

Ignaz Friedman

Chopin Mazurkas – No. 25 in B minor, Op. 33 No. 4, No. 41 in C sharp minor, Op. 63 No. 3; Waltz No.6 in D flat, Op. 64 No. 1. **Mendelssohn** Songs without Words – Nos. 3, 6, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 32 and 47. **Liszt** Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 in C sharp minor, S244/2. **Rubinstein** Romance in E flat, Op. 44 No. 1. **Schubert** (arr. Liszt) Horch! Horch! die Lerch', S558 No. 9.

Ignaz Friedman (pf).

St Laurent Studio mono © ① YSL78-055 (47mins; AAD); rec. 1923/30. (www.78experience.com).

The Polish pianist Ignaz Friedman, a student of Leschetizky in Vienna, is perhaps best known for Chopin. There are only three small pieces here of his art in that composer's music, though. St Laurent Studio's latest disc begins with a bouquet of nine of Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte*, along with the reassuring sizzle of 78s before he plays (not distracting, more atmospheric: these transfers are from English Columbias, I assume). St Laurent Studio have managed to convey a fair body to

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the piano sound. Despite Friedman's reputation as a lion of the keyboard, it is the slower, more lyric Mendelssohn pieces that impress the most, particularly the darkness of the C minor, Op. 38 No. 2. These are all the *Lieder ohne Worte* that Friedman recorded – one craves for more. Ward Marston's transfers on a Naxos issue (© 8.110736) have less surface noise but are more recessed and therefore less vivid.

The Anton Rubinstein *Romance*, musically, has some heart-stopping holdings back and a feeling of rightness to it that modern interpreters tend to miss. Again, there is a Naxos edition (© 8.110686) and again the St Laurent Studio version sounds truer. Friedman is exceptional in the Liszt Second *Hungarian Rhapsody*, where delicacy is once more the most notable element (dwarfing the likes of Lang Lang, who see music such as this as potboilers). Friedman is also properly virtuoso when required, and there seems to be more presence in the St Laurent version than on a Naxos transfer (© 8.110736), and it makes for a better listening experience, despite increased surface noise around 4'50".

If the impeccable Chopin leaves us wanting more, the final Schubert/Liszt performance acts as an encore of the most gorgeous lyricism. In short, this disc is a winner. Naxos have issued five discs so far of Friedman; as this is Vol. 1 of St Laurent, they may well follow suit.

Colin Clarke