

Vieuxtemps – Cello Concertos Nos. 1-2 (Schiff) [1987]

Written by bluesever

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Cello Concerto No. 1 in A minor, Op. 46

1 - I. *Allegro Moderato-Cadenza-Allegro*

2 - II. *Andante*

3 - III. *Finale (Allegro)*

Cello Concerto No. 2 in B minor, Op. 50 (Op. posth. 4)

4 - I. *Allegro*

5 - II. *Adagio*

6 - III. *Finale (Allegretto Con Moto)*

Heinrich Schiff – cello

Stuttgart SWR Radio-Symphony Orchestra

Neville Marriner – conductor

This reissue in EMI's Encore line is, regrettably, one of its weakest offerings. Despite the presence of such luminaries as cellist Heinrich Schiff and conductor Sir Neville Marriner, the album is a disappointment for its fuzzy sound quality, lackluster orchestral palette, and Henri Vieuxtemps' tedious music. The boxy digital sound dates from 1985-1986, though it sounds as compressed and murky as any analog recording from the 1940s. Because of the severely limited range, the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra sounds flat and muddy. Yet this may be due as well to its old-fashioned, over-homogenized blending, and its pulling back to middling dynamics to give Schiff greater prominence. Of course, Vieuxtemps has a hand in it, too, and his thick, bottom-heavy orchestration puts the orchestra at a real disadvantage in the Cello Concerto No. 1 in A minor. However, this is mitigated somewhat in the Concerto No. 2 in B minor, since the orchestration is a bit more differentiated and not always scored tutti. Too bad, though, that the music itself is trite and uninspired. There are some diabolically clever moments in the solo parts of both concertos, which Schiff whips off with fiendish glee, but these are not enough to rate Vieuxtemps any higher than as a mediocre composer of shallow showpieces.

---Blair Sanderson, Rovi

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