audite

Igor Stravinsky & Dmitri Shostakovich: Works for Violin and Piano

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Fanfare (Robert Maxham - 01.01.1970)

Violinist Judith Ingolffson finds great warmth in the lower registers of her 1750 Lorenzo Guadagnini violin for the Sinfonia of Igor Stravinsky's Divertimento, but she also delivers its jagged rhythmic passages with cocky incisiveness—a brashness that strops a comparably sharp edge on her reading of the second movement ("Danses suisses"). The third provides her, as well as her sympathetic collaborator, pianist Vladimir Stoupel, with an opportunity to blend lyricism with slashing figuration, a challenge they meet with a combination of wit and verve. The last movement (or might it also be Audite's engineers?) displays the unalloyed silver of her instrument's upper registers—as well of course, as the purity of her tone production—in its cantabile sections.

The contrast of an almost metallic brightness with shadows, and shadowy dimness streaked only occasionally by light, that the two works offer, of course, allows Ingolfsson to draw upon the correspondingly contrasting sides of her musical personality, her tone production, and the capabilities of her instrument; all three respond to the challenges of Dmitri Shostakovich's late work. It seems to be a tough sell; even dedicatee David Oistrakh, who recorded the sonata with Sviatoslav Richter (Mobile Fidelity MFCD 909, presumably no longer available), and who set a very high standard, hardly popularized the piece. Ingolffson and Stoupel play with reserved puckishness in the first movement (so did Leila Josefowicz, whose performance with John Novacek on Warner, 2564 62997-2 I very strongly recommended in Fanfare , 30:2, preferring it to the reading by Oistrakh's own student Lydia Mordkovich on Chandos 8988), and they hack and slash their way aggressively through the second movement's thickets of irony. Ingolffson sounds particularly commanding as she dispatches the movement's difficulties, and the engineers have captured the dynamic range of the instruments in the most tumultuous sections. By contrast, they set the pizzicato statement of the final movement's passacaglia theme and the first variations in a very subdued light, which remains through the movement.

In Fanfare 26:5, I noted that Ilya Grubert's performance on Channel Classics 16398 lacked, in its last movement, Oistrakh's "depth of reflection." I also thought that his reading of the second movement hardly matched "both the last measure of Oistrakh's fervor and the caustic bite of his pessimism." Could that be said of Ingolfsson's reading of the finale as well? However Ingolfsson stands in relation to Oistrakh, however, she demonstrates probing insight into the sonata—as she does into Stravinsky's pastiche, and her pairing of them deserves a strong recommendation.

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