

Brahms - Violin Concerto - Double Concerto (1991)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 25 November 2011 09:50 - Last Updated Monday, 16 September 2013 20:57

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1. *Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77: I. Allegro non troppo* 2. *Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77: II. Adagio* 3. *Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 77: III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace* 4. *Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello and Orchestra, Op. 102 "Double Concerto": I. Allegro* 5. *Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello and Orchestra, Op. 102 "Double Concerto": II. Andante* 6. *Concerto in A minor for Violin, Cello and Orchestra, Op. 102 "Double Concerto": III. Vivace non troppo* Isaac Stern (Violin) Leonard Rose (Cello) Philadelphia Orchestra Eugene Ormandy – conductor

This performance of two of Brahms most beautiful concerti is truly unbelievable. isaac stern is one of my favorite violinists and this shows him at the peak of his form. He combines subtle humor and a remarkably light touch into the heavy dramatic passages that the violin concerto is famous for. you can easily tell how involved he is with the music. the cadenza in the first movement is sheer technical brilliance, and yet stern's tone in the second movement needs little flourish. He is truly one of the masters of the instrument. Rose plays a highly dramatic part in the double concerto. he uses the full extent of the cello to produce moving sound, at times warm and at times powerful. Ormandy does a superb job in maintaining a perfect set of dynamics with the philadelphia orchestra. He makes the orchestra very forceful when the soloists rests, but never gets in stern or rose's way. It is interesting that one of the greatest violin concerti of all time was written by a pianist. part of the greatness of the piece must be attributed to Brahmes's close friend, one of the great Romantic virtuosi, Joseph Joachim. the influence of one of the giants of the violin is thoroughly felt in the composition. --- "thebestdictator" (Charlottesville, Virginia United States)

Having been brought up, so to speak, on a CBS bargain box of the four Brahms Concertos the

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experience of reviewing this CD has been a nostalgic voyage. At the time (early 1970s) that box of LPs seemed and was matchless value. It offered these two works (same performances) as well as Serkin/Szell in the two piano concertos. I seem to recall that the set managed to squeeze all four works onto three LPs by use of long sides and breaking works across discs.

Ormandy and the Philadelphia are untamed partners in Brahms' musical alembic. The orchestra's silver and golden flames, their passion and resinous fire bears all before it. The sound is reassuringly flawed in the way of CBS recordings from the late 1950s onwards into the mid 1970s: that peculiar combination of closeness of focus and a graininess denying ultimate refinement to the massed strings. This however has an amplitude and tonal generosity superior to the Szell Brahms set also on Essential Classics.

Taking the Double Concerto first, Leonard Rose endows the work with eloquence and a surfeit of the most glorious tone. One of the finest cellists in America you cannot doubt his fiery application, his lyric 'stickiness' and smoky passion all intensified by the close-miked recording. Rather like Yo Yo Ma's pizzicati in the finale of the Finzi Cello Concerto (a Lyrita LP from 1979) Rose's pizzicati are imperiously loud. It matters nothing that you would never hear the music like this in a concert hall. Each melodic 'collision' with Stern is assuredly calculated in its ecstatic chordal effect. The music is always phrased with a warmth too hot to rest your hand on. Stern is brilliant and his unanimity with Rose is, without doubt, down to their trio work with Eugene Istomin for which the foundations were laid in Casals' Prades Festivals. In the Violin Concerto Stern draws on powerful tone, a vibrant warmth and a fully developed life-vision. Though I still wonder why Philips have not reissued Hermann Krebbers' recording, which had some celebrity during the days of LP, the listener who comes to Brahms through these performance is likely to be spoilt when they go to concerts or encounter alternative versions.

A towering bargain. Fortunate the new listener who learns her/his Brahms through these works.
--- Rob Barnett, musicweb-international.com

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