

**LISZT *Un Sospiro. La Campanella. Rhapsodie Espagnole. Sonata in b* •
Sophia Agranovich (pn) ARMONIOSO (60:02)**

It might seem unnecessary, perhaps even absurd, to have this new release of music that has been performed by a seemingly endless stream of the great virtuosos of piano history. Remarkably, Sophia Agranovich manages to present these extremely familiar works with a distinct profile. In general, her style is clearly textured, measured in tempo, and rhythmically playful without being mannered. Her touch is rather dry, which accounts for the cleanliness of her sound. Agranovich, a Ukrainian native who completed her formal education at Juilliard, certainly does not try to blow away her listeners with scintillating technique, and indeed, her lurching chords in the opening pages of the Sonata gave me pause. But she travels across Liszt's vast world with poise and determination, and throws out a sure sense of grandeur and theater with nary a trace of pomposity and bombast, a refreshing way with this booby-trapped score. In all honesty, Agranovich will not replace my favorite performers in any of this music, which includes Egon Petri, Grigori Ginzberg, and Marc-Andre Hamelin, just to name a few. And I have long admired the wonderful combination of lush poetry and elegance that Claudio Arrau brought to the Sonata. But her playing is honestly emotive and sufficiently agile, and it held up well in repeated hearings. A nervy release, in some ways, but ultimately a successful one. **Peter Burwasser**