Eugène Ysaÿe - Six Sonatas for Violin Solo, op. 27 (Gidon Kremer) [1992]

I. No.1 in G minor (Dedicated to Joseph Szigeti) *1. Grave (Lento assai) /1/ 2. Fugato (Molto moderato) /2/ 3. Allegretto poco scherzoso (Amabile) /3/ 4. Finale, con brio (Allegro fermo) /4/* II. Sonata No.2 in A minor (Dedicated to Jacques Thibaud) *1. "Obsession" - Prelude (Poco vivace) /5/ 2. "Malinconia" - Poco lento /6/ 3. "Danse des ombres" - Sarabande (lento) /7/ 4. "Les Furies" - Allegro furioso /8/*
III. Sonata No.3 in D minor "Ballade" /9/ (Dedicated to Georges Enescu)
Lento molto sostenuto - Allegro in tempo giusto e con bravura
IV. Sonata No.4 in E minor (Dedicated to Fritz Kreisler)
1. Allemande (Lento maestoso) /10/ 2. Sarabande (Quasi lento) /11/ 3. Finale (Presto ma non troppo) /12/
V. No.5 in G major (Dedicated to Mathieu Crickboom)
1. "L'Aurore" (Lento assai) /13/ 2. "Danse rustique" (Allegro giusto molto) /14/
VI. Sonata No.6 in E major /15/ (Dedicated to Manuel Quiroga)

Gidon Kremer – violin

…what's recorded here are not a group of pieces called Impressions, or a variety of works, but the Sonatas for violin solo, Op. 27. These six pieces, after years of neglect, have become popular once again, with new recordings appearing from mostly young violinists. The appeal of the sonatas to younger players may have to do with their musical language: just as distinctive as the mind-bending virtuosity of the music (many passages could hardly be guessed to be for a single violin) is its stylistic pastiche. This is not simply a question of the potpourri type of composition that was still common enough in 1923, when these sonatas were composed. Ysaÿe's conception of structure is closer to what fans of contemporary popular music might call a mash-up. Consider the first movement of the Sonata No. 2 in A minor, Op. 27/2 (track 5), where one of the themes from Bach's Partita No. 3 for solo violin, BWV 1006, is interwoven with the Dies irae chant melody. The general trend among players has been to take this as, to use modern parlance once again, extreme violin. There's some evidence that Ysaÿe himself, who was recorded a few times, tended toward a more dramatic approach. ---James Manheim,

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As is well known, the six Sonatas Ysaye published in 1924 were written for the six greatest virtuosi of the day: Szigetti, Kreisler, Enescu, Jacques Thibaud and (less well remembered nowadays) Manuel Quiroga and Matthieu Grickboom. They are held in special regard by violinists who enjoy overcoming the technical challenges they pose.

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