



Dvořák: Cello Concerto & Klid - Bloch: Schelomo

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I must admit that I sighed a little as I got ready to review this CD. "Here we go, another Dvořák Cello Concerto," I thought. Even so, my interest and then my excitement mounted as I listened to this disc, because it has so much going for it. It opens with Bloch's Schelomo, a work that I enjoy, but that often seems a little long for its material, and also a little Hollywood-hysterical. The first thing I noticed was how good everything sounds. Cellist Marc Coppey produces an unusually burnished and smooth sound in all three of these works, and both he and the orchestra play with considerable tonal character. And then there's the engineering, which strikes me as superior in its clarity and balance. It also is exceptionally realistic. Pulled in by the sound per se, I was then taken with the sensitivity of the playing. Many lovely things occur during these readings, particularly where Coppey is concerned. One of those lovely things takes place in the last movement of Dvořák's concerto—at the five-minute mark, to be exact, where, after some transitional material, the cellist returns briