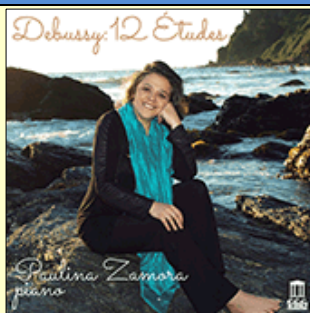


Phil's Classical Reviews

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Debussy: 12 Études – Paulina Zamora, piano (Delos)

Paulina Zamora, the extraordinary young Chilean-American pianist, received her degrees from the University of Chile (BM), Eastman School of Music (MM), and the University of Indiana (DM). By training as well as temperament, she is accustomed to follow things up with a passion. In pursuit of Claude Debussy's Twelve Études, she spent considerable time in Pourville-sur-Mer, the picturesque village on the Normandy coast where the composer wrote these pieces in the Summer of 1915. Her assumption that it would be beneficial to breathe the same air, smell the scents, and gaze at the same landscapes Debussy loved¹ in a place that time has changed very little might be open to question were it not for Zamora's persuasive interpretations of *Douze Études*. She followed it up by spending time in Paris conferring with Scottish pianist and scholar Roy Howat, who knows his Debussy as intimately as any man alive.

All this is more important than a mere quest for local color because Debussy's rationale for writing the Etudes has long eluded many music lovers, myself included. They have never been among his popular recorded works, and one seldom encounters them in recital programs, either in their entirety or as encores. Yet Debussy, already terminally ill by this time and sick at heart at the carnage of the World War in which his country was enmeshed, took time to compose them in the midst of the rich harvest of works he wrote that summer of 1915. They must have meant a great deal to him.

And of course they did. They were organized in two books. Book I has the titles (translated) Five Fingers after M. Czerny, Thirds, Fourths, Sixths, Octaves, and Eight Fingers. In Book II the titles are: Chromatic Degrees, Ornaments, Repeated Notes, Opposing Sonorities, Composite Arpeggios, and Chords. Debussy might have enhanced the popular appeal of these pieces by assigning them picturesque names as he did in his two sets of Preludes, but such was not his intent, and they might even have proved a distraction.



Sibelius: Symphonies Nos. 1, 6 Thomas Søndergård, BBC National Orchestra of Wales (Linn Records)

Once more at the helm of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, the fine young Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård gives us illuminating performances in what is shaping up as an outstanding Sibelius cycle. That illumination, besides taking on the character of the shy twilights of Sibelius' beloved Finland, also includes the truly magical moment in the opening movement of Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 39 in which the song of the solo clarinet, which has struggled painfully "like a wounded bird" in the words of Sibelius scholar Erik Tawaststjerna, is succeeded by an outburst of brilliant sunlight and the music takes flight in the Allegro energico section – a moment that has to qualify as among the most thrilling in all of music.

Sibelius, who was disinclined to mix instrumental timbres, allows plenty of opportunities for delicious solos in this score: the afore-mentioned clarinet, the delicate use of the harp and the glowering reef of brass under the lightly scored string passages, also in the same opening movement, the solo cello in the lovely Andante, and the thrumming pizzicato strings in a brief but extremely varied Scherzo.

In the Allegro molto finale, in another instance of a Sibelius penchant for which my own pet name is "The Big Build-Up," the pounding tympani and querulous strings make a stunning impression. This is a moment for which "massive crashing waves" seems a tame metaphor for the stormy climax that is allowed to rage here before the skies clear and the violins, in their very lowest register, sing a song of consolation and hard-won peace that any composer would give his right arm to have written. The coda offers a final moment of defiance before the curtain falls.

In other regards, what I said about Søndergård in my June, 2015 review of Symphonies 2 and 7 still goes: "Pacing is one of the most vital elements in interpreting a Sibelius score, and Søndergård obviously knows what he's doing in this department. The underlying pace of

¹ And Claude Monet loved as well, to judge by his painting *Cliffwalk at Pourville* (1882).

So exactly what *are* the Études? From the titles, they often appear to be either a keyboard practice or works supporting a music theory. Actually, they relate specifically to Debussy, *his* piano and *his* music. Zamora provides a clue in her description of the Debussy étude as transcending any actual pedagogical purpose: “In his hands, the étude has become a piece of music in which every single technical tool, old and new, is developed in such a way as to support and produce the very specific sound world that the composer inhabits.” Debussy did things musically that must have seemed bizarre in terms of tradition. He often used whole tone and pentatonic scales, made unprepared modulations without any harmonic bridge and used parallel chords that were not harmonies at all but chordal melodies, or enriched unisons. The Études were his way of ensuring his discoveries would not be lost to posterity.

Zamora throws herself heart and soul into her performances, with the result that these pieces sound more like real music than I have heard previously on record. She captures the elements of joy, even jubilation, in many of these études that other artists miss, as well as a certain drama, pathos, and intimacy. The brilliant and the burlesque, the graceful and the gauche co-exist happily here, together with echoes of Debussy’s personal Three C’s: Chopin, Couperin, and Chabrier. A true delight!

the music tends to be slow, allowing ample time for great themes to grow out of the smallest 3- and 4-note kernels. At the same time, the various thematic sections often move at different tempi, creating problems for the unwary conductor for whom Sibelius is not a basic course in his repertoire.”

Symphony No. 6, Op. 104 is generally considered to be in D minor, though the tension created by Sibelius’ use of modality – in this case, the Dorian mode, which corresponds on the piano keyboard to the white-note scale beginning with D, keeps matters tantalizingly uncertain. The gentle eloquence, tinged with a sense of poignancy in the concluding bars of the finale, creates the dominant impression, to which Søndergård’s interpretation is always sympathetic. The composer calls for large orchestral forces, which are nonetheless handled with the greatest economy, allowing the rhythms in the music to move with surprising lightness.

Past commentators often described this symphony (and the Seventh as well) as “enigmatic.” Happily, latter-day conductors such as Søndergård are beginning to better define its subtly shaded moods. Sibelius himself cautioned us that, in the Sixth, “Rage and passion are utterly essential, but it is supported by undercurrents deep under the surface of the music.” The dominant impression I get from the present performance is one of very slowly unfolding organic changes, like the coming of the seasons in nature – or in the span of a human life.



Beethoven: Piano Sonatas 16-18, Opus 31 - Sequeira Costa, piano (Claudio Records)

In what is Volume 7 in a complete survey of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas by famed Portuguese pianist Sequeira Costa, we are given the three Opus 31 Sonatas, products of the years 1801-1802. They count as experimental works in that Beethoven was in search of departures from the classical style in the interest of greater personal freedom of expression. While there is no indication that he intended them to be performed together, they would make for a very satisfying evening’s program in terms of variety and individuality.

With his utterly relaxed and gracious style and the absolutely beautiful tone he coaxes from his instrument (qualities that I noted in my previous review of this artist in September, 2016) Costa is able to convey the humor and charm (yes, *charm!*) in these sonatas, beginning with Op. 31, No. 1 in G major. It opens with a melody of



“Fantasien,” fantasies by CPE Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms - Anna Tsybuleva (Champs Hill)

In *Fantasien*, Russian-born pianist Anna Tsybuleva presents a deeply insightful program of of fantasias by four major composers that help define this elusive but nonetheless compelling musical genre. The word has had different meanings from age to age, but essentially it implies a work in which the composer sets aside strict musical form and allows his thoughts to change from moment to moment. The impression is that of a spontaneous flow of ideas. As is usual in music, much foresight typically goes into the design.

First up is a real discovery: the Fantasia in F-sharp minor, H300 by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, second son of Johann Sebastian. Marked “very sorrowful and quite slow,” it has a melancholy beauty that is all the more disturbing because the music is never repeated in quite the same way, as if it were painful to recall any single

childish simplicity, but Beethoven will do remarkable things with it in the way of key changes and harmonic progressions. Of interest is the fact that all the themes in this movement derive from a tight little kernel. From the opening bars, Beethoven creates a “hurry up and wait” impression by suggesting the pianist’s hands are out of synch, and the second subject is deliberately cast in the “wrong” key. Costa takes the slow movement, marked *Adagio grazioso*, at tempo as marked, allowing us to gauge its spacious architecture. The finale, in rondo form, returns to the humor of the opening movement with four tempo changes in a row and the hands once more out of synch, before we launch into a spirited romp of a coda. Great fun!

Sonata No. 17, Opus 31, No. 2 in D minor (Beethoven’s sole use of this key as the signature of any major work) is one of his most famous and frequently performed. The relevance of its nickname “The Tempest” to Shakespeare’s comedy of the same name is debatable, but there is definitely a gathering storm of some sort in the opening movement with its arpeggiated chords taken softly and mysteriously at first, and then at speed, generating nervous energy in that movement and an irresistible sense of perpetual motion when we hear them reprised in the Allegretto finale. (Not much comedy here!) The Allegro section of this movement becomes increasingly turbulent with its flurry of arpeggiated and scalar figures. Many pianists take this movement far too fast, but Costa’s beautifully paced approach gets things just right, allowing him to take full advantage of the remarkable stepwise motion which must have really astonished Beethoven’s audiences.

