

Martha Argerich & Friends – Live from Lugano Festival 2002-2004 (2005) CD1

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Prokofiev – Symphony No. 1 in D major ('Classical'), Op. 25 1. *I. Allegro* 2. *II. Larghetto*
3. *III. Gavotte: Non Troppo Allegro* 4. *IV. Finale: Molto Vivace*
Tchaikovsky – Nutcracker, suite from the ballet, Op. 71a
5. *I. Overture Miniature* 6. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:A. Marche: Tempo Di Marcia Viva*
7. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:B. Danse De La Fee Dragee: Andante Non Troppo* 8. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:C. Danse Russe - Trepak: Tempo Di Trepak, Molto Vivace* 9. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:D. Danse Arabe: Allegretto* 10. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:E. Danse Chinoise: Allegro Moderato* 11. *II. Danses Caracteristiques:F. Danse Des Mirlitons: Moderato Assai* 12. *III. Valse Des Fleurs*
Shostakovich – Piano Trio No. 2 in E minor, Op. 67
13. *I. Andante - Moderato* 14. *II. Allegro Non Troppo* 15. *III. Largo* 16. *IV. Allegretto*
Martha Argerich - Piano Yefim Bronfman – Piano (1-4) Mirabela Dina – Piano (5-12) Maxim Vengerov – Violin (13-16) Gautier Capuçon – Cello (13-16)

This bargain 3-CD set is called "Martha Argerich and Friends," but is that enough to warn buyers that she appears only half the time? That half is the best part of this collection, taped live across three summers, 2002-04 in Lugano, Switz. The half without Ms. Argerich features other stellar musicians, particularly Maxim Vengerov and Yefim Bronfman, but their participation is surprisingly low-key.

Argerich loves to play two-piano music, a genre I find too bangy to be interesting much of the time. She zips through a piano transcription of Prokofiev's Sym. 1 with Yefim Bronfman, and sparkles in a similar arrangement of the Nutcracker Suite with a partner unknown to me, Mirabela Dina. I'm sure a lot of listeners will have as much fun with fluff as she does.

Her two major contributions come in a riveting Shostakovich Piano Trio #2, one of his

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undoubted masterpieces, with Vengerov almost dominating the ensemble in his mesmerizing account of the violin part. This reading isn't as fiery as Argerich is wont to be, but it has passion enough to stand beside the best performances (the composer's own and the one with Richter and the Borodin Trio). The second-best thing here is the Schumann Piano Quintet, again finding Argerich in vigorous but not slashing mode (Gott sei dank), easily taking charge and making this a quintet for piano solo with string obbligato. A fine account despite the imbalance.

The half without Argerich is pleasantly done. I had hoped for much more from Vengerov and Bronfman in the Brahms Violin Sonata #3--maybe the warm July breeze off the lake made them a bit drowsy. A Schubert Piano Trio #1 again finds Bronfman in too relaxed mode; the piece lacks spine and attack. The rest of these three CDs is filled out with Argerich accompanying Geza Hosszu-Lagoocky (a fine violinist unknown to me) in Schumann's late, rather debilitated Violin Sonata #1, a lovely account without quirks, and a pleasant but hardly memorable Dvorak Piano Quartet #2 led by Walter Delaunt.

All in all, a bargain set of very good performances that sometimes rises higher than that. ---
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