



Alexei Lubimov

piano

Born in Moscow, pianist Alexei Lubimov is one of the most strikingly original musicians performing today. His large repertoire combined with his dedication to principle and musical morals make him a notable exception in today's music scene.

Following studies with Heinrich Neuhaus, Alexei Lubimov established an early dual passion for baroque music performed on traditional instruments and 20th-century composers such as Schönberg, Webern, Stockhausen, Boulez, Ives, Ligeti, Schnittke, Gubaidulina, Silvestrov and Pärt. He has premiered many contemporary works in Russia and founded a music festival there: "Alternativa," where they are featured. He formed a quartet dedicated to baroque music during the 1970s when international travel became impossible. While performing old and new music, however, Alexei Lubimov has continued to be an outstanding performer of classical and romantic repertoire as his many recordings show.

As political restrictions were lifted in Russia during the 1980s, Alexei Lubimov emerged among the first rank of international pianists giving concerts in Europe, North America and Japan. He has appeared with such orchestras such as the Helsinki-, Israel-, Munich-, St. Petersburg, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic in London, Russian National Orchestra, Orchestre Phil. de Radio France, Deutsches Symphonieorchester Berlin, Toronto Symphony and New York's Mainly Mozart Festival Orchestra under the most

important international conductors: Ashkenazy, Järvi, Kondrashin, Hogwood, Mackerras, Nagano, Norrington, Saraste, Salonen, Janovski and Tortelier. He has given historic performances with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Collegium Vocale Gent, Wiener Akademie and Musica Angelica. In the world of chamber music, he performs regularly with famous soloists and ensembles at festivals throughout the world.

In recent seasons he has performed with the Seattle Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra in Moscow and the Tonkünstlerorchester (2 concerts in the Great Hall of Vienna's Musikverein) as well as innumerable solo recitals. He toured with the Haydn Sinfonietta playing Mozart concertos and played Mozart with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana under Robert King, Haydn with the Camerata Salzburg under Sir Roger Norrington in New York, Pärt's *Lamentate* with RSO Vienna under Andrey Boreyko at the Musikverein and with the Tampere Philharmonic. Other highlights include performances of *Prometheus* by Scriabin at the Salzburg Festival and in Copenhagen and performances with the Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment (Beethoven), Munich Philharmonic (Silvestrov), SWR Stuttgart (Pärt), DSO Berlin (Pärt), Danish National Symphony Orchestra (Pärt), Anima Eterna Brugge and Russian National Orchestra. Alexei Lubimov has become a frequent performer in New York City, where he appeared at Lincoln Center's *White Light* Festival with the Budapest Festival Orchestra, in solo recitals and collaborations with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. In July 2015 he returned to Lincoln Center for a recital at the Mostly Mozart Festival. In December 2015 he was named the inaugural Cage Cunningham Fellow by New York's Baryshnikov Arts Center where he will receive \$50,000, over two years, in support of new works and collaborations.

His recordings have been issued on Melodia, Harmonia Mundi, Linn, Erato, BIS and Sony featuring the complete Mozart sonatas, Schubert, Chopin, Beethoven and Brahms as well as music of the 20th century. He has recorded regularly for ECM, producing some unusual CDs of particular note: *Der Bote*, with music of Liszt, Glinka and CPE Bach alongside John Cage and Tigran Mansurian; Arvo Pärt's *Lamentate* with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony; *Messe Noir*, with music of Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Scriabin; *Misterioso* with music of Silvestrov, Pärt and Ustvolskaya; the complete Debussy *Preludes* and John Cage *As It Is* with the singer Natalia Pschenitschnikova, released in 2012 His recordings of Schubert's Complete Impromptus, Beethoven's Three last Sonatas, Mozart's Complete Two-piano pieces (with Yuri Martynov) and Haydn's *Seven Last Words* in the keyboard version - all on historical instruments - were released between 2009-2014 on ZZT/Outthere France.

Updated January 2018 – please discard any previous versions)

Press comments:

“This recording is a particularly fine inclusion into the musical canon, the perfect across-the-ages coming together of composer, musician and instrument, produce a shining gem of an album. Alexei Lubimov has that rare combination of having a commanding reputation for modern piano works

and a passion for the baroque played on appropriate instruments. He plays with sonorous grace interspersed with bouts of explosive, energetic passion...making this slice of 18th century musical life sound fresh and new to 21st Century ears. A first-rate recording.”

Hi-Fi Plus - January 2018

“Alexei Lubimov has recorded a representative sampling of this chimeric music on a replica of a 1794 tangent piano. The sound is closer to a harpsichord, but the mechanism strikes the strings with pieces of metal or wood. Lubimov uses the various sustaining pedals and harp-like stops to bring out this composer’s varying moods to singular effect.”

The Classical Review - December 26, 2017

“Lubimov is on superb form, relishing the music’s unpredictability. Bach's original spirit is manifest in every one of his works: all bear the stamp of originality. A lovely disc, in demonstration sound.”

The ArtsDesk - December 20, 2017

“Listeners are afforded the double delight of hearing a fine cross section of the composer’s work played on a beguiling and multifaceted instrument. The G Major sonata relies on a three-chord pattern that Lubimov shapes with considerable delicacy. He makes the tangent piano the star throughout, employing all of its various methods of expression to stirring effect. One hopes that there will be additional outings in which he shares his art with us on this rare and fascinating instrument.”

Sequenza 21 - December 19, 2017

“Alexei Lubimov is the Janus-headed among pianists. One of the few pianists with two complete and authentic artistic identities on his instrument. That of a historical instrument pioneer, whose recordings of Mozart sonatas was one of the first complete such cycles on the fortepiano. And there is his reputation as a pianist’s pianist on the regular grand piano, capable of producing a silky, powerful, sumptuous tone interpreting 20th-century classics. And just recently I extolled his virtues in Ives and Berg. And now there’s a new disc out that once again explores the fringes of piano playing: C. P. E. Bach – on the tangent piano! It’s recordings like these that add the little extra-something! That’s in part due to the tangent piano that Lubimov uses. The opening Fantasy in F minor brings this rich universe of sound clearly to the fore. Lubimov’s powerful, juicy playing brings to the instrument and the composer exactly what this music needs in order to take that step from ‘interesting’ to ‘fascinating’. Without this individualistic, emotional and original treatment, the music might never be truly discovered.”

