

Sophia Agranovich

Album Leaf: Piano Works by Felix Mendelssohn

sophiagranovich.com



Pianist **Sophia Agranovich**, in a very aggressive artistic attack, opens her newest work **Album Leaf**, with Mendelssohn's Fantasia in F sharp minor '**Sonate écossaise**', Op 28. Mendelssohn was one of the many German composers that had a Caledophile fetish. He loved all things Scottish. Agranovich's musical interpretations of this three movement Fantasia is spot on with a particular acknowledgment to the third movement, Presto in which her skills are put to the test with remarkable results. However, with twenty-nine themes and variations on the album, I have elected to write on some of the highlights.

As in most popular and contemporary works, we eventually have the title tune, in this case, **Albumblatt** or Album leaf in E minor, Op.117. Mendelssohn's *Lied ohne Worte* or song without words, is from a larger work, all written in the Romantic tradition. Agranovich's accomplished and stylistic approach adds a great deal of color and panache to the piece. Mendelssohn insisted that no lyrics be associated with the music, stating that the music should be self-representing. Agranovich lends her powerful, yet relentless dynamic to the work making it one of my favorite pieces on the album.

Variations Sérieuses, Op. 54 is a nineteen part composition that was chiefly a fund raising effort by Mendelssohn to erect a statue of Beethoven in 1842. Agranovich displays not only a certain demanding virtuosity throughout the body of compositions, but also an ambitious and determined style. She presents Mendelssohn's **Three Etudes, OP. 104b** with a decidedly unrestrained flair. In the short first movement the artist presents No. 1 in B-flat minor in a flowing, effervescent rendering with passionate, if not romantic embellishments and as a sincere, yet poetical piece. In contrast No. 2 in F Major is presented in a complex, exhilarating and challenging allegro of incredible virtuosity. One can barely catch one's breath during and after hearing and witnessing such expressive phrasing. No. 3 in A minor is just as exciting by virtue of its challenging, spectacular execution. **Etude in F Minor Wo01** is a work drenched in the language of arpeggios and a forceful, illusory three handed technique, yet Agranovich layers the piece with enough energy to account for the unique method. The music, even for an etude is quite serious for being in the romantic style. Nevertheless, the artist delivers a more than adequate interpretation with adroit self-confidence.

The final piece **Rondo Capriccioso in E Major/E Minor, Op. 14** is a somewhat bewildering work with the andante sweetly addressed while the rondo is bright and expressive. Ms. Agranovich's version is sharper than a knife with virtuosic execution. Under her charge, the piece is elaborate with detail and bold in execution. She implements Mendelssohn's routine of

his verbosity of notes, even when a simple stanza might tell the whole story, translating it with a rich complexity that earns more than a mere “Brava”.

Ukrainian-American pianist Sophia Agranovich is a Steinway Artist and Juilliard graduate that is highly recognized as a mesmerizing performer with an eager, worldwide audience and a multitude of awards including the International LIT Award, The American prize, the Steinway Top Teacher Award, and Best Classical album by One World Music Award. This work is rated as excellent.

- R J Lannan, ArtisanMusicReviews.com