
Sergio Tiempo

Selected Reviews

Hommage

Avanti Classic, September 2023

“It is not every pianist who can pick up the phone and ask Martha Argerich, Mischa Maisky or Nelson Freire to come and record some duets with them - and, moreover, know that they will do so without question. Easier to ask your mother or sister or an important teacher. But then Sergio Tiempo is no ordinary pianist and the six people who join him on this recording are all family - both literally and metaphorically, especially Argerich and the late, much-missed Freire, who have known him (and nurtured him musically) since he was in his cradle.

'Hommage' is a triumph on at least two levels: the performances themselves, and the kind of mixed-genre programme I wish more musicians would offer us, here for cello and piano, piano duet and two pianos.

The disc opens with Tiempo's rocket launch into Chopin's Introduction and Polonaise brillante, in which he is joined by Maisky. It's a canny opening choice, intense, showy and a little mischievous, the elder statesman holding a magisterial line above the exuberant playfulness of his protege. Still smiling, I played through the whole thing again immediately...

...Then it is the turn of Tiempo's gifted sister, Karin Lechner, in Tchaikovsky's Serenade for strings, the composer's own piano-four-hands arrangement but played here on two pianos, presumably to lend a more orchestral bloom to proceedings. It is a triumph, both because of the pianists' innate understanding of the other in terms of ensemble, phrasing, voicing, and the rest of it, and also because it thoroughly convinces you that the work was originally conceived for two pianos. Finally, Tiempo and his 'Aunt Martha' in Schubert's Fantasy, two musicians of different generations at the top of their game, quietly, unassumingly revelling in what they do best. I hope you enjoy it all as much as I did.”

– **Jeremy Nicholas, *Gramophone Magazine***

Berlin Philharmonic: Ginastera Piano Concerto No. 1 with Gustavo Dudamel Philharmonie Berlin, May 2023

“With pianist Sergio Tiempo at the centre, a full-blooded virtuoso from Venezuela, compatriot and friend of Dudamel... He has everything Ginastera's music needs: the percussive touch, the frenzied precision, the passionate dance, and when necessary, also a seductive pianissimo.” – **Felix Stephan, *Berliner Morgenpost***

“As centrepiece, music with greater staying power, from Argentina, composed in 1961, Alberto Ginastera's four-movement First Piano Concerto, also requiring a large orchestra, and giving the pianist reams of notes to tackle, beginning thunderously to introduce a wide-ranging first movement, from enchanted to hard-hitting, quite modernist, then a 'Scherzo allucinante' – fast, mysterious, mostly pianissimo – answered by a dark slow movement, alternating troubled intimate lyricism with impassioned outbursts, followed by a 'Toccata concertata' that pulsates all the way to the exciting end, as orchestral as it is pianistic. Sergio Tiempo gave a brilliant performance, from memory, with the Berliners and Dudamel every bit as vivid and rhythmically alert as the pianist, they stuck together throughout.”

– **Colins Column**

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QSO Grieg Piano Concerto Brisbane, March 2023

“Sergio Tiempo’s enthusiasm and verve surged through the auditorium gathering audience, guest conductor Johannes Fritzsch... Sergio had it all: moppish hair to swish out of his eyes, elegant hands to caress the keys and a vitality served with a virtuosity that lured the audience to burst into spontaneous applause at the piece’s crescendo. It was one of those concerts when music and momentum merge to create true magic.” – **Toni Johnson-Woods, *Westend Magazine***

QSO Studio Recital Brisbane, March 2023

“a touching and personal recital that also allowed Tiempo to showcase his remarkable virtuosity across a wide-ranging recital of favourites and lesser-known works...

The highlight of this first half, though, was the titanic Sonata No. 3 in B minor. Here, Tiempo shaped the first movement’s mercurial moods easily, but the beating heart of this work is the Largothird movement, where it was clear that Tiempo had Freire in mind with the gentleness of the melody floating through this movement.,,

Villa-Lobos wrote a colossal amount of music and perhaps doesn’t always fire on all cylinders, but on those occasions when he does, the results speak for themselves. These character pieces were both rhythmically fascinating and truly splendidly virtuosic – real show-stoppers. Alberto Ginastera’s Malambo continued in a similar vein but with even more satisfyingly crunchy harmonies.

