

PRESTO CLASSICAL

Classical Search within department

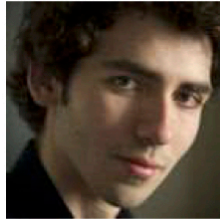
Wishlist My account Help €

0 items, €0,00

Departments Composers Artists Labels Formats Awards New & Future Releases Special Offers Latest News

Article categories Announcement Alexandre Kantorow wins at the 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition 28th June 2019 Special offers

Alexandre Kantorow wins at the 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition



by Chris O'Reilly

The results of the piano category in the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition were announced last night, with First Prize and Gold Medal going to the 22-year-old Frenchman Alexandre Kantorow, who opted for Brahms and Tchaikovsky's Second Piano Concertos for his final round with the State Academic Symphony Orchestra and Vasily Petrenko on Wednesday evening (all other finalists chose to perform Tchaikovsky's more popular First Concerto).

Born into a musical family in Clermont-Ferrand in 1997, Kantorow currently studies at the Conservatoire de Paris, and already has a substantial discography under his belt: he made his debut on BIS in 2015 with a recording of the [Liszt Piano Concertos](#) (conducted by his father Jean-Jacques) which prompted *Fanfare* to describe him as 'Liszt reincarnated', and *BBC Music Magazine* to note that 'Kantorow's approach rejects bombast in favour of an equable, mellow-toned artistry that's admirable in itself'. An equally impressive solo recital, [à la Russe](#), followed two years later: featuring Rachmaninov's Piano Sonata No. 1, Guido Agosti's solo piano arrangement of Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Balakirev's notoriously fiendish *Islamey*, the album was one of our Recordings of the Week, with Katherine observing that 'when bravura calls, Kantorow will leave you agog'. (You can read her [full review of the recording here](#)). He's currently partway through a series of the Saint-Saëns piano concertos (again with Jean-Jacques on the rostrum), with another solo album and a new concerto dedicated to him by the composer and conductor José Serebrier also in the pipeline.

Silver medals went to Japan's Mao Fujita and Russia's Dmitry Shishkin (who recorded a [Chopin album](#) on the Frederick Chopin Institute's own label in 2016), with a special award for 'Courage and Restraint' going to Chinese pianist An Tianxu after an administrative error resulted in the orchestra launching into Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* rather than the Tchaikovsky concerto he was expecting.

Established in 1958, the International Tchaikovsky Competition takes place every four years in Moscow (and latterly St Petersburg), with former victors in the piano category including Van Cliburn, Grigory Sokolov, John Ogdon, Mikhail Pletnev, and Daniil Trifonov; the winner of the 1998 Gold Medal, Denis Matsuev, chaired this year's jury, which also included Nelson Freire, Barry Douglas, Menahem Pressler, and Freddy Kempf.

Thanks to [medici.tv](#), you can watch Kantorow's semi-final recital (which includes the Stravinsky/Agosti transcription mentioned above) [here](#) and his performance in the concerto round [here](#) - and until Monday we're offering 20% off his three BIS recordings.

<https://www.prestomusic.com/classical/articles/2728--announcement-alexandre-kantorow-wins-at-the-16th-international-tchaikovsky-competition>



Photo courtesy of tch16.medici.tv



Alexandre Kantorow wins Tchaikovsky Competition piano category

9:16, 28th June 2019

Report by [Gramophone](#)

The 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition concluded last night, naming the winners across its six categories.

In the customarily much-followed piano category the Gold Medal went to the 22-year-old French pianist Alexandre Kantorow (the only finalist to opt for Tchaikovsky's Second, rather than First, Piano Concerto). Kantorow recently released a much-praised album of Saint-Saëns piano concertos for BIS, a label that showed considerable foresight in starting to record with him five years ago.

Kantorow 'is the real deal – a fire-breathing virtuoso with a poetic charm...' wrote *Gramophone* in June.

Two Silver Medals were awarded: to Mao Fujita, 20, from Japan (a firm audience favourite) and Dmitry Shiskin, 27, from Russia, while the jury, chaired by Denis Matsuev, gave three Bronze Medals – to Konstantin Emelyanov, 25, from Russia, Alexey Malenikov, 29, from Russia and Kenneth Broberg, 25, from the USA.

The Chinese pianist An Tianxu, 20, was awarded fourth place but singled out for his courage when he was poised to start the Tchaikovsky First Concerto while the orchestra opened the Rachmaninov *Paganini Rhapsody* – a situation he rescued with aplomb.