The Adagio is not as well-behaved a citizen as it appears to be at first. The tender first theme and the soothing accompaniment to the second theme provide some solace, although a muffled drumbeat in the latter and a filigree of arpeggiated 32nd notes in the recapitulation do sound a disquieting note. The finale is marked by ceaseless motion, obsessive repetition, deep anxiety, and a propulsive rhythm with a half-step descent supposedly inspired by the sound of a galloping horse. As did the opening movement, it ends abruptly, suggesting resignation.

Opus 31, No. 3 in E-flat major has a nickname of doubtful authenticity, “The Hunt.” That tag relates only to the brilliant finale, *Presto con fuoco*, marked by continuous rhythmic figures in the accompaniment and horn calls sounding out amid the tumult. The sonata is in four movements, beginning with a questioning Allegro in search of a home key. The Scherzo, marked *Allegretto vivace*, has something of the feeling of a rondo with its implied sense of finality (at least as Costa takes it here), but the following Minuet, which has some of the gentle character of a missing slow movement, reveals that Beethoven was just having his little joke. Here, as elsewhere, Costa’s measured artistry encompasses the poetry and the feeling of spaciousness that Beethoven intended

idea. Its subtitle is *CPE Bach’s empfindungen*, the unfamiliar German word implying intimate thoughts, or a profound meditation.

In rendering this fantasia by CPE Bach in all its dark beauty and compelling strangeness, Tsybuleva has done us the service of helping make a vital piece of music more visible to the public. A search in Arkivmusic.com revealed only five previous recordings, none available on labels familiar to American listeners. As a seminal work with echoes throughout the following romantic period, by a figure in whom each new age can behold its own image, it deserves to be heard far more often.

Ludwig van Beethoven felt that way, at any rate. Beethoven’s spiritual kinship with the older composer is most apparent in his Phantasie, Op. 77. From the downward cascading scale that opens the work to its unprepared modulations and excursions into keys far removed from the signature, it is a quirky work, the like of which Beethoven never attempted again.

Tsybuleva gives Franz Schubert’s great “Wanderer” Fantasy in C major as strikingly beautiful a performance as I’ve ever heard, and that’s saying a lot. From the theme, sounded in galloping, thunderous measures in the opening movement and heard again in cascading figures in the finale, to the lyricism that forms the basis for a set of swiftly flowing, increasingly complex variations that unfold with the greatest naturalness in the Adagio, this work is drenched in immense beauty.

There is also great variety, as consolation and despair often seem to be at odds. The lyricism in the Adagio is so pervasive it finds expression in the succeeding scherzo section, marked *Presto*, while in the Adagio itself there’s an upsurge of troubling emotion in the latter half of a section that had begun with serene, quiet beauty. Tsybuleva is well attuned to the flow and the pacing of a work in four sections that gives the impression of a continuous performance, even to Schubert’s marking the transition to the final section *attacca*. In her performance, all four sections of the Fantasy dovetail seamlessly.

That leaves the Fantasien, Op. 116, by Johannes Brahms, seven pieces he variously described as *Capriccios* and *Intermezzos*. The former are typically quiet and introspective and the latter more extroverted, although the distinction doesn’t always hold. For instance, the rollicking measures of the Intermezzo in E minor are imbued with a carefree, playful mood that is more typical of a Capriccio. Broadly speaking, fire and reflection are both abundant in this opus. The pulsating rhythms and arching phrases in the opening Capriccio are in sharp contrast to the soothing cadences of the inwardly reflective Intermezzo in A minor. In the latter, as elsewhere, Tsybuleva’s dynamic shadings are just what the music requires. She always maintains Brahms’ fine balance between tension and relaxation. In her hands, sadness and reflection never descend to mere sentimentality.



