



A bran tub of bonbons, yes, but much more than that: it is also a portrait of an artist in love with music of all sorts (including, with no apology, the unfashionable and the second-rate if it happens to appeal to him), of a master transcriber and of that rare animal, a concert pianist who is not afraid to mix high jinks with high art.

The first two items set the tone for the whole album: Hough's own take on the *Radetzky March* transformed into a waltz in the style of Grünfeld with plenty of mischievous Godowskian figurations along the way – virtuoso, musically knowing and pianistically sophisticated. Then *Das alte Lied*, second of the 15 Hough transcriptions and original compositions featured on the album. It's a nostalgic song that many will know from the recording by Richard Tauber accompanying himself on the piano (it's known as the 'Whispering Record'). Tauber was one of those magicians with the power to transform base metal into gold. Hough is another. I found this among the most moving pieces of the 27, along with Sibelius's 'The Spruce', Chaminade's *Scarf Dance*, 'Somewhere a voice is calling' and 'Blow the wind southerly' (the last two both simple Hough transcriptions). In all these we are eavesdropping, listening from next door to the pianist's private reverie. Hough's masterly use of the pedal and exquisite phrasing are very special accomplishments.

Everyone will have their own favourites; but elsewhere and by contrast are powerful readings of Liszt and Dohnányi, 'Waltzing Matilda' as a rumba with lashings of Villa-Lobos, two transcriptions of dances from *Don Quixote* (the ballet) which teeter amusingly on the kitsch and, to end, Mompou's 'Jeunes filles au jardin', one of the earliest pieces Hough ever played, his companion as an encore for 40 years, which he first heard as a child on a mixed album 'much like this one' (writes Hough), played by Clive Lythgoe.

My only cavil is that the empty concert-hall acoustic at Wyastone leads the upper treble at *forte* and above to fly away, sounding disembodied from the lower register. Obviously, Hough and his longtime producer Andrew Keener like the effect. It is a small matter, one of personal preference perhaps. No matter. Witty, wistful, extrovert, introspective and cheeky by turn, this is a masterclass in a certain style of piano-playing, and a dream of an album. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Stephen Hough's Dream Album'



Albéniz España, Op 165 – No 5, Capricho Catalan^o **Chaminade** Pas des écharpes, Op 37 **Coates** By the Sleepy Lagoon **Dohnányi** Rhapsody, Op 11 No 3 **Dvořák** Humoresque, Op 101 B187 No 7. Songs my mother taught me, Op 55 B104 No 4^a **Elgar** Salut d'amour, Op 12 **Hough** Iver-song (Lullaby). Lullaby. Matilda's Rhumba. Niccolo's Waltz. Osmanthus Reverie. Osmanthus Romp. Radetzky Waltz **J Isserlis** Memories of Childhood, Op 11 – In the Steppes **Liszt** Étude, S136 No 10. Harmonies du soir, S139 No 11 **Love** The Third Man – Das alte Lied^a **Minkus** Don Quixote^a – Dulcinea's Variation; Kitri's Variation **Mompou** Scènes d'enfants – No 5, Jeunes filles au jardin **Ponce** Intermezzo No 1 **Seymer** Solöga (Sun-eye), Op 11 No 3 **Sibelius** Five Pieces, Op 75 – The Spruce **Solovyov-Sedoy** Moscow Nights^a **Tate** Somewhere a voice is calling^a **Traditional** Blow the wind southerly^a (^aarr/transcr Hough) **Stephen Hough** *pf*
Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68176 (80' • DDD)