The State Academic Symphony Orchestra of Russia, 'Evgeny Svetlanov', was conducted for the piano concerto finals with considerable skill and musicality by Vasily Petrenko.

The competition was streamed in its entirety by Medici.tv with more than 15 million views from nearly 200 countries. Medici will also stream the two winners' galas – on Friday from Moscow and on Saturday from St Petersburg. In both galas, the Tchaikovsky Competition's co-chair and guiding force Valery Gergiev will conduct his Mariinsky Orchestra.

For a full listing of the results visit [Medici.tv's](https://www.medicivt.com/competition) competition website.

XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition

https://www.rhinegold.co.uk/international_piano/alexandre-kantorow-wins-tchaikovsky-competition-piano-category/

Pianist *Helping you become a better player*

HOME NEWS BLOG PIANO LESSONS BUYER'S GUIDE RESOURCES EVENTS STORE WIN LOGIN / REGISTER

The ONLY newsletter for piano learners
Key to your progress as a pianist

Stay on beat with our free exclusive tips, professional advice, interviews, competitions and more

[SIGN ME UP](#)

News / French Pianist Alexandre Kantorow Wins Gold At The International Tchaikovsky Competition

French pianist Alexandre Kantorow wins GOLD at the International Tchaikovsky Competition

By [Ellie Palmer](#)

28 June 2019



Kantorow performed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, Op. 44 and Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat Major, Op. 83

Friday 28 June 2019

Alexandre Kantorow has taken home first prize in the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition piano category.

[The French pianist was the only one of the seven finalists to play Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 in G Major, Op. 44.](#) The remaining six all chose to play Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat Minor, Op. 23.

Second Prize and the Silver Medal were shared between Dmitriy Shishkin of Russia and Mao Fujita of Japan, whilst Third Prize and the Bronze Medal were shared between Alexey Melnikov of Russia, Kenneth Broberg of the USA, and Konstantin Yemelyanov of Russia.

Fourth Prize and the Diploma award went to Tianxu An of China, whose [performance was unfortunately scuppered by a huge administrative error](#).

Russian favourite Alexander Malofeev was controversially eliminated early, bringing into question the motives of the judges.

The competition is one of the world's most famous music competitions. Previous winners have included Van Cliburn, Boris Berezovsky and Daniil Trifonov. [Pianist issue 98 cover star Lucas Debargue took home 4th prize at the competition's last finals back in 2015](#).

Watch highlights of Kantorow's gold-winning performance below

Watch all highlights from each round of the competition [here](#).

[25 piano contestants kicked off the competition back on 18 June](#).

The prize-giving ceremony will take place later today at the Pashkov House in Moscow. The winner of the Grand Prix of the Competition will be announced on June 29 during the gala concert of the laureates, which will be held at the New Stage of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg.

<https://www.pianistmagazine.com/news/french-pianist-alexandre-kantorow-wins-gold-at-the-international-tchaikovsky-competition/>



ALEXANDRE KANTOROW TAKES FIRST PRIZE AT

THE XVI INTERNATIONAL TCHAIKOVSKY COMPETITION

At the prestigious Tchaikovsky Competition — the Olympics of classical music held every four years in Russia — contestants in the piano category may select their instrument from various pianomakers, and are free to shift allegiances from round to round. The 16th International Tchaikovsky Competition, and its piano competition, reached its conclusion in the evening of June 27.

In his final round of competition, the 22-year-old Alexandre Kantorow, who had stuck with another pianomaker for previous performances, found himself doubtless overwhelmed by the storied craftsmanship and rich, inimitable tone of the Steinway & Sons Model D grand, and, in an inspired, prescient decision, elected to play on a Steinway for the final round.

It was — as it was for 5 out of 6 of the prize-winning pianists at the Tchaikovsky and for over 95% of concert pianists who performed with orchestra during the 2017–2018 season — the correct choice. The Frenchman, performing Tchaikovsky's and then Brahms' Second Piano Concertos, impressed the jury with his sensitive musicality and took First Prize and the Gold Medal at the XVI International Tchaikovsky Competition. Congratulations, Alexandre Kantorow!

<https://www.steinway.com/news/features/alexandre-kantorow-XVI-international-tchaikovsky-competition>



An all classical music blog

THE CLASSIC REVIEW

NEWS

Alexandre Kantorow is the Winner of 2019 Tchaikovsky Piano Competition

The Classic Review - June 28, 2019



Image: (c) Jean-Baptiste Millot

French pianist Alexandre Kantorow was announced as the big winner of the 16th Tchaikovsky [piano](#) competition for 2019.

