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New Piano Transcriptions Album Touches Upon Old and New

CHICAGO — November 30, 2005 — Transcriptions are making a wild comeback. And why should we be so surprised? What many people did not realize during the short-lived “purist revolution” of the mid-20th century is that the art of transcribing music is as old as music itself. As we escape this preposterous notion that musical works must only be played on the instrument or instruments for which they were written, we find more and more musicians including transcriptions in their programs, and listeners are eagerly accepting them with open arms. On occasion, an old masterpiece of a transcription that once dropped out of the repertoire is dug up by music aficionados, and new ones are being written down every day. Pianist Junichi Steven Sato is upping the ante by including transcriptions from both facets in his debut compact disc album, *Piano Transcriptions*.

Sato’s program begins with his solo piano version of one of Johann Sebastian Bach’s greatest organ pieces—the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*, BWV 582. This transcription, very much in the spirit of Busoni and Sorabji, was hailed as “ingenious ... idiomatic and imaginative” by pianist and conductor Ian Hobson.

The second work on the compact disc is a transcription of a piece by Franz Liszt, a setting of *Psalm XIII* for tenor solo, chorus, and orchestra that had somehow fallen into undeserved oblivion. When Sato published the print music of his arrangement in 1997, it was enthusiastically reviewed by *Piano & Keyboard* magazine as follows: “[Sato’s] transcription of Liszt’s *Psalm XIII* ... makes an effective concert piece, at once pianistically idiomatic and dramatically coherent.... The result is a gripping 20 minutes of music ... which you might have mistaken for one of Liszt’s lost masterpieces for piano.”

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The third and final work is a rare Alfred Cortot transcription of César Franck's ever-so-popular *Sonata in A Major for Piano and Violin*. Cortot's version for piano solo, published around the turn of the 20th century, presents many brilliant solutions to the challenges of transcribing such a complex piece of music, and Sato adds some of his own touches in his recording of this work.

A Chicago native, Sato has been the recipient of numerous musical awards and honors, and has made several appearances on television and radio programs as both performer and composer. In 1995, he founded J. S. Sato Music Editions, a music publishing business that has been gaining worldwide reputation as a publisher of highly unique and dependable editions. Sato's works are performed internationally, some of which have been heard at Ravinia Festival and on National Public Radio. He has performed in several countries, and his adjudicating experience has taken him as far away as Albania.

Sato's *Piano Transcriptions* album, SME1001, released by Sato Music Editions on August 2, 2005, retails for \$16.98 and is currently available at Amazon.com, CDBaby.com, TowerRecords.com, and other retailers. More information and samples can be found at Sato Music Editions' website at www.satomusic.com.

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