

DVDS

BEETHOVEN String Quartets op.14 no.1, op.18 nos.1, 2 & 6, op.59 no.1 'Rasumovsky', op.74 'Harp', op.130, op.131 & op.133. Plus documentary **Wihan Quartet**

NIMBUS ALLIANCE NI 6107 (TWO DVDS)



The Convent of St Agnes in Prague provides a generous acoustic to offset these live, close-recorded performances marked by crisp, biting playing. There is a mixture of clarity and resonance here that doesn't quite exist in the real world, conducive to both searching detail and grandeur, and it serves Beethoven well.

The Wihan Quartet brings equal intensity to the open faces of op.18 no.1 in F major (not to mention the tyro exercise of op.14 no.1) and to the veiled mysteries of the C sharp minor Quartet op.131. The relentless rhythmic bite of the *Grosse Fuge* is leavened by a lyricism that leads one

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through its rigorous and uncompromising workings and reveals the sheer beauty that exists alongside the power.

There is so much character in these performances: deep feeling, devoid of superfluous sentiment, pervades the Adagio, *ma non troppo* of the 'Harp' Quartet, and humour flows through the second-movement

Allegretto vivace e sempre scherzando of op.59 no.1, signified by the gentle grin on the face of the leader, Leoš Čepičky, after his first entry. This is a rare example of the recording gaining from being on DVD. The setting, with its filled-in



Manrico Padovani plays Paganini like a hero

Gothic arch and massive stonework, is striking, but these recordings can be best appreciated without such distractions.

TIM HOMFRAY

PAGANINI Violin Concerto no.1 in D major op.6

Manrico Padovani (violin) Oltenia Philharmonic Orchestra/Boris Perrenoud

IPA 20070720 (DVD + CD)

(WWW.PERRENOUD-FOUNDATION.COM)



Blessed with a name of operatic resonance, the young Swiss-Italian violinist Manrico Padovani plays like a hero in this marvellous concerto – marvellous, that is to say, when attacked with such technical brio, tonal lustre and musicality.

Padovani commands a superbly equalised scale and does not lean too much on the G string, although he rightly makes more of it in the central Adagio *espressivo*, where Paganini is depicting a prisoner in a dungeon.

Spiccato is splendidly precise; staccato is evenly audible; left-hand pizzicato pings nicely; harmonics all ring out; but cantilena is also beautifully flexible, with sensitive dynamic variations that make the melodies really touching.

Padovani clearly enjoys the Sauret cadenza, as do I, even though it uses non-Paganini effects. The finale has real bounce, with variations of colour in the episodes. The DVD is very plainly filmed and there seems to be no audience, even though everyone is giving a real performance.

The little orchestra is tidy and adequate but backwardly placed, something even

more apparent on the audio CD. Sound quality is excellent on both discs. Do you need just 38 minutes of music in two formats? In any case, Padovani, a pupil of Aïda Stucki, is certainly worth a hearing.

TULLY POTTER

LIVE AT THE VERBIER FESTIVAL

BACH Keyboard Partita no.2 in C minor BWV826 **MOZART** Andante & Variations in G K501 **GRIEG** Cello Sonata in A minor op.36 **BARTÓK** Violin Sonata no.1 **LUTOSLAWSKI** Paganini Variations **SHOSTAKOVICH** Piano Quintet in G minor op.57

Renaud Capuçon, Joshua Bell, Henning Kraggerud (violin) Yuri Bashmet (viola) Mischa Maisky (cello) Martha Argerich, Stephen Kovacevich, Gabriela Montero (piano)

MEDICI ARTS DVD 3078928



I must perforce pass over some terrific solo and duo piano playing and go straight to the high-powered, intense Grieg Cello Sonata by Mischa Maisky and

Martha Argerich. The variety of tone colour produced by Maisky is phenomenal and if anyone has not yet succumbed, this performance is a good introduction to him. He has so much in reserve that when he has to give more, he has the wherewithal. I can imagine a simpler approach to this music, but for a supercharged reading, this is hard to beat.

At first I was less impressed by Renaud Capuçon's Bartók, especially with Argerich in full flight at the keyboard. But on a second hearing I feel that he does lovely things with the many quieter moments, especially in the central movement, and he does rise to the occasion after a slightly bumpy start.

Shostakovich's Piano Quintet generally does best with an established quartet but the ad hoc grouping of Joshua Bell, Henning Kraggerud, Yuri Bashmet and Maisky plays with great inwardness and understanding. Only once, in the Intermezzo, can I 'see the join'.

Sound quality is very good, as is production. Filmed at the 2007 and 2008 Verbier Festivals, it is really Argerich's DVD, but the string quotient is worthwhile.

TULLY POTTER