Joseph Joachim Raff – Violin Concertos (2000)

1 Joachim Raff Violin Concerto No. 2 in A minor, Op. 206 Allegro 9:59 2 Adagio 11:44 3 Allegro 11:18 4 Joachim Raff Cavatina for violin & piano, Op. 85/3 4:57 5 Joachim Raff Ungrischer, Op. 203 8:30 6 Joachim Raff Violin Concerto No. 1 in B minor, Op. 161 Allegro patetico 11:47 7 Andante non troppo 5:45 8 Allegro trionfale 6:02

Michala Paetsche Neftel - violin
Bamberger Symphoniker
Hans Stadlmair – conductor

If the idea of a marginally more advanced Mendelssohn or a slightly more coherent Liszt sounds appealing, try Joseph Joachim Raff. In this disc of his two violin concertos coupled with two shorter works for violin and orchestra, Raff writes for the soloist in an effervescent style that clearly has its origins in Mendelssohn's elfin manner. The clarity of Raff's writing and the lightness of his lyricism strongly recalls Mendelssohn's own Violin Concerto, but since Raff's works were written decades after Mendelssohn's, the soloist is set against the slightly more advanced harmonic idiom of Liszt. Fortunately, the lucidity of Raff's part-writing and the cogency of his modulations, while it calls to mind Liszt's harmonic adventures, is more secure than Liszt's and the result is less rambling if also less innovative. But if Raff's music is also less interesting than either Mendelssohn's or Liszt's, it is surely not the fault of violinist Michaela Paetsch Neftel, whose warm tone, secure intonation, and virtuoso technique makes the best possible case for Raff's concertos. Accompanied by Hans Stadlmair and the Bamberg Symphony Chorus -- the stalwart performers who have recorded much of Raff's orchestral music for Tudor -- Neftel's performances are strong, sprightly, and sweet and as convincing as is imaginable considering the repertoire. Tudor's sound is clear, warm, and round. ---James Leonard, Rovi

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