



The Scriabin Mystery

Vincent Larderet, *piano*

Release date: 23 September 2022

AVIE Records

COMPACT DISC – 1CD Jewel Case, 20-page booklet

DIGITAL STEREO – 96kHz/24bit, digital booklet

AV2500 (physical)

822252250022

AV2533 (digital)

822252253324



Full Price

“Larderet is quite musical with every little phrase ... well worth hearing a number of times ... fascinating program”

American Record Guide

January-February 2023

Larderet calls this program “The Scriabin Mystery”, and the selections cover his whole compositional life. The excellent booklet notes trace the influences and style development from 1886 (Scriabin was 14 when he wrote the superb Etude Op. 2:1) to 1914 and his final set of Preludes, Op. 74. He does make mention of Scriabin’s final, incomplete work, *Mysterium*, which was intended to be performed in the foothills of the Himalayas in India—a weeklong event that would be followed by the end of the world and the replacement of the human race with “nobler beings”. While Scriabin, a classmate and friend of Rachmaninoff’s, started his career heavily influenced by Chopin, he grew into an innovative and unique composer. The earlier works here are well selected and played. As Larderet moves forward into the middle and end of Scriabin’s short life, the mystery of his harmony and rhythm become more apparent. Sonata 7 (1912) was given the title *White Mass* by Scriabin, who also noted that it had “a mystical sensation as well as a total absence of human feeling and emotional expression”. The composer also had a view at this time that “his melody was reconstituted harmony while his harmony was melody in compressed form”. The density of Sonata 7 certainly confirms this thought, and Larderet’s exceedingly slow tempo allows him to bring out much melody and harmony that usually flash by. Right from the first bar, I knew I was in for a different interpretation of this piece. Larderet takes in excess of 15 minutes here. Ashkenazy, Hamelin, and Richter all clock in around 11 minutes. I don’t know if any mystery is solved with the slow tempo. Larderet is quite musical with every little phrase, and I found this recording well worth hearing a number of times. Sofronitsky’s Sonata 9 (*Black Mass*), is the best I have ever heard (*Vista Vera* 93, July/Aug 2007). I have never heard such power in “the march of evil forces” (Scriabin’s description) or the later “infusion of wild orgiastic dance elements”. While Sofronitsky takes about 8 minutes, Larderet takes almost 11 minutes. His slower tempo makes many of the inner voices clear and well shaped, but it loses much of what I believe the composer intended. No one beats the white-hot recording of *Vers la Flamme* by Horowitz, which is only a little bit faster than Larderet, who acquits himself well in this piece. The closing piece by Manfred Kelkel is a prelude and eight variations on material from *Mysterium*, which Kelkel discovered in 1972. It is an interesting five-minute piece I had never heard or heard of before. It makes for a good conclusion to this fascinating program.