Italian Influence
The German keyboard virtuoso and composer Sigismund Thalberg revered Gioacchino Rossini. He not only dedicated many opera fantasies to his hero but also had no rivals when it came to transferring the master’s song style to the piano. It is thus hardly surprising that the renowned pianist Stefan Irmer, following the sensational success of his complete recording of Rossini’s piano music and inspired by this Italian influence in Thalberg’s music, has now turned to the recording premiere of Thalberg’s études.

Noble Charisma
During the mid-nineteenth century everybody in Europe’s noble music world knew Thalberg. For Heinrich Heine he was the gentleman pianist par excellence; in 1844 the German poet ranked Thalberg, the son of a baroness and a prince born in Geneva, together with Chopin and Liszt. In matters of etiquette and personal charisma Heine even preferred the virtuoso German romantic Thalberg to the Burgenland-born Liszt. Clara Schumann too had the highest praise for the piano virtuoso Thalberg.

Sumptuous Imagination
The Fantasy on themes from the Rossini opera Moses of 1837 is Thalberg’s most famous composition. In it he intensifies his orchestral and colorfully nuanced piano compositional style to an incredible sumptuousness of sound. In his Fantasy op. 40 he elaborates Rossini’s La Donna del Lago even more intensively and with what is of course the greatest brilliance. The twelve Études op. 26 offer a complete compendium of Thalberg’s piano style. Their fine craftsmanship by itself is a challenge for each and every virtuoso.

International Breakthrough
Stefan Irmer loves special things and has gained renown as an outstanding interpreter of unknown and rarely performed works of the piano literature. His recording of Clementi’s late sonatas on MDG was awarded the CHOC French recording prize. His recording of Rossini’s complete piano works brought him his international breakthrough and won the Echo Klassik 2008 for the year’s best audio edition.

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