

Excerpts from Reviews

“Hayroudinoff’s choices of pieces here are inspired. Third English Suite proves a good showcase for precise technique, even touch, crisp articulation and crystal-clear textures... The magnificent Sarabande is as spacious and brooding as you could want... Hayroudinoff captures the twitchy energy and electric invention of this music. In the two polonaises by WF [Bach] his expressive sensitivity shines. These contemplative little poems, rich with romantic feeling, really deserve to be heard more, especially when (as these performances show) they benefit so from being performed on the piano. Welcome back, then, to a pianist with an eye for rewardingly unusual programming and whose fingers, thankfully, sound in excellent shape.”

Gramophone, June 2025

“The G minor English Suite is sensitively played, sparsely pedalled, tastefully ornamented and subtly inflected. Wilhelm Friedemann’s Fantasie that follows alternates fingery brilliance with austere French ouverture-style dotted rhythms and encloses a fugue on a subject dad would have recognised. The discontinuities and subversive juxtapositions between fiery virtuosity and melancholy lyricism in a pair of sonatas by Carl Philipp Emanuel prove that while the form would find its first perfection way south in Vienna, its elements were alchemised in a north German crucible. Played with obvious affection on a fine-sounding instrument, this is an album that enlightens as surely as it entertains. A heartfelt welcome back to a fine artist.”

International Piano, May 2025

“Too many notes, you might have thought if you’ve encountered a less than magisterial performance of Rachmaninov’s First Piano Sonata. So did I before hearing this crystal-clear interpretation by Rustem Hayroudinoff... As a master of textural details he knows what to highlight and where to give space. The long first-movement development’s climaxes are properly terraced; there’s pure poetry in the Lento’s feminine portrait; and the demonic dash of the finale never blusters... an impressive grip on structure... There’s no better way to get to know these two masterpieces.”

BBC Music Magazine, November 2017

“There’s a great deal of high-voltage playing on Rustem Hayroudinoff’s disc. But he always uses his prodigious technique intelligently; there’s no sense he’s ever highlighting the heftiness of the piano writing in a self-regarding way.”

The Guardian, June 2017

“This is an artist not merely interpreting the music, but identifying with it. Small wonder it [the CD] has generally been seen as a benchmark recording of these studies and was selected as the finest version when BBC Radio 3 last assessed the work on its ‘Building a Library’ feature. I still commend these two Hayroudinoff discs for completeness, convenience and class. Ideally one could also add Richter’s Regis selection of studies and preludes from all four opus numbers. Then you have a titan of the great Russian piano tradition and one of his most impressive heirs.”

Music Web International, May 2015

“...unbridled - even unhinged - forward momentum conveyed by Rustem Hayroudinoff in his superlative recording for Chandos. ...great range of colours... Hayroudinoff’s almost impressionistic handling of timbre and subtle use of rubato seems even more apposite to the doom-laden and emotionally fraught atmosphere of the music.”

BBC Music, November 2014

“The 13 Preludes of Rachmaninoff’s opus 32 made up the second half of Hayroudinoff’s program, and it’s hard to think of anyone who plays them better... Hayroudinoff brings to them electrifying power and passion, but always expressed with a beautiful tone, even in *fortissimo*. And he is positively a genius at digging out the inner voices that most pianists don’t realize are even there. The first part of the program was made up of three Preludes and Fugues from Shostakovich’s *24 Preludes and Fugues* (opus 87) in a rendition so authoritative that one wishes Hayroudinoff would record the entire set... The only question that remained after the recital was, Why isn’t Hayroudinoff better known and playing a larger venue, such as the big stage at Carnegie Hall?”

Vanity Fair on NYC Debut, January 2010

“Rachmaninoff asks everything of his pianist: a steely rhythmic sense, coruscating virtuosity, spiritual depth and introspection. Tartar-born Rustem Hayroudinoff marshals all these qualities. His classically contained

but never underpowered approach is likely to have delighted the composer-pianist and it comes closest to Sviatoslav Richter...”