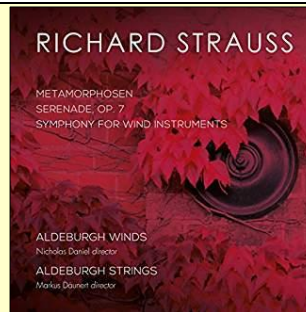
"Keyboard Transcriptions" – Michael Adcock (Centaur)

Upcoming American pianist Michael Adcock couldn't have put together a more attractive program with which to showcase his keyboard talents. Among the selections are Robert Schumann's *Widmung* (Dedication) in the transcription by Franz Liszt that plays up the rippling arpeggios and overlapping phrases at the climax of the piece, and Earl Wild's Seven Virtuoso Etudes on songs of George Gershwin that allow the pianist to express a range of moods from jazzy exuberance to dreamy introspection, and sometimes both in the same song, to say nothing of the polyrhythms, harmonic twists and syncopations that have made these pieces a challenge for the performer.

We also have on this menu: Carmen Variations, based on the Gypsy Dance in Act II of Bizet's opera, a work that plays up the pounding rhythms, chromatic passagework, double notes, interlocking octaves, and other features of Vladimir Horowitz' virtuoso transcription, and Leopold Godowsky's arrangement of Saint-Saens' richly contrapuntal and effortlessly flowing keyboard favorite The Swan. For the sake of brevity, I'm going to focus on Prokofiev's Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, a work that best epitomizes my impressions of this recording.

Prokofiev prepared these pieces as artistic propaganda to keep the music of his 3-act ballet continually in the public ear and help popularize a work so strikingly different that it was initially rejected by the Bolshoi Ballet. He also prepared three orchestral suites for the same purpose. The piano pieces represent the full range of themes, moods, and techniques that went into the ballet. He did not call them a "suite," and there is no indication he intended them to be performed all on the same evening. The individual pianist was free to perform as many of them in a recital as suited his/her style and the scope of the program.

In many ways, the Ten Pieces represent an ultimate challenge for an artist such as Michael Adcock, with his sonorous, full bodied sound and impressive technique in both hands. From the rich leaping and pounding chords in The Street Awakens, Arrival of the Guests, and The Montagues and the Capulets to the delicate, skittish music that deftly epitomizes Juliet the Young Girl and the soft effusions of sunlight that accompany the portrait of Friar Lawrence, there's enough meat here to satisfy



Strauss: Metamorphosen, Serenade, Symphony for Winds – Aldeburgh Winds & Strings (Linn)

I'd never been a great fan of Richard Strauss. The testosterone-laden, overly lush orchestrations of his tone poems often seemed to me to conceal a lack of musical substance. But these glorious performances of his sub-symphonic works by the Aldeburgh Winds under Nicholas Daniel and the Aldeburgh Strings under Markus Däunert helped to change my outlook on a composer who turns out to have had a lot to say in music during his very long life (1864-1949).

We begin with *Metamorphosen* (1945) which was Strauss' response to the destruction of so much of the Germany that he loved, including the allied bombings that left smoldering ruins of Dresden, Weimar and Munich, completely destroying the Munich National Theatre where Strauss had introduced ten of his operas, and in which his father had played first horn in the orchestra during a fifty year career. Lushly scored for 23 strings, it nonetheless possesses a chamber-music clarity that serves Strauss' expressions of anguish, sorrow and hopeful resolve very well. After sombre opening chords, the theme is introduced by the dark voices of the violas. In ominous counterpoint to it is none other than the Funeral march from Beethoven's *Eroica*, disguised so well that we get only glimpses of it until it is finally stated unequivocally ten measures from the end.

Deep lyricism, arising from despair, pervades this work, contending with the cautiously hopeful note that Strauss expressed in his diary upon the fall of the Third Reich: "At last the most terrible period of human history is at an end, the twelve-year reign of bestiality, ignorance, and anti-culture under the greatest criminals, during which Germany's 2,000 years of cultural evolution met its doom." Perhaps that idea of cultural evolution is behind Strauss' curious choice of the title *Metamorphosen*, as so much of its music seems to "morph" out of previous expressions of the main theme. The current performance emphasizes the rich and seamless quality of Strauss' writing, in which a surprisingly tight construction underlies its long, free-flowing lines.

Also on the program are *Serenade in E-flat major* (1881), a neat little 10-minute work by the teen-aged Strauss that shows us that, even so early, he had absorbed virtually all there was to know about the expressive beauty of instruments. The *Symphony for*

any pianist. The poignant music of considerable compass and harmonic depth that describes the dilemma of the lovers, doomed to separation, in Romeo and Juliet before Parting, right down to the eerie sounds of single notes at the very end that seem like the rattling of dry bones (a palpable harbinger of death), make this scene the emotional deep point of the set.

