Giya Kancheli & Sofia Gubaidulina - Styx & Viola Concerto

01. Giya Kancheli / Styx [0:34:33.00] 1999 02. Sofia Gubaidulina / Concerto for Viola and Orchestra [0:35:18.00] 1996 Yuri Bashmet – viola St Petersburg Chamber Choir Orchestra of the Mariinsky Theatre Valery Gergiev – conductor

This pair of single-movement viola concertos written for Yuri Bashmet justify his renown. In both, he is able to draw an impressive variety of expressions from his instrument with seeming ease. On the other hand, it's obvious there was a lot of thought and care put into his interpretations. The concertos need thoughtful interpretations by the soloist and the conductor, not because the pieces are necessarily complex in rhythm or harmony, but they are complex in tone and color. Valery Gergiev conducts the Mariinsky Theater Orchestra and the St. Petersburg Chamber Choir also in the Kancheli, with a thoughtfulness that complements Bashmet's. In fact, the interpretations seem so natural, it's a wonder what the concertos sound like with other orchestras and conductors, particularly how that affects improvised solo sections of the Gubaydulina. The wide dynamic ranges of the Kancheli meant having to turn up the volume to get the muted parts, which shouldn't be mistaken for the characteristic silences of his work also found here. However, the mixing and engineering were done well enough so that the louder parts then did not totally blast out of the speakers or distort the sound. At the time of this issue, although many concertos had been written for Bashmet, very few had been recorded. This first album by Bashmet for Deutsche Grammophon is proof that more should be recorded. ---Patsy Morita, AMG

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