Kantorow (22) has already recorded few well-received albums for the BIS label, the latest of which, a hybrid SACD of Saint-Saëns three Piano Concertos with the Tapiola Sinfonietta conducted by his father, Jean-Jacques Kantorow, was [reviewed on these pages](#).

The final round requires all participants to play two concertos consecutively, one by [Tchaikovsky](#) (either the first or the less-heard second concerto), and another concerto chosen by the participant. In this years' finale, Kantorow was the only pianist out of the seven finalists to play the Second Concerto. In addition, he played Brahms second Piano Concerto.

Unfortunately, this years' piano [competition](#) will mostly be remembered by a significant blunder that causes pianist Tianxu An to misunderstand the order of the concertos he had to perform. The confusion, which the competition's organizers claimed caused by the evening announcer's error, was widely discussed and can be seen below, with Mr. An expecting the longer introduction of the first Tchaikovsky piano concerto and surprised to hear the opening of Rachmaninov's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini:

Although offered to perform the entire evening again, An declined. He was placed fourth in the competition, but was also compensated by a special award, giving for "courage and restraint".

The jury of this years' competition included renowned pianists and past winners such as Denis Matsuev (Jury Chair), Michel Béroff, Barry Douglas, Freddy Kempf, Boris Petrushansky, Menahem Pressler and Nelson Freire.

The Tchaikovsky Piano Competition is held every four years in Moscow, and is considered one of the more prestigious competitions in the world, alongside other events like the Van Cliburn Competition (Texas) the Leeds Competition, The Chopin Competition (Warsaw), The Queen Elisabeth Competition (Brussels) and the Arthur Rubinstein Competition (Tel-Aviv). Recent winners of the Tchaikovsky competition included Daniil Trifonov (2011) and Dmitry Masleev (2015).

<https://theclassicreview.com/news/alexandre-kantorow-is-the-winner-of-2019-tchaikovsky-piano-competition/>

À LA Russe • Alexandre Kantorow (pn) • BIS 2150 (SACD: 76:29)

RACHMANINOV Piano Sonata No. 1. **TCHAIKOVSKY** *Morceaux*, op. 72: No. 5, *Méditation*; No. 17, *Passé lointain*. *Scherzo à la russe*, op. 1/1. **STRAVINSKY** *The Firebird* (arr. Agosti): *Infernal Dance*; *Berceuse*; *Finale*. **BALAKIREV** *Islamey*

Rarely does a new release convince you that the next great pianist has appeared, but it happened here. Alexandre Kantorow turns 20 this year and is the son of the noted French violinist Jean-Jacques Kantorow. I'm not the first to be dazzled. The booklet for this new release quotes a rave close to home: "Alexandre is Liszt reincarnated. I've never heard anyone play these pieces, let alone play the piano, the way he does (Jerry Dubins, *Fanfare*)." That review (39:3) greeted a teenage phenom playing the two Liszt piano concertos, with father Jean-Jacques conducting. I suppose young Kantorow can't also reincarnate as Balakirev, Rachmaninoff, and Stravinsky, but his performance of virtuosos showpieces from these composers occasions total admiration and delight.

I wonder why two supreme Rachmaninoff interpreters, Horowitz and Richter, didn't record—and perhaps never even played?—his First Piano Sonata, written in Dresden between November 1907 and May 1908. The program note concedes that this massive, immensely challenging work is rarely performed and goes on to depict the opening motto of a descending fifth as a "strange banality." Kantorow dispels that description, rendering the sonata's storminess and tenderness with poised confidence. After hearing only a few measures, you realize that he's one of those exceptional talents who can make any piece captivating. The bursts of Rachmaninoff's fiendishly difficult pianistic effects flow past with utter

Fanfare September/October 2017 485

naturalness. I have no comparisons to offer, but this is a glorious reading of a wrongly neglected work.

Jumping to the next peak of technical audacity, Balakirev's *Islamey* has almost ceased to be a musical evocation of the Orient (as Romantic composers defined it), in favor of a barn-burner to send the audience home gasping. Kantorow fulfills that requirement, but when the gentle second section arrives, he displays a melting touch and poetic phrasing that cannot be taught. He never bangs, and his rhythmic sense is vibrant and secure. In short, this is a performance of pure enjoyment because the listener can relax and put himself in the hands of a pianist of supreme skill.

