

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

Symphony No.9

200th Anniversary

1824-2024

Piano transcription Franz Liszt
Choral Fantasy
for piano and orchestra

Idil BIRET piano

Antoni Wit, Bilkent Symphony Orchestra, Turkish State Polyphonic Choir, İbrahim Yazıcı choirmaster, Özgecan Gencer soprano, Gülbén Özışık Çayan soprano, Sema Baysal alto, Can Serhat Sayı tenor, Ethem Demir tenor, Ali Sinan Gülsen bass

During the 200th anniversary of the first performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, in 2024, IBA is releasing a commemorative limited edition on LP, Idil Biret's performance of the symphony as transcribed for piano by Franz Liszt, originally recorded for EMI and published in a box set of 6LPs with all nine symphonies in 1986. The Choral Fantasy for Piano, Orchestra and Chorus, considered a precursor to the 9th Symphony, is also included in the set.

The name of Beethoven is sacred in art. His symphonies are nowadays universally recognized as masterpieces. No one who seriously desires to extend his knowledge, or create something new himself, can ever devote sufficient thought to them, or ever study them enough.

Franz LISZT

Idil Biret not only recorded all nine of the Beethoven symphonies in less than a year but, in a superhuman feat which astounded all those who know about music, she also publicly performed all of them in four recitals at the Montpellier Festival (of Radio France Musique). To learn and also memorise scores of such length and difficulty in such a short time is a mind-boggling achievement.

Peter Cossé Fonoforum (Germany) 1986

Have you thought of a pianist's loneliness? Especially when she is to play all the nine Beethoven Symphonies' piano transcriptions by Liszt. That Idil Biret was given a special place at the Montpellier Festival was not without reason. In the publicity brochure her performance of the complete symphonies in four recitals was announced as The event of the Festival. She gave the most eloquent example of the mastery of these works in the performance of the 9th Symphony. The 9th was only recently played in Japan in a stadium with an orchestra filling the entire field and a chorus of ten thousand. Could such extraordinary music be expressed by a single piano? Perhaps it is hard to believe, but in the fearsome loneliness of the piano Beethoven's work gains another meaning and the delivery of the music so plainly brings one closer to its essence...

Cumhuriyet (Turkey) 1986

Idil Biret gives an impressive performance of the complete Beethoven Symphonies' ingenious transcriptions by Liszt...A supreme mastery of tempi, sonorities, polyphony and of course technique permits Biret – a disciple of Cortot and Nadia Boulanger – to embrace all the moods of great Beethoven and gives her playing a symphonic depth rarely heard until now.

Henry-Louis de la Grange Le Nouvelle Observateur (France) 1986

Idil Biret's performances, in fact, impress in a very special 'pianistic' way. She aims at underlining details with an emphasized articulation and, on the whole, with a more transparent and colourful performance...In order to carry through her priorities, she has to take slower tempi in many movements, compared to the familiar tempi of the conductors. In this way, she is able to display the characteristic value of the piano transcriptions better than her male colleagues, requiring the listener to hear the piano versions without recalling the originals.

Ingo Harden Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany) 1986

Idil Biret a pianist well known to us, has devoted four recitals at the Montpellier Festival in France to Liszt's transcriptions of the nine Beethoven Symphonies...She played these often talked about but rarely performed works with spirit, great technical ease, breathtaking virtuosity and implacable energy.

Jacques Mairel Le Soir (Belgium) 1986

Idil Biret, a former pupil of Wilhelm Kempff, is the first pianist to complete all nine Beethoven Symphonies in Liszt's transcriptions... The unfolding of the finale theme in the 9th Symphony before the baritone entry is daringly slow and Fürtwänglerian. Indeed her speeds are often measured. Yet it works. Biret clearly loves the sustaining powers of the instrument...She never resorts to routine and it seems to me very much playing in the Kempff-Beethoven mould. I was captivated by these realisations. Christopher Breunig, editor HI-FI News (UK) 1987

Last year Idil Biret has performed in concerts the complete nine symphonies of Beethoven, transcribed by Liszt, and also recorded them for EMI...The performance of the eighth symphony succeeds in the sustained tension, the prominence of logic in building up the colours, the autonomy as well as the interplay of the parts...She conquers by dominating the whole, with an implacable left hand in the Allegretto or with lightness in the fury of the Allegro vivace.

Franca Cella Corriere Della Sera, after a concert in Milan (Italy) 1987

Listening to Beethoven through Liszt's keyboard transcriptions can put a fresh perspective on these familiar symphonies. Idil Biret has taken on the complete cycle, and I admire her taste, technique and sound musical decisions.

Peter G. Davies New York Magazine (USA) 1987

It may seem bizarre to play Beethoven Symphonies on the piano, but Idil Biret obviously does not think so, and she justifies this view in her remarkable set of the Liszt transcriptions of all nine...From the outset of the First Symphony one feels that Idil Biret grasps the size of Beethoven's style. The polyphony is laid out in a relaxed way with little indulgence in point making. She keeps her big line, and is thankfully sparing in her use of fortissimos... The piano tone throughout is sumptuous. This is a remarkable achievement.

J. Methuen-Campbell Gramophone (UK) 'Critics Choice' 1987

You started your Beethoven series in the 1980s with Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies. Why? When I was a child I used to play four-hand transcriptions of Beethoven's symphonies with my mother. Later I played by ear and made my own transcriptions. Then, in Nadia Boulanger's keyboard class [at the Paris Conservatoire] we used to sight-read Liszt transcriptions. When I was asked to make the recording of the Beethoven symphonies I had to be careful as I already had my own transcriptions in my mind. I was fascinated by these pieces.

BBC Music Magazine, interview (UK) 2009



Idil Biret recording the Beethoven symphonies in 1986

BEETHOVEN/LISZT		
Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (Choral)		
i. Allegro ma non troppo, un poco maestoso	19:20	
ii. Molto vivace	12:50	
iii. Adagio molto e cantabile	19:03	
Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125 (Choral) (continued)		
iv. Presto	31:50	
Fantasy for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra in C minor, Op. 80		
	19:34	

Recorded: Symphony No. 9 at St. Bavon Church, Chaumont Gistoux, Belgium 3/4 April 1986, Producer Michel Devos •

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