

the Levant will clinch it for most of us who still remember.

BECKER

### *Lights & Shadows*

**CHOPIN:** *Ballade 4; Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise*; **SCRIABIN:** *Poeme, op 32:1*; **RAVEL:** *Une Barque sur l'ocean; Alborada del Gracioso*; **SZYMANOWSKI:** *Prelude op 1:7*

Elzbieta Bilicka, p

Centaur 3876—48 minutes

This is a wonderful debut CD from a promising young Polish pianist. Bilicka has many impressive accomplishments in the past 5 years since she graduated from the Polish Akademia Muzyczna. She is currently a Piano Instructor at Utah State University and a doctoral candidate. I am sure the pandemic has brought her active concert and teaching life down to a crawl and can only hope that she, like so many talented musicians, can get to normalcy over the next year.

Her program is impressionist themed and the variety of colors Bilicka can draw from the piano is truly astounding. Scriabin has been called a Russian Impressionist (by one of my music history professors) and this 1905 *Poeme* still sounds a little like Chopin, but is right at home with the type of music we refer to as impressionist. Ravel's *Miroirs* are a cornerstone of Impressionism, and the two movements heard here are ones that the composer later orchestrated. Bilicka shows no fear with the waves of notes in 'Une Barque sur l'ocean' or the repeated notes and glissandos in thirds and fourths in 'Alborada del Gracioso'. Her Szymanowski Prelude is from a very early set of works (Op.1) that the composer referred to as "sins of my youth". It forms a perfect bridge from the Impressionism of the previous pieces to the two big Chopin works that end the program.

Bilicka stands in formidable company here and acquits herself admirably. She can coax the inner voices out in a perfectly balanced musical texture. I might prefer a little more forward momentum. She does the most varied and musical things with the repeated notes in the *Ballade*. She also seems to delight in Chopin's occasional dissonances, especially the chords in the *Grande Polonaise*. This is a program I would go out of my way to see in concert.

Recorded sound is quite good, as are the pianist's exceptionally fine English program notes. My only wish here is for more. I will be

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on the watch for future recordings by this talented young artist.

HARRINGTON

### *Reimagine*

**BEETHOVEN:** *Bagatelles, op 126*; **GOLUB:** *Bagatelle*; **HENDELMAN:** *Bagatelle*; **DANIELPOUR:** *Bagatelle—Childhood Nightmare*; **KROUSE:** *Etude 2A—Ad Fugam*; **CARLSON:** *Sweet Nothings*; **LEFKOWITZ:** *Bagatelle*; **PRESTINI:** *Variations on a Spell*; **ANDRES:** *Old Ground*; **CHILDS:** *Pursuit*

Inna Faliks, p—Navona 6352—77 minutes

The title may be "Reimagine" but the concept is yet another amazing product of Inna Faliks's extraordinary imagination. Besides the quality of the music and her exceptional pianism, we have to consider other great aspects of this recording. The program alternates a newly composed Bagatelle response with each of Beethoven's original six Bagatelles, Op.126. The second part of the program is a series of responses to Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit*, which has been a part of her repertoire for quite some time now (MSR 1333, Jan/Feb 2010). We should also honor Faliks for commissioning works from nine composers during the pandemic. All were written specifically for her, and these are world premiere recordings. Her booklet essay is outstanding, and each of the composers contributes a paragraph.

The foundations for this project go back to her studies with Gilbert Kalish. She gives him credit for introducing her to the compositional response idea. Two excellent Faliks recordings also add to the foundation of "Reimagine": Beethoven (MSR 1446, Mar/Apr 2014) and Ravel (above). Her comments about alternating the Beethoven with newly composed responses are worth quoting here. "I hope that the emerging dialog between then and now points out the unique character of the original while forming a wholly new sonic adventure." She could not have succeeded better.

Her *Gaspard de la Nuit* recording from over 10 years ago is still memorable, and she would probably include it in a full recital program with the pieces on this disc. The new works are every bit as demanding as Ravel's notorious original. 'Ondine', the water spirit, gets treated to a pair of *Variations on a Spell* by Paola Prestini: 'Water Sprite' and 'Bell Tolls'. 'Le Gibet', the hanging corpse, inspired Timo Andres to use a forward-moving ostinato that ends with dark chords in his 'Old Ground'. 'Scarbo', the goblin up to nighttime mischief,