Forbes - November 22, 2017

“It took the ECM album ‘Messe Noire’ for me to get wise to the extraordinary pianism of Alexei Lubimov. It’s as sumptuous and pianistic an album of Russian 20th century music as it gets. The surprise was all the greater when I found out that the same Lubimov is also a pioneer of the original instrument scene. I’ve since grown used to his shape-shifting ways, enjoying most his releases and really loving a handful few. CPE Bach on the tangent piano? Sure thing. Beethoven on a 1802 Erard – absolutely. John Cage on a prepared piano? Hell yes! And I’ve found myself most enchanted with a release of some older live performances: Ives’ massive Concord Sonata, Anton Webern’s Variations for piano op.27, and Alban Berg’s sublime “Opus 1” Piano Sonata in one movement. The Berg sonata massaged in just the right ways; played with enough patience, it all comes together as a hyper-romantic work. Glenn Gould was terrific at this. Marc-André Hamelin is pretty terrific at it, too.

Lubimov performs the Berg sonata with brawn and enough warmth to get this essential characteristic across. Lubimov's performance doesn't shock, but it's also not apologetic. It is seductive on its own terms and attains an engrossing, spellbinding beauty. The main ingredient of this recital is the grand Ives 'Concord' Sonata. The elegant sophistication of the 'Concord' is brought out nicely by Pierre-Laurent Aimard; its difficulties are made sound easy by Marc-André Hamelin; its sense of time is deliciously stretched to the limits by Tzimon Barto. But for power, sweep, coherence, and that Ivesian magic that occurs when fundamentally different musical ideas crash or emerge from another, Lubimov is now my go-to choice. His way of melding the utmost tenderness with the harsh interruptions and juxtaposing the folksy with the elegant is extraordinarily effective and enchanting.”
Forbes – November 8, 2017

“Think for a moment of a pianist equally at home with the French clavecinistes, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Scriabin, Satie, Debussy, Silvestre, Pärt, Ives, Cage, Schnittke, Webern and Gubaidulina, whose preference is to record this music on historically appropriate instruments, each of which he plays with breathtaking mastery. That perspicacious artist could only be Alexei Lubimov. ECM has issued Lubimov's disc of works by Emanuel Bach on a 1794 tangent piano. Lubimov draws from it a veritable rainbow of colors, plus an abundant variety of sounds, perfectly suited to the extravagant expressivity of Bach. Lubimov's carefully chosen program seems tailored to underscore that influence. I can think of no other pianist capable of breathing such light and life, such shape and substance into this bold, wildly imaginative music. Lubimov gives us CPE Bach in the white heat of inspiration, forging a new expressive language that will become the musical lingua franca of future generations. Please do not miss this.”
Gramophone - October 2017

“Lubimov seems to achieve a kind of insight into the mind of this notoriously troublesome composer that no one else has quite managed before, and the end result is often gripping.”
AllMusic.com - September 20, 2017

“Lubimov's approach offers a first-rate account of just what it was that those listeners found so appealing. Even with limited dynamic range, Lubimov can achieve 'surprise' effects that we are more likely to associate with Haydn or, for that matter, Beethoven. Indeed, when [Beethoven](#) himself recognized Bach as a major influence, he was referring to Emanuel, rather than Sebastian! The result is an album that will provide generously satisfying rewards.”
The RehearsalStudio - September 3, 2017

“Alexei Lubimov is an acknowledged innovator. In this notable recording of CPOE Bach, he shows the inventive character of the fantasies, sonatas, and rondos of the composer making a full creative use of the sonority are pulsed from the tangent piano, allowing a great expressivity and intensity.”
El Nuevo Herald - August 27, 2017

Lubimov, fascinating sorcerer

“This is the concert, that *purged* me from a dazed state since last Friday's recital of Andrés Schiff. It surpassed by far yesterday's recital by the famous Yefim Bronfman. 'Master' definitely describes Alexei Lubimov. Lubimov is a brain of music who once recorded an unforgettable disc of Beethoven sonatas for Erato. The concert Wednesday, the first I would hear for this artist whom I have followed for 25 years, was going to lift the suspense. In the case of Alexei Lubimov, the fingers follow and translate perfectly the thought and the loftiness of view. It was easy to make a

comparison with András Schiff. But everything differentiates Lubimov from Schiff. The Hungarian plays a musical liquidity and its vaporization in the ether, while the Russian kneads matter and the flesh, in a gesture just as brilliant, but diametrically opposed. Lubimov starts from rhythm and plays without any frills. Schubert follows an equally personal Mozart. During the second half, Lubimov evokes the lapidary, flamboyant intransigence of Pollini, but with a more convincing pianism. I had the privilege in my life of three immense interpretations in concerts of the 1st Book of Preludes: Barenboim, Pollini and Lupu. The six Preludes played by Lubimov are now added to this trio, obedient to Pollini, but more fascinating still. Alexei Lubimov is the major Montreal discovery of the season. The return of such an artist is more than merely desired.”

Le Devoir - March 8, 2017

“Lubimov is the most Russian of pianists, except when he is challenging Russian orthodoxy from all sides and getting away with it. He paid tribute to Maria Yudina, one of the 20th century's most Russian of pianists, except when she was busy breaking every rule in the Soviet book and getting away with it. Both are pianists who have had a profound and lasting influence on their culture, musically and politically. The performance remained true to the high ideals that characterized every aspect of Yudina's chaotic, incautious life. In other words, it was a terrific performance.”

