

indiscriminate employment of the classics in their film scores; suffice to say that these two interlopers are very well played and conducted in the company of the Rachmaninov-inspired *Warsaw Concerto*, the jovial *Hobson's Choice* and *Vertigo*, the most substantial items. The Klanglogo label will no doubt have its knuckles rapped by a higher power than mine for crediting the *James Bond* theme to John Barry (nor is it his arrangement) instead of Monty Norman. The sequence of music works well and the resonant recording does full justice to some of the best screen music written over the past 70 years. **Adrian Edwards**

Mozart

Piano Concertos - No 17, K453; No 25, K503

The Cleveland Orchestra / Mitsuko Uchida *pf*
Decca © 483 0716DH (67' • DDD)

Recorded live at Severance Hall, Cleveland, OH,
February 11-13, 2016



Hot on the heels
of Jean-Efflam
Bavouzet's vivacious
K453 (complete with

his own cheeky cadenzas) comes Uchida's latest instalment in her series with The Cleveland Orchestra. Latest and last, according to the blurb on the back, which is a great shame, for this has been a compelling addition to the Mozart discography.

The G major, K453, is particularly alluring: details are uncovered as if for the first time (just check out the bassoon countermelody from 4'04" in the first movement, for instance) and the wind players are in particularly fine fettle – giving Abbado and Pires a run for their money. As accompanist, Uchida is the most generous of colleagues, withdrawing her sound to a whisper. By contrast, the cadenzas (Mozart's own) are wondrously shaded, and in that of the slow movement she plumbs the depths before drawing to an ethereal close of considerable beauty. It's only in the quietest moments that you realise there's an audience present at all. The lustrous slow movement is more elegiac than in many readings (Andsnes is notably faster here), we as listeners privy to the most intimate of conversations.

The finale also sets off at an unhurried pace – observing its *Allegretto* marking – allowing us to enjoy the theme's natural elegance. Others may take it faster but Uchida and co find so much of interest in the following variations here that you're constantly engaged. The interplay between soloist and orchestra is particularly sparky

and the *Presto* conclusion provides a true contrast, thrillingly upbeat yet never merely breathless. No question, this is up there with my favourite performances of K453 – by Pires and Andsnes.

The C major Concerto, K503, is as martial as K453 is intimate and the opening *tutti* has a Beethovenian strength to it, brilliantly punctured by Uchida's gleefully understated entry. Having said that, the slow movement is a tad too slow for my taste, though unquestionably caressing in its effect (by comparison Argerich and Abbado seem positively *allegretto*). The Cleveland are particularly responsive in the finale, which opens with such unassuming grace before exploring darker landscapes; in the middle section Uchida's duet with oboe then flute has a wonderfully rhapsodic quality.

If you're already collecting this series, you'll need no encouragement from me. But for K453 in particular, this is a winner.

Harriet Smith

Piano Concerto No 17 – selected comparisons:

Pires, COE, Abbado (2/96) (DG) 439 941-2GH

Andsnes, Norwegian CO (4/08) (EMI) 500281-2

Bavouzet, Manchester Camerata, Takács-Nagy

(11/16) (CHAN) CHAN10929

Piano Concerto No 25 – selected comparison:

Argerich, Orfè Mozart, Abbado (3/14) (DG) 479 1033GH

Mozart

Violin Concertos - No 1, K207; No 2, K211;
No 3, K216; No 4, K218; No 5, K219.

Adagio, K261. Rondos - K269; K373

Isabelle Faust *vn*

Il Giardino Armonico / Giovanni Antonini

Harmonia Mundi © ② HMC90 2230/31

(129' • DDD)



Mozart's violin
concertos are never far
from the centre of any
violinist's repertoire.

Written while the composer was still a teenager, they can hardly be considered among his deepest music (the string concerto masterpiece is, of course, the magnificent *Sinfonia concertante* of 1779-80), yet they maintain all the *galant* charm and suavity of the period as we hear the boy coming of age, experimenting with forms and growing more harmonically daring and melodically assured.

For Isabelle Faust's recording of the five concertos, she teams up for the first time with the period instruments of Il Giardino Armonico. Giovanni Antonini is the nominal conductor but these wonderful performances have the air of chamber music, of close listening between soloist, band and director. Faust isn't spotlighted in the

remarkably clear engineering but seems part of the ensemble, her sound growing out of the corporate entity to glitter, coax, snarl and soar as required. She has always struck me as a player who cannot help but look beyond the notes, examining each phrase and paragraph to wring out of them more than simply phrases and paragraphs. She varies her ornamentation delightfully and, as an added treat, plays cadenzas and lead-ins specially written by the keyboard player Andreas Staier, who knows a thing or two about 18th-century style.

