

Album Leaf – Piano Works by Felix Mendelssohn
Sophia Agranovich
Centaur Records CRC 4038
(sophiagranovich.com)

Thanks to Youtube I feel as if I've seen and heard this magnificent pianist live whose new recordings I am pleased to introduce. In fact I am simply mesmerized by Sophia Agranovich's tremendous talent, virtuosity, emotional involvement and thorough musicianship. *Fanfare* magazine calls her a "tigrress of the keyboard" and I could listen to her for hours. Her credentials include concert pianist, recording artist, teacher, computer scientist and vice president of Merrill Lynch, no less. This is her 12th recording to date.

Agranovich is no stranger to these pages – we reviewed her very impressive Liszt recital in November 2022 – and now she turns to Mendelssohn and surely doesn't disappoint. Her virtuosity immediately becomes evident in the extremely difficult last movement *Presto* of the *Fantasia in F-sharp Minor*, a *perpetuum mobile* that ends the first piece. Her lightness of touch makes the piano sing at the *Albumblatt in E minor*, a typical Mendelssohn *Lied ohne Worte* that the set is named after.

Mendelssohn was probably one of the most gifted composers who ever lived. As a child prodigy he composed a symphony for full orchestra at the age of 12! As the program continues the composer's immense talent shines through beautiful pieces like the *Caprices*, a set of *Variations Serieuses* and the murderously difficult *Etudes* that rival Chopin. They are executed in a lovely singing tone, with virtuosity and elegance.

My beloved, since childhood, *Rondo Capriccioso*, a favorite concert piece where I see elves dancing every time I hear it, ends the program and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

-Janos Gardonyi, The Whole Note