

Beethoven - Violin Concerto Op.61, Romances Nos.1 & 2 (Nishizaki)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61: I. Allegro ma non troppo* 25:11 2. *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61: II. Larghetto* 10:13 3. *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61: III. Rondo: Allegro* 11:20 4. *Romance No. 1 in G major, Op. 40 (use): Romance No. 1 in G major, Op. 40* 8:40 5. *Romance No. 2 in F major, Op. 50 (use): Romance No. 2 in F major, Op. 50* 9:50 Takako Nishizaki – violin Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra Kenneth Jean – conductor

Takako Nishizaki, wife of Naxos label-founder Klaus Heymann, is famous for her Fritz Kreisler interpretations, and here she gives a demonstration of her Kreisler-inspired virtuosity, playing Beethoven's Violin Concertos and the two Romances as well as you are ever likely to hear them anywhere: Assuming that you share Ms. Nishizaki's presuppositions about romantic violin playing, vibrato and Kreisler's cadenzas, you should find this recording, at least from the point of view of the soloist, to be world class. As is usual with Naxos, the soloist is strongly emphasized by the (1988 digital) recording engineering, and although I found the Slovak Philharmonic to be, on this recording, better than I had expected (thanks to Kenneth Jean's conducting perhaps?), I doubt whether the orchestra is quite the champions' league material that Takako Nishizaki would really have deserved. Nevertheless, this is an enjoyable recording, only very slightly marred by the 'hollow' acoustics of the empty Reduta Concert Hall in Bratislava and by a somewhat clumsy break between two 'takes' at 1'47" during Romance No. 1.

In the meantime, there is plenty of budget-price competition, at least for the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Arthur Grumiaux' Philips version has been digitally remastered, but I cannot say that it is all that much superior to the Nishizaki/Jean, although the orchestra is perhaps a little classier (Grumiaux plays Joachim's cadenzas). My personal preference is for a recording on EMI Classics for Pleasure by Monica Huggett and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment directed by Sir Charles Mackerras. These excellent musicians recorded the Violin Concerto along with Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto on period instruments and in historical performance practice, and Ms. Huggett invented her own cadenzas that, in my humble opinion, fit much better with Beethoven's style than either the Joachim or the Kreisler. --- Leslie Richford

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(Selsingen, Lower Saxony)

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