Faust doesn't couple the *Sinfonia concertante* here (the mouth waters at the prospect of a future recording of it) but fills the disc with the three extant single-movement pieces Mozart wrote for violin and orchestra: an *Adagio* and a *Rondo* from 1776 and another *Rondo* from 1781, shortly before his break from Salzburg and his freelance decade in Vienna. In the E major *Adagio* (K261), especially, there is a radiance to her playing that, in a way, brings these standalone works in from the cold, elevating them to the level of the concertos. It's not all lush sonority, though: Faust's vibrato-lite tone adds a real sting to *sforzandos*, while her high-lying passagework is rock-solid in terms of accuracy and intonation, and her unwillingness to play rows of semiquavers as strings of equal notes makes for some piquant inflections. As for the 'Turkish' episode in the final concerto, the slapped pizzicatos and astringent *spiccatos* really add spice to the drama – although even here Faust plays as part of an ensemble, not as a foot-stomping star soloist.

The world is not short of recordings of this music and, in true *Gramophone* fashion, it must be acknowledged that most listeners will have their favourites from the innumerable classic discs that have appeared over the decades. However, for period instruments, period sensibility and state-of-the-art engineering, you may find yourself hard-pressed to better this thought-provoking and eminently enjoyable cycle.

David Threasher

Prokofiev

Romeo and Juliet, Op 64

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

LAWO Classics © ② LWC1105 (145' • DDD)



Norwegian orchestras
have been here
before...up to a point.
Mariss Jansons set
down two suites from *Romeo and Juliet* with
the Oslo Philharmonic (EMI, 5/89), more



'A compelling addition to the Mozart discography': Mitsuko Uchida plays Piano Concertos Nos 17 and 25

than a decade before he threw in the towel, citing the acoustic problems of the band's home base. Few would deny that Bergen's Grieg Hall comes over better in Andrew Litton's selection (BIS, 7/07) – three suites, suitably reordered. Looking beyond Scandinavia, if you want the 20th century's greatest full-length ballet score complete in audio format, the field is not as competitive as might be supposed. While readers will have their own favourites from Gennady Rozhdestvensky to Vladimir Ashkenazy, there remains a gap in the market for a truly first-rate rendition in state-of-the-art sound. LAWO's pink-themed packaging looks more contemporary than LSO Live's for Valery Gergiev and I was expecting the former to triumph on sonic grounds as well. In the event the bass-light, aseptic sonority of Vasily Petrenko's ensemble is not necessarily preferable to the sheer clout of the LSO in the concrete bunker that is London's Barbican Hall.

In place of Soviet-style weight, Petrenko wields a new broom. His tempi are often too extreme for dancing, or for fencing, come to that. Sections within numbers are refreshed unpredictably, sometimes slowed, more often swift, voicings tweaked to expose long-buried lines or surprising points of colour. The music sounds less implacably Russian

that it does under Gergiev, whose concentration may come and go – he lacks fire in the earlier fight scenes – but whose overall approach is nothing if not idiomatic. Petrenko refuses to overplay the emotional conflicts latent in the music. Favouring parody over pomp (for example, track 8's ceremonial 'Interlude', in which Gergiev is a third slower), his 'Young Juliet' (track 10) really is young, bouncing from one activity to another as if suffering from attention deficit disorder.

Neither set includes the material Prokofiev discarded when revamping his original 1935 ballet, the one with the non-Shakespearean 'happy ending', in which the protagonists do not die but are 'released' as Christian Science contends 'from the false reality of their material being'. On the plus side, Petrenko has a proper chamber organ in the 'Balcony Scene', where Gergiev resorts to solo strings. Elsewhere, an interpretation designed to underline the fragility of young love risks coming across as relatively inconsequential until we near the final curtain. Is this psychological insight or an unwillingness to engage?

David Gutman

Selected comparisons:

Bolshoi Tb Orch, Rozhdestvensky
(9/61*) (MELO) MELCD100 0908

LSO, Gergiev (5/11) (LSO) LSO0682

Sydney SO, Ashkenazy (1/13) (EXTO) EXCL00087*

Reznicek

Goldpirol. Wie Till Eulenspiegel lebte.

Konzertstück^a. Prelude and Fugue. Nachtstück

*Sophie Jaffé ^{vn}

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra / Marcus Bosch

CPO © CPO777 983-2 (69' • DDD)



The works on this disc – part of a leisurely continuing series from CPO –

date from the period between 1900 and 1918, after Emil Nikolaus von Reznicek (1860-1945) had the progress of a very impressive career as conductor and composer cut short by scandal of a very unscandalous sort. The detailed booklet-note describes them as transitional, even detecting a sort of polystylism *avant la lettre* in the *Konzertstück* of 1918, recorded here for the first time.

I think that's being a little optimistic. In that work's first movement we ramble through a series of violin concerto tropes that largely sound familiar – there are echoes of Mendelssohn's, and on a couple