

Nicholas Susi, pianist

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American Record Guide

2017; Critical review of debut album Scarlatti Now in Nov/Dec 2017 issue (p. 229), by Rob Haskins

“Oh no, I initially thought—another weird concept album. Then it became clearer—four of the composers are Italian, Liszt is represented by ‘Les Jeux d’Eaux a la Villa d’este’, Ravel’s ‘Barque sur l’Ocean’ might be sailing close to Italy. The concept doesn’t really work, but the playing on this self-produced first album is, in a word, spectacular. Susi is a first-class virtuoso with the technique to handle all the formidable challenges of this program, which includes Berio’s ‘Luftklavier’, a knuckle-busting transcription of the ‘Largo al Factotum’ from Rossini’s Barber of Seville, a prelude by Sciarrino, Liszt’s transcriptions of Rossini’s ‘Danza’, and Scarlatti sonatas in D (K 96, 214), D minor (K 143), F-sharp (K 318), F-sharp minor (K 319), C (K 159), F (K 379), and F minor (K 466). I love, love, love the Scarlatti. The repeated notes in K 143 and K 96 and the superfast tempos are properly exciting, the joy and elan of K 214 perfectly satisfying. The Berio is not often programmed and sounds amazing here. The Liszt, strange to say, strikes me as a bit too controlled, but the virtuosity is there, so never mind. Ravel and Sciarrino—couldn’t be better. A release like this reinforces my long-held contention that great artists come from anywhere, not just New York, London, or Berlin (Susi hails from St Louis) and that—in spite of everything—there are still a few exciting artists making real music and taking real chances with it. The piano sound could be slightly brighter, but it’s perfectly fine. I hope his career flourishes.”

- Rob Haskins