

Hommage à Debussy: Works for Piano CD 4

This is the final disc in Genuin's Debussy series, performed by four different pianists. A Blüthner piano was used for everything, specially prepared to approximate the sound of Debussy's own Blüthner (currently in Musée Labenche in Brive-la-Gaillarde), which he acquired in 1905 and used until he died. An essay by noted Debussy expert Roy Howat is the basis for all the booklet notes, but I suggest downloading and reading the complete 37-page essay from Genuin's wonderful website (www.genuin.de/pictures/Gr_Booklet_Debussy_gr.pdf). Volumes 1 and 2 were reviewed in the previous two issues (12226, July/Aug 2012; 12227, Sept/Oct 2012). It also appears from the website that there is a four-disc box for the price of two now available.

Even with all of the Debussy I have had in recent months, this grabbed my attention for many hearings. Dahlkvist has publicly performed all of Debussy's piano music more than once in recent years and has to be viewed as a young expert in the style and technical demands placed on the pianist.

The Etudes are the most difficult of Debussy's sets of pieces, prompting the composer to write to his publisher that they even gave pause to his hands. Written with the inspiration of preparing a new edition of Chopin's Etudes for publisher Durand, they most certainly rank alongside Chopin's in both musical worth and technical challenges. They are the last major works for piano Debussy wrote and a fitting culmination for his revolutionary output and any recorded set of his piano music. The performance, sound, and booklet are all in keeping with the greatness of the music.

James Harrington

GEN 12229
American Record Guide
11/12/2012