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A Kuhlau Comeback?

Review by: Jed Distler

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*Artistic Quality: 9**Sound Quality: 9*

When piano pedagogues want to assign classical period works that are what manageable for young students, they often choose sonatas by the Danish composer and pianist Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832). Yet the sonatas are more than mere teaching pieces. They are full of invention and charm, and smartly crafted.

Who'd suspect, for example, that the Op. 20 No. 3's opening finger exercises are about to lead into a witty Polka? Or that one might mistake the G major Op. 20 No. 2's central Adagio e sostenuto movement for early Beethoven? Interestingly, the more demanding Op. 4 Sonata in E-flat follows a five-movement game plan similar to the Divertissement in the same key, and features a Vivacissimo finale that abounds with energy and restless modulations.

Marie-Luise Bodendorff's superb pianism and musicianship makes the best case on disc for a Kuhlau comeback. She gives dramatic shape to the E-flat sonata's dark and deliberate opening movement, while her crisp articulation causes the subsequent Allegro con brio's detaché phrases to dance off the page. As a child, I remember my fellow piano students dutifully plodding through the C major Op. 20 No. 1's concluding Rondo (not that I played it any better!); it's a treat not only to hear the same music in the hands of a pro, but to also hear it sound so elegant, effortless, and supple. If nothing else, you'll turn to this delightful disc when you want to stump contestants in a round of "Guess the Composer".

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Recording Details:

Album Title: Works for Solo Piano, Vol. 1

Reference Recording: None for this collection

KUHLAU, FRIEDRICH:

Divertissement in E-flat major; Three Piano Sonatas
Op. 20; Piano Sonata in E-flat major Op. 4

Marie-Luise Bodendorff (piano)

Dacapo - 8226204

CD

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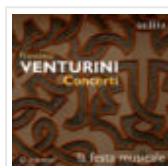
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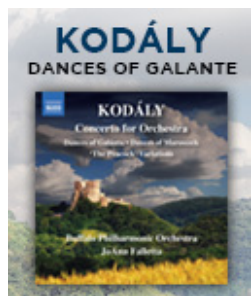
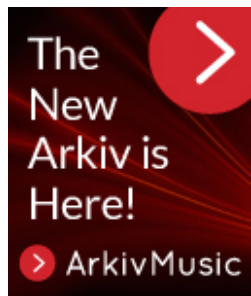
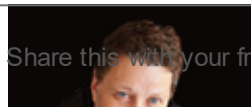


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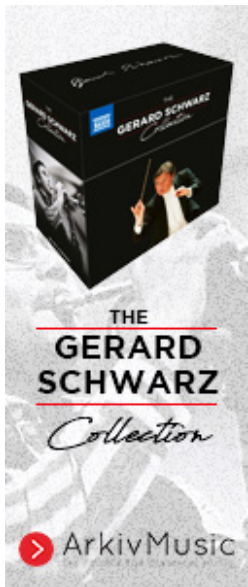
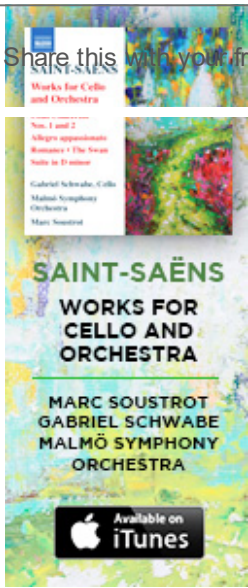
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