Los Angeles Times - March 3, 2016

- Pianist Alexei Lubimov has a new recording of Ives, Webern and Berg on Zig-Zag Territories Records:

“A compelling new recording by Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov was released recently. Lubimov is a musician who confounds perceive notions. Instead of favoring programs filled with Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Prokofiev, Lubimov is best known as a specialist in ‘historically informed performance.’ His performances of Mozart and Chop on contemporary pianos in the early 1990s created a sensation. Less well known is Lubimov’s longtime advocacy of modern music. This new recording presents live performance, vividly capturing the cohesion and lucidity of Lubimov’s interpretations. Not many American pianists tackle the craggy ‘Concord’ Sonata. It’s the devil to play, requiring the pianist to depress the keys with a 14³/₄-inch piece of wood in the second movement and featuring a brief flute solo in the last. For another, it lasts nearly 50 minutes, a sizeable piece of real estate on any concert program. Listening to Lubimov play it, however, you’re left wondering why it isn’t heard more often. Among the 20 or so recordings of this American masterpiece available, not many can hold a candle to this one in terms of audacity, breadth, clarity or vision.”

Washington Post - August 7, 2015

Mostly Mozart Festival, Lincoln Center, New York City

“At the Kaplan Penthouse, pianist Alexei Lubimov brought a vivid range of colors and pianistic firepower to his program, which included selections from Debussy’s ‘Préludes’ Book 1 and Book 2, the dense textures contrasted with the spare delicacy of Satie’s ‘Gymnopédie No. 1’” and ‘Gnossienne No. 5.’ There were three encores: the Prelude from Debussy’s Suite Pour le Piano and some Mozart; a muscular, meaty rendition of the Allegro con spirito from Sonata in D and an introspective take on the Andante cantabile from Sonata in C. Given the reception of the rapt audience it seemed that most listeners (myself included) would have been happy to stay and listen to Mr. Lubimov for another hour.

New York Times - August 2, 2015

Piano works of Ives, Webern Berg, Zig-Zig Territories CD:

A provocative mix, thrillingly played.

“Alexei Lubimov remains a bit of an enigma. His recordings have been unfailingly impressive, and demonstrate that few other pianists today command as wide a repertory as he does. Lubimov has recorded Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Debussy on instruments of the composers’ time, as well as well as a range of 20th-century music from Debussy and Satie to Cage and Pärt. It’s a provocative mix: Charles Ives isn’t often juxtaposed with the Second Viennese School, and the contrast between the exuberance and sheer density of his great Concord Sonata, and the crystalline austerity of Webern’s Variations, especially, is about as extreme as it could be. That’s underlined here by Lubimov’s account of the Ives, which is rugged, uncompromising and often thrilling. Other performers have attempted to tame its wildness. Lubimov seems to delight in that roughness, and his playing celebrates the complexity and technical challenges as much as it does the moments of poetry that unfold when the welter dies away. Webern’s Variations provide the briefest of repose before Lubimov plunges into the Berg, with playing that matches his Ives performance for intensity. The sense of expressive impulses barely held in check by the musical form that’s containing them is irresistible and highly revealing.”

The Guardian – May 20, 2015

Complete piano sonatas by Galina Ustvolskaja – Film by Alexandre Brage:

“Lubimov is an eminent scholar of Ustvolskaja’s music; he can look back on a long and intensive study of these works and a number of significant recordings. Lubimov’s playing of Sonata No. 6 wins again in added intensity, and also clearly hows the difference between teacher and students: fast, raw acts of gestural impetus, with excellent body control, the pianist carves the chord cluster structures from the keyboard, creating suspenseful pauses again and again. After this tour de force, nearing the end of the work, he takes a meaningful moment’s pause before moving on to the last chords. This is one of the most amazing moments of this concert recording. Lubimov’s playing is the icing on a cake of high quality and the best production.”

Klassik.com - April 11, 2015

It’s All About Piano! Festival, Institut Français, London:

“It was right to kick off with the programming of Russian veteran Alexei Lubimov. His was a perfectly symmetrical sequence, bookended by Mozart sonatas as you never quite heard them before, working in between through 20th-century developments both forwards and backwards to a new simplicity. Lubimov’s touch in the Mozart was dry, effortlessly agile and creative. Lubimov’s biggest coup was to plunge into Schoenberg’s Op 25 Suite as if the opening were merely another Mozart sonata cubed. He kept the dance rhythms taut and supportive to the emerging serialism; the Musette sounded like an early Prokofiev Rigaudon. The toccata-fire was even and impressive. Most striking were the centerpieces. As Lubimov took us on a journey from Pärt's early serialism to the tintinnabulating purity of *Für Alina*, we caught the full glare of the pianist's attack surrounding a moving meditation in the Op 2 Partita. On the other side of the interval, early minimalism was kept even and noble in the unison and then chorale-harmonic sphinxes of Satie's *Ogives*. Two encores suggested pure orchestral pianism.”

The Arts Desk - April 5, 2014

Recital, Zipper Hall, Los Angeles:

“Two years ago Alexei Lubimov, the Russian polymath pianist, made a rare appearance to open the season of Monday Evening Concerts. He was back Monday to do the same with Satie, Debussy and three short prepared piano pieces by John Cage. The odd composer out, Rabinovitch-Barakovsky

was the bigger news of the evening. He is a mystically inclined Minimalist composer with a cult following in Europe. The piece that Lubimov selected was 'Récit de Voyage' written in 1976; this was a U.S. premiere. Spiritually, this traveler leaves the land of the Gospel according to St. Luke and discovers the Buddhist 'Lotus Sutra;' the Schubert of the 'Wanderer' Sonata zooming through the worm hole of Wagner's 'Tristan' and coming out into an alternative universe. The direction keeps changing. The ground under your feet becomes unsteady and your mind reels. His later music includes big, mystical orchestral pieces that knock your sonic socks off and, to my knowledge, have never been done by a major orchestra. Lubimov began with equally rare, mystical, minimalist Satie - from 'Le Fils de Étoile;' an early work and a U.S. premiere. Lubimov played with a ringing tone and loving application of tonal coloration. A constancy in Lubimov's playing is his big, Russian sound, and that was intriguingly noticeable when he played Cage. In Debussy, Lubimov's Russian character proved even more startling. He played six from the Second Book of Preludes, giving them the hardy transcendence of Scriabin along with the rhythmic spirit of Stravinsky. Full of character, each prelude seemed as intoxicating as a shot of vodka. After six, you're drunk. 'Sunken Cathedral' filled Zipper and seemed to reverberate longer than possible. Lubimov's two new ECM recordings are devoted to Cage and Debussy's Preludes. They're heady stuff. Don't listen and drive. And that goes double for any recording you can get of Rabinovitch -Barakovsky."