I've never encountered a keyboard arrangement of numbers from *The Firebird*, but this one by Italian pianist and pedagogue Guido Agosti (1901–1989) turns Kastchei's "Infernal Dance" into a thrill ride equal to anything in the familiar *Three Movements from Petrushka* that super-virtuosos live by. The *Berceuse* and *Finale* aren't as knuckle-crunching, but that's an advantage since Kantorow can display his lyrical gift in them. So that we can catch our breath, three Tchaikovsky miniatures are respites of grace and charm. A great asset throughout is BIS's gorgeous recorded sound, which captures every register of the instrument with absolute fidelity—this is the best-sounding piano disc of the year so far.

Unrestrained praise can easily drift into hyperbole, so I'll end with a quiet nudge—this is one disc where a word to the wise is sufficient. **Huntley Dent**

486 *Fanfare* September/October 2017

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/classical-music-news/the-16th-international-tchaikovsky-competition-announces-the-results>

<https://www.sfcv.org/reviews/none/letter-from-moscow-tchaikovsky-competition-graced-by-outstanding-finale>

https://www.rhinegold.co.uk/international_piano/alexandre-kantorow-wins-tchaikovsky-competition-piano-category/

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/07/03/tchaikovsky-festival-a66261>



Fanfare Magazine

A remarkable pianist

14 August 2019 - **Published on Amazon.com**

Steven Kruger, Fanfare magazine

Here is a release that makes me sit bolt upright with amazement. It's simply better than the competition, and one knows it immediately. That could be the end of this review.

We live in a world of flawless pianists these days, virtuosos by the dozens who can toss off nearly everything without the sense of laboriousness evident in piano greats of the past. Arthur Rubinstein's missed notes in concert are a footnote from history now, not our normal experience. But note-perfect and insightful are not synonyms. Amid the welter of notes, we hope for special artistry, and when it presents itself, it's still remarkable how easily it stands out. Saint-Saëns has been lucky on CD with his piano concertos, if not in the concert hall outside of France, except for the Concerto No. 2 and the occasional performance of No. 5, the "Egyptian." Most recently, Romain Descharmes recorded a well-received full cycle for Naxos. But Alexandre Kantorow, ably assisted here by the conducting of his father, sounds as if he were born inside the music.

Recording these concertos with a chamber orchestra might seem limiting at first, but the extraordinary combination of qualities in Alexandre Kantorow's pianism stands out in fine relief here, recorded with perfect balances by BIS. Kantorow's manner ranges from meltingly soft to the fastest passage work you have ever heard, all of it projected with a natural sense of rhythmic give and not a moment of edgy harshness anywhere in the treble. Fast pianists tend towards machine-gun sonorities at the top of the keyboard, and slow ones more frequently give in to mush down below and then sound clangorous on top. I don't know how he does it, but Kantorow brings us gleaming depth and a beautiful treble that doesn't cut the ear. And in fast moments, he is even more "effortless" than other star pianists one hears about these days. The word is overused, of course. But listen to Kantorow's passagework, and your jaw will drop at the impossible fluidity.

The Saint-Saëns concertos themselves make for a wonderful study in inventive structural eclecticism. The Third Concerto dates from 1869, yet it sports, along with post-Wagnerian key fluidity and a nod at Middle Eastern sonorities popular in France of the day, nearly every trick Rachmaninoff would later think of, especially that of having the pianist advance musical logic, rather than merely answering the orchestra in formal opposition. Saint-Saëns, with experienced sophistication, varies what the piano does more than most composers, changing things every few seconds to avoid listener boredom. The piano never seems stuck imitating the orchestra. Instead it moves with lightning speed through purely pianistic tricks: trills to octaves to glissandos and back. These concertos aren't just vehicles for display. They entertain, and that is why they are still alive and well in the concert hall when they do get a hearing. It is hard to know which of these three concertos to prefer, each is so well designed to please in the same way.

The Tapiola Sinfonietta, 45 strong, achieves here an unusual unanimity of purpose with the soloist. One doesn't miss the orchestra's lack of heft in the big rondo of the Fourth Concerto—or elsewhere. One is simply too busy taking in how beautiful it all is.

[Read less](#)

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

Piano Concerto No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 29 (1869) [27:11]

Piano Concerto No. 4 in C minor, Op. 44 (1875) [24:39]

Piano Concerto No. 5 in F major, Op. 103, 'L'Égyptien' (1896) [27:47]

Alexandre Kantorow (piano)

Tapiola Sinfonietta/Jean-Jacques Kantorow

rec. 2016 (Nos. 4 & 5), 2018 (No. 3), Tapiola Concert Hall, Finland

Reviewed as a 24/96 download from [eClassical](#)

Pdf booklet included

BIS BIS-2300 SACD [80:37]

It's good to see Saint-Saëns's piano concertos gaining traction these days, especially as the focus so often falls on his ubiquitous 'Organ' Symphony. The latest recordings of these winning works include: Nos. 2 and 4 with Bertrand Chamayou and the Orchestre National de France under Emmanuel Krivine (Erato 9029563426); Louis Schwizgebel and the BBCSO conducted by Fabien Gabel and Martyn Brabbins in Nos. 2 and 5 respectively ([Aparté](#)); and the Naxos/Romain Descharmes traversal of all five with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra directed by Marc Soustrot. I heartily recommend [Vols. 1 and 2](#) of that cycle, but [Vol. 3](#), which pairs the fourth and fifth concertos, is a major disappointment.

