

John Adams - Scheherazade.2 (2016)

Wpisany przez bluesever

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Dramatic Symphony for Violin and Orchestra *I. Tale of the Wise Young Woman – Pursuit by the True Believers II. A Long Desire (love scene) III. Scheherazade and the Men with Beards IV. Escape, Flight, Sanctuary* Leila Josefowicz - violin Chester Englander - cimbalom St. Louis Symphony David Robertson - conductor

You'd get differing answers to the question of whether John Adams is America's greatest living composer, but he's the one to whom the country turned in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The demand for new work from him has only increased since he achieved senior citizen status. Fortunately, he's been able to meet that demand with distinctive large-scale works. Consider 2016's *Scheherazade.2*, recorded here by the violinist who premiered the work, Leila Josefowicz, with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra under David Robertson. The piece succeeds on several levels. It is, outwardly, as close as Adams has come to writing a big Romantic violin concerto, and it will no doubt be welcomed into the concert repertory as such. Yet go into it more deeply, and it seems less a concerto than -- well, what, exactly? Adams calls it a "dramatic symphony." English critic Nick Breckenfield has compared it to Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, with the soloist representing an individual making her way through a series of adventures that may have a threatening tinge. Adams was inspired to write the work after visiting an exhibition in Paris devoted to *Scheherazade* and the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the work has a bit of feminist critique woven into its unusual structure. The four movements, traditional in their outer shapes, are each loosely programmatic, and except for the second, "A Long Desire," each presents the heroine under some kind of pressure from male figures. Sample the third movement, "Scheherazade and the Men with Beards," where she seems to be surrounded by a chattering group of religious leaders who disagree among themselves. *Scheherazade* elbows her way into the discussion at times. Josefowicz's sharp-edged style is ideal for the work, and the St. Louis Symphony excels in the music's give and take. Adams has produced at once a worthy successor to the long tradition of *Scheherazade* pieces in classical music, and one that, as so often with Adams, pokes the tradition in which it works. ---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

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