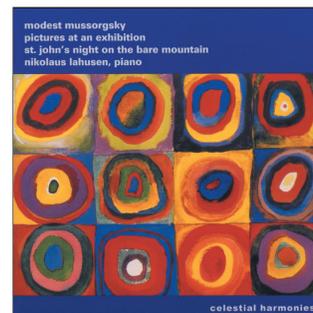


# celestial harmonies

modest mussorgsky  
pictures at an exhibition  
st. john's night on the bare mountain  
nikolaus lahusen  
celestial harmonies 13248-2  
cd - 0 1371 13248 2 2  
file classification: classical



## the artist

Nikolaus Lahusen was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1960 and grew up in Mexico. His artistic development was supported by Edith Picht-Axenfeld, Christoph Eschenbach and Bruno Leonardo Gelber.

Counted among the leading pianists of his generation, Lahusen gave concerts worldwide in some of the finest concert halls (Philharmonie in Munich, Musikhalle in Hamburg, Beethovenhalle in Bonn, etc.) and worked with leading orchestras.

During a period of eleven years, Lahusen worked with Celestial Harmonies on eight recordings - Orff-Schulwerk, Vol. 3: Piano Music (13106-2), The Complete Piano Music of M.K. Čiurlionis, Vols. 1-3 (13184-2, 13185-2 & 13222-2), Franz Schubert Sonata B Flat Major D. 960, 3 Klavierstücke D. 946 (13195-2), Franz Schubert Sonata D Major D. 850, 34 Valses Sentimentales D. 779 (13221-2), Franz Liszt Transcriptions of Franz Schubert Songs (13228-2) and this, his final recording.

International radio and television stations have broadcast his concerts and recordings; his numerous recordings have been well received among music critics.

On Whitsunday, May 15, 2005, Nikolaus Lahusen passed away having fought cancer since 1998. This recording is his last. Because of his illness, he went through two periods where he was unable to perform. "But his attitude," company president Eckart Rahn says, "was always forward-looking and positive. He added much to my life and work."

## the project

Beauty is found in *Life*. Reality stands above Art. This idea, proposed by Nikolai Chernyshevsky in his *Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855), became a manifesto of sorts in the artistic circles of Czarist Russia in the second half of the 19th century. Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881) was most enthusiastic in adopting the precepts of Chernyshevsky. Most of his works—and the piano pieces especially—are descriptions of moments and situations from everyday life.

Recorded at Radio Bremen's concert hall, as a co-production between Celestial Harmonies and Radio Bremen, this is the last recording by Nikolaus Lahusen prior to his untimely death on May 15, 2005, at the age of 44. It features a Hamburg Steinway piano that he had selected for himself and had shipped to Radio Bremen's concert hall.

In the beginning of the 1870s Mussorgsky had gotten to know the painter and architect Viktor Hartmann. But Hartmann, who was not yet 40, died in 1873 from heart disease, and Mussorgsky was devastated. The influential art critic and essayist, Vladimir Stasov, initiated a memorial exhibition where 400 of Hartmann's works were shown. This exhibition inspired Mussorgsky to write a suite for solo piano, with each movement based on Hartmann's paintings.

*Pictures At An Exhibition* has inspired many composers and arrangers to orchestrate the suite; and for many listeners around the world, accustomed to Maurice Ravel's famous orchestral version, the idea that *Pictures At An Exhibition* was originally a piano work will come as a surprise. Leopold Stokowski and Vladimir Ashkenazy have also clothed the work in full orchestral garb, and numerous arrangements for brass choir, organs, guitars and synthesizers exist, too. But the original piano version still has its own fascination, and arguably allows more room for the listener's own interpretation.

Whereas *Pictures at an exhibition* is a piano work that became successful in a variety of orchestral versions, the reverse is true for *St. John's Night on the Bare Mountain* which was originally an orchestral piece. Lahusen plays here the piano version by Konstantin Černov.

