

COVER STORY



'I still can't play scales and I don't play studies'

to study first at the Purcell School and subsequently at the Royal Academy of Music under Christopher Elton. 'My career only took off properly after the Scarlatti disc. It reached so many people so quickly. Every subsequent recording has received quite good reviews. I don't think there have been any that went completely unnoticed.'

Today, Sudbin tries not to do too many concerts, playing around 50 or 60 a year at the moment (his ideal would be 30 or 40). 'I want to record more. I enjoy it very much. People say recording is easy because

they can fix mistakes. That's terrible! You can fix mistakes, but if you can't play a phrase then it doesn't matter how many takes you make – it's not going to sound good. But you can push things further in the recording studio than the concert hall. With the high resolution of sound you can be far more detailed. A concert is more about a general atmosphere and feeling. It's not possible to get the same quality in a concert as you can in a studio. Some musicians only record live. I can understand that, but I think it's a very subjective feeling. For example, I went

to one concert and the atmosphere was incredible. I later heard the same concert on the radio and I thought it was pretty pedestrian. There are no interruptions. You can't hide behind anything.'

Sudbin has been hailed by the *Daily Telegraph* as 'potentially one of the greatest pianists of the 21st century' while *International Record Review* stated that his Rachmaninov recording 'confirms him as one of the most important pianistic talents of our time'. Even before I ask one final question of this amiable, articulate, fiercely intelligent yet diffident artist, I already know the answer – but not the follow-up. 'Are you,' I wonder, 'one of those guys who can just sit down at a party and play?' He laughs. 'No, no. I don't do that. Anyway, I hate parties! I don't like crowds of people, so playing concerts doesn't fit that well with my personality. I like performing, but I don't like thinking about the masses of people who are listening. That's why I like recording. I know who I'm playing for. That person has very good ears. Playing for one person is just as satisfying as playing for ten thousand. In live concerts, you get terrible noises. You know whether people are listening or not when they are coughing in the wrong place. If they cough in the middle of a phrase, they're not listening. Somewhere like the Wigmore Hall, they'll cough at the end of a phrase. That gives me a good feeling – they are actually listening to the music. There are a lot of telepathic things going on between the audience and the performer, and the audience can feel if you are on song or not. It can simply be a confidence issue – maybe you don't feel at ease with the instrument, or the atmosphere, or you're not feeling well. There's no guarantee how a performance will go. That's part of the thrill, but it can also be quite frustrating. I remember every single concert I wasn't happy about – but I don't remember any of the good ones.'

Yevgeny Sudbin's
Scarlatti: 18 Sonatas
will be released by BIS
Records on 1 April
2016. www.bis.se

