



Richard Strauss & Dmitri Shostakovich: Sonatas for Violin & Piano

aud 97.759

EAN: 4022143977595



American Record Guide (Joseph Magil - 2019.09.01)

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Gulli is accompanied here by his wife Enrica Cavalli in excerpts from recitals they gave in Milan in 1981 and 1990. The Violin Sonata of Richard Strauss and the FAE Sonata were recorded in 1990, and Bartok's Violin Sonata 2 was recorded in 1981. From what I can hear, the Gullis were outstanding musicians, and their interpretations leave nothing to be desired. I wish I had had the opportunity to hear him in concert. A friend of mine who did found him remarkable.

I regret to report that the recorded sound from both recitals is not acceptable. They sound like they were both recorded from the audience on amateur equipment. Once or twice, I can hear a man coughing whose mouth sounds like it is mere inches from the microphone. Gulli is not well represented in recordings, and these are the best performance of his that I have heard.

I was greatly impressed by Franziska Pietsch's Prokofieff violin sonatas (N/D 2016), so I was excited when this came for review. I am happy to report that my expectations were exceeded. Pietsch plays this music like she is improvising. A native of East Berlin, she didn't learn this score, she lived it. Until now, my top recommendation for this work was the wonderful recording by the Khachaturyan siblings, Sergey and Lusine (J/A 2008). They characterize moments with remarkable vividness. Pietsch and Josu de Solaun play in a different manner. They are not as quicksilver in coloring their sound, but Pietsch especially brings a feeling of great familiarity with the music and its motivation that has the stamp of authority. She has her own way of tone painting that many violinists would never think of. At 5:42 of the first movement, she very briefly lowers the pitch of the note she is playing, producing an effect I had never heard before that I would describe as sickly yet absolutely appropriate. I am sure this is not a technical lapse but a wise choice. She eschews brilliance and polish and plays straight from the heart, and the effect is cathartic. This is at least on a par with the Khachaturyans. The recording is warmer and much more present too, so the pianissimo passages aren't as quiet as they are on the Armenians' disc; but the enveloping sound, especially in the piano, enhances the music's emotional effect. This recording is an essential acquisition for people who value this work, the second great Soviet violin sonata after Prokofieff's Sonata 1.

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Sonata BARTOK: Sonata 2
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Da Vinci 158—73 minutes
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Franziska Pietsch, v. Josu de Solaun, p.
Audite 97.759—64 minutes

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Gulli played two Stradivarius violins, the "Marchal Berthier, Vecsey" of 1716 and the "Come Fontana" dated 1702 in its label but probably from around 1690. Pietsch plays a violin made by Carlo Antonio Testore of Milan in 1751.

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