

the B-A-C-H project

BACH • SHOSTAKOVICH • CHOPIN

DORA DELIYSKA

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B-A-C-H Project

Dear listener, it is a great honour to share this recording with you. The B-A-C-H Project has a very profound and significant meaning to me, as I devoted considerable time and thought into its final version. Analysing and going into the depths of these three masterpieces – The Well Tempered Clavier by J.S. Bach, Preludes and Fugues op.87 by Shostakovich and The Études by Chopin has made me appreciate and respect even more the salient meaning of these compositions and the deep musical impact they have had on the performing art of the piano. Finding a connection between these three piano cycles was a complicated, but fulfilling process, as it made me view these compositions from a different angle. The core of my concept is based on the idea of how musical compositions, written in different centuries with different compositional styles, can find a connection between one another, giving rise to very new and unique reflections. This way, the three composers 'communicate' with one another, mutually influencing their artistic ideas. Based on a thorough musical analysis, I have tried to make a selection of pieces that will not only respond musically to one another, but also represent part of an overarching concept, the structure of B-A-C-H. This way, I try to present a new perspective for the performing art of the piano, in which compositions created in the past respond to one another in the present and a new work of art is created through the performer. But let me look back at the actual process of creating the B-A-C-H Project.

For me, the starting point was my deep appreciation of Shostakovich and his music. Throughout my years as a student at the Academy of Music and the Performing Arts in Vienna, I spent much time admiring his compositions. I was moved to read books describing his difficult life and the years of oppression. The inner strength he found to compose, despite being condemned by the Party, and not to do what the powers that be demanded inspired me and revealed the extent of his genius. The biggest impact on me derived from his string quartets and symphonies. It was always the sound that impressed me most; a sound of despair and a cry for help (B Minor Prelude) or, at other moments, – simply a sound, symbolizing the dream of a better life (C Major Prelude). This is also how his Preludes and Fugues op.87 were written – he had to compose them in secret. Shostakovich started them in 1950, when he was invited to be a jury member at the J. S. Bach Piano Competition in Leipzig. His Preludes and Fugues are based on the structure of Bach's The Well-Tempered Clavier in all the major and minor keys. Writing a piano cycle containing 24 pieces aimed at reviving Bach's tradition in the 20th century, with a new vision and a new sound. My reason for elaborating the B-A-C-H Project was the link between these two piano cycles, and I was amazed how much these compositions have in common, despite having been written approximately 200 years apart.

I investigated pieces with the same tonalities and analysed not only their similarities, but also their contrasts. Gradually, I was able to discover a very striking connection between the pieces in the keys of B flat, A minor, C-major and B -minor, which is the famous syllable combination of B-A-C-H in the original German notation. While playing and analysing the preludes and fugues, I could feel the strong philosophical effect they had on me. The many voices in the fugues and the intensity of the preludes created a clear structure, yet frequently a rather dark and introverted one. This is when I decided to add some of the Études by Chopin also composed in the same keys. With their long harmonic lines, these pieces were the perfect additions to the strict structure of the preludes and fugues. Chopin was the missing link helping me to combine all the pieces and compile a concert programme and also this CD recording. The four blocks of the B-A-C-H Project represent the four main components of music: melody, rhythm, harmony and emotions. They all have almost the same duration, as they are all equal in importance. If one of these components were missing, the music could not exist or be recreated. This is the rationale of the B-A-C-H Project, the logic of music. This way, the wheel turns full circle, giving the listener a feeling of completeness.

– DORA DELIYSKA