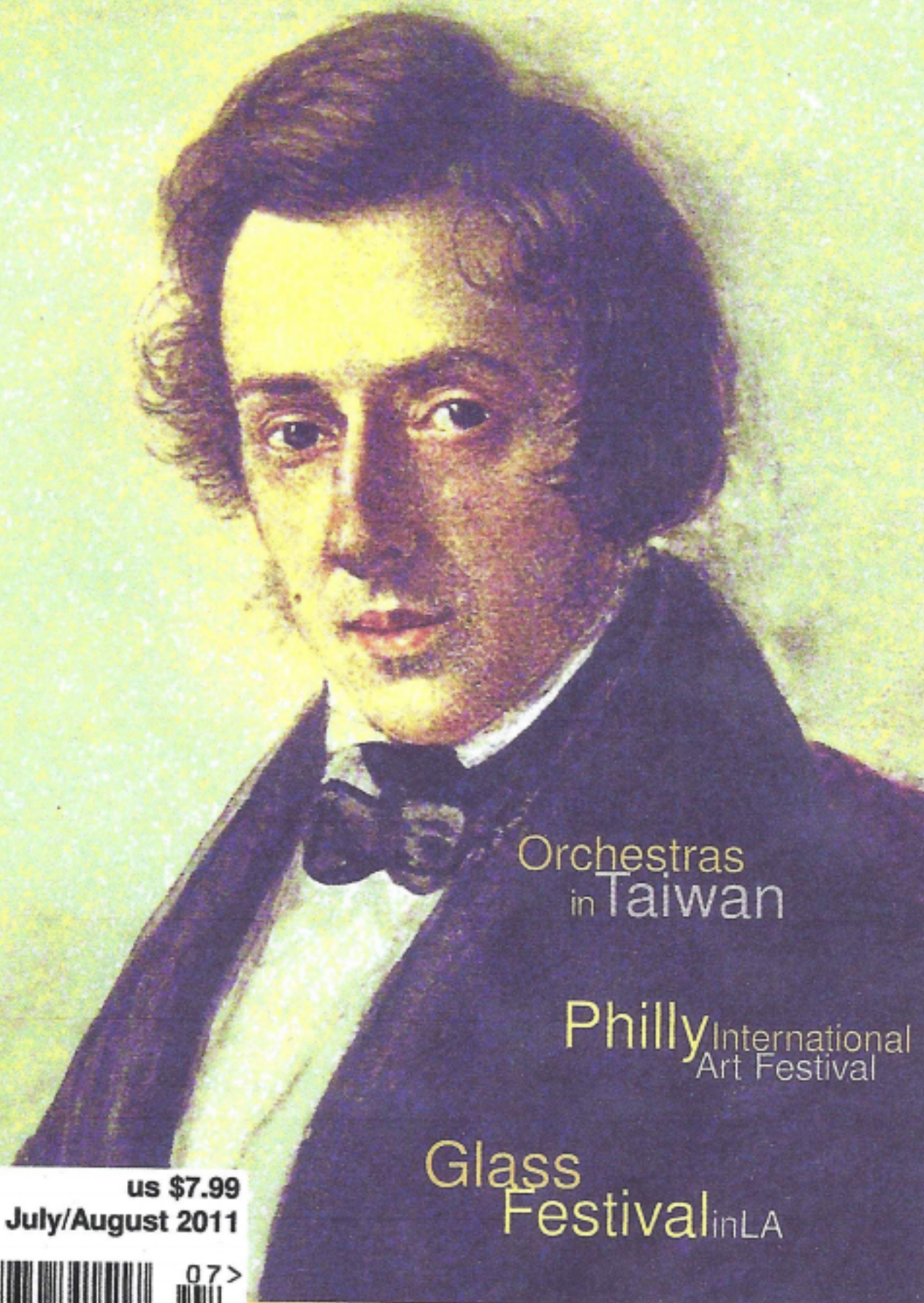


American Record Guide

Independent Critics Reviewing Classical Recordings and Music in Concert



Orchestras
in Taiwan

Philly International
Art Festival

Glass
Festival in LA

us \$7.99
July/August 2011



Overview: Chopin

Etudes

Ashkenazy recorded them twice: for Melodiya (released on Saga, too) and later for Decca (London). The latter was in 1975, and the sound is better, but some of us find it just slightly heavier-handed—less fresh. But either Ashkenazy is a safe bet: sensitive, passionate, and technically stunning. Andrei Gavrilov outdoes Ashkenazy in sheer stunning virtuosity, but the sweeter ones have less feeling. You will not hear more exciting playing, and his tone remains beautiful, as does the sound. For sheer energy and excitement, Gavrilov is hard to beat. (There are two exciting Ballades on the disc as well.)

Mauricio Baglini has all the virtuosity of Pollini or an Ashkenazy, but more musical substance. He is more technically assured than Zayas and less eccentric than Cherkassky. He is a great musician and interpreter—very articulate. He was 23 when he recorded these (don't confuse this with a later recording on the same label using a period piano); and the impulsiveness of youth added to beautiful tone, an even touch, and mature judgement make him here one of the great Chopin pianists.

Just as impressive a virtuoso is Earl Wild: never a labored moment, never an ugly sound or shallow bravura display—never a mechanical feeling. He is deft, fluent, and elegant—no as intense as Ashkenazy but more attractively tonally (except that Ashkenazy's piano has better bass—that's Steinway versus Baldwin)—and with more insight than Simon or Lortie.

Juana Zayas is especially impressive in the etudes. Her readings are strong, smart, and substantial; her sound is never skittish, but full and ebullient. We described her recording as an intelligent balance of lyricism, wit, drama and pianistic craft. It is playing on the highest level—with imagination—beautifully recorded. She recorded them twice, and they are not the same. Some etudes got more aggressive others more mellow the second time around.

We also like Anievas; he has perfect tempo combined with elegance and technical finish. Horowitz's readings of some of the more famous etudes are breathtaking and scintillating.

Baglini	Phoenix 98403
Zayas	Music & Arts 891 or 1229
Wild	Chesky 77
Ashkenazy	Decca 466250; 414127
Gavrilov	EMI 74502
Anievas	EMI 74296

ALSO LIKE

Cherkassky displays his usual power and delicacy—beautiful sound.

Freddy Kempf: Lisztian, but often ideal tempo & great tone

Louis Lortie is stylish and often brilliant.

Abbey Simon is smooth and fluent.

Malcolm Binns is elegant, poetic, expressive—good tone, too.

MIXED

Lugansky: clean, commanding tone but nothing to say

Arrau: 1950s monaural, but clean, individualized, intimate

Freire: too aggressive, but sometimes thrilling

Biret: brilliant, energetic, sometimes ever brash

Kauppi: adventuresome, unusual