

COMING TO AN ARRANGEMENT

A supportive label has helped pianist, clarinetist and composer Dejan Lazic develop his talents

On 24 May, Dutch label Channel Classics celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Frits Philips concert hall in Eindhoven. In addition to workshops, masterclasses, a documentary on the label, a children's concert and listening sessions, various performers on the label took to the stage, each doing a short showcase of their work. One of these artists was Croatian pianist Dejan Lazic, who was celebrating 10 years with Channel Classics.

'It's been quite a productive decade,' the 33-year-old says. 'They're very loyal to their artists and ready to take on new music, programme-wise.' He adds that after completing his arrangement of the Brahms Violin Concerto for piano

and orchestra a few months ago, Channel Classics didn't bat an eye about recording it. 'Even some major labels wouldn't go there!'

After its world premiere with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and music director Robert Spano in October 2009, Channel released the live recording last February. Lazic worked on it for six years, but says the final product is more than a transcription. 'If I played it on the flute, it would be a transcription,' he explains. 'This is a re-creation of the arrangement.'

After the gala performance in the Netherlands, Lazic headed to Brazil for three performances of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto with the Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo. 'It's only three concerts, quite a way to go, but worth it,' he states. 'It's amazing how the young people come to the concerts there.'

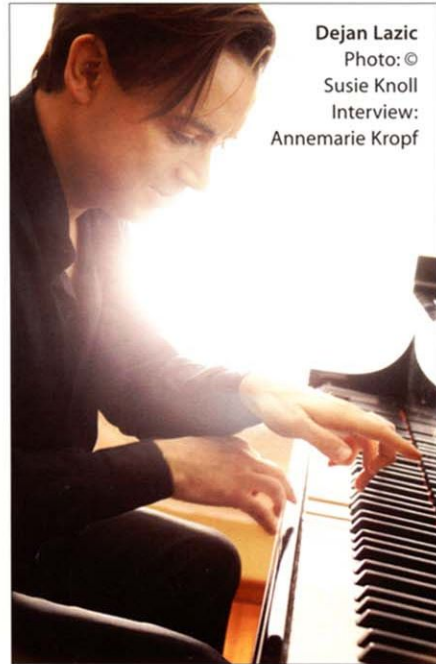
As a performer and a composer, Lazic says that he's always trying to find the right balance of touring. This spring, he'll be travelling with various orchestras as well as doing a few solo recitals. With festival season approaching, he will also 'be meeting up with old friends and making chamber music'. Lazic thinks both parts of his musical persona are important. 'I don't think I could live without one particular component,' he says. 'As a pianist, I gain business as a composer. Even 15 years of playing the clarinet helped me to play the piano. I look up to the great 18th and 19th-century composers – who all played two instruments. For me, it all belongs together.'

Given his schedule, Lazic says that he doesn't have time to compose on a daily basis. 'It's definitely a big passion that I try to keep up as much as possible,' he comments. 'It's productive, reproductive, all coming together.' He adds that very often while performing Mozart or other composers, he'll throw in a few of his own cadenzas as well. While he receives commissions, Lazic admits that sometimes it's a struggle. 'There is always a deadline, and sometimes that affects the creativity,' he notes.

Born in Zagreb, Lazic and his musical family – a pianist mother and clarinetist father – moved to Salzburg when he was 12 so he could study at the Mozarteum. He stayed in the city for 10 years, then moved to his current home, Munich. For the past three years, he has been artist-in-residence with the Netherlands Chamber Orchestra.

This fall, Channel will release a live recording of Lazic's work with the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) under Richard Tognetti in late 2009, performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4. For the rest of the year, he'll be touring Europe and Asia, at times performing with the ACO.

'As Thomas Mann said, "The way is the goal."' Lazic muses. 'I'm currently really happy about what I'm doing. I don't want this to sound like an election piece! I'm really blessed to be doing what I'm doing. My hobby and my passion is my work.'



Dejan Lazic
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