

Sibelius & Tchaikovsky - Violin Concertos (Shaham) [1993]

Written by bluesever

Friday, 03 August 2012 16:24 - Last Updated Saturday, 10 May 2014 11:10

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1. *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op.47 - 1. Allegro moderato* 15:39 2. *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op.47 - 2. Adagio di molto* 8:09 3. *Violin Concerto in D minor, Op.47 - 3. Allegro, ma non tanto* 7:19 4. *Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 - 1. Allegro moderato* 18:14 5. *Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 - 2. Canzonetta (Andante)* 6:58 6. *Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 - 3. Finale (Allegro vivacissimo)* 10:12 Gil Shaham – violin Philharmonia Orchestra of London Giuseppe Sinopoli – conductor

Violinists are stuck parading five big concertos around the world (Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Sibelius), so they can be excused for performing them in the rote fashion we encounter too often in concert. For touring virtuosos is there any music to be squeezed out of these works? Here, Gil Shaham has turned his back on anything rote, however, giving masterful, original, totally committed readings of the Sibelius and Tchaikovsky concertos.

Putting Shaham close to the mikes makes his sound larger than life, which is quite thrilling given his superhuman accuracy. In concert his tone isn't exceptionally large; it's sweet and smooth, incapable of an ugly note. Those qualities come out in DG's excellent recording. Like his contemporary Joshua Bell, Shaham views the Sibelius as an inward work. He is a solitary singer against a lonely, romantic northern landscape. Sinopoli supports this approach with symphonic depth in the orchestral part. The Philharmonia is captured in gorgeous sound. Tempos are fairly slow, phrasing quite thoughtful, the overall result a performance that stands at the same height as a Sibelius symphony, a rare occurrence in the concerto.

The Tchaikovsky is performed more overtly as the violinist's show, but it too has nothing routine about it. Shaham sees the work as serious music, and again Sinopoli obliges with depth of expression in the orchestra. I'm not sure the approach works as well this time--the Tchaikovsky is more fun in the hands of a high-wire showman like Heifetz. In every other way this

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performance is first-rate, a worthy sidebar to the superlative Sibelius. --- Santa Fe Listener, amazon.com

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