



Solomon plays Beethoven, Schumann, Bach, Chopin & Brahms

aud 23.422

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The American Record Guide

The acoustical Berlin recordings were made towards the very end of this great English pianist's performing life. They are reasonably clean sounding and most ears will accept the dullness with little complaint. Beethoven's Sonatas 3 and 14 are pleasant enough excursions. There is little here to dazzle the listener, save the tempestuous finale of the Moonlight Sonata. This style of playing appears to be vanishing in our present world. Along with fine musicianship and control of line and phrasing, Solomon demonstrates his spare use of the sustaining pedal. The closeness of the sound does make the music seem plodding sometimes, but I am assured by people who actually heard him that many of his recordings give a false impression. In any case, the Adagio of Sonata 3 is pure and golden. The Scherzo is as light-textured as the perspective allows, and the final Allegro assai impressive by surety of technique and beauty of the contrasting lyrical section. The opening of the Moonlight Sonata is wonderfully sustained and always clear. As simple as the music seems, it has been a stumbling block for many pianists. Schumann's Carnival is best heard at a reduced volume. Raise it slightly and the performance can seem too aggressive. While Solomon knows what to do with Schumann's quirky rubatos, he refuses to indulge in sentimentality or even allow things to blossom forth into full-blooded romanticism. Each section occupies a unique sound world, and his relentless forward motion seems to sweep all before it. It may not be the Carnival for everyone, but you will respect it in the morning. In Bach's Italian Concerto his playing should please all but the fussiest harpsichord enthusiasts. The sparse use of pedal and brilliant embellishments bring this towards the top of a select group of recordings. Chopin's Fantasy in F minor demands playing of great scope and sensitivity. Solomon's response to the opening march-like tune at first sounds measured, yet grows gloriously as the work is pressed ever forward. There is an instinctive response to each tempo change, and the varied climaxes reach their peaks just where they should, not too soon or too late. The Nocturne in B-flat minor is both tender and flowing, but his very fine Scherzo 2 is somewhat sabotaged by print-through in the all-important silences. In the Brahms grouping two of the more reserved Intermezzos—Op. 116:3 and Op. 118:6—contrast with an explosive Rhapsody, Op. 79:1. The notes are acceptable, and you can acclimate yourself to the relentlessly loud sound.