

Vadim Gluzman – Barber, Bernstein, Bloch (2009)

Written by bluesever

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Bernstein: Serenade after Plato's 'Symposium' 01. I. *Phaedrus: Pausanias* (06:39) 02. II. *Aristophanes* (04:40) 03. III. *Eryximachus* (01:27) 04. IV. *Agathon* (07:09) 05. V. *Socrates: Alcibiades* (11:01) Bloch: *Baal Shem* 06.. *Vidui (Contrition)* (03:21) 07. II. *Nigun (Improvisation)* (06:57) 08. III. *Simchas Torah (Rejoicing)* (04:58)
Barber: Violin Concerto, Op.14
09. I. *Allegro* (10:51) 10. II. *Andante* (08:59) 11. III. *Presto in moto perpetuo* (04:24)
Vadim Gluzman - violin Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra John Neschling – conductor

A Ukrainian/Israeli violinist is backed by Brazilian musicians and conductor in a trio of American works of the twentieth century for violin and orchestra, all originating within about 15 years of each other. It's not as unusual as it sounds. In fact, the connections among the musicians and repertory here show that it's not unusual at all. Violinist Vadim Gluzman studied in the U.S., at the Juilliard School with Dorothy DeLay, among others, and his style is a faithful extension of the one Jascha Heifetz brought to the U.S. almost a century ago. São Paulo Symphony Orchestra conductor John Neschling, a Brazilian with Austrian roots (he is a grand-nephew of Arnold Schoenberg), studied conducting with Leonard Bernstein. And the three composers on the program, who might be dubbed the three Bs of American concert music, are linked in many ways. The program is beautifully constructed. The opening work, Bernstein's *Serenade*, marries a representation of Plato's *Symposium*, his Socratic dialogue on love, to a musical vocabulary that lightly seasons Bernstein's Bartók/Stravinsky idiom with bits of his musical theater language. Bernstein perversely wrote that the work had no extramusical program, but then went on to provide a fairly detailed one, reproduced in the excellent booklet. The question of the specifically Jewish contribution to American music hangs over all three works to an extent, but surfaces in Bloch's *Baal Shem*, heard here in its orchestral version of 1939. It's an ideal work to showcase Gluzman's lyrical side before the final Violin Concerto, Op. 14, of Samuel Barber, which resolutely holds off on violinistic fireworks until the finale, something that's true of the album as a whole. Gluzman holds the brutal passagework of the beginning of Barber's finale together, does a satisfactory rendition of the Eastern European accents of the Bloch, and catches the romantic quality of the Bernstein, which steps just to the edge of swinging. Nicely

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engineered, and highly recommended. The excellent booklet notes, which recount Bernstein's remark that if he ran into a person on the slope of an Alp the Alp disappeared for him, are given in English, German, and French. --- James Manheim, Rovi

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