

Schumann, Lalo, Saint-Saens - Cello Concertos (Janos Starker) [1991]

Written by bluesever
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Robert Schumann – Cello Conerto in A minor, Op.129 1. *I. Nicht Zu Schell* 2. *II. Langsam* 3. *III. Sehr Lebhaft* Edouard Lalo – cello
Concerto in D minor
4. *I. Prelude: Lento; Allegro Maestoso* 5. *II. Intermezzo: Andantino Con Moto; Allegro Presto* 6. *III. Introduction: Andante; Allegro Vivace*
Camille Saint-Saens – Cello Concerto in A minor, Op.33
7. *I. Allegro Non Troppo* 8. *II. Allegretto Con Moto* 9. *III. Un Peu Moins Vite*
Janos Starker – cello London Symphony Orchestra Stanislaw Skrowaczewski – conductor
(1-6) Antal Doráti – conductor (7-9)

What János Starker lacks in the warmth of emotion he makes up for with the heat of intensity, and the same can be said of his conductor-partners in these superb 40-year-old performances, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and Antal Dorati. Starker tends to sound like he's playing on his D and A strings, even when he isn't; his tone is consistently tight and focused, never really fat and juicy, even in the bottom notes. If the latter is the kind of cello-playing you prefer, you know perfectly well where to go for your musical wallow. [Read more](#)

The Schumann and Lalo were recorded on film rather than tape in 1962, and their background is silent. The soundstage for the Saint-Saëns recording, from two years later, is just a bit fuller and wider. All three concertos were recorded in three channels, faithfully and seamlessly reproduced in these new DSD transfers. This is a basic item for every collection. --FANFARE: James Reel, arkivmusic.com

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Janos Starker recorded the Schumann Concerto more than once: this performance, from the 1960s, was the second, and, of those I have heard, I think the best - in fact, I'd say it's about the best performance of the concerto I've heard altogether. Starker is never tempted to romanticize the music as some cellists are, and as a result it emerges stronger and can be appreciated for the masterwork it is. Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and the London Symphony Orchestra provide a similarly taut orchestral performance. Starker has composed a cadenza which comes just before the last movement - or should I say section as all three run together.

This performance has previously been issued on Philips coupled with the Dvorak concerto but this new issue has added attraction of being a hybrid SACD for those who can take advantage of it. For the Schumann Concerto, this is an essential disc. Neither of the other works is on the level of the Schumann, but they are also very well performed, and the Saint-Saens in particular is very enjoyable.

Since first writing these comments I've heard (on LP) a performance by Maurice Gendron with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Christoph von Dohnanyi - also very good, and similar in style to the Starker and Skrowaczewski. I would still say that Starker / Skrowaczewski have the edge, both in performance and sound (though it is a bit earlier), and in any case so far as I can see Gendron's stereo performance is not yet available on CD.

The Schumann performance has also been issued in a coupling with the Dvorak Concerto. This has had high praise in some quarters, but I find it rather disappointing - Starker doesn't seem to respond to the work very strongly, and Dorati's conducting is not very idiomatic, with a really horrible speed-up at the end of the first movement. Of the great cellists of the later twentieth century and great nineteenth century concertos, it is Starker / LSO / Skrowaczewski for the Schumann, Fournier / BPO / Szell for the Dvorak. ---Precession, amazon.com

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