



Franz Liszt: A Faust Symphony, S. 108 – Mephisto Waltz No. 3, S. 216

aud 97.761

EAN: 4022143977618



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BBC Music Magazine (2023.10.01)

What would the history of music look like if Goethe had not written his Faust dramas? It's a good question, posed at the beginning of the liner notes to this new release, but the writer could equally have been asked where music would be without the phenomenon of Liszt. Wagner (and all the long shadows he cast) would have been impossible without the music of his father-in-law Liszt, and what might be called 'Wagnerian' harmonies (and Leitmotifs) make their presence strongly felt in the Faust Symphony, premiered under the composer's own baton in Weimar in 1857.

Liszt's connections with the city ran deep, so it is hardly surprising to hear how even today the Staatskapelle Weimar sounds steeped in his music. The orchestra's former music director Kirill Karabits has immersed himself in Liszt too, also completing Alfred Reisenauer's orchestration of the Mephisto Waltz No. 3 and recording it for the first time. In the Faust Symphony, he handles the sprawling and discursive first movement impressively, moving between rumination and headlong energy in this character sketch of Faust. Portraits of Gretchen (full of delicacy) and Mephistopheles follow, and the added apotheosis with male chorus and tenor soloist (Airam Hernández singing with heft) makes for a grandly affirmative ending.

Liszt
A Faust Symphony; Mephisto Waltz No. 3
Airam Hernández (tenor); Male voices of the Weimar Theatre Opera Chorus and Thüringen Youth Choir; Staatskapelle Weimar/Kirill Karabits
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