

MENDELSSOHN Fantasia in f-sharp, op. 28, "Sonate écossaise". *Albumblatt* in a, op. 117. *Caprice* in a, op. 33/1. *Variations sérieuses*, op. 54. *Three Etudes*, op. 104b. *Etude* in f, WoO1. *Rondo Capriccioso* in E/e, op. 14 • Sophia Agranovich (pn) • CENTAUR 4038 (54:58)

Album Leaf (Centaur) is a collection of solo piano works by Felix Mendelssohn, performed by Sophia Agranovich. In the Mar/Apr 2021 *Fanfare* (44:4), I had the pleasure of reviewing another Agranovich Centaur recording, *Ludwig van Beethoven: In Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of his Birth* (3828). That disc includes the Beethoven Fantasia, op. 77, along with the "Pathétique," "Moonlight," and "Tempest" Sonatas. Agranovich's Beethoven recital offers much to recommend. Agranovich maintains an elegant and refined approach. And I was particularly taken by the pianist's renditions of Beethoven's more reflective and lyrical episodes, and in particular the slow-tempo movements of the various Sonatas. I wrote: "Here, the pianist employs a marvelous and subtle application of varieties of articulation, dynamics, colors, and flexibility of phrasing. As familiar as I am with the second movement *Adagio cantabile* of the "Pathétique," and *Adagio sostenuto* of the "Moonlight," Agranovich's performances made me hear them in a different and affecting way. In both cases, I was reminded of hearing vocal music of a similar character performed by superlative artists. And so, in the second movement of the "Pathétique," I felt as if I were hearing a beautiful Schubert Lied sung by the likes of Hans Hotter. And in the opening of the "Moonlight," the image of Maria Callas sculpting a poignant Bellini *cantabile* line invaded my consciousness." In such moments, Agranovich emerges as a true poet of the keyboard.

Those same positive qualities attend Sophia Agranovich's new recital. I think that Agranovich's patrician approach is even better suited to Mendelssohn, who, after all, was a musical descendant of Mozart in more ways than one. Once again, Agranovich's grasp of architecture and proportion, elegance and beauty of phrasing, and clear articulation provide considerable pleasure. And once again, I find myself especially gravitating toward the moments that allow Agranovich's poetic impulses to shine their brightest. Lovely recorded sound and Agranovich's fine liner notes enhance this project. A most enjoyable recital. Recommended.

Ken Meltzer