Los Angeles Times - November 6, 2012

John Cage *As It Is*, ECM Records:

"This haunting recording from ECM reminds us of the color, precision and sheer beauty of his compositions. Pianist Alexei Lubimov is a significant proponent of 20th-century music in Russia. He is also known for his Haydn and Mozart, and to that end brings a considered, even classical approach to Cage's work. The opening *Dream* sets a tone of hypnotizing reverie. By contrast, the chiming pieces for prepared piano are rhythmically repetitive; other works are a little more astringent. Vocalist Pschenitschnikova adds her own touch to *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* and *A Flower*, both accompanied by Lubimov deftly manipulating the piano lid. The overall tone of the disc is of space and introspection. These pieces receive new and sensitive treatment from Lubimov. They remember Cage as an inventor, certainly, but also as a careful technician and somewhat improbable aesthete."

Limelight Magazine - November 14, 2012

"These short works for piano and voice are deliciously sonorous and relaxing, yet wind up yanking you into a state of total alertness. If you have preconceived notions about Cage, try these early works, mostly dating to the 1930s and '40s. There's playfulness and gentle melody here, along with intimations of medieval chant and the calming bell-like influences of gamelan. Lubimov and Pschenitschnikova guide their listeners to a zone of deep riveting stillness."

San Jose Mercury news - September 12, 2012

Debussy *Preludes*, ECM Records:

"I was very struck by a recording on Manfred Eicher's esteemed ECM New Series label, and it featured the piano music of Debussy played by pianist Alexei Lubimov. What was so striking was the instruments, on which Lubimov played. Lubimov wanted to find an instrument whose sound would be closer to the sound imagined by the composer, and more revealing of Debussy's staggeringly-original timbres, textures, colors, shading and nuances. It actually felt as though I was in the room, standing right next to the piano and pianist, hearing Debussy crafting these magical miniatures with their infinitely-varied and subtle hues. It's all wonderful new territory for listeners: not an alternative, but an additional, exhilarating perspective on the music."

The Herald (Scotland) - January 3, 2015

“There's a long history of love between Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov for the music of Debussy. As a young soloist barely thirty, had already recorded the two books of Preludes on a modern piano. Forty years later he returns to his favorite repertoire. Soft sounds with a rich range of colors, vibrational resonance, finesse: these advantages stimulate the imagination of the artist, enrich his inspiration. Texture, like iridescent droplets, is more ideally palpable on historical instruments.”

Telerama - September 11, 2012

“Every so often, a project comes along that demands a revisiting of music you think you know inside and out. This two-disc set of Debussy headed by Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov is just such a release. Lubimov used early 20th-century pianos in this recording. It might sound a tad precious to talk about using ‘period instruments’ in 20th-century music. But Lubimov says that after chancing upon an old Steinway in the Polish Embassy in Brussels, he began thinking about Debussy differently — about the rich colors not just in Debussy's writing, but even more so in his own piano playing. Throughout this recording, Lubimov alternates between that Steinway and a 1923 Bechstein from Germany. To piano buffs, it's a fascinating set of choices. Lubimov employs the Bechstein for the first book of Preludes, and to the Steinway, which he calls ‘marvelously suitable for unexpected colors,’ for the second book.”

NPR - July 24, 2012

“Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov came across two old pianos which inspired a new, more authentic ‘period instrument’ approach to Debussy's *Préludes*. ‘Like Ulysses bewitched by the Sirens, I let my pianos sing... and guide me into uncharted realms,’ Lubimov says. He uses the Bechstein, light-toned and translucent, for the *Préludes* Livre 1, the Steinway, more vivid and rich, in Livre 2. Both are used in the two-piano arrangement of *Trois Nocturnes* and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. The results are at once fresh and enigmatic.”

The Guardian - June 2, 2012

“5 stars. Pianist Alexei Lubimov continues his quest to find the perfect match of repertoire and instrument in this extraordinary survey of Debussy's *Préludes*. A 1925 Bechstein provides the pellucidity and percussive brilliance for Book 1, a 1913 Steinway an exotic, satin-finished soundworld for Book 2. The textures are intense and immediate, the blend of the instruments beguiling.”

The Independent - May 27, 2012

“The pianist [Alexei Lubimov](#) has an unusually broad range of specialties, and he touched on the extremes during a short residency at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. He demonstrated his fascination with new music in two performances of John Cage's 55-minute ‘Four Walls’ with choreography by Merce Cunningham. Lubimov's other side is his reputation as a fortepianist known for commanding, often broad-boned interpretations of Classical and early Romantic works. He appeared in that capacity on Tuesday and this time had the stage to himself. Even if you are used to the fortepiano's sound, it takes a few moments to adjust to differences in weight and coloration. Mr. Lubimov exploited those differences in his account of Beethoven's *Sonata in E* using a relatively light touch at first. Lubimov abandoned that delicacy and restraint gradually, addressing the *Prestissimo* second movement energetically and producing a lush-textured finale. Glinka's *Bellini* fantasy was an entertaining canvas on which Lubimov could show off the fluidity and coloristic range of the fortepiano. Two Schubert *Impromptus* benefited from readings that deftly and movingly balanced their tension and poetry. But the program's center of gravity was Mr. Lubimov's powerful account of Beethoven's final *Sonata in C minor*, an aggressive reading that emphasized the unabashed dissonances that drive the work's passionate opening sections, as well as the pained

lyricism of the Arietta. It was, as a performance of this work must be, an unsettled and unsettling drama with a sublime, otherworldly resolution. But it was also a startling reminder of the degree to which Beethoven's music challenged the resources of the pianos of his time, a point that is lost in even the best performances on a modern instrument."