BBC Radio 3 Building a Library Choice, July 2008

“These forthright, beautifully weighted performances keep the emotion in check but never at bay. With Hayroudinoff's playing equal even to the greatness of Richter, Op. 39 No. 7 emerges as one of Rachmaninov's greatest creations in a drama of life and death.”

BBC Music Magazine Best Instrumental CD of the Year Nomination 2008

“Rustem Hayroudinoff plays these extraordinary miniatures with sensational aplomb, transforming some of the most note-spattered pages in the piano repertoire into sublime poetics. My piano record of the year so far.”

Classic FM Magazine (London), February 2007

“Hayroudinoff takes the composer at his word, a courtesy to Rachmaninov not granted by every pianist. Temperamentally he is right inside the music. This is powerful Rachmaninov playing that transcends the artificial constraints of the recording studio.”

Gramophone, February 2007

“...there's little doubt that Hayroudinoff's warmly recorded interpretations are not only brilliantly characterised and absolutely masterly in terms of technique, but also sufficiently varied in colour and timbre to enable him to extract the maximum degree of impact throughout each piece - an extra dimension that makes his performances sound even more vibrant and imaginative...whilst conveying more vividly the increasing desperation that engulfs the music. Benchmark recording.”

Instrumental Choice of the Month - BBC Music Magazine, January 2007

“Among many Dvorak issues I'd like for my collection...the problematic Piano Concerto with the inspired young Russian, Rustem Hayroudinoff, bringing out a rare joy.”

Best CDs of 2005 - Gramophone, December 2005

“Rustem Hayroudinoff sounds as though he believes in every note of the Piano Concerto, making even the most commonplace of phrases sound utterly magical. Dvorák was by no means an expert pianist, as is reflected in page after page of awkward, unidiomatic writing, yet Hayroudinoff somehow clarifies and illuminates even the most densely-textured terrain, making it glisten and radiate emotional warmth. Even Richter's celebrated EMI recording must cede to this outstanding newcomer.”

Classic FM Magazine (London), August 2005

“It says much for the Russian pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff that he gives such a commanding performance of the Dvorak Piano Concerto...just as dazzling and just as electrically compelling. Hayroudinoff even more than Richter brings out the joyful, carefree quality of Dvorak's inspiration, demonstrating what a wonderful fund of good melodies it contains. The clarity of his articulation in the trickiest passagework is phenomenal, and his phrasing in the central *Andante Sostenuto* is limpidly beautiful, even warmer than that of Richter....an outstanding modern version.”

Gramophone, July 2005

“Rustem Hayroudinoff proves himself to be a player in the great Russian virtuoso tradition.”

Gramophone, May 2004

“As far as Rachmaninoff's 'complete' cello music goes, this is the best I have heard.”

American Record Guide, NY 2004

“This complete set [Rachmaninoff's 24 Preludes] is a gem.”

Classic FM Magazine (London), March 2004

“Despite such a diverse range of alternative versions this latest account... is far from negligible in that it presents the music with a concentrated yet expressive directness that commands our attention without the need to resort to histrionic effect... Hayroudinoff's is... a most impressive achievement and one that raises hopes of more Rachmaninov, maybe the *Etudes-tableaux*, from this artist.”

International Record Review, March 2004

“This is one of the most rewarding and exciting new piano releases I have heard. Hayroudinoff's performances are so entrancing that listeners may be loath to set it aside, much like a book that 'one cannot

put down'. Rachmaninoff's ubiquitous C-sharp minor Prelude ... proves to be the most beautiful account of this hackneyed piece imaginable. The pianist moves from one revelation to another, his conceptions of the Preludes remarkably rounded and rife with touches and gestures of the old-style pianism. His understanding of the composer's tonal language is precocious, and his playing is full of evocative shading, pedalling, and nuance. The collector can choose from several outstanding recordings of Rachmaninoff's Preludes. At the top is Richter, with this recording by Hayroudinoff a close second, though in several of the Preludes ... I think he surpasses Richter."

