



P. I. Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto & Symphony No. 4

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Audiophile Audition (Gary Lemco - 2003.04.01)

Some discs you just know are going to be exciting; and when I saw this one available through Albany Music, I jumped at it. Originally, Nathan Milstein was scheduled to make his first post-War appearance in Germany for the concert of 24 April 1969, but illness prevented his collaboration with Rafael Kubelik (1914-1996) for this historic Munich event. Columbia Artists' Management ushered in a twenty-one-year old replacement from Tel-Aviv, Isaac Stern prodigy Pinchas Zukerman. Frankly, I would have been as skeptical of the replacement as was the Bavarian Orchestra management: I have never taken a shine to Zukerman's violin artistry (excepting his CBS inscription of the Kabalevsky Concerto) as I have to his viola playing. Get thee behind me, artistic doubt!

What we have here, gentlemen, is some visceral musicianship, assuming you like your Tchaikovsky aflame. Zukerman is totally prepared for the virtuosic and temperamental demands of the Concerto, neither eschewing the punishing thirds and spiccato bowings, but offering up tender reveries where Tchaikovsky's sentimentality prevails. Nobility of line, sweetness of tone, fervent rhetoric, all are evident in detail, as Joachim Kaiser's review in the South German Times noted with rare appreciation of a new artist. The F Minor Symphony has equal sound and fury of its own, with Kubelik's urging the Bavarian players to alternate frenzy and intimate musings, in the heroic tradition of Koussevitzky and Mravinsky. At the end of the outer movements, he applies the musical afterburners to explosive ends, the symphony's ending in a dervish-like whirl of Russian colors. Whew!