New York Times - March 28, 2012

Haydn's Piano Concerto No. 2 with the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Ivan Fischer:

"Common to both evenings was a well-known Haydn concerto with a superb soloist. On Tuesday, the pianist Alexei Lubimov was featured in the Piano Concerto in D major, to which he brought a feather-light touch, a limpid radiance in the slow movement and a frolicsome energy in the Hungarian rondo finale."

New York Times - January 28, 2011

"Alexei Lubimov gave a lively rendering of the solo part to Haydn's Piano Concerto in D major. He dazzled in his solo moments, including his own cadenza built on an anonymous 18th-century model."

New Jersey Star Ledger - January 27, 2011

"Last night's performance of Haydn was no less inspired. Piano Concerto No. 2" --with an exacting and agile piano performance by Alexei Lubimov--captured the refinement that classical music has come to represent."

The Jewish Week - January 26, 2011

"This performance pitted a modern Steinway against the period band. Mr. Lubimov made the case for this anachronistic arrangement with fleet-fingered legato playing, and elegant turns of phrase. The final rondo had an almost manic energy, as the orchestra supported Mr. Lubimov through every twist and turn of the work."

super-conductor.blogspot.com - January 26, 2011

"Best of the year" in the London Independent:

"Alexei Lubimov pitched muscular pianism against the delicate fortepianos in his peerless recording of Schubert's Impromptu, my disc of the year."

The Independent - Dec. 26, 2010

An excellent review for the Schubert *Impromptus* recording:

"Lubimov's C minor Impromptu boasts powerful dynamic surging. Subtle pushes and pulls illuminate the melodic arc of the E flat's pearly scales. The soft pedal imparts a haunting, disembodied quality to the G flat. His curvaceous rubatos and accentuations lend interest to the A flat minor. If you like the way Frank Sinatra shapes a melody ahead of and behind the beat, you'll find a kindred soul in Lubimov's phrasing of No. 2's opening section."

Gramophone - August 2010

Recital at the Kissinger Sommer Festival:

"When the Kissinger Sommer enters the path of the unusual, it often brings a great reward for the audience. So it was on Friday afternoon, one of the hottest afternoons of the week, with 20th Century Russian piano music. The curious came to be in great demand. With Alexei Lubimov at the piano, we had the one man, who as an advocate of the Russian avant-garde, holds the special key for this sometimes unwieldy music. The tension under which Lubimov had to work in the decades of dictatorship until the dissolution of the Soviet Union were reflected in repertoire that ranged from historical performance practice on fortepiano to the rugged Brutalism of Russian modernism. The brilliant Alexei Lubimov worked out the characteristics of composition of his compatriots finely and sensitively, his somewhat sharp articulation fitting the works that followed: Russian classics of

Shostakovich, Scriabin and Prokofiev. His Piano Sonata No. 7 from the war-year 1942, with its striking motor activity and its aggressive Expressionism naturally outshone the rest at the conclusion of a wisely chosen program.”
Main Post - July 27, 2010

With the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at Queen Elizabeth Hall as a last-minute replacement:

“The inevitable sense of anticlimax was largely allayed by the seasoned Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov. As a sparring match between Lubimov and an orchestra that had just shown its muscle in the Coriolan Overture, the concerto threatened to be an uneven contest. But Lubimov’s firm and persuasive way with Beethoven’s melodic lines gave him equal footing. His phrasing spurred the wind soloists on, and he introduced some sudden, magical pedal effects.”

The Guardian - May 28, 2010

“Stepping into the breach as soloist was Alexei Lubimov who played on a fortepiano, offering a different experience from the norm given the instrument’s softer sound, restricted range, and limited ability to sustain. But any such initial impression soon passed as the ears acclimatized, and a delightful sense of intimacy was experienced. In his playing, momentary flaws were of no account when set next to the crystalline delicacy of his performance and his ability to sustain sound. After the first-movement cadenza, touchingly effective here, the veiled effect achieved by the fortepiano’s dampened strings was quite special. Lubimov brought a beautifully simple expressivity to the Largo and the orchestra’s accompaniment was equally memorable. There was real bounce to the finale, Lubimov’s nimble playing counterpoised with many more entrancing orchestral timbres.”

Classical Source.com - May 25, 2010

With the London Philharmonic under Neeme Järvi:

“Alexei Lubimov found an ideal sonority and combined perfectly with the orchestra; I’d never heard a more satisfactory and engrossing performance of romantic piano concerto in the Festival Hall. His tone was full, and well balanced even when playing with the orchestra. A small figure at the keyboard, he has an admirable technique and found power without forcing or any visible effort.”

Musical Pointers - May 2010

Recording: Schubert, Impromptus Opus 90 & 142: Zig-Zag Records:

“The Russian pianist Alexei Lubimov is nothing if not a perfectionist, and he searched long and hard (over four years, in fact) to find historical instruments that would satisfy his requirements in these pieces. Both instruments are capable of subtle gradations of colour, and it’s worth putting up with the occasional creak from the keyboard action, or perhaps the pedals, for the sake of the beauty of tone Lubimov coaxes from them. It would be hard, for instance, to imagine a warmer or more lyrical performance of the song without words that forms the penultimate piece from the D899 collection; or a smoother and more delicate account of the pianissimo first variation on the Rosamunde theme in Impromptu No. 3 from D935. (Anyone who’s tried playing those variations themselves will know how hard that is to bring off.) Lubimov has opted to play the outer sections of the Allegretto second piece of D935 with the so-called moderator pedal, which interposes a piece of cloth between hammers and strings, to produce a veiled sound. The tone-quality is well suited to the start of pianissimo theme itself, though it makes its more forceful second half sound curiously muted. It’s possible, too, to feel that Lubimov makes a meal out of the characteristically Schubertian turn from minor to major in the opening number of the D899 set. But this is altogether a beautiful

recital by a master-pianist, and while there's no shortage of fine recordings of these famous pieces, there has been none in my experience to equal Lubimov on instruments of Schubert's day."

