Scriabin - Les Trois Cahiers d'Etudes Pour Piano (Magaloff) [1994]

1. Etude In C Sharp Minor, Op. 2, No. 1 2. Etude In C Sharp Major, Op. 8, No. 1 3. Etude In F Sharp Minor, Op. 8, No. 2 4. Etude In B Minor, Op. 8, No. 3 5. Etude In B Major, Op. 8, No. 4 6. Etude In E Major, Op. 8, No. 5 7. Etude In A Major, Op. 8, No. 6 8. Etude In B Flat Minor, Op. 8, No. 7 9. Etude In A Flat Major, Op. 8, No. 8 10. Etude In G Sharp Minor, Op. 8, No. 9 11. Etude In D Flat Major, Op. 8, No. 10 12. Etude In B Flat Minor, Op. 8, No. 11 13. Etude In D Sharp Minor, Op. 8, No. 12 14. Etude In D Flat Major, Op. 42, No. 1 15. Etude In F Sharp Minor, Op. 42, No. 2 16. Etude In F Sharp Major, Op. 42, No. 3 17. Etude In F Sharp Major, Op. 42, No. 4 18. Etude In C Sharp Minor, Op. 42, No. 5 19. Etude In D Flat Major, Op. 42, No. 6 20. Etude In F Minor, Op. 42, No. 7 21. Etude In E Flat Major, Op. 42, No. 8 22. Etude In E Flat Major, Op. 49, No. 1 23. Etude, Op. 56, No. 4 24. Etude, Op. 65, No. 1 Nikita Magaloff – piano

As one might surmise from the low opus number, this is early Scriabin and thus somewhat stylistically derivative. Yet while it divulges unmistakable echoes of Chopin and Liszt, it also reveals a good measure of sophistication and growing mastery of keyboard writing, pointing the way toward the later individualism of the composer. The Etude No. 1 in C sharp minor, with its nervously caressing thirds, is decidedly Chopin-esque, but also exhibits that quirky flow so typical of Scriabin, even in some early pieces. The Second, in F sharp minor, brims with passion and mystery, mixing Chopin with a kind of Rachmaninovian agitation in its cross rhythms. The Etude No. 3 in B minor has the same kind of tempestuous character, but challenges the soloist with a speedy mixture of octaves and single notes. No. 4, in B major, is relatively tranquil in its brightness and sweet nostalgia. The ensuing Etude in E major is more challenging than it sounds, moving consistently in and out of various octave ranges, while turning more intense as the piece progresses. The Sixth, in A major, is graceful and charming in its mostly upper-register sonorities and challenging sixths. The Seventh, in B flat minor, is full of colorful energy and virtuosic hurdles for the soloist in its Presto outer sections. No. 8, in A flat major, is a lovely Lento whose gentle melancholy has a characteristically Scriabin-esque broken flow to its Romantic utterances. The Etude No. 9 in G sharp minor, at about five minutes, is the longest and most powerful piece in the set. Octaves abound in the furor, with Liszt coming to mind in the outer sections, both in the virtuosic writing and in the sinister but dazzling nature of the

music. There is a charming, mostly subdued middle section, offering imaginative contrast. The D flat major Tenth mixes staccato and legato writing in quirky, playful music. No. 11, in B flat minor, is sad in its elegance and subdued manner. The closing Etude in D sharp minor, lasting about four minutes, is another long effort and features a powerful sense of yearning, as if expressing some dire frustration or failure. This is probably the most famous etude in the set.

Of the 74 opus numbers in Scriabin's catalog, 13 date to 1903, probably his most productive year in keyboard composition. Not only was it a fertile period, but it also marked the appearance of his first truly mature piano works, following a two-year stretch during which the composer had mostly focused on orchestral music (Symphony No. 2 and No. 3). The Etudes, Op. 42, are among his most rewarding piano works -- works whose nascent modernity point toward the mystical and often weird compositional ideas of his final years. The music here is still post-Romantic, but sounds overripe, pushing out toward new horizons, harmonically, rhythmically, and thematically. The opening etude in D flat major has a Chopin-esque spirit but a Scriabin-esque sound. Triplets swirl and rhythms perplex as cascades of notes spin out a carefree web of light fabric and brilliant colors. The ensuing F sharp minor etude, at about a minute in duration, is one of the set's shortest entries. It is playful in its quirky melody and hushed in its brief middle section, the whole leaving a sense of capriciousness. No. 3, in F sharp major, is also brief, but its quivering, twittering radiance seems perfectly matched to the piece's nickname of "Mosquito." The Etude No. 4 in F sharp major features a lovely theme whose Romantic manner sounds a bit perfumed, as if to conceal inner decay. The piece is typical of Scriabin, reaching out beyond an expressive language not quite suited to the music. No. 5, in C sharp minor, has a sinister character to its roiling bass, but a sense of passion to its agitated main theme. The alternate theme is lovely and contrasts well in its more-tempered Romanticism. The Sixth, in D flat major, is tentative in its uncertain gait, passionate but restrained in its sudden Romantic blossomings, and intense with yearning as it confronts the soloist with challenging wide stretches and tricky rhythmic hurdles. The Etude No. 7 in F minor, another one-minute affair, is bright and quirky, full of sunshine, but sunshine on a misty, cool day. The closing E flat major etude features a playful nervousness in its outer sections with a start-and-stop manner in its hyperactive accompaniment. The odd, stately middle section features big chords of ambivalent emotional expression, which sound like a sobering response to Rachmaninov's sweet gloom. The whole set lasts about 16 or 17 minutes in performance.
---Robert Cummings, Rovi

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