

101 443 FAZIL SAY – ALLA TURCA

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


An inconsistent but happily adventurous pianist steps outside the box

Fazil Say

'Alla Turca'

A film by Gösta Courkamp

ArtHaus Musik ©  101 443

(73' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM Stereo • 0)

The Turkish star pianist comes across in this indifferent 2005 documentary as a likeable, self-effacing musician who is as diverse as he is inconsistent. He is on the hitting rather than stroking end of the scale as a pianist, whose performances of the Bach-Liszt Fugue in A minor and the first part of the Bach-Busoni Chaconne are less expressive than his facial and bodily gestures. These are filmed in the shell of a building overlooking the blue sunlit waters of the Bosphorus. The Istanbul rush hour provides the director with footage for the first movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata*, Say's performance disconcertingly brought to an abrupt halt by the evening call to prayer.

As to Say the composer, I was much drawn to his melancholy and atmospheric *Black Earth* with its ingenious keyboard imitations of the bağlama and saz (Turkish string instruments), and to his haunting, atonal quasi-piano concerto *Silk Road*. These are of far greater depth and interest than the movement we hear from his oratorio *Nazim*, written in the kind of Euro-ballad tonal language that Andrea Bocelli revels in. Likewise his *Paganini* Variations are jejune, jazz-pastiche takes on the famous A minor Caprice in the same questionable taste as the various T-shirts that Mr Say wears.

That said, and though the film is little more than a promotional video, Say emerges as a searcher and a seeker, someone who dares to be different and is not afraid to step outside the concert pianist box to compose, improvise and experiment. We need more like him.

Jeremy Nicholas