

Impromptu
Shai Wosner, p
Onyx 4172—75 minutes

“What would happen if we get together Schubert, Chopin, Beethoven, Liszt, Dvorak, Gershwin, and Ives for a posthumous jam session?” Such a concept forms the root of this program of (mostly) impromptus. That it all works is testament to both the quality of the music and the excellence of the playing. The Ives are barely wisps of ideas, but the others stretch the imagination to form an eclectic grouping we can all appreciate.

Finding Gershwin among the group with his strange *Impromptu in Two Keys* prompts Wosner to supply a sly spoiler alert that E-flat wins. Shucks, I wanted to figure that one out for myself. In any case, Schubert’s *Impromptu D 935:1*, the longest piece on this program, opens with a lovely melody, much concentration, and tonal beauty. Schubert does return later with *Impromptus 3 and 4* from that late set, but not before other composers have been added to the mixture.

Improvisations 1 and 3 by Ives are expectedly cryptic but fit in well with their more tonal surroundings. Gershwin’s jazzy dabbling is a delight, and Chopin’s three *Impromptus* are well known (the *Fantasy-Impromptu* is not played). Wosner’s ability to embrace all idioms is most impressive. It is impossible not to

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enjoy the program’s freshness and the attractiveness of the playing.

Beethoven’s rarely heard *Fantasy, Op. 77*, is added inducement to join the jam session.

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