



CHRISTOPH GRAUPNER
by Geneviève Soly

ANALEKTA



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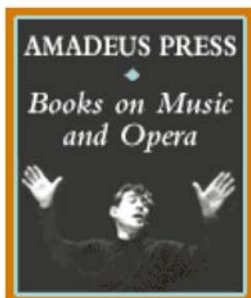
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FRANZ SCHUBERT

Impromptu D. 935; Piano Sonata No. 21 in B-flat D. 960

Inon Barnatan (piano)

Bridge - 9197(CD)
Reference Recording - Sonata: Fleisher (Vanguard),
Andsnes (EMI); Impromptu: Lupu (Decca)

Artistic Quality **9/9** *Sound Quality*

Inon Barnatan's name first caught my attention via positive accounts of his performance of Schubert's posthumous B-flat sonata during Leon Fleisher's 2004 Carnegie Hall master classes devoted to the composer's last piano sonatas. I'm happy to hitch a ride on the critical bandwagon. The 27-year-old Israeli pianist possesses an innate ability to navigate Schubert's sometimes-discursive paragraphs and also knows how to acknowledge the composer's harmonic tangents and obsessive rhythmic gestures (the left-hand syncopations in the Scherzo and Finale, for example) without a trace of mannerism or self-consciousness.

In addition, the plangent, fluttery timbre of the restored 1904 Steinway used for this recording enhances Barnatan's beautiful and rounded sonority, although I suspect that his occasionally uneven fingering (the Scherzo's accompanying figures, the B-flat Impromptu's winged runs) results from the vagaries of the instrument's action. In all, Barnatan's Schubert B-flat more than holds its own in a catalog overstocked with first-rate versions, and totally outclasses Andrew Rangell's horrifically mannered traversal, also on Bridge. Like Brendel and Goode, Barnatan eschews the long first-movement exposition repeat.

Similarly, the Impromptu benefit from Barnatan's cultivated pianism, intelligent musicianship, and tempos that are just right. My only quibble concerns the pianist's holding back when the music demands surging forward, such as in No. 1's main theme, or in No. 4's cross-rhythmic effects and right-hand scales (no match for Rudolf Serkin's fiery 1957 live performance on Ermitage). Could this be microphone shyness? In any event, it's hard to complain about Barnatan's overall achievement here,

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and hopefully more of his work will be on the way soon.

--Jed Distler

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