

Prokofiev - The 2 Violin Concertos (Steinbacher) [2012]

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01] Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major Op.19 - I Andantino Andante assai 02] Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major Op.19 - II Scherzo Vivacissimo 03] Violin Concerto No. 1 in D major Op.19 - III Moderato - Allegro moderato 04] Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op.63 - I Allegro moderato 05] Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op.63 - II Andante assai 06] Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op.63 - III Allegro ben marcato 07] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - I Moderato 08] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Theme 09] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Variation 1 10] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Variation 2 11] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Variation 3 12] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Variation 4 13] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - II Variation 5 14] Sonata for Violin Solo in D major Op.115 - III Con brio - Allegro precipitato Arabella Steinbacher – violin
Russian National Orchestra Vasily Petrenko – conductor

Szigeti once famously referred to an 'intriguing mixture of fairy-tale naïveté and daring savagery' as being the very essence of Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto. Yet encapsulating these elements convincingly can often prove elusive. In this stunningly recorded SACD release, Arabella Steinbacher shapes the glorious melody in the opening movement with great tenderness and affection and throughout the work there is a real sense of her interaction with conductor Vasily Petrenko and the highly responsive Russian National Orchestra. However the overall effect seems a little calculated and lacking in the kind of fantasy and fluidity that Maxim Vengerov and Mstislav Rostropovich bring to the same passage in their mid-1990s Warner Classics recording. At the opposite end of the emotional spectrum, Steinbacher is suitably malevolent in the ensuing Scherzo, projecting Prokofiev's percussive writing to impressive and exciting effect. Nonetheless Vengerov more than matches her in terms of aggression, while also finding room to exploit the more playful and mischievous aspects of the score.

Steinbacher and Petrenko seem much more closely attuned to the emotionally ambiguous world of the Second Violin Concerto. Particularly admirable is the dark brooding sound Petrenko secures from the orchestra as a disturbing counterpart to Steinbacher's bitter-sweet phrasing of

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the lyrical melodies. The sudden eruptions of anger in the first movement, and the sinister passagework that disrupts the diatonic simplicity of the Andante assai are vividly conveyed, as is the Finale, presented as a grim and almost desperate dance of death. ---Erik Levi, classical-music.com

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