Finally, the encore was a Chopin prelude that Tiempo had earlier teased – the Prelude No. 4 from Op. 28. Richly chromatic, it provided a reflective end for this impressive virtuoso recital.” – **Paul Ballam-Cross, *Limelight Magazine***

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra: Rachmaninoff 3 with Domingo Hindoyan Philharmonic Hall Liverpool, March 2023

“From the first flourish there was no disappointment with Tiempo’s virtuosity, which was abundantly clear. His articulation was crisp and clear, with meticulously executed staccato playing...Tiempo was a master at extracting the tone of the Steinway’s upper register, cutting through the orchestral textures effortlessly...Tiempo showcased his skill especially by delicately balancing his hands to perfection, demonstrating staggeringly impressive fingerwork with rapid repeats of notes and crystal clear trills...There is no doubt that Tiempo has great stage presence and skill, with charisma and charm. The audience were incredibly focused and it was difficult to take one’s eyes off him.”

– **Leighton Jones, *Bachtrack***

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“It’s never good news when you find yourself without a soloist days before a practically sold-out concert...What started as an organisational headache thus morphed into an unexpected treat for a Thursday night audience at Hope Street as the Venezuelan-born Argentine virtuoso delivered a dazzling interpretation of Rachmaninov’s fiendish Third Piano Concerto...

Power, phrasing, pace...and perspiration (literally) combined in an effervescent performance which made the three-quarters-of-an-hour running time feel like 10 minutes. Tiempo fugit as it were.

Along the way there was a flamboyant cadenza – punctuated by the sweetness of Cormac Henry’s flute, an intermezzo which brought both romantic reflectiveness and spiky scherzando playing, and a frankly heroic finale all round.

But a concerto is a partnership. And while there was a perhaps fleeting moment at the start of the first movement where the Phil could have held back a touch to allow the piano to really sing, under Domingo Hindoyan’s nuanced direction Rachmaninov’s complex orchestral accompaniment was otherwise flawless, from the lovely swelling ebb and flow of the first movement themes to the expressive intermezzo (introduced by Jonathan Small’s beatific oboe) to the work’s cinematic climax.” – **Arts City Liverpool *******

“Stunningly absorbing, this performance of Rachmaninov’s Piano Concerto No.3 conducted by Domingo Hindoyan is unmissable. Considered as an archetype showpiece, the concerto is renowned for being a challenge and demands technical prowess – pianist Sergio Tiempo rises to this and more, demonstrating what a maestro he is...

Sergio Tiempo was not originally billed to perform tonight, making his playing all the more impressive. Throughout most of his playing, he subtly smiles and loses himself in the intensity of playing – the audience, seeing the difficulty in the task, smiles with him.

Delightful. The relationship between Hindoyan, the musicians and Tiempo is a joy to watch. From the expressions on faces and frequent glances to Hindoyan, this is an ensemble that love the music they’re playing...

Although Tiempo’s virtuosity provides the glue to the concerto, there is a strong sense of this being a communal performance.

As the interval approached, the concerto edged towards a blistering climax with the orchestra bobbing in unison and the audience keen to show appreciation. Everyone was on their feet applauding as the final note sounded..”

– **Ezzy LaBelle, NorthWest End UK *******

Los Angeles Philharmonic: Prokofiev 1 with Ludovic Morlot Walt Disney Concert Hall, March 2022

“[...] pianist Sergio Tiempo more than fulfilled his obligations. This was the first time I had heard Maestro Tiempo play: he is unquestionably one of the best contemporary pianists, and I look forward to future performances.