BBC Music Magazine - May 2010

"Alexei Lubimov is not one of those fingerless pianists who would have chosen pianoforte to find a place under the sun nor a specialist from the baroque world: he is an absolute pianist, known from the USSR for his contemporary music recitals and his involvement in resurrecting Scriabin's last work (*L'acte préalable*). A sort of a Russian Pollini, who is now 65. His first French recordings, though, were dedicated to Mozart on pianoforte (Erato). So here is this great artist, this great musician, original but always on the right track, the music's track not the ego's, playing Schubert on two pianofortes with strong personalities, very well captured. But a beautiful sound without the phrases, breathing and rhythmic vitality eloquence would only be an ocean of nice piano. But with Lubimov's very unique natural sophistication, tenderness and proximity of playing, one forgets the piano's sounds and dives into Schubert's mystery, caught up in the infinitely subtle nuances that make music. Everything flows naturally." Diapason - March 2010

"It's amazing what can find its way into an attic. An 1810 Matthias Müller piano, for instance, now restored and used for the first set of Schubert's Impromptus, D899, in Andrei Lubimov's recording. It's a beautiful instrument. Use of its soft pedal in the G flat major work emphasises the gentlest twang of the string, the accompanimental arpeggios are wonderfully clear and there is power in reserve for the darker music at the heart of the A flat Impromptu. The piano used for the D935 set is a Joseph Schantz, built in 1830. It offers a less silvery, more rounded sound. This disc is not just a sonic exhibition, however, but a series of deeply satisfying, expressive performances."

The Times (London) - February 21, 2010

"That crises often result in good, is a truism. However, this requires a good deal of patience and fortitude - both virtues that the Moscow pianist Alexei Liubimov possesses sufficiently. Because he played too much avant-garde music, Soviet cultural officials denied him all foreign travel in the 80's. Liubimov opted for the homeland and everywhere in the USSR he met colleagues with whom explored baroque music and performance practice. On the harpsichord. At the time, he was denied his greatest desire: to play the classics on the historical pianoforte. In Brezhnev's Soviet Union, there was never such an instrument. It had to wait for the fall of the Berlin Wall, for Liubimov to let in his ideal sounds from Western Europe. To play Schubert's eight Impromptus Liubimov search for five years to find the perfect instrument. Finally, in April a few years ago, the Russian pianist found in Holland pianos from the early 19th Century, by Matthias Müller and Joseph Schantz, which perfectly met Liubimov's sound image. His playing is - quite casually and unobtrusively - with so much brilliant virtuosity and dexterity that it makes one dizzy. Above all, it has a poetic radiance, wisdom and poignant emotional sensitivity that can arrest with what makes this music so supernaturally Schubert: the impossible fusion of pain and beauty."

Bavarian Radio - February 20, 2010

"Educated in the Soviet school of vividly coloured pianism, Alexei Lubimov brings muscularity and vision to the fortepiano. It took five years just to find the right instruments for this recording and the result is breathtaking. Aside from the crispest E-flat Impromptu, the bitter grandeur of the A-flat major, and the delectable translucency of the instruments, what is truly startling is the "sung" melody of the G flat major. Stunning." The Independent - February 14, 2010

"Sadness and joy. Lubimov superbly suggests this paradoxical ubiquity through his playing and instrumental options. He chooses for the first cycle, the most brutal, the most tragic one, a Matthias

Müller piano, sharp as a declaration of war, with bristly hammers and bronze like high notes. This instrument has nothing to do with the fashionable salon's amiable antiquity anymore, and became a merciless war machine to x-ray the sound, the polyphony and the soul. Lubimov is also merciless in the way he bares Schubert's suffering instead of concealing it, behind the smile of a melody or confronting the fascinating duel of rebellion and resignation. Listening to the second instrument is similar: compatssonate but dignified and never whining. Lubimov fathoms abysses of despair behind deceptive coolness, or the dance's rhythmic élan. "Sadness and joy: we were warned."

Classica – "Choc" (highest award) - February 2010

Between us and Paradise

"If the western marketing industry had integrated him, he would have been as appreciated here as the French pianist Pierre-Laurent Aimard: both are exceptional pianists because they have directed their tremendous skills towards contemporary music and promoted, with great openness, early music practice. Lubimov phrases very precisely, though not stiff, like someone who would recite those verses with inherent sympathy. He speaks through his fingers: very sensitive, light and finely cut."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung - January 5, 2010

Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto in G Minor, London Philharmonic, New York City:

"The pianist Alexei Lubimov gave a stellar performance of the work at Avery Fisher Hall on Sunday afternoon with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Jurowski. Mr. Lubimov performed the concerto with fiery panache. He energetically plunged into the chordal opening and gracefully played the enigmatic Chopinesque theme later in the first movement. Mr. Jurowski, the Philharmonic's principal conductor since 2007, led a richly hued performance that mirrored the pianist's spirited interpretation. The wit of the first section is replaced by a Grieg-like lyricism in the more melodic second movement, rendered here with soothing introspection by orchestra and soloist. Mr. Lubimov's virtuosic playing in the exuberant finale - featuring an initial mad dash that soon morphs into Rachmaninoff's familiar lushness - was notable for its crisply defined energy. This almost jazzy movement ends in boisterous triumph."

New York Times - March 2, 2009

Misterioso, ECM New Series 1959:

"The performances are superb, completely in tune with the aesthetic of all the pieces, and up to their technical challenges. I realize that I've been less than enthusiastic about some of the works on the program, but overall I find this a creatively conceived and excellently realized program, and a good introduction to unusual chamber music from this neck of the woods."

Fanfare Magazine - March/April 2007

"This music casts a powerful spell and, given the superb recording quality, the new disc is one that deserves to be widely heard."

Gramophone - Awards Issue - 2006

Pärt: *Da pacem Domine, Lamentate* ECM 1930:

"The performances are outstanding, though from both ECM and these performers one wouldn't expect less. Lubimov maintains the perfection of even tone and touch necessary to make materials glow that could be anemic in less musical hands. ECM's sound is, as usual, sumptuous. The program is a little short, and it would have been nice to have one more work at least. At the same time, I'd rather have this music than wait for something else to fill it out if it's not readily available. A cause

for pleasure—and celebration of a composer whose vision continues to grow.”

