

MENDELSSOHN Fantasia in fT, op. 28, "Sonate écossaise". **Albumblatt in a**, op. 117, "Lied ohne Worte". **Caprice in a**, op. 33:1. **Variations sérieuses**, op. 54. **3 Etudes**, op.104b. **Etude in f**, WoO 1. **4 Rondo Capriccioso**, op.14 • Sophia Agranovich (pn) • CENTAUR 4038 (54:58)

Mendelssohn (1809-47) is one of the great composers who was a bonafide young prodigy, achieved notable success as both a pianist and composer and died in his thirties. He wrote a large amount of piano music - Ana-Marija Markovina takes 12 CDs for the complete works (Hänssler 18043). Here we get an excellent hour's worth of Mendelssohn that makes for a wide-ranging selection of piano pieces. Included on this program titled *Album Leaf* are all of the composer's Etudes, the brilliant and well-known *Rondo Capriccioso*, and arguably his greatest piano work, the *Variations sérieuses*. Besides a couple of other short pieces, the surprise here was the *Fantasia in fT*, written 1828-34. Originally titled *Sonate ecossaise* (Scottish Sonata), Mendelssohn changed the title for its publication. It is a more dramatic work than I normally expect from the composer and measures up to the grandeur of his Scottish Symphony.

There is a lot of brilliant writing in this program, no doubt quite taxing on the pianist. Agranovich has recorded more than 10 CDs in the past dozen years and is fully up to every demand here. She can spin a legato, sensitive melody and sort out contrapuntal voices. Her facile technique is perfect for the music here. The well-written and detailed booklet essay is also provided by the pianist. The recorded piano sound from Centaur is as good as I have heard on this label. **James Harrington**

Five stars: A wonderful Mendelssohn recital with a wide range of pieces, all in strong and exciting performances.