Horowitz Plays Clementi Sonatas (1955)

Sonata In G Minor, Op. 34, No. 2 (C.1788) *1 First Movement: Largo; Allegro Con Fuoco 9:28 2 Second Movement: Poco Adagio 5:55 3 Third Movement: Allegro Molto 6:27*
Sonata In F Minor, Op. 14, No.3 (1784) 14:10
4 First Movement: Allegro Agitato 5 Second Movement: Largo E Sostenuto 6 Third Movement: Presto
Sonata In F-Sharp Minor, Op. 26, No.2 11:55
7 First Movement: Piuttòsto Allegro Con Espressione 8 Second Movement: Lento E Patetico 9 Third Movement: Presto
Vladimir Horowitz, piano

One of Horowitz's most interesting discs - these sonatas form a link between C.P.E. Bach, the Sturm und Drang of Haydn, and Beethoven's dramatic style.

"A mere mechanician, strong in runs of thirds, but without a pennyworth of feeling or taste". Mozart's extremely harsh judgement on the playing of Clementi, against whom the Emperor Leopold II pitted him in a famous keyboard duel, plus recollections of his purely educational music, has resulted in an almost total shunning of his 64 piano sonatas. But Beethoven, who possessed a large number of them, esteemed them very highly; and to anyone not already knowing them the three remarkable works on this disc will certainly come as a shock. AP was absolutely right in suspecting that Clementi was "one of the greatest of neglected masters".

The present three sonatas, dating from between 1784 and 1788, form as it were a link between C. P. E. Bach (whose wildness they share, as witness all the finales), the Sturm und Drang of Haydn, and Beethoven's dramatic style. The first movement in each case is striking—ominous in the F 'minor, movingly expressive in the F sharp minor, while the G minor has a highly dramatic short Largo leading to a fiery Allegro in the middle of which there is, after an abrupt

key-jolt, a recollection in tranquillity of the opening. I recommend also the lovely Lento of the F sharp minor.

Horowitz plays these with great tonal sensitivity and great rhythmic vitality; and though the sound is a trifle harsh in forte and a bit boxy in general, the 1955 recording stands up well. This was always one of Horowitz's most interesting discs, and it should not be missed by those who do not already have it. ---arkivmusic.com

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