Chamayou, Schwizgebel and Descharmes, all in the thirties, are fine pianists, but the stellar talent here is the young Alexandre Kantorow (b. 1997). I first encountered this remarkable Frenchman in eloquent and insightful accounts of the three Liszt concertos, also with the Tapiola Sinfonietta conducted by his father, Jean-Jacques ([BIS](#)). I described the then teenager as a 'virtuoso of rare sensitivity and good taste'. I was similarly impressed by his well-filled solo album, *à la russe*, whose 'zephyrs and whirlwinds' simply confirmed his many talents ([BIS](#)). That said, when it comes to Saint-Saëns's output for piano and orchestra, it's the scintillating Stephen Hough, with the CBSO and Sakari Oramo, who's still the one to beat ([Hyperion](#)). Indeed, these vital, spontaneous performances from 2000/2001 are a must-have for pianophiles and fans of this composer alike.

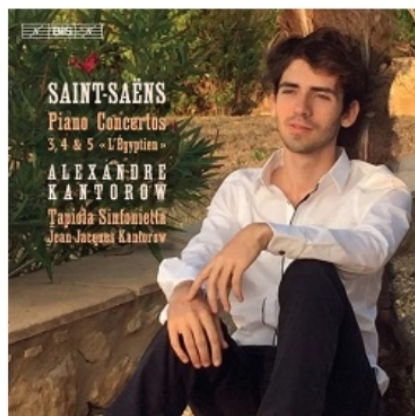
The recorded sound of Hough's and Descharmes' Op. 29 is bright and clear, so I was disconcerted, albeit briefly, by the unusually dark-toned opening to Kantorow's reading. At first I thought this signalled a less-than-lively presentation, only to realise we're hearing the instrumental weight/body that most rivals seem to miss. Indeed, Arcantus engineer Martin Nagorni's production has all the tonal richness and overall sophistication that makes Jens Braun's Liszt so special. (Take5's Braun is listed as the producer this time around.) Happily, Kantorow *files* gives a very attractive performance of the piece, the quieter moments of the opening movement well shaped and nicely nuanced. The orchestra, sounding wonderfully aerated in the ensuing *Andante*, then match the soloist's urge and sparkle in the concluding *Allegro*. In short, a terrific start to this enticing programme.

The fourth and fifth concertos were recorded two years earlier, when this phenomenal pianist was not yet twenty. The former, a shadowed and more introspective work in two movements, is thoughtfully done, its pianistic flourishes a pleasing foil to those dark, declamatory timps. Again, the recording is beautifully detailed, the piano especially alluring in the opening *Allegro moderato - Andante*; as before, balances are entirely natural. Ultimately, though, it's the soloist who deserves the most credit here, given his surefooted sense of style and structure. Meanwhile, Kantorow *père* proves an alert and judicious accompanist, notably in the now animated, now inward *Allegro vivace - Andante - Allegro*. He and his Finnish players certainly match the soloist in terms of felicitous phrasing and finely calibrated dynamics. It's very different from the sheer momentum and brilliance one gets with Hough, for instance, but the deeper rewards of this new album are immense.

At this juncture I'd planned to revisit Hough's accounts of Nos. 4 and 5, but decided there was little point, as I was so engaged - nay, captivated - by the young Kantorow's magical, multifaceted readings of both. Schwizgebel's performance of the exotic fifth is essential listening, though, yoking as it does a keen intellect with all necessary impulse. That said, he's not as limpid, as ravishing, as Kantorow in the gentler musings of the *Allegro moderato*. As for the spiced rhythms and timbres of the remaining movements, they're supremely well pitched and caught; in fact, there's a sudden - and sustained - sense of presence, of 'being there', that adds immeasurably to one's enjoyment of the music. It's all so poised and proportionate, yet that energetic dash to the finish line is as exhilarating as it gets. (Goodness, I hope there's more to come from this talented team.) Jean-Pascal Vachon's excellent liner-notes complete this top-flight release.