Fanfare Magazine - January / February 2006

Messe Noire. ECM 1679

“This disc of early twentieth-century Russian piano works sat on the shelves at ECM for nearly six years – an almost unbelievable situation, because it’s one of the most remarkably satisfying solo piano recordings I’ve had the pleasure of hearing in a very long time. Don’t be misled by the title; the music in this disc is so stylistically varied, it’s hard to believe that three of the four composers here were contemporaries. Each of the four works presented here is its own highlight. Sonically, this disc is a knockout – in usual fashion, ECM has captured the sound of the piano with such remarkable realism that, yes, Alexei Lubimov is right there in the room with you. Very highly recommended.”

AudiophileAudition.com - November 2, 2006

“Alexei Lubimov is best known as a maverick. He has long been a champion of the avant-garde (both Western and Soviet), starting back when it was a perilous choice for Soviet pianists; at the opposite end of the spectrum, he has been an advocate for period-performance practice; then, too, he has lent support to off-beat ventures like Nemtin’s “realization” of the Prologue to Scriabin’s *Mysterium*. But as a student of both Heinrich Neuhaus and Maria Yudina, Lubimov also claims a place of pride in the Great Tradition of Soviet pianists; and on this disc, he tackles three sonatas that are central to the 20th-century Russian canon. He plays them magnificently, too. The first movement of the Prokofiev clearly displays his interpretive reach: because of his dry tone and his exceptional voicing, the rhythmic crosscurrents of the first theme emerge with particular vitality; yet he sounds like a different pianist entirely as the second theme—slow, hazy, supple—stretches out to seduce your ear. The same attention to the music’s emotional range emerges in the contrast between the second and third movements, the Andante caloroso even more dreamy and hypnotic than usual, the deliberate finale thundered out with crushing weight. Lubimov makes a still stronger showing in the Shostakovich, where he once again expertly captures the music’s competing aesthetic demands. On the one hand, he etches the spare textures with just the right antiseptic rigor, and punches out the manic outbursts with an unyielding solidity that bares the music’s grim determination. But he’s equally compelling as he explores the paradoxically catatonic intimacy of the Largo. All in all, this stands with Gilels’s among the most convincing recordings of this sonata in the catalog. Lubimov’s stone-and-shadows approach would seem ideal for the Scriabin Ninth; and since that’s the piece that both closes the recital and gives it its title, my expectations were high. In the event, it turns out to be an emotionally diffuse performance that catches neither the perfume nor the poison. Still, for the Prokofiev and Shostakovich, this disc is well worth attention, even for those who already own several competing accounts. The artful presentation of the Stravinsky makes a fine overture (I especially appreciated the shots of cocktail-pianist indolence in the second movement and the rhythmic verve of the third); and the sound on my pre-production disc was strikingly immediate. Strongly recommended.”

Fanfare Magazine - November / December 2005

“We know that fashions change, and tastes with them. In the case of Romantic piano music, and of Chopin's works in particular, the early post-war preference for relative understatement has in recent years given way to the brand of recreative individualism. Think of Argerich, Pogorelich, Pletnev, Lubimov, Kissin, Freire and Leonskaja.”

Gramophone - April 2005

Portrait of Arvo Pärt: Naxos Records:

“An outstanding performance of “For Alina” by Alexei Lubimov begins the Naxos two-CD ‘Portrait of Pärt’.”

Los Angeles Times - October 30, 2005

Silvestrov: *Metamusik. Postludium* ECM 1790:

“The piano—played here by Alexei Lubimov, Silvestrov’s most dedicated interpreter—is almost constantly central to the texture; the orchestra doesn’t have a role independent from the soloist, rather the piano and the orchestra work together to create an integrated larger sound, most of the time. Sometimes the piano is alone. *Metamusik* (1992) is the larger of the two works, a single movement of nearly 48 minutes. It was written for Lubimov. The piece features stylistic mimicry, maybe quotation that I can’t readily identify, and quotation from earlier works by Silvestrov, folded into washes of arpeggiation and figuration. Above all, the music has the impression of being suspended in time; things move slowly and last a long time. The effect is dreamlike. Performances are excellent and poetic, and sound is great.” *Fanfare Magazine* - November/ December 2003

Schnittke, Shostakovich: ECM New Series 461 815-2:

“The Kellers are equally convincing in Schnittke’s piano quintet, adhering to the composer’s tightly wound mode of expression, but again allowing for the escapism of overt emotionalism—the tolling bell effect of Alexei Lubimov’s piano, the second movement’s waltz, a la Shostakovich, that is overcome by ghostly string apparitions, the occasional harsh harmonies. In their refusal to cushion the blow in these moments, they register a deeper degree of despair, perhaps, than do the Vermeer Quartet.”
Fanfare Magazine - July/August 2003

“In Schnittke's solo piano opening, Alexei Lubimov shows the requisite temperament and control of sonority, and both he and the Kellers keep us inside the Quintet's world through the first movement's obsessive, quarter-tone-inflected bell-tolling, through the ghost-train-ride of the film-derived *Tempo di valse*, through the catatonic laments of the nvo succeeding slow movements, all the way to the anxious transfigurations of the finale. Curiously, Lubimov goes against the score in the final phrase, where Schnittke asks for pitched notes to fade into the noise of fingertips tapping on the keys, echoing the pedal-knocking at the end of the first movement. But his carefully graded diminuendo is effective enough in its own way, and overall this is the only recorded performance I know of to rival Ludmil la Berlinsley and the Borodins.

Gramophone - May 2003

Der Bote: ECM New Series:

“ECM’s lush sound seems totally in the spirit of this music. Poppen, Lubimov, and the Munich Chamber Orchestra maintain the perfect blend of poise, refinement, and knowing naiveté. Overall, this is a disc I can come back to again and again.”

