

OLLI MUSTONEN

Gramophone
 June 2012

Scriabin



Twelve Etudes, Op 8. Six Preludes, Op 13.
 Five Preludes, Op 16. Piano Sonata No 10, Op 70.
 Vers la flamme, Op 72

Olli Mustonen *pf*

Ondine (P) ODE1184-2 (68' • DDD)



The playing, conducting and composing Finn does Scriabin

An extraordinary pianist for extraordinary music. This is Scriabin as you have never heard him before, played by one of music's most formidable and compulsive free spirits. Had Stravinsky lived to hear Mustonen, he might well have asked with added emphasis, 'Scriabin, where does he come from, and who are his followers?'

The stress is very much on an original journey from the early Op 8 Etudes through the Op 13 and 16 Preludes to the obsessive circlings of the Sonata No 10 and the final conflagration of *Vers la flamme*. Yet, even in the Etudes, Mustonen's acetylene technique dazzles and astounds, fragmenting a Chopin-inspired lyricism into so many shards of glass. The music is made to leap flame-like and uncontained from the page and you could cut yourself on Mustonen's glittering sonority. Try the third Etude in B minor (*Tempestoso*), where Mustonen sets the cross-rhythms in jagged opposition, and you will hear a pianist of a truly astonishing force and individuality.

He may have raised eyebrows in his Beethoven discs but, in the volatility and dark musings of Russian Romanticism (Rachmaninov's First Sonata, Balakirev's *Islamey*), his originality defies comparison. Like Olivier, who could mesmerise the back row of an audience with a look, Mustonen's beady and dazzling pianism is truly hypnotic. He has been excellently recorded and I can hardly wait to hear him in, say, Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*. Few pianists have a more potent sense of the demonic in music. **Bryce Morrison**