

Max Bruch - Violin Concerto & Romance (Jansen)

Written by bluesever

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Max Bruch - Violin Concerto & Romance (Jansen) [2007]



1) *Romance for Viola and Orchestra in F Major, Op. 85 (8:27)*

Concert for Violin and Orchestra in G Minor, Op. 26

2) *I Vorspiel: Allegro moderato (8:00)*

3) *II Adagio (8:22)*

4) *III Finale: Allegro energico (7:16)*

Janine Jansen - violin

Gewandhausorchester

Riccardo Chailly - conductor

Composed between 1864-68 Bruch dedicated his Violin Concerto No. 1 to the eminent, Hungarian-born violinist Joseph Joachim who went on to premiere the revised version in 1868. Eclipsed by the tremendous popularity of the G minor it is often forgotten that Bruch actually wrote two other fine violin concertos as well as many other splendid scores. In his day he was primarily recognised for his large-scale choral works that earned him a reputation that for a short time outshone that of Brahms.

In the first movement *Vorspiel: Allegro moderato* Jansen's interpretation is convincing and highly poetic. Her lyrical aria-like approach seems just perfect. Jansen does not over-accentuate the Jewish sounding melody in the same way as Maxim Fedotov on Naxos. I loved the spirit that suffuses her splendid playing at 1:50-2:11 and 4:26-4:31. She clearly relishes the long melodic lines at 2:34-5:10 with warm-hearted and buoyant playing. My promotion copy has a slight glitch at 5:34 (track 5).

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In the beautiful central movement Adagio one continues to be impressed by the playing which is light as a feather, infused with tender sensuousness, ensuring that the interpretation is never over-sentimental. Her expressive playing at several points provides a remarkable depth of blissful passion that can make the hairs stand up on the back of the neck. Jansen displays her expertise with great boldness in the brilliant virtuoso passages in the development section of the Finale. Throughout the score Jansen provides a natural understanding of the music's rhythmic impetus. With great assurance she navigates a broad range of emotions with her vibrant and characterful playing. The first class orchestral support is sympathetic, frequently full-bodied and often beautiful.

There are a large number of recommendable Bruchs and this recording is certainly right up there with the finest. My preferred version is by Jaime Laredo, who directs the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, available from IMP Classics PCS 829, c/w the Mendelssohn. Laredo's special account is warm and extremely characterful; so full of joy and spontaneity. These Laredo performances have also been reissued on Regis RRC 1152. In addition I am full of admiration for the memorable account from Maxim Fedotov and the Russian Philharmonic Orchestra under Dmitry Yablonsky on Naxos 8.557689 (see review). Recorded in 2004 in Moscow, Fedotov's superb playing displays his innate understanding of the varying emotional states of the Bruch score.

Another favourite version of the Bruch was recorded in Leipzig in 1977 by Salvatore Accardo with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Kurt Masur on Philips Duo 462 167-2. This is an interpretation that sees the stylish Accardo providing vital and characterful playing. The desirable couplings on Accardo's all-Bruch set are the Violin Concertos 2 & 3; Serenade, Op. 75 and the Scottish Fantasy, Op. 46. Primarily for his exquisite tone and thrilling playing the historical 1962 recording from Jascha Heifetz with the New Symphony Orchestra of London under Sir Malcolm Sargent on RCA 09026 61745-2 draws considerable approval from a large group of admirers. The generous RCA disc also includes the Scottish Fantasy, Op. 46 and the Vieuxtemps Violin Concerto No. 5.

This advance promotion recording provides very little information on Bruch's Romance for viola and orchestra in F major, a late work that I believe was composed around 1911. For this rarely heard score Jansen exchanges her violin for the viola to impressive effect. Her playing is highly expressive with a yearning quality and melancholic richness. In her hands Bruch's score is a very personal and romantic love letter performed with a crystalline beauty. -- Michael Cookson, MusicWeb International, arkivmusic.com

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