

Fuzjko Hemming in a
romantic reverie

Hemming serenades and seduces in these passionate recordings

Grieg • Liszt

Grieg Piano Concerto, Op 16

Liszt Piano Concerto No 1

Fuzjko Hemming *pf* Munich Symphony Orchestra
/ Heiko Mathias Förster

Domo Classics © 73096-2 (55' • DDD)

Although 74-year-old Fuzjko Hemming, caught on the cover in a lovely Monet-like moment, may not be everyone's idea of a conventional love goddess, on the basis of this recording she is a very persuasive one.

While Liszt's formidable warhorse has impressive breadth, warmth and moments of gorgeous melody, it is Grieg's more feline concerto that brings forth the most illuminating playing. Here Fuzjko curls up purring in response to the composer's sophisticated musical desires. It is utterly transforming, perhaps because it appears to spring from so compelling a sense of inner romantic fantasy.

The sessions were held in Munich where the Munich Symphony Orchestra, specialists in soundtrack recordings (they've made more than 500), match the pianist in sumptuous virtuosity (check out the flute's whipped-cream trill in the slow movement of the Grieg) and embracing rhetoric at every bar from beginning to end.

There are no liner-notes besides track-listings; for compensation, the CD label itself sports three delightful caricatures by the pianist, a talented artist.

As a girl, Hemming studied in Tokyo with the great Lenoid Kreutzer, Schnabel's lesser-

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known colleague. After the airing of an NHK documentary about her recovery from a partial loss of hearing as an adult, her subsequent CD reportedly sold two million copies; in its aftermath, she has become a big star in Japan and, increasingly, in Europe.

There is no secret to her appeal: Fuzjko Hemming is not just playing the piano; she is using the music to make love, seeming to enter a romantic reverie to find and unfold the music's beauties and intentions. After an hour spent alone with Liszt, Grieg and Ms Hemming, there is no doubt of what the music has in mind.

Laurence Vittes