Rhythm is rightly cited as one of music’s predominant elements, and when it came to driving this particular concerto, Tiempo showed his pianistic and rhythmic mastery in each of the three movements. From downbeat to final chord, the

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pulse was strong and steady, not overly driven, and the pure musicality of the concerto proved to be a primary basis and purpose. Tiempo's musical strengths were evident everywhere, but the delicacy and taste that accompanied the middle movement was an even more direct acknowledgement of the work's beauty. That Tiempo's technical ability is superseded only by his divine taste was demonstrated in the encore: Liszt's 'Consolation No.3', which Tiempo dedicated to his father who died on 28 February. The contrast between his awesome power in the Prokofiev Piano Concerto and the sensitivity shown in the Liszt was heart-breaking. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, including mine"

– **Douglas Dutton, *Seen and Heard International***

Philadelphia Orchestra: Chopin Piano Concerto No. 1 with Yannick Nézet-Séguin Philadelphia, March 2022

"Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 offered a soloist of considerable artistic individualism. Sergio Tiempo had such a big sound you might have thought his piano was amplified. But he also had dimensions. His suddenly explosive outburst in the second movement wasn't a gratuitous one, but, rather, an expressively beautiful one. He could be brawny or flowery, and the orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin expertly hewed to his contours and flashes."

– **Peter Dobrin, *Philadelphia Enquirer***

Los Angeles Philharmonic: Prokofiev 1 with Ludovic Morlot Walt Disney Concert Hall, March 2022

"[...] pianist Sergio Tiempo more than fulfilled his obligations. This was the first time I had heard Maestro Tiempo play: he is unquestionably one of the best contemporary pianists, and I look forward to future performances. Rhythm is rightly cited as one of music's predominant elements, and when it came to driving this particular concerto, Tiempo showed his pianistic and rhythmic mastery in each of the three movements. From downbeat to final chord, the pulse was strong and steady, not overly driven, and the pure musicality of the concerto proved to be a primary basis and purpose. Tiempo's musical strengths were evident everywhere, but the delicacy and taste that accompanied the middle movement was an even more direct acknowledgement of the work's beauty. That Tiempo's technical ability is superseded only by his divine taste was demonstrated in the encore: Liszt's 'Consolation No.3', which Tiempo dedicated to his father who died on 28 February. The contrast between his awesome power in the Prokofiev Piano Concerto and the sensitivity shown in the Liszt was heart-breaking. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, including mine."

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New York Philharmonic: Esteban Benzecry Piano Concerto 'Universos Infinitos' **David Geffen Hall, Jan 2020**

“Pounding rhythms, cascading chords, spiraling swirls of fast notes... a dizzying perpetual-motion toccata. Mr Tiempo gave a scintillating and virtuosic performance.” – **Anthony Tommasini, *New York Times***

“The evening’s most rewarding item was the New York premiere of *Universos infinitos*, a piano concerto by Esteban Benzecry...Pianist Sergio Tiempo, Benzecry’s fellow Argentine, gave an inspired reading, showing in this first movement complete comfort with the virtuosic demands of the part, but also finding moments to pull back and draw whispering phrases out of the instrument... [In “*Ñuque Cuyen*”] an airy texture accompanies the flowing lines of the solo part, which Tiempo played with a breathing freedom, delicately and thoughtfully interweaving his voices... [the] thrilling finale calls to mind the close of Rachmaninoff’s third piano concerto, ending in a flash of light and a blazing chordal progression in the solo part.” – **Eric C. Simpson, *New York Classical Review***

“This is an absolutely outstanding composition, undoubtedly the most engaging and satisfying new piano concerto I have heard from a living composer. Tiempo played it with absolute commitment and an extraordinary range of touch, sometimes creating hallucinatory dreamscapes of notes, sometimes hitting an individual key so hard you could hear the note distorting slightly, and integrating percussive effects like double elbow clusters and slaps on the bass strings without seeming affected.” – **David Wolfson, *Bachtrack* *******

“The mostly restless piece is a bravura challenge for the pianist...The soloist, the young and fearless Sergio Tiempo, dispatched the virtuosic demands of the part with remarkable ease. In the mystical, dream-like slow movement, ‘*Ñuque Cuyen*’ (Mother Moon), he played the flowing solo lines with great delicacy and tenderness. In the whirlwind-paced closing toccata, ‘*Willka Kutí*’ (Return of the Sun), his furiously energetic playing most effectively depicted the dance rhythms of the Ayamará and Guaraní ethnic groups gathering to celebrate the start of a new agricultural cycle.”
– **Susan Stemplewski, *Classical Source***

