

Valentin Silvestrov / Arvo Pärt /Galina Ustvolskaya Misterioso

Alexei Lubimov: piano; Kyrill Rybakov: clarinet; Alexander Trostiansky: violin

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Alexei Lubimov, heir to the great Russian piano tradition, has joined forces with two outstanding young musicians from his native country. “The thing that connects us is our strong interest in contemporary music”, he explains. Even as a young man Lubimov consistently championed the cause of modern composers, despite repressive measures from the Soviet regime. “Playing with younger colleagues is becoming more and more important to me. Kyrill Rybakov and Alexander Trostiansky already combine keen musical intuition with immense professional expertise. And as a performer, my practical encounter with the musical outlook of a completely different generation has been even more valuable to me. It has worked like a new energy source.”

Rybakov and Lubimov had met before while the clarinetist was studying in Paris. Shortly thereafter all three musicians got together for the first time in the chamber music circles of cellist Alexander Rudin in Moscow. *Misterioso* is their debut recording as a trio. Although they see themselves more as a union of soloists than a permanent ensemble, the three men regularly give recitals together. Their focus on contemporary repertoire seemed only logical for it was not until Stravinsky's original arrangement of *L'histoire du soldat* and Bartók's *Contrasts* that the trio format of clarinet, violin and piano became established. Galina Ustvolskaya's Trio, composed in 1949 (her former teacher Dmitri Shostakovich quoted its final movement in several of his own works), is one of the early masterpieces for this combination of instruments.

All the works on our album were studied with their respective composers or performed in their presence. “Galina Ustvolskaya doesn't rehearse with performers at all any more,” Lubimov points out. “She lives a very secluded life. But in June 2004 we played the Trio and the Violin Sonata in St. Petersburg at a festive concert for her 85th birthday.” A few years ago clarinetist Rybakov and pianist Lubimov played the violin version of Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* to the composer in Berlin. Pärt was so taken with it that he decided to officially release a version for clarinet. “He gave us many valuable tips for our performance and worked very thoroughly on our agogics, colour and phrasing.” In contrast, Lubimov has been working very closely with the Ukrainian composer Valentin Silvestrov for years. The three musicians have played the works on this album in Silvestrov's presence in the course of several portrait recitals, including one at the Basle Culturescapes Festival, where Silvestrov was composer-in-residence in 2004.

Like Lubimov's programme of masterpieces of 20th-century Russian piano music, released last year by ECM as *Messe Noire*, the repertoire of *Misterioso* is intentionally rich in contrasts. The pieces date from a period covering almost 50 years. Here three uncompromising nonconformists representing radically individualist stances and world-views raise their voices, each in a different way, to speak of what Lubimov calls “existential layers of spiritual life”. Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* functions as a line of demarcation, equally intent on separation and rapprochement, between the fundamentally antithetical pairs of works by Silvestrov and Ustvolskaya. Not only does this illustrate the broad range of Soviet and post-

Soviet music, it also reveals the great wealth in Silvestrov's and Ustvolskaya's compositional styles, which cannot be reduced to a common denominator.

Born in Moscow in 1944, **Alexei Lubimov** was one of the last pupils of the legendary piano teacher Heinrich Neuhaus. He took up an early interest in the music of the Western avant-garde, which he presented to Moscow audiences in a series of Soviet premieres. In the 1970s, when his career became subject to increasing restrictions, he established the Moscow Baroque Quartet, which gave him an opportunity to perform many masterpieces of early music on period keyboard instruments – a pioneering achievement at that time in the Soviet Union. In 1988 he founded the Alternativa Avant-Garde Festival. Since the 1980s Lubimov has appeared with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. His chamber music partners include Christian Tetzlaff, Natalia Gutmann and Andreas Staier, and his discography encompasses works from the Baroque to the present day. In addition to the Silvestrov album *Metamusik/Postludium* and Arvo Pärt's *Lamentate* for piano and orchestra, Lubimov has issued two solo recitals in the ECM New Series: *Der Bote*, a collection of elegiac miniatures (2002), and *Messe Noire*, a program of works by Skryabin, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich (2005). He is currently professor of piano and hammerklavier at the Salzburg Mozarteum.

Kyrill Rybakov was born in Moscow in 1977 and began to study the clarinet with Ivan Mozgoenko at Moscow's Special School of Music at the age of five. After continuing his studies with Richard Vieille, Jörg Widmann and Wolfgang Meyer, he was placed in charge of the clarinet class at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory in 2003. He appears regularly at international festivals in solo and chamber settings. In addition to his keen interest in historical clarinets and the early repertoire for his instrument, he also specialises in contemporary music. The clarinet version of Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* was written at his suggestion.

Alexander Trostiansky was born in Novosibirsk in 1972. He took his first violin lessons at the Special School of Music in his native city, where he later studied at the Conservatory. In 1990 he became a pupil and soon an assistant of Irina Bochkova at Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory, joining its faculty in 1999. He won prizes at the Paganini Competition in Genoa (1990) and the Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (1998). He was a member of the Moscow Soloists and the Romantic Trio of the Moscow Philharmonic Society. Trostiansky has also issued a number of recordings on various labels.

The CD box contains a 32-page illustrated booklet with an essay by Jürg Stenzl in German and English.