Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji - Fantasia Ispanica (Powell) [2005]

1. Fantasie ispanica, for piano: I. Preludio. Introduzione. Con fantasia: libero e rapsodisticamente 2. Fantasie ispanica, for piano: II. Molto moderato 3. Fantasie ispanica, for piano: III 4. Fantasie ispanica, for piano: IV. Quasi habanera 5. Fantasie ispanica, for piano: V. Coda. Finale Jonathan Powell – piano

It seems just one peculiarity among many in his biography that Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji developed an abiding fascination with Mediterranean culture -- partly because his mother claimed Spanish and Sicilian ancestry, but also because his belief in this heritage gave him an escape from the tedium of growing up in London. Early on, Sorabji dabbled with exotic themes in his Quasi habanera (1917), and this interest continued throughout his life, appearing even in the late piano work Villa Tasca (1979-1980). The Fantasie ispanica (1933) is an extravagant piece in five movements that plays on many of the Iberian mannerisms Sorabji absorbed, first from Debussy and Ravel, then later from Albéniz and Granados. Yet it is also freely layered and almost as fantastic as anything else in Sorabji's virtuosic oeuvre; it requires a pianist of extraordinary skill to play this elaborate maze with a proper balance of accuracy and atmosphere. Jonathan Powell wends his way through Sorabji's crisscrossing, chromatic lines and multi-stave textures with assured technique and delicate expression, and compellingly evokes Spanish dance styles, even though Sorabji's many idiosyncrasies make them seem remembered in a strange, Scriabin-esque dream of blurred clusters and hazy dissonances. Altarus' sound quality is fine, though a little lacking in depth. --- Blair Sanderson, Rovi

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