Henryk Wieniawski - Violin Showpieces (1994)

01. Souvenir de Moscou Op.6 [7:07] 02. Capriccio-valse in E major Op.7 [6:32] 03. Variations on an original theme Op.15 [11:53] 04. Polonaise brillante Op.4 [5:37] 05. Le carnaval russe Op.11 [7:10] 06. Gigue in E minor Op.23 [2:37] 07. Saltarello (arr. Lenehan) [1:42] 08. Mazurka Op.19 no.2 - Village Fiddler [3:35] 09. Mazurka Op.19 no.1 - Obertass [2:09] 10. Mazurka Op.12 no.2 - Polish Song [3:47] 11. Mazurka, Kujawiak [2:43] 12. Légende Op.17 [7:47] 13. Scherzo-tarantelle Op.16 [4:35] Marat Bisengaliev, violin John Lenehan, piano

The Polish violinist Henryk Wieniawski began his career as a virtuoso in earnest in 1851. His compositions were principally for his own use and include two important violin concertos as well as a number of virtuoso pieces designed to display his technical and lyrical musical accomplishments. Starting with a flourish, the Souvenir de Moscou allows the violin an exhibition of virtuosity, before the lyrical melody at the heart of the piece is heard. Le carnaval russe allows the violinist-composer to exploit relatively simple thematic material with all the technical virtuosity at his command, including astonishing feats of left-hand pizzicato and the favourite contemporary virtuoso device of accompanying a melody on one string with a tremolo on the string below. --- naxos.com

The violin showpieces of Wieniawski still turn up sometimes as encores, but there are few discs devoted entirely to them. They're fun. Wieniawski (1835-1880) must have been a brilliant violinist to write so well for the instrument, and he came up with some very catchy tunes and never pushed them too far. Marat Bisengaliev, who comes from Kazakhstan, is a very elegant violinist with a seamless technique. He plays these pieces for their musical value instead of showing off his zippy fingers. Since some of these works were meant for showing off, though,

this lovely disc isn't the ultimate Wieniawski collection, but it will do until that is recorded.
--Leslie Gerber, amazon.com

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