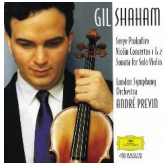


Prokofiev - Violin Concertos 1 & 2. Sonata for Solo Violin (Shaham) (1996)

Written by bluesever

Thursday, 13 June 2019 15:51 -

Prokofiev - Violin Concertos 1 & 2. Sonata for Solo Violin (Shaham) (1996)



Concerto For Violin And Orchestra No.1 In D Major, Op.19 1 1. *Andantino - Andante Assai*
2 2. *Scherzo: Vivacissimo* 3 3. *Moderato - Allegro Moderato - Moderato - Più Tranquillo*
Concerto For Violin And Orchestra No.2 In G Minor, Op.63

4 1. *Allegro Moderato* 5 2. *Andante Assai - Allegretto - Andante Assai* 6 3. *Allegro, Ben Marcato*

Sonata For Solo Violin In D Major, Op.115

7 1. *Moderato* 8 2. *Tema: Andante Dolce - Var. I - Var. II: Scherzando - Var. III: Andante - Var. IV - Var. V* 9 3. *Con Brio - Allegro Precipitato - Tempo I - Allegro Precipitato*

Gil Shaham - violin London Symphony Orchestra André Previn - conductor

Rarely has there been such a performance as this, in which soloist, orchestra and conductor connect with such unerring intuition, and the music — rather than its superficial display potential — is treated so naturally.

Two or three minutes into the first movement of the First Concerto and I had already forgotten such concepts as 'virtuoso' or 'orchestral support', focusing instead on a single phenomenon: Sergey Prokofiev. Devoted as I am to earlier interpreters of these two masterpieces (especially Oistrakh in the First and Heifetz in the Second), I can honestly say that I have never encountered performances where soloist, orchestra and conductor connect with such unerring intuition, where the music — rather than its superficial display potential — is treated so naturally. Previn ushers in the First Concerto's crystalline opening with gentle intensity, raising the curtain for Gil Shaham's warmly tended first entry. Both make great play with the march theme that follows (although the upward solo scale and orchestral 'tail' at 219" could have been better synchronized). The effect is like spicy gossip shared between friends while the Scherzo is equally rich in dialogue: note how nimbly flute mirrors violin eight seconds in, whereas the swaggering first trio sounds appropriately boorish (say, at 102"). Shaham's tone is at its most expressive at the beginning of the third movement, and at its most delicate at 421", just prior to the last big climax.

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This natural exegesis extends to the darker Second Concerto, even where Shaham or Previn linger about a particular phrase (as Shaham does in his very first entry, or Previn does when he pauses before the final bars of the second movement). The recording, too, is extremely impressive, with well defined string lines and a fine body of winds, brass and percussion (the all-important bass drum especially), although I should, I suppose, mention a rather tentative horn at 125" into the first movement. Still, note how, beyond the raucous happenings of the second movement's central episode, the violins waft back with the principal theme (at 656"). Similar felicities occur regularly throughout both concertos, while the Second's finale — a riotous, slightly tongue-in-cheek danse macabre — is here sensibly paced and very well articulated. And as if all that weren't enough, Shaham treats us to a substantial encore in the lively Solo Sonata that Prokofiev intended to be performed in unison by a group of young players.

Although hardly on the level of the concertos, the voice is unmistakable and this particular performance as bright as a button. An excellent CD. -- Robert Cowan, Gramophone [6/1996]

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