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COLLECTION: SORABJI – PIANO MUSIC AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

Works by Sorabji, Ravel, Bach &
Chopin

Michael Habermann (piano)

BIS CD-1306 68:20 mins £ £ £

 Michael Habermann is assured of a place in the annals of Sorabjiana. One of the first pianists to play Sorabji's music after the composer lifted his so-called ban, and the first to record it commercially, he has long championed it and premiered many works of the Parsi magus.

Apart from the delicious early miniature *Quasi habanera*, the items on this disc display Sorabji's considerable and idiosyncratic powers as arranger, transformer and fantasist on other composers' materials. His comparatively straightforward, highly effective solo piano transcription of Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* contrasts with a magisterial post-Busonian version of Bach's Chromatic Fantasia (united with the – possibly inauthentic – D minor Fugue, BWV 948), a floridly flamboyant *Pasticcio* after Chopin's *Minute Waltz* and the brilliant *Passeggiata veneziana*, a lush and powerful five-movement fantasia based on the waltz from Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*. BIS claims this (and everything else save the *Pasticcio*) as a first recording, but Altarus has already issued a splendid version of the *Passeggiata* played

by Jonathan Powell. Habermann invests all this repertoire with relief and authority, although sometimes he's apparently unwilling to relax where the music seems to expect more rubato. Also the piano sound is a little thin, and in quiet passages one becomes aware of an intermittent rumble in the ambience: not nearly enough, though, to distract from the musicianship and high interest-value of this release.

Calum MacDonald

PERFORMANCE

★★★★

SOUND

★★★

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