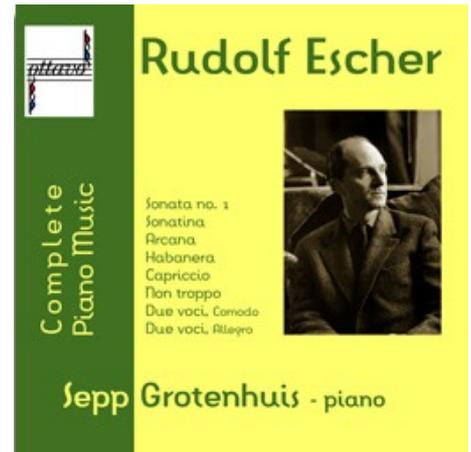


Rudolf Escher, Complete piano music.

Sonata, Sonatina, Arcana, Habanera, Capriccio, Non troppo (10 pieces), Due voci Commodo, Due voce allegro Sepp Grotenhuit (piano).
Ottavo OTR C90075 (DDD) 75.44



It grieves me that self-appointed music experts can be so cruel and stupid. I remember one saying of Escher, "Is he that idiot who wrote an electronic score? That is not music!"

So many composers are ignored and forgotten and yet, on the BBC, we have wall to wall Elgar. Until recently, Poland had wall to wall Chopin.

If I were to say that Escher was a genius, most people would object. But why?

Rudolf George Escher was a Dutch composer, born in Amsterdam on 8 July 1902. The family moved to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies in 1904. Escher senior was a highly respected geologist and a musician who taught his son the piano and the violin and, like his father, Rudolf eventually became a talented painter, poet and writer.

Back in the Netherlands in 1922, young Escher studied piano, violin and harmony very seriously, Some 36 years later, he became interested in electronic music and had further studies with Boulez

The Dutchman composed two symphonies piano sonata and other sonatas and vocal music.

The Piano Sonata is really his Opus 1 of 1935 revised in 1940-1 and consists of an Intrada, Allegro, Adagio and Allegro vivace. It is perfectly written with meticulous detail. It may owe something to Pijper. It has quality thematic material.

The Sonatina of 1951 is also most acceptable and tends towards the toccata style of Scarlatti. During this time, or a little earlier, Escher was working on a Piano Concerto but, sadly, this did not materialise. Arcana is a suite written at the end of World War II and may be his most profound work with both the violence and tenderness of the war in mind. There are four movements namely Prelude, Toccata, Chaconne and Moderato. Again, the music is very well written, structurally sound and meticulous in detail. Every note counts and there are no pianistic gymnastics and showing off.

The Habanera of 1945 was to be one of two pieces based on Spanish dances and written to get away from his important music. It is a piece of no consequence. After this, his music took on an attractive simplicity.

The Capriccio of 1936 was written in great haste for a female dancer and friend. He was living a Bohemian life at that time which encouraged his music to be somewhat serious.

Non troppo is a series of ten pieces showing a command of variety. The usual virtuoso style is not evident. This is music for music's sake which is what music should be.

The pianist Sepp Grotenhuit is superb and cannot be praised high enough.

The sound is first class and this is a very welcome CD.

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