I've nothing but praise for Adcock's accounts of these Prokofiev pieces. His technique encompasses their great technical and emotional range without strain, and his readings are beautifully nuanced, qualities not often found in the same keyboard artist. The sound of the piano he employs, a Steingraeber Model E-272 Concert Grand, struck me as excessively bright, and even clangorous, in the sharply struck notes and chords in many of the pieces that express conflict or vigorous activity, and there is frequent interference of treble and bass, making me suspect these recordings were too closely-miked. Perhaps the instrument itself had been recently delivered and there had not been sufficient time to break it in for recital purposes? For whatever reason, the sound does take some getting accustomed-to in order for Adcock's artistry to make its full impression.

Winds, in four movements (1944-1945) carried Strauss' dedication "To the Spirit of the Divine Mozart." Totally belying the trying times through which he was living, he modelled it after Mozart's grand Serenade for 13 Winds, K361, adding a third clarinet, basset horn and bass clarinet to the scoring. The middle movements, an Andantino and a Minuet, are particularly charming, leaving us totally unprepared for the darkly tragic note at the very opening of the finale, marked *Einleitung* (beginning).

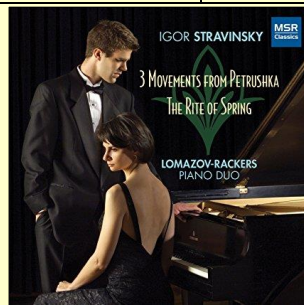
Produced and recorded at The Maltings, Snape, Suffolk by Philip Hobbs, with post-production by Julia Thomas, the superior sound of these recordings enhances our pleasure in hearing the performances.



Brahms: Cello Sonatas – Brian Thornton, cello; Spencer Myer, piano (Steinway & Sons)

Cellist Brian Thornton and pianist Spencer Myer, in recordings made at Clonick Hall, Oberlin, give inspired performances of Brahms' two Sonatas for Cello and Piano, Opp. 38 and 99. More than that, Thornton's instrument, a 1720 Dominic Montagnana on loan from Lynn Harrell, is complimented perfectly by Myer's Steinway D, producing as beautiful a sound as I've ever heard in these two major works of the literature. From the very opening of Opus 38 in E minor, where the cello melody meanders slowly but with deceptive purpose, we know we are in for enchanted music making.

And we are not disappointed. This brooding melody from a land of dreams, played in the cello's lowest



Stravinsky: Three Movements from Petrushka, The Rite of Spring (MSR) Lomazov-Rackers Piano Duo (MSR)

Performed with demon precision and complete dedication by the piano duo of Marina Lomazov and Joseph Rackers, these arrangements by Igor Stravinsky tell us a lot about the composer's intentions and the really striking qualities that have made the ballets *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* of enduring importance in the modern repertoire. The differences between the scores, perhaps even more than the resemblances, are of vital significance.

In neither case was the duo piano version of the ballet an afterthought by Stravinsky. He knew he was writing something revolutionary in the world of ballet, and he wanted the executants to get it right. In the instance of both ballets (and *The Firebird*, as well) he prepared the



Chopin: Etudes – Amir Katz, piano (Orfeo)

Israeli pianist Amir Katz shows a solid grasp of the issues involved in Frédéric Chopin's two sets of Etudes, Opp. 10 and 25. That is important, as the Etudes are compelling works on three fronts. First, they are superb resolutions of technical difficulties from the composer's point of view. Second, they require what the Romantic era termed a "transcendent" technique of the pianist, requiring the greatest flexibility of arm and hand extensions and the strengthening of what had traditionally been regarded as weak fingers, plus a totally unprecedented independence of both hands that was absolutely necessary to meet the expressive demands of the new music that Chopin was pioneering. Finally, the Etudes need to come across as *real* music, and not merely a keyboard practicum. There's also