Alexandre Kantorow eschews runaway virtuosity for something much more thoughtful and illuminating; *très extraordinaire*.

Dan Morgan



Support us financially by purchasing this from



PROFIEL

ALEXANDRE KANTOROW

EEN JONGE TSAAR VAN DE PIANO

Door Eddie Vetter

Foto: Baptiste Millot

'Een jonge tsaar van de piano'. 'Een reïncarnatie van Liszt'. 'Een jeugdige tijger op de toetsen'. 'Een vuurspuwende virtuoos met poëtische charme'. Recensenten lijken tegen elkaar op te bieden om hun enthousiasme te uiten over het spel van Alexandre Kantorow (22).

Natuurlijke flair, overrompelende virtuositeit en sensualiteit gaan een magisch verbond aan

In juni van dit jaar won Alexandre Kantorow als eerste Fransman het eerbiedwaardige Tsjaikovskiconcours in Moskou. Tekenend: als enige van de finalisten koos hij niet het populaire Eerste maar het veel minder bekende Tweede pianoconcert om het publiek en de juryleden te verleiden. Valery Gergiev was er als de kippen bij om de 'jonge tsaar van de piano' te engageren.

Alexandre is een zoon van Jean-Jacques Kantorow, hier bekend als voormalig concertmeester en dirigent van het Nederlands Kamerorkest. Anders dan zijn vader en moeder koos hij niet voor de viool maar voor de piano. Op zijn elfde kreeg hij les van Pierre-Alain Volondat, de ietwat wereldvreemde musicus die in 1983 de Koningin Elisabethwedstrijd in Brussel had gewonnen. Tegenwoordig wordt Kantorow nog gecoacht door de befaamde pedagoog Rena Shereshevskaya in Parijs.

Reeds lang voor zijn definitieve doorbraak in Moskou waren velen overtuigd van zijn uitzonderlijke talent. Toen hij zestien jaar oud was, maakte hij al zijn eerste cd. Hierop speelde hij samen met zijn vader Franse vioolsonates van Fauré en tijdgenoten. Jean-Jacques had als dirigent van de Finse Tapiola Sinfonietta een hechte relatie met het Zweedse label BIS. Zo kon Alexandre al op zijn zeventiende beide pianoconcerten van Liszt inclusief diens furieuze *Malédiction* voor piano en strijkers opnemen voor het prestigieuze label. Uiteraard wordt de 'jeugdige tijger op de toetsen' hierbij

begeleid door de Tapiola Sinfonietta onder leiding van Jean-Jacques Kantorow. De recensent van *Gramophone* signaleert dat vader en zoon 'telepathisch' op elkaar zijn afgestemd.

BIS geeft de eigenzinnige Fransman de vrije hand in de programmakeuze. In *À la russe* onderzoekt hij zijn Russische roots in werken van Rachmaninov, Tsjaikovski, Stravinsky en de berucht moeilijke oriëntaalse fantasie *Islamey* van Balakirev.

Op zijn meest recente cd keert Alexandre Kantorow met drie pianoconcerten van Saint-Saëns (de nummers 3, 4 en 5) terug naar Franse sferen. Hij wordt opnieuw begeleid door de Tapiola Sinfonietta onder leiding van zijn vader, die het hart voor Saint-Saëns op de goede plaats heeft, zoals hij al vaak heeft bewezen. Met de kleine bezetting van veertig orkestleden blijft de samenklank mooi transparant en de aanpak kamermuzikaal.

De pianist is hier met zijn sprankelende toucher en innige muzikaliteit eerder een dichter en charmeur dan een vuurspuwende virtuoos. Toch kan het vuur ineens vanuit het schijnbare niets hoog op slaan. Dat maakt zijn spel juist zo spannend en verrassend. De laatste twee concerten zijn overigens al in 2016 opgenomen toen hij nog geen twintig jaar oud was. Des te verbluffender zijn de gerijpte interpretaties. Nummer 5 spant wel de kroon. Dit draagt de bijnaam 'L'Égyptien' omdat het tijdens een verblijf in Luxor is gecomponeerd en een Nubisch liefdeslied erin is verwerkt. Natuurlijke flair, overrompelende virtuositeit en sensualiteit gaan in de handen van Alexandre Kantorow een magisch verbond aan. We zullen nog veel van hem horen.



LISZT PIANO CONCERTOS e.a.

