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**Classical CD Reviews:**

## **Joseph Moog, Tchaikovsky and Scharwenka, review: 'deft and fluid'**

**The 26-year-old pianist Joseph Moog has the agility and panache to tackle two complex pieces, says Geoffrey Norris**

★★★★★



Pianist Joseph Moog Photo: PAUL MARC MITCHELL



By [Geoffrey Norris](#) 2:37PM BST 09 Jul 2014

Joseph Moog, the 26-year-old German pianist, earned plaudits for a 2012 release of Anton Rubinstein's Fourth Concerto (Onyx 4089). "Easily a match for its bravura" and "a talent worth watching" were among the comments in this paper's review, although the reception was a little more muted for his Rachmaninov's Third Concerto. Here Moog returns to do battle with two formidable beasts of the solo piano repertoire,

Tchaikovsky's G major ("Grand") Sonata of 1878 and the Second Sonata of the same era by the German-Polish composer-pianist Xaver Scharwenka.

The Tchaikovsky sonata, deficient though it is, has exercised a curious fascination on pianists who are blessed with the blistering technique to play it. Sviatoslav Richter and Mikhail Pletnev represent the chief competition in the current catalogue, but Moog is right up there with the requisite weight, agility and dazzling panache. He brings to the first movement an invigorating element of impulsiveness and urgency that makes it sound far less bloated than can often be the case.

Tchaikovsky's flaw here was to see the sonata in terms of a sort of concerto manqué, with inflated gestures and elaborate flurries of virtuosity that echo the First Concerto and pre-echo the Second. But he allows space for sensitivity, as Moog shows in the passages of more inward-looking lyricism, and he brings delicate charm to the picturesque writing of the second movement, reminiscent of Tchaikovsky in his miniaturist mode of "The Seasons".

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The tiny scherzo is alive with its teasing cross-accent, and the finale is taken at a propulsive, finger-breaking speed, though not at the expense of the restrained moments which Tchaikovsky – here a seasoned rather than an inspired composer – carefully placed for contrast.

The four Scharwenka piano concertos have received quite a lot of attention on disc, but the solo works less so. In 1992, Seta Tanyel recorded the Second Sonata (now on Helios CDH55132) as part of a wider survey of Scharwenka's music, and hers is still a pleasurable and formidable option. Scharwenka, as Tanyel revealed, was a perceptive and instinctive explorer of the piano's expressive potential, without recourse to Tchaikovsky's hollow tricks, and Moog makes the same point here, deftly and fluidly shaping the romantic contours, igniting the fireworks, keeping the energy levels high and, in the slow movement, mining a seam of genuine emotion.