<p>register, is followed later by a sensational outburst from both instruments and a recap of previous themes. This work wears its supple architecture inobtrusively so as not to distract from Brahms' astonishing inventiveness. Its middle movement, for example, is a melancholy waltz, enclosed by a minuet, in which Brahms' use of the Phrygian mode imparts an archaic tone.</p> <p>The finale is a fully realized fugue, based on Contrapunctus XIII from J.S. Bach's Art of the Fugue, further evidence that Brahms understood the legacy of the past better than any of his other contemporaries. The fugue theme alternates with a graceful cantabile melody played by the cello and agitated figurations in the piano. Solid conviction in the performances of both artists brings out the rugged spontaneity of this movement.</p> <p>Brahms' Sonata in F major, Op. 99, written more than 20 years later, could not have been more different than the first in its powerful emotion. Like the Piano Quartet, Op. 60 and the Piano Concerto, Op. 83, it begins with a huge, dramatic sonata form movement, requiring enormous energy from the cellist and very dramatic tremolos from the pianist. It continues with a breathtakingly lyrical slow movement, marked <i>Adagio affetuoso</i>, and a heaven-storming scherzo marked <i>Allegro passionato</i> (and how!)</p> <p>The finale is a relaxed, laid-back rondo, with only a few dissonant clashes and syncopations to let us know this is still Brahms speaking. As he did in the slow movement, Brahms plays off the home key of F with a more ethereal F-sharp in order to increase the beauty and the harmonic tension. At the final return of the theme, he introduces a pizzicato "slide" in the cellist's left hand, changing the pitch on a single pluck. Thornton and Myer have to be ever vigilant for Brahms' subtle changes within the line. Exceptional recorded sound (produced and edited by Thomas C. Moore, with engineering and mastering by Michael Bishop) serves both these performances well.</p>	<p>duo piano versions himself as a guide for use in rehearsals by the actual choreographers, dancers, and conductors.</p> <p>Stravinsky indicated that these duo-piano works might be performed on one piano, four hands or by two pianos. Lomazov and Rackers voice a clear preference for four-hands / one piano, having performed these works many times in both versions. As they explain it, "The physicality and sharing of space on one piano helps bring out the dance qualities and athleticism of this music. In addition, the transparency that can be achieved in the duo piano version is most effective, in our opinion, on one piano." There is no loss in the rhythmic and percussive effects that are so striking a feature in both scores, and the artists do not have to worry about keeping the sightlines clear as they would in two-piano music, where it is imperative to maintain eye contact with a partner.</p> <p>As the four-hands version makes abundantly clear, the differences between the two ballets could not be greater. On the surface, Petrushka is the easier of the two to enjoy, with its absorbing story of love, jealousy, and sudden death involving a trio of puppets – the hapless Petrushka, the fickle Ballerina, and the sensual Moor – who come to life with the colorful, lively setting of a Shrovetide Fair (a sort of Russian Mardi Gras) as the backdrop. As aid to the home listener, we are provided a synopsis of events, with track timings from each of the ballet's three tableaux.</p> <p>As opposed to the duo-piano version of Petrushka, which makes us long to hear the rich palette of colors in the fully scored ballet, that of Rite of Spring, the more coolly austere, percussive and objective of the two works, leaves us with the impression that nothing of real importance has been left out in this sunless world of life in prehistoric Russia. While Stravinsky borrowed actual Russian folk melodies for use in both ballets, they are much easier to detect as such in Petrushka than they are in Rite of Spring, where they are given such abstract, percussive treatment.</p>	<p>an implied harmonic theory at work here. Though they have often been presented as individual encores, Chopin intended the Etudes to be performed in their entirety in the order in which they were printed, a point that is important to keep in mind.</p> <p>Katz meets the requirements of the Etudes on all scores, infusing these pieces with a vocally inspired rubato and an exceptionally smooth legato, even in the most impassioned moments. Expression is vital, as these etudes have earned an unusual number of descriptive names from posterity: "Black Key," "Revolutionary," "Harp," "Butterfly," "Winter Wind," and "Ocean," to name only the most popular.</p> <p>We sense a new spirit at work in the world of music right from the opening Etude of Opus 10 with its uninterrupted flow of arpeggios opposed to an implacable metric regularity from which a simple melody line originates, all this phrased with a perfect legato. Opus 10, No. 3 in E major, the famous "Tristesse," requires, and here receives, the musical sensitivity needed to express its sadness without lapsing into sentimentality. Op. 10, No. 10 in A-flat major contrasts quirky, skittish rhythms in the outer sections with a meltingly beautiful melody in its center.</p> <p>The beautiful left hand legato the pianist cultivates in Op. 25, No. 7, the "Cello" Etude, exemplifies the Bellini-style of bel canto that Chopin wanted. Op 25, No. 11 in A minor, lives up to its nickname of "Winter Wind" with the maelstrom of its chromatic passagework for the right hand reinforced by the vehemence of the rhythmic motif in the left hand, conjuring up the image in the popular imagination of an icy wind howling over forgotten graves.</p> <p>There's a lot going on in the 24 etudes, of which I've been able to suggest a mere random sampling. Amir Katz does not lose an ounce of intensity or sheer expressive beauty that is at work here, and his tone is never less than exceptional.</p>
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