

André Laplante, pianist
CD Review
"nothing less than sublime"

Andre Laplante: Chopin

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We can only wonder why it took Andre Laplante – a pianist long renowned for his interpretations of late-romantic repertoire – until now to record an all-Chopin disc. But in light of the well-balanced program and superb playing, it was well worth the wait! Included on this Analekta recording are 2 major works, the Sonata in B flat minor, Op. 35 and the Fantaisie Op.49, in addition to two early Nocturnes, (Op. Post. in C sharp minor, and Op.15 No.1), and the three Mazurkas Op.63. The Sonata, the second of Chopin's efforts in the form, raised more than a few eyebrows when first published in 1840. Schumann even went so far as to refer to it as a binding together of "four of his maddest children." No matter, Laplante approaches the music with aplomb – this is powerful and noble playing, and my only quibble - and a minor one at that - would be the overly brisk pace he takes in the opening movement. Yet the familiar third movement "Funeral March" is treated with the solemnity it deserves, and the finale, with those fleeting octaves once described as "wind over church-yard graves" embodies a spirit that surely would have pleased Edgar Allan Poe. The two nocturnes and three mazurkas which follow are miniature jewels, but to my mind, Laplante saves his best for last with the magnificent F minor Fantaisie, hailed by many as Chopin's greatest work. I have heard many versions over the years, but I can honestly say this is among the finest I have encountered. His treatment is nothing less than sublime, from the ominous opening march, to the thrice-heard secondary theme, a veritable love-song. There is a world of contrasting moods in this piece, and Laplante effortlessly captures them all, thus bringing this most satisfying disc to a close. Richard Haskell

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