Frankfurter Museumsorchester: Rachmaninov 'Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini' **Alte Oper, November 2019**

“The Venezuelan pianist Sergio Tiempo played with an open, virtuosic, and agitated driving force, without missing even the smallest of notes, setting itself apart from the more introverted interpretations of the same work.”
– **Axel Zibulski, *Frankfurter Allgemeine***

“The phenomenal pianist Sergio Tiempo, from Venezuela, formed a dream team with conductor Alexander Prior. The two made all aspects of the work their own, with a swirling, percussive but also subtle shape. At the same time, it was completely unforced, sparkling and crystalline. Rachmaninov's ideas were exposed, broken down with rapidly changing perspectives. Tiempo and Prior - remember these names.” – **Bernhard Uske, *Frankfurter Rundschau***

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“Sergio Tiempo has without a doubt immensely powerful reserves of showmanship, which seem to me to favour soft lyricism and the elegiac main features of the work...with a highly virtuosic colour palette, Tiempo impressed especially in Variation No. 6 through his organic and stylish tempo changes...It was fascinating to see the intensity which with the artist manoeuvred from dramatic climaxes to brilliant pathos, and with sparkling lustre and an elastic cantabile in Variations 11 and 12 to name but a few, the spirited pianist seemed to play these as a nostalgic swansong, full of melancholy even in the less expressive passages, gave us emotional depths and lyrical elegies.” – **Gerhard Hoffmann, Online Merker**

Los Angeles Philharmonic: Esteban Benzecry Piano Concerto 'Universos Infinitos' World Premiere Walt Disney Concert Hall, October 2019

“The concerto is dedicated to the virtuoso Venezuelan pianist Sergio Tiempo, who played it from memory, which seemed an impossibility. A catapulting Tiempo almost never stops for 30 minutes. The Steinway is subject to all you might ever want to subject it to. Phenomenal runs. Tone clusters banged out with the elbows. Percussive playing of the strings inside the instrument. Tiempo somehow made the impossible possible.” – **Mark Swed, LA Times**

“Dudamel’s performance of Universos infinitos achieved a combination of expansive musical imagination and when-worlds-collide momentum. And Tiempo played it with much virtuosic frazzle-dazzle...It’s a work that deserves a place in the contemporary repertory, though it’s hard to imagine anyone other than Tiempo being able to display its full range of fierce, take-no-prisoners dynamics.” – **Jim Farber, San Francisco Classical Voice**

Boston Symphony Orchestra: Ravel Piano Concerto Boston Symphony Hall, April 2019

“When I last heard Sergio Tiempo play, he was a teenager. I thought then that he was one of the greatest talents of his generation. He had everything: taste, tone, technique, temperament and intelligence. I finally got a chance to hear him again and my opinion hasn't changed. At 47, he remains one of the best pianists alive. His performance of Ravel's Concerto in G major with the Boston Symphony surpassed every live and recorded version of the piece I've ever heard. The encores made me desperate to hear him again.” – **Stephen Wigler, International Piano**

“Through the lushness of the orchestra, pianist Sergio Tiempo's phrases glistened with a pearly sheen, manifesting with nonchalant loveliness. The slower second movement took a prayerful, introspective tack...from there it was an all-out gymnastic Presto to the end, and Ginastera's roaring *Danza del gaucho matrero* came as an encore in lieu of the canceled concerto. With luck, Symphony Hall will see Tiempo again.” – **Zoe Madonna, The Boston Globe**

“A vigorously robust interpretive playing of the Ravel. Tenderness of remarkable delicacy and immediacy he adeptly called up as savorable 'moments'...The Allegramente thrilled.”

– **David Patterson, The Boston Musical Intelligencer**

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“Sergio Tiempo's poignant and dynamic interpretation of Ravel was the highlight. The pianist demonstrated an appealingly forceful and secure technique. Delicate and reflective in the exquisitely rendered Adagio, he was full of verve in the jazzier moments of the outer movements.” – **Susan Stempleski, *Classical Source***

Würth Philharmonic: Rachmaninov Concerto No. 3 Künzelsau, February 2019

“This difficult piece begins quite light-footed as the Argentinian star pianist Sergio Tiempo displays his technical brilliance... One experiences a mature pianist, who brings a fresh approach to Rachmaninov's music. Tiempo masters the fast passages with a playful lightness and elegance... he carries us away with this work.”

