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Sara Marianovich - Gramophone Review

Rodrigo Complete Piano Works

Sara Marianovich pf

Sony Classical SKZ 89828

Not the Concierto de Aranjuez – and very rewarding too.

Sony announced this set as the first complete recording of all Rodrigo's solo piano music and I initially thought they were wrong, for Bridge has already published a 'complete' recording most sympathetically played by Gregory Allen (listed above). But this new Sony set includes an extra piece, the chimerical Cancion y Danza. What it does not include is the music for piano duet, in which, for the Bridge compilation, Gregory Allen is joined by Anton Nel, with Admirable results.

However, I would not want to make too much of this. Rodrigo greatly valued his piano music and was disappointed that it was so seldom performed. His daughter tells us that Sarah Marianovich played this music for him and received his imprimatur. Understandably so, as she is very sensitive to its stylistic changes. In her hands, the innocent early Suite of 1923 has just the right simplicity, and she also catches the winning charm of the Pastoral (1936), a siciliana and two delicate Berceuses, while the Preludio al gallo mañero glitters in the manner of Debussy.

Much of Rodrigo's early music is eclectic in style, and the Cinco Piezas del Siglo XVI are arrangements for piano of pieces by Milán, Cabezón and Mudarra. But what character they have! Marianovich lays out her programme in order of composition, and as she proceeds the Spanish colouring and rhythmic feeling are more and more influential, even in the miniatures of the delightful Album for Cecilia (1948), the composer's daughter, which are played here with great affection.

The ambitious Sonatas de Castilla con toccata a modo de pregón (1950/51) brilliantly and hauntingly exploit the same basic material throughout, with each episode dedicated to Spanish musician. Not surprisingly, the Tres evocaciones (remembering Turina) are the most atmospheric pieces of all, with the third, Mañana en Triana idealising Spanish dance rhythms with plenty of sparkling bravura. Rodrigo's final piano work (from 1987) the romantic Preludio de Añoranza ('Nostalgia'), is associated with Arthur Rubinstein, and makes a magical postlude.

Rodrigo could hardly have a more persuasive advocate, and one must hope that other pianists will decide to explore such rewarding repertoire. Meanwhile, this very naturally recorded Sony set can be highly recommended.

Ivan March
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