

Joshua Bell - Mendelssohn • Beethoven • Violin Concertos (2002)

Written by bluesever

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Felix Mendelssohn (1840-1893)
Violin Concerto in E minor, Op. 64

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
Concerto For Violin In D, Op.61

Joshua Bell – violin
Camerata Salzburg
Sir Roger Norrington – conductor

Joshua Bell's fresh approach to these violin warhorses makes for an unexpectedly inviting listening experience. In the Mendelssohn he marries his bright tone to forthright phrasing in a manner that communicates the music's emotion without sliding into the gooey sweetness heard in some interpretations. There's little if anything hackneyed about Bell's reading, indicating he's thought about the work anew, right through to the stylistically appropriate cadenza he composed himself (Bell cites research that suggests Mendelssohn's friend Ferdinand David may have actually composed the original cadenza). Roger Norrington's crisp, period-informed style, with its pointed accents and propulsive energy easily fits in with Bell's conception.

Bell's Beethoven is of a similar stripe. There's a youthful whimsy to his reading, although it's tempered by an awareness of the work's graceful majesty. Again, Bell supplies a cadenza of his own devising, which cleverly makes references to the Moonlight Sonata before carrying on in the discursive manner of Beethoven's late string quartets. Norrington accompanies in the aggressive Beethoven style familiar from his symphony recordings. Sony's recording slightly favors the soloist, but not to an unnatural degree as orchestral detail can be heard clearly, even in the soft passages. The CD booklet notes are evidently aimed at the newcomer to these

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works, and Bell's performances do make for fine introductions. But seasoned listeners can enjoy them as well for their unique insights--a rare occurrence in today's glutted CD catalog. --Victor Carr Jr, ClassicsToday.com

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