Fanfare Magazine - January/February 2008

“An intriguing programme of elegiac music drawn from several nations and centuries. Melancholy ... nostalgic pictures ... quiet meditation - all phrases which come into play in Alexei Lubimov's foreword to the present collection, and all apposite to one or another of the 10 pieces featured. The freely-evolving monologue - now ruminative, now capricious - of CPE Bach's *Fantasia in F sharp minor* provides an uncharacteristically substantial opening to a disc in which 'elegy' is expressed in generally inward-looking terms. Thus the exquisite, marble-frozen intricacy of John Cage's *Inn landscape*, or the improvisatoriness of Tigran Mansurian's *Nostalgia* - perfectly poised between East and West in tonal expression. The liquid prosody of Valentin Silvestrov's *Elegie*, a subtle reminder of his more than dutiful credentials in the 1960s avant-garde, finds a natural context in the company of Debussy's stoic *Elégie* (a self-commemoration as Ivan Moody rightly points out) and the first of

Bartok's harmonically ambivalent Dirges. *Der Bote* concludes the disc as Silvestrov's half-remembered recollection of another world - pain giving way to an enveloping poignancy. Undemonstrative playing from Lubimov, a questing pianist whose appearances in the West have become a welcome occurrence in the post-Soviet era. The sound is appropriately spacious. Warmly recommended in any event.”
Gramophone - July 2003

“The Most Distinctive Disks Of 2002” “Alexei Lubimov: *Der Bote*” (“The Messenger”) (ECM)—While none of the alluring miniatures (by such composers as Glinka, Debussy, Chopin, and Cage) on this album are especially well known, this Russian pianist's impulsive, jazzlike style—crisp attacks emerging from gentle vapors of pedal—is so hauntingly persuasive that each one seems indispensable.”
New Yorker - January 20, 2002

“Alexei Lubimov has championed Silvestrov's music elsewhere, and so it is not surprising to see two more of his works appearing on *Der Bote*. Over two centuries separate the earliest and latest works on this CD. Lubimov is less interested in contrasts than in similarities, though. In fact, like Silvestrov, he is in search of a never-ending song of endings, an elegy for and of elegies. Silvestrov's *Der Bote* seems to wrap-around into C.P.E. Bach's F Sharp minor Fantasy, the work that opens this disc. The elegiac carpet that Lubimov weaves extends into infinity. Lubimov's generous use of the sustaining pedal and the reverberant recording venue wraps this program in romantic mists. His tone is jeweled and his touch always poetic. This could be one of the great late-night listening CDs in your collection.”
Classical.net - 2002

“*Der Bote*” (“The Messenger”), a June release on ECM from the pianist Alexei Lubimov, is one of a number of tantalizing disks that may mark a return to the art of the miniature, to programs that emphasize the performer's instincts over the cookie-cutter strategies of concert promoters. It strings together a number of short, elegiac pieces by Chopin, Glinka, Debussy, Cage, and others; while none of the works are especially well known, Lubimov's performances are so hauntingly persuasive that each one seems indispensable. The pianist's free, impulsive, jazzlike style—crisp attacks emerging from gentle vapors of pedal—lightens what could have been an overload of nostalgia.”
New Yorker - May 27, 2002

Onslow Hubeau; Marder; Nielsen Qnt Apex 0 0927-49536-2:

“Alexei Lubimov's account of the Sonata is a tour de force of controlled virtuosity; rather shallow recorded sound doesn't hide the magnificent, poetical effect of this extraordinary work.”
Gramophone - May 2003

“...brisk, free of cinematic sentiment...he gives the illusion of keeping strict time while subtly pushing and pulling at tempos... After all, this is what Mozart is about.”
New York Times

“Mr. Lubimov's piano playing had an easier time, offering a shining, easy beauty that filled the hall.”
New York Times

“Lubimov proved himself a flexible, inspired partner. For him, selfless following obviously is no more fruitful than aggressive leading. The versatile Muscovite did his own Romantic singing at the keyboard - always warm and sympathetic, virtuosic yet understated, assertive yet poetic. Don't call him an accompanist.”
Los Angeles Times

“Lubimov’s instrument...played once by Mozart himself...comes to life when played with the musicality and sense of fantasy displayed by this remarkable pianist.”

The Sunday Times (London)

“In familiar Liszt and Chopin, Lubimov offered more imaginative faithfulness than I have heard in some time, different in innumerable details from the "standard" readings. But every time one thought, "Now, there's something you couldn't do on a modern grand!" It was also something that perhaps only Lubimov would have thought of doing anyway. The sound never seemed miniaturised: the third and fourth Chopin Ballades rose to glorious climaxes, and the three members of the audience who left before the encores missed a magnificent Barcarolle.”

The Financial Times (London)

“...absolutely beautiful...he shows a real command of what that sort of instrument can give you in the way articulation and shaping.”

BBC Radio 3 Record Review

“...quite a revelation...Lubimov brings a big, modern technique to bear on these (Mozart) sonatas...K533's marvelous first movement has lots of incredible, rich counterpoint and tremendous harmonic twists which Lubimov makes the most of...the slow movement, too, is really superb where he builds up the phrases and sequences architecturally with careful timing...”

BBC Radio 3 Record Review

“Lubimov's instrument...played once by Mozart himself...comes to life when played with the musicality and sense of fantasy displayed by this remarkable pianist.”

The Sunday Times

“Genuine, captivating Chopin dramatics!”

Hufvudstadsbladet (Helsinki)

“The music really catches life in his hands: even the simplest tones start talking and to speak.”

Turun Sanomat (Finland)

“Alexei Lubimov demonstrated with Chopin's Ballade in g minor how beautiful an Erard grand from 1850 can sound.”

Die Welt (Berlin)

“With small musical details and an excellent musical execution, Lubimov brought the work (Mozart KV 595) to life, joyfully and brilliantly.”

Aamulehti (Finland)

“...Lubimov always surprises. His musical thinking is clear like crystal and always inspired. He possesses a rare gift; he can transplant the musical ideas of the composer into reality. He is a genius without the aura of a genius.”

Turun Sanomat (Finland)