



F. Schubert: Piano Sonata D 850 & Three
Piano Pieces D 946

aud 92.546

EAN: 4022143925466



Audiophile Audition (Steven Ritter - 2009.01.23)

Outstanding in every way, this disc finally gives Gilels a run for his money.

This may be the first recording of Op. 53 that I have heard that comes anywhere close to my standard, that of Emil Gilels on a Living Stereo CD coupled with the Liszt Sonata - also a wonderful reading. Though this sonata is only the second of the final eight, it has a wonderful control and tightly-woven logic that sets it apart from some of the later, more melancholy and even "mystical" sonatas. Schubert's piano sonatas are like clarion calls from a distant world, beckoning us to strive to attain a perfection that life itself refuses to grant; yet at the same time his own real-life situation caused him to discover beauties that often eluded him in the practical realities of daily existence. When we hear Schubert we are often hearing the Platonic prototype, unable to grasp the inaccessible and fleeting tangible sounds in so cloudy a place as the real world. He tells us about life as it should be, not as it is.

And that makes any attempt at his piano music a foray into the difficult and often formidably exasperating far reaches of art. For a supreme technician the music is not hard to play, but it leaves no room for errors of any sort, whether technically exposed or temperamentally inappropriate. Mr. Koudriakov offers us a journey into this sonata with a soft touch, excellent pedaling, and a consistently connected sense of melodic logic, so important in this work. And above all, he is intimately involved in the emotional content of the piece, expressed in Schubert's technically brilliant lines as perhaps in no other of his sonatas. A champion all around, this, and presented in wonderfully apt Audite hi-res sound.

The coupling is enterprising and compelling, if not particularly memorable. The Three Pieces (totaling around 27 minutes) preceded the last three famous sonatas in C-minor, A-major, and B-flat major. They are not that popular, probably because they are overshadowed by the last sonatas, and also because individually they feel complete in and of themselves, but at the same time curiously lacking completion. It is almost incomprehensible to hear them apart from one another, yet even a hearing in whole does not always satisfy, due to any sort of anticipated linkage between them. Yet they are late, they are Schubert, and that should be enough. It was a stroke of genius to include them in this setting, allowing their own peculiarities to shine forth apart from their late sonata cousins, and Koudriakov gives them their due.

This is, simply, not to be missed. Don't!