

**VIRTUOSO PIANO TRANSCRIPTIONS.** Daniel Berman, piano. PIANOTHEK 651131 (digital), \$11.98 [distributed by German News].

**BACH-BUSONI:** *Prelude and Fugue in D, BWV 532*. **CHOPIN-ROSENTHAL:** *Waltz in D<sup>b</sup>, Op. 64, No. 1*. **SAINT-SAËNS-GODOWSKY:** *Le Cygne*. **R. STRAUSS-GODOWSKY:** *Ständchen*. **J. STRAUSS-GODOWSKY:** *Wein, Weib und Gesang*. **RACHMANINOFF-WILD:** *Three Songs: Where Beauty Dwells, Op. 21, No. 7; In the Silent Night, Op. 4, No. 3; Floods of Spring, Op. 14, No. 11*. **GERSHWIN-WILD:** *Summertime. Seven Virtuoso Études on Popular Songs of Gershwin: Liza; Embraceable You; Oh, Lady, Be Good; Fascinatin' Rhythm; The Man I Love; Somebody Loves Me; I Got Rhythm*.

This is a delightful collection, though one's pleasure is of a different order piece by piece. Busoni has recreated Bach's massive organ sonorities for the piano, while Godowsky's transcription spirits up the chaste delicacy of Saint-Saëns' *Le Cygne*. With Godowsky's recomposition of *Wein, Weib und Gesang* we enter a world of high fantasy which makes such things as Wild's Rachmaninoff transcriptions or Rosenthal's addition of thirds and sixths to Chopin's "Minute" Waltz seem naïve. Wild's Gershwin arrangements come perilously close to cocktail music, the familiar tunes wafting up through stereotyped figures. Gershwin himself, whether improvising a foxtrot or composing the vignettes of the *Song Book*, reveals something unexpected yet essential about these melodies, something often deeply felt yet never sentimental—a pitfall into which the predictable Wild easily tumbles. Still, his arrangements are fun. Berman plays everything with such relaxed fluency and genial warmth—which is saying a very great deal—that I would welcome hearing anything he chose to record. The Bach-Busoni was taped live before a very discreet audience while the remainder of the album is in close clear digital. Surfaces were flawless. Enthusiastically recommended.

A.C.