Martha Argerich – The Legendary 1965 Chopin Recording

1. Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58: I. Allegro maestoso 8:50
2. Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58: II. Scherzo (Molto vivace) 2:41
3. Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58: III. Largo 8:40
4. Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58: IV. Finale (Presto, non tanto) 4:52
5. Mazurka No. 36 in A minor Op. 59 No. 1 3:49 *play*
6. Mazurka No. 37 in A flat Op. 59 No. 2 2:51
7. Mazurka No. 38 in F sharp minor Op. 59 No. 3 3:06
8. Nocturne No. 4 in F Op. 15 No. 1 3:39 *play*
9. Scherzo No. 3 in C sharp minor Op. 39 7:07
10. Polonaise No. 6 in A flat 'Heroic' Op. 53 6:35

How can it be that a recording by one of today's indisputably unequaled pianists performing some of her prime repertory--made fresh within months of her triumph in the 1965 Warsaw International Chopin Competition--could languish for decades in the vaults before its official release? Chalk it up to the exclusivity clauses of rival recording companies and legal constraints from which not even Wotan with the help of Loge could extricate himself. Thankfully this belated EMI release--recorded in a few sessions at the Abbey Road studios--is finally available. It's a significant complement to Argerich's other accounts of Chopin on disc. From the white-hot intensity of Argerich's way with the composer, you can easily extrapolate a sense of what had recently wowed the jury in Warsaw. The Argentinean pianist undertakes the Third Sonata as a vast, big-voiced, far-reaching statement that encompasses both molten power and moments of almost unbearably intimate lyricism (listen closely to her gestures of illumination in the Largo). With a characteristically unforced spontaneity, Argerich sounds the shattering chords that launch the finale (recorded in one take); her sense of flow in the Nocturne No. 4 is a perfect mesh for the illusion of improvising that is so central to Chopin. She commands the logic--both emotional and musical--of the composer's skittish turns in the Scherzo No. 3 and crafts three of the mazurkas into perfectly chiseled character pieces. The sheer force of Argerich's personality might seem overwhelming to those accustomed to a tamer Chopin--listen to how she dives into

the A-flat Polonaise--but it's always at work dusting off tired clichés and uncovering the music's expressive wealth. For those who know about Argerich's artistry, this disc is indispensable; anyone who has yet to make that enviable discovery will find it (together with the Argerich anthology in Philips' Great Pianists series) a great place to begin. --Thomas May

This CD truly deserves its legendary status. It was recorded way back in 1965 at the start of what has turned out to be one of the most exciting and frustrating careers in history; exciting because Argerich is arguably the greatest pianist alive, and frustrating because she refuses to give solo recitals, preferring the support of friends and colleagues in chamber or orchestral concerts. That makes her rare solo outings all the more precious. This disc exactly duplicates her debut recital for DG, which release and subsequent exclusive contract forestalled EMI until now. Rumor had it that the EMI was better, and on the whole it is, though both are pretty exceptional by any standards. The differences are relatively minor, but include an even more brilliant response to the Polonaise in A flat, tighter rhythm in the Scherzo No. 3, and a few incidental touches in the Sonata No. 3 and elsewhere. Chopin lovers and fans of this artist certainly need no further recommendation. Now, if only she would record some new solo repertoire - we can only hope. --David Hurwitz, ClassicsToday.com

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