American Record Guide (New York), Jan/Feb 2004

"How rare to hear Rachmaninov playing of Rustem Hayroudinoff's enviable ease and inclusiveness. Musicianly to the core, without a trace of exaggeration, whipped-up rhetoric or histrionics, he makes you fall in love all over again with both the Op 23 Preludes and the still richer Op 32 set. Even Op 3 (*the* Rachmaninov Prelude) takes on a special distinction in such a devoted recreation of all of its drama. ...In Liszt's immortal description of a true virtuoso, everything is allowed to 'weep and sing and sigh'. Competition may be strong from the urbane Howard Shelley, from Ashkenazy and most of all from Moura Limpany..., but Hayroudinoff, a young Russian resident in London, speaks with a voice all his own."

Gramophone, January 2004

"One of the qualities most needed in Rachmaninov's music is the graceful lack of apparent effort, and that is precisely why Rustem Hayroudinoff is so engaging. It is not at all the same thing as nonchalance, or being cool, and if you compare his recording of the very first Prelude, in C sharp minor, with Lympny's most recent version, you are at once aware that the level of expressive intensity is greatly heightened. Hayroudinoff brings a sense of urgency – dark fatalism, even – to the music's message...Hayroudinoff's razor-sharp rhythmic attack is hardly blunted,...while his fluency, heedless of hurdles, and his sensitive balancing of strands within Rachmaninov's sonorous textures beg, without undue unction, to be relished."

BBC Music Magazine, December 2003

"Not many recordings of Rachmaninov's complete Preludes come on a single disc, although it doesn't mean that the sensationally gifted Rustem Hayroudinoff rushes his fences. The heavenly E flat Prelude...is magically phrased, as is the skin-tingling D major... the famous G minor thrills and seduces, and the A minor darts about kaleidoscopically to hypnotic effect. Hayroudinoff plays with an electrifying and compelling inevitability that connects the listener with the composer himself. The larger than life recording suites the exuberance of Hayroudinoff's stunning artistry to a tee."

Classic FM Magazine, November 2003

"Beautifully lyrical playing from Russian pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff... He really imbues these works with passion and intensity. It sounds as if every note is special to him. Rustem Hayroudinoff's playing combines power with control and lacks any of the over-sentimentality or self-indulgence that is often associated with Rachmaninoff's works. ...the B flat major Prelude is grand and majestic in his hands. Compelling playing...This full-priced recording for Chandos should certainly win him new friends."

BBC Radio 3 CD Reviews, September 2003

"...a splendid CD of Rachmaninov's Second Piano Sonata ... It's a performance that makes as constructive a case for this suicidally disposed work as you could imagine, showing a penetrating intelligence... served by a strong technique."

The Independent, January 2002

"Rustem Hayroudinoff's fresh, intelligent and tremendously witty playing makes this a CD I'd give anyone for Christmas. This young Russian is clearly a deep-thinking, independent and very characterful artist and concert halls should book him, fast. But also, he has unearthed some real gems in these pieces of incidental music by Shostakovich, the vast majority of which are heard on disc here for the first time. The total effect is a breath of fresh air."

Best CDs of 2001 - BBC Music Magazine, December 2001

"Hayroudinoff's performances are tender and brilliant, enhancing the music's many facets with glowing tone, exquisite phrasing and an unerring sense of comic timing... If this disc is anything to go by, he's a pianist out of the ordinary: he plays every note as if he simply loves it. More from him, please, Chandos."

BBC Music Magazine, August 2001

“An absolutely precious disc... A first-rate performance by the pianist Rustem Hayroudinoff, brilliant technically but even more so in the psychological and often drastic transitions from one piece to another.”
Compact Disc Classics (Italy), July/August 2001