



BEETHOVEN

Violin Sonatas Volume 3

Alina Ibragimova v;
Cédric Tiberghien p
Wigmore Hall Live WHLive 0045

★★★★★

Tiberghien and Ibragimova maintain the wonderful synergy of their two previous albums in the final instalment of this riveting series. As with the others, it's a challenge as to which of the countless felicities to mention first. The fluctuating dynamics are as good a point as any: Beethoven dubbed these works, in effect, piano sonatas with violin accompaniment like Mozart's) and he pair acknowledge this throughout, with long passages where the piano is rightly dominant.

The three sonatas are well contrasted: the playful and witty Op 12 in E flat with its variable pulse in the first movement is perfectly captured by the pair, the rather banal theme (described as "dim-witted" in the liner notes) of the final movement completely transformed by the magic of their partnership. The Op 30 A-major Sonata is deliciously suave and Tiberghien is dominant in the slow movement, with Ibragimova reticent and the pianist dispatching the demanding variations of the last movement with panache.

The series ends, appropriately, with the mighty *Kreutzer* sonata, perhaps the only work in this genre with the sense of drama and power we take for granted in Beethoven's music. Here, Ibragimova is amazing: she may look gamine but her tone is quite masculine and suggests real passion. In the central variation movement, Beethoven achieves the same sublime delicacy as in the last movement of the Op 111 Piano Sonata: the theme is broken up into smaller and smaller fragments and the notes become like an endless string of precious jewels. In the final tarantella the exquisite tension is released and the players hurtle through a cat and mouse-like chase. What a pity there's no Volume 4! GK



BACH•BUXTEHUDE• MENDELSSOHN

Magnificat: Organ of the Scots Church, Melbourne

Douglas Lawrence o
Move MD3340

★★★★☆

Anyone who has heard the four-manual organ designed for Melbourne's Scots Church by Austria's Rieger firm will be aware of its heart-stopping magnificence. The church's resident organist Douglas Lawrence offers an inspired choice of pieces avoiding the hackneyed at every turn; only Buxtehude's Prelude and Fugue in G Minor could be called popular.

The intricate polyphony of Bach's E minor Trio BWV528 is best conveyed by an organist with three heads; pending that particular anatomical configuration, Lawrence's performance attains everything that could be desired. A virtuosic prelude by Gabriel Pierné – the former Franck pupil who conducted the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* – makes a beguiling alternative to Widor's Toccata and fully deserves the attention Lawrence expends on it.

From half a century earlier comes a splendid contribution in B flat major by Alexandre Boëly (1785-1858), one of the very few Frenchmen of his time who cared for Bachian counterpoint. Among Boëly's predecessors, Michel Corrette (1709-1795) harks back gratifyingly in his own music to the great age of Couperin.

Where lesser players too often impart a stodginess to German Baroque material, Lawrence demonstrates his keen gift for registrations at once idiomatic and ear-catching. Whilst perhaps the recording quality lacks in-your-face vividness, the Mendelssohn fugue's concluding bars will give any speakers a good workout. The package includes the performer's own booklet notes, a comprehensive stop list, and sung versions of the chorale melodies Bach employed. **RJ Stove**