

## THE PERFORMER'S POINT OF VIEW

### **| How did you devise this programme around the Chopin Preludes?**

The cycle of Twenty-Four Preludes is shot through with violence and death. I like to play it without interruption, maintaining the same tension throughout, and a certain fear – which is there all the time, underlying even the most serene preludes. There needs to be a period of silence after the last prelude. It isn't easy to carry on from there. I wanted this continuation to take the form of a dialogue, so I chose to add to the Prelude in A flat, the Prelude op.45, and the three posthumous études (which one can well imagine Chopin might have called 'Preludes'), a more recent, more intimate echo in the music of Federico Mompou.

### **| Both Chopin and Mompou devoted virtually their entire output to the piano . . .**

They are linked by their personality, their careers, their exclusive relationship with the piano, the attention they devote to sonority, and their inward melody. There are many ties between these two composers.

With reference to Chopin's op.28, I selected three pieces by Mompou. *Música callada XV* (Silent music) is a direct homage to Prelude no.4, retaining its form, its heaving rhythm, and its inexorable fall. Mompou himself wrote a cycle of preludes, of which the ninth is in my view the most exalted and the most lyrical. Its harmonies come astonishingly close to another spiritual son of Chopin, Alexander Scriabin. Finally, I wanted to conclude the programme in an atmosphere of meditation, with Mompou's great elegiac prelude *El lago* (The lake). I've often played this piece in concert as an encore after the Twenty-Four Preludes of Chopin, as if to echo their violence. Whenever I do so, I'm always struck by the quality of silence in the audience.

***| This CD follows on from your recent recording of the Waltzes. What is the place of Chopin in your life?***

Above all, he is the composer I have played most often, the one who has never failed to move me deeply. These Preludes have been my constant companions since my years at the Conservatoire. In particular, they take me back to the long period I spent in Canada as I was emerging from adolescence, when I chose to cut myself off from the world so as to be able to practise them to the exclusion of all else. Since then they have marked several key stages in my life.

***| What was the piano you chose to record on?***

An eight-year-old Steinway D. It sometimes makes me think of certain recordings of the 1950s. This isn't a very recent instrument – I like pianos that have a history behind them. This one has gone through many pairs of hands, and has gained in the course of time a sound, a touch – I would say a 'patina' – all its own.

*Translation: Charles Johnston*