TAPIOLA SINFONIETTA
O.L.V. JEAN-JACQUES KANTOROW
BIS
VKZ.NL/19540 € 23,99



RACHMANINOV, BALAKIREV e.a. À LA RusSE

ALEXANDRE KANTOROW
BIS
VKZ.NL/19541 € 23,99



SAINT-SAËNS PIANO CONCERTOS 3, 4 & 5

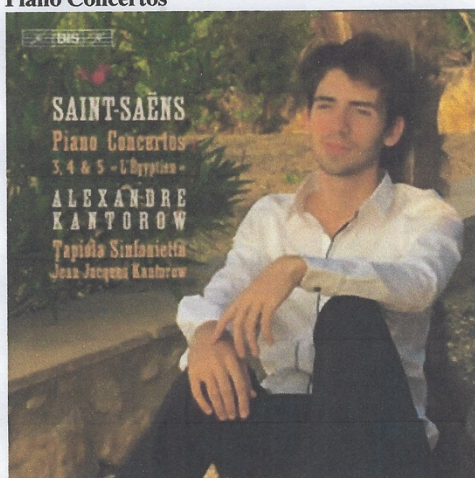
ALEXANDRE KANTOROW
TAPIOLA SINFONIETTA
O.L.V. JEAN-JACQUES KANTOROW
BIS
VKZ.NL/19539 € 23,99



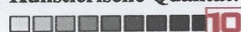
Suche

CD-Besprechung

Saint-Saëns
Piano Concertos



Künstlerische Qualität:



Klangqualität:



Gesamteindruck:



Besprechung: 12.07.19

Klassik Heute
Empfehlung

BIS 2300

1 CD/SACD stereo/surround • 81min • 2016, 2018



War zumindest das 2. Klavierkonzert von Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) für Generationen von Tastenakrobaten absolutes Standardrepertoire für den Konzertsaal, sind dessen Aufführungszahlen in den letzten zwanzig Jahren rückläufig. Mag sein, dass die dort offen zur Schau gestellte Virtuosität sich ein wenig verbraucht hat, andererseits das abverlangte technische Niveau – etwa im Vergleich zu Rachmaninow – heute jungen PianistInnen nicht mehr reicht, um vor großem Publikum zu reüssieren. Die vorliegende CD beweist aber, dass sich eine intensive Beschäftigung mit den drei letzten Klavierkonzerten des französischen Meisters durchaus lohnt und die Stücke in ihrer Zeit viel innovativer waren, als allgemein vermutet.

Das äußerst selten gespielte dritte Konzert ist fast ein Gegenentwurf zum populären zweiten: Das Klavier wird in ungewöhnlicher Weise in den Orchesterklang integriert. Der Komponist knüpft hier an symphonische Vorbilder an: Schuberts große C-Dur-Symphonie sowie Beethovens fünftes Klavierkonzert in derselben Tonart Es-Dur werden fast wörtlich zitiert. Lediglich das Finale kommt mit unverhohlener Direktheit. Das vierte Konzert übertrifft alle anderen an Tiefgang und formaler Raffinesse deutlich. So wird in diesem zweisätzigen Werk, das einige Konzepte der berühmten *Orgelsymphonie* vorwegnimmt, z.B. das schwer lastende Hauptthema des Beginns später als Scherzo paraphrasiert. Beide Stücke haben die zeitgenössischen Hörer eher überfordert. Dem fünften Konzert (1896) hingegen ist stets ein Publikumserfolg gewiss, vor allem wegen des ungewöhnlich farbigen, stimmungsvollen zweiten Satzes, der keineswegs nur Anklänge an arabische, sondern auch an javanische (Gamelan) oder südosteuropäische Musik (Nachahmung des Cymbaloms durch das Klavier) enthält. Hatte ich die im vorigen Jahr vollendete Naxos-Gesamtaufnahme (auf 3 Einzel-CDs) zur neuen Referenz gekürt, die – endlich! – Collards bahnbrechende Einspielung aus den 1980ern ablöste, ist das mit dieser BIS-Veröffentlichung schon wieder Geschichte. Was die Herren Kantorow (Vater und Sohn) hier mit der ebenfalls ausgezeichnet aufspielenden Tapiola Sinfonietta vorlegen, übertrifft alles, was bislang für dieses Repertoire aufgegeben wurde. Alexandre Kantorows – zum Zeitpunkt der Aufnahme von Nr. 4 & 5 gerade mal neunzehn – Spiel erfreut nicht nur durch stupende Virtuosität und einen alle Facetten von Anschlagkultur überzeugend abdeckende klangliche Differenzierung; man höre nur den Beginn des letzten Satzes von Nr. 3 mit dem schnellen Wechsel von Martellato-Oktaven zu eleganten, wieselflinken Sechzehnteltriolen oder die



Tähti on syttynyt: Tšaikovski-voittaja Alexandre Kantorow teki Lisztin virtuoosikonsertosta syvämietteisen odysseian Mikkeliissä

Tšaikovski-pakitut piristävät Mikkelin musiikkijuhlia.