– **Andreas Dehne, *Heilbronner Stimme***

Queensland Symphony Orchestra Residency: 'Soloists and Spontaneity' Brisbane, August 2018

“Sergio Tiempo was sensational in Rachmaninov's colossal Third Piano Concerto... [he] had the virtuosic challenges nailed yet consistently directed towards pathos. Demanding though the big and scampered chordal flurries were, the clarity of the melodic line, accents and harmonic nuance was superb. Meaning flowed through Tiempo's fingertips and never more so than in the light and feathery tender passages. His charismatic persona and luminous exploitation of the Concerto's mood swings ensnared the audience who were swept up in Tiempo's insightful pianistic might from start to finish.” – **Gillian Wills, *Limelight Magazine***

Fundación Beethoven recital with Natalie Clein Teatro Municipal de Las Condes, Chile, 29 May 2018

“Natalie Clein and pianist Sergio Tiempo demonstrated outstanding qualities, and collaborated well in the recital. Praiseworthy was the refreshing repertoire selected... Beautiful music, moments of sublime lyricism contrasting with energetic, exaggerated and sarcastic passages, in the hands of this prominent pianist, made the Shakespearian characters [of Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet piano transcriptions] come to life [and] the Rachmaninov cello and piano sonata was a triumph... Natalie Clein and Sergio Tiempo, as well as being excellent musicians, had an angelic, magical aura on stage, and a mutual understanding, communicating their musical enjoyment to the audience.”

– ***El Mercurio*, Jaime Donoso A.**

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Queensland Symphony Orchestra Residency: 'An Emotional Rollercoaster' Brisbane, April 2018

“To say that Sergio Tiempo, the orchestra’s current artist-in-residence, is an exciting player is an understatement. His take on Ginastera’s blistering First Piano Concerto with its folksy intent, dancier currents and pointy challenge was extraordinary. In the cadenza of the first movement, the brass interacted with Tiempo’s fiery figurations with aplomb. The pianist’s seamless shifts between tenderness and fury, incisive commentary and treacherous chases up and down the length and breadth of the piano in the variations dovetailed superbly with a precision powered orchestra. His thrilling prowess in the Toccata Concertata with its slashed, punched and ferociously crunched rhythm was breathtaking...this concert was unforgettable, a stunner.” – **Gillian Wills, *Limelight Magazine* *******

Solo recital recording: 'Legacy' Avanti Classic, January 2018

“Sincere and authentic renderings of music that have a great deal of meaning to the artist in question... Tiempo’s playing is exciting, with plenty of jewel-like poetry and playfulness... For us piano fans, this is the kind of album that will be spun red-hot and devoured avidly on a regular basis, such is its verve and life-enhancing atmosphere.” – **Dominij Clements, *MusicWeb International***

LA Philharmonic: Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 1 Walt Disney Concert Hall, 8-10th December 2017

“Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No. 1 featured the flashy Venezuelan pianist Sergio Tiempo as soloist. He’s a lot of fun in the way he dashes off fancy finger work. Every passage offers him something with which to show off.”
– **Mark Swed, *LA Times***

“Sergio Tiempo is the real deal. When a pianist can take a work as familiar as Tchaikovsky’s 1874 First Piano Concerto and turn it into an exciting Olympic event, I’m more than sold. Appearing at a packed Disney Hall this morning (in a program that runs through Sunday), the very cool and jovial Venezuelan was down to some serious business ... The power he provoked from the piano alone was worth the price of admission, but consider his savvy, authoritative, crisp virtuosity: He didn’t overcompensate with the pedal, instead sustaining chords at the end of an arpeggio; he performed some runs nearly twice as fast as I’ve previously encountered, but it never felt rushed; and he’s introspective without laboring on the quieter passages ... This is a very well-balanced program, but you’ve simply got to see Sergio Tiempo.” -
Tony Frankel, *Stage and Cinema*

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Federico Jusid's Tango Rhapsody with Queensland Symphony Orchestra, cond. Alondra de la Parra Queensland Performing Arts Centre, August 2017

“The pianists show off virtuosity and dazzling technique around the passions displayed in the narrative [...] Clever and beautifully presented with each artist in total control, this was a brilliant piece of showmanship from two fine young pianists who gave us an entirely fresh way to look at composition and delivery. They followed it with a stunning encore of a skilfully freestyled variation on Paganini’s Variations for two pianos which was perfectly played and technically assured.” - **Suzannah Conway, Limelight Magazine *****1/2**

“The onstage tantrums, sulking, and mid-performance frock change are all part of the act, none of which distracts from the virtuosity of the brother-and-sister pianists Sergio Tiempo (a regular with QSO) and Karin Lechner.”

Kartin Buzacott, The Australian

Ginastera Piano Concerto No.1 with Queensland Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Alondra de la Parra April 2016

“The soloist’s part is merciless in its demands, but Tiempo not only faces this challenge head-on, he is dauntless in his control and sensitivity of this music.”

- **Maxim Boom, Limelight**

“Sergio Tiempo infused this difficult first Concerto from 1962 with a boyish impetuosity, capturing the neo-expressionist elements convincingly. As a player he has technique to burn, paired with a galvanizing courage and rock-solid rhythmic sensibility.”

- **Josephine Vains, ClassicMelbourne**

Ginastera Piano Concerto No.1 with Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel March 2016

“[The] drama was brilliantly realised with the extraordinary Sergio Tiempo at the keyboard [...] Tiempo’s performance was astonishing by its combination of unbuttoned wildness and fastidious precision.”

- **Michael Church, The Independent *******

“Ginastera’s Piano Concerto No 1 has a fiendish solo part that the undaunted Sergio Tiempo dispatched with fierce control.” - **Neil Fisher, The Times**

“Best of all was the rare performance of Alberto Ginastera’s First Piano Concerto [...] Dudamel was joined by his fellow Venezuelan Sergio Tiempo, an astonishing soloist who played with fearless attack and commanded the complex score from memory.” - **John Allison, The Telegraph**

“The massive solo part, fearlessly played by Sergio Tiempo, ranges from hauntingly jazzy bits to great bursts of keyboard colour that the Venezuelan pianist seemed born to reveal.” - **Mark Swed, The LA Times**

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“Sergio Tiempo was a dazzling soloist and the Angelenos under Gustavo Dudamel matched him for rhythmic precision and energy.” - **Barry Millington, Evening Standard**

“The Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera’s rarely heard first piano concerto [was] played with authoritative dexterity by Sergio Tiempo.” – **Martin Kettle, The Guardian *******

“Sergio Tiempo played with grand vivacity.” - **Zachary Woolfe, The New York Times**

“The Venezuelan pianist Sergio Tiempo played it here with percussive ferocity and lean exactitude.”
- **Timothy Mangan, Orange County Register**

“The virtuosic playing of soloist Sergio Tiempo and the energy of LA Philharmonic and Dudamel collided to vibrant effect in Alberto Ginastera’s Piano Concerto No. 1, fluctuating between flashes of riotous dynamic contrast, pounding rhythms, mysterious texture and dreamy melodies.” - **Isaku Takahashi, The Upcoming *******

Beethoven Choral Fantasy

**Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra and Bogota Philharmonic, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel
July 2015**

“The pianist Sergio Tiempo gave a virtuous version of the Choral Fantasy [...] a lively and exciting interpretation.”
– **El Comercio**

Liszt and Tchaikovsky

**Orchestra Della Svizzera Italiana
(Avanti Classic : 5414706 10382)**

“Virtuoso glowing, but especially [an] inventor of new sounds: listen how suddenly he transforms his piano dulcimer in the Totentanz of Liszt [...] and in terms of style, [he] could teach Martha Argerich herself.”
- **Jean-charles Hoffelé, ARTAMAG**

Solo Recital at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London April 2014

“Playful, open-hearted, a total delight.” - **Richard Fairman, The Financial Times**