



Delicate beauty

Finnish pianist and artist **Jasmin Fors** introduces her debut album of masterworks by Chopin and Liszt, delving deep into the Romantic ideas that inspired their creativity

The starting point for my debut album was Liszt's B minor Sonata, a piece that has always haunted me. The Sonata became the nucleus around which other elements began to form. Once I had added Chopin's Ballades in G and F minor, a musical concept began to emerge that for me is full of meaning: I believe these composers were drawing musical self-portraits with their highly expressive pencil marks on the piano staff.

The title of my album merges the English words 'autobiography' and 'graphite', which gave me the idea of drawing a self-portrait in pencil for the cover to complement my overall concept. As I am interested in writing about artistic creativity, two small stories about the composers also began to take shape and were eventually included in the album booklet.

One could say this album is my love song to music and playing the piano. It's a love that has not always been obvious to me, but built up to become an outburst of musical expression after a long silence. During this silence, my focus shifted toward the fine arts and portrait painting in particular, as well as to writing. As a result, I tend to explore the work and language of composers as if from the perspective of a portrait painter and artist. I begin each musical interpretation the same way, with a 'blank canvas', my goal being to create an independent yet complementary work of art.

Jasmin Fors: 'My main goal throughout this project has been to get the music out of myself, and to bring it to life as sincerely as possible'

In painting, every brushstroke has a meaning, and it can often feel like you're in danger of losing the most immediate and vibrant moments of inspiration as they become smudged under layers of paint. George Orwell once wrote in the *Tribune*, "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle." I think this applies to everything, including art and music. It is a lifelong path of learning that involves fighting off all sorts of useless and distracting things which come between you and art, be they fears, beliefs, blindness, impatience or general lack of concentration. When you find that famous and precious 'flow', where you are completely awake to the reality a work of art offers, it is a moment of deep fulfilment.

Alfred Cortot is one of the pianists I loved most when I was a young student. His thoughts about music were very perceptive. Take his observation that Liszt's B minor Sonata unfolds like 'an illustration of Goethe's *Faust*', which is especially illuminating.

The *Faust* theme is startlingly universal, providing an inspiration to many composers and artists – a testament to its enduring ability to address existential challenges that every human faces. Goethe's *Faust* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, with their epic scale and autobiographical foundations, certainly inspired Liszt: the idea of Faust haunted him, inviting him to deep introspection.

Goethe's play was widely known in the 19th century, and the idea that the world and Man could be changed