Alexandre Kantorow ja Valeri Gergiev lavan takana heti Lisztin toisen pianokonsertton esityksen jälkeen. (KUVA: juha metso)

Mikkelin musiikkijuhlat. Pietarin Mariinski-teatterin orkesteri Valeri Gergievin johdolla konserttitalo Mikaelissa keskiviikkona. – Wagner, Liszt, Bruckner.

Tiesitkö, että [Franz Lisztin](#) nuoruudenteos pianokonsertto nro 2 ei olekaan pinnallinen virtuoosikonsertto, vaan syvämietteinen mestariteos?

Siltä se ainakin kuulosti, kun viime viikolla Moskovassa Tšaikovski-pianokilpailun voittanut ja kaikkien Tšaikovski-kilpasarjojen Grand Prix -pääpalkinnon saanut ranskalainen [Alexandre Kantorow](#) soitti sitä Mikkelin musiikkijuhlilla keskiviikkona.

Hänen sointikulttuurissaan on menneiden kulta-aikojen aristokratiaa. Soinnin hienoin kultapöly on jälleen kuuluvillamme.

Konserton kolme keskeistä motiivia kulkevat melkoisen odysseian, ja Kantorow sai ulos aivan kaiken [Danten](#)

helvettinäyistä pienen lapsen viattomiin taivasnäkyihin. Hän soitti kaiken syvämietteisesti pohdiskellen, kuin filosofisena harjoituksena.

Konsertossa on tietysti myös virtuoosikulkua, mutta hän nivoi nekin kokonaisuuteen reuhtomatta ja numeroa tekemättä, kypsänä taiteilijana.

Sanonpahan vain: bravo! Jos tämä meno jatkuu, Kantorow on tai ainakin hänen pitäisi olla pian yhtä iso nimi kuin mitä [Daniil Trifonov](#) tai [Yuja Wang](#) ovat tällä hetkellä.

Tämä [suomalaisten jo vuosia suosima](#) huippukyky on kaiken lisäksi vain 22-vuotias, joten juhlimme nyt ainutlaatuista potentiaalia, sillä hänestä voi tulla tätä erinomaista nykytasoaankin parempi.

Ylimääräisenä saimme kaksi osaa [Igor Stravinskyn](#) *Tulilinnun* pianosovituksesta. Ne menivät hyvin, mutta paljastivat myös pianistin rajat, sillä uskon osien menevän vielä tätäkin paremmin sitten joskus 25-vuotiaana.

Kantorowin esitys oli illan kohokohta, vaikka Pietarin Mariinski-teatterin johtaja [Valeri Gergijev](#) antoi hänelle vain noin varttitunnin yhteistä harjoitusaikaa ennen konserttia.

Konsertin aluksi kuultiin [Wagnerin](#) *Lohengrin*-oopperan alkusoitto, jonka herkkä alku olisi pitänyt puhdistaa tavalla, johon Gergijeviltä ei nyt riittänyt aikaa ja viitseliäisyyttä. Huippukohdissa saimme tuki nauttia orkesterin syvästä sointimaailmasta.

Gergijevistä on vähitellen tullut erinomainen [Bruckner](#)-kapellimestari, kun aikaisemmin hänen upeita leipälajejaan olivat venäläinen ooppera ja muu venäläinen musiikki. Münchenin filharmonikkojen ylikapellimestarin pesti auttaa epäilemättä Bruckner-soinnin kultivoitumisessa.

Brucknerin kahdeksas sinfonia meni viime vuonna yllättävän hyvin, joten nyt osasi jo odottaa uhkeaa ja syväsointista esitystä myös seitsemännestä sinfoniasta.

Sellainen saatiin, esitys oli koskettava ja syvä.

Mutta kaikenlaista puleerattavaa olisi kyllä vielä löytynyt. Ainakaan ensimmäisenä Mikkelin-iltanaan hän ei harjoittanut orkesteria kuin tunnin, kun parhaimmillaan hän harjoittaa Mikkeliissä sentään kolmisen tuntia päivässä.

[www.mikkelinmusiikkijuhlat.fi](https://www.mikkelinmusiikkijuhlat.fi/ohjelma)<https://www.mikkelinmusiikkijuhlat.fi/ohjelma>