

MENDELSSOHN: *Piano Pieces*

Sophia Agranovich Centaur 4038-55 minutes

Yet another disc of Felix's piano music makes its appearance this month. Not bad for a major composer whose solo keyboard music was largely ignored a few decades ago. Sophia Agranovich hails from the Ukraine, a country you may of heard about recently. After immigrating to the United States with her family, at age 15 she entered the Juilliard School where she studied with Sacha Gorodnitzki and Nadia Reisenberg. She continued her academic pursuits at Columbia University before returning to her first love along with marriage and raising a family.

Here we have the ever popular *Variations Serieuses* but only one of the *Songs Without Words* plus a grab bag of other assorted but worthy pieces.

The Fantasia in F-sharp minor (known as *Sonata Ecossaie*) is a short 3-movement work written in 1933. It is an interesting work of varied moods, conceived before his visit to Scotland, and shows some of the traits we would call Mendelssohnian. It is played with a scintillating sense of humor, especially in the closing presto. The *Variations Serieuses* if hardly an unknown piece also does very well in her sympathetic hands.

Several etudes put her technical skills to the test, and they are definitely not found wanting. Nor is the ever popular Rondo Capriccioso along with the similarly structured Caprice Op. 33:1. As to that one 'Song Without Words', it is Albumblatt, Op. 117. A fine-sounding Steinway D and excellent notes by the pianist make this highly recommendable, if not revelatory.

BECKER