Scriabin - The Early Scriabin (Coombs) [2007]

1. Sonata in E flat minor I 2. Sonata in E flat minor II 3. Sonata in E flat minor III 4. Valse In F Minor Op.1 5. Valse In G Sharp Minor 6. Valse In D Flat Major 7. Variations On A Theme By Mlle Egorova 8. Nocturne In A Flat Major 9. Nocturne In F Sharp Minor Op.5 No.1 10. Nocturne In A Major Op.5 No.2 11. Sonate-fantasie 12. Fugue In E Minor 13. Canon In D Minor 14. Mazurka In B Minor 15. Mazurka In F Major 16. Etude In D Sharp Minor Op.8 No.12 17. Prelude In C Sharp Minor Op.9 No.1 18. Nocturne In D Flat Major Op.9 No.2 19. Allegro Apassionato Op.4 Stephen Coombs – piano

None of the pieces on this disc was written later than 1894, when Scriabin was 22; all reveal a prodigious young talent heavily indebted to Chopin, with just occasional glimpses of the idiosyncrasy and perfumed eroticism that were to characterise the later composer. Stephen Coombs is the faithful and sympathetic interpreter. --- -- Barry Millington, BBC Music Magazine

Lovers of Scriabin's exotic, perfumed piano music, can not be without this disc. It conveniently collects all of Scriabin's early piano works that don't form part of a larger genre group. The largest work is, in fact, a piano sonata, but one that Scriabin abandoned as his musical language was developing so rapidly. He reworked the first movement to form the Allegro appassionato Op 4, and much of the rest of the work was lost for many years. It re-surfaced in 1970, and here it is played in a completion by Stephen Coombs himself. There are also attractive juvenile miniatures, and more mature works such as the two pieces for the left hand Op 9, and two Nocturnes Op 5; and, fascinatingly, an early version of the well-known Étude in D sharp minor Op 8 No 12 (the virtuoso work made famous by Horowitz and others).

Stephen Coombs has already shown himself to be a stylish advocate of neglected Russian repertoire, and here he brings all his musicianship and idiomatic affinity to create an inspiring and illuminating disc. This is a must for those interested in the development of the uniquely individual composer. It goes some way to providing an answer to Stravinsky's exclamation: "Scriabin … where does he come from; and who are his forebears?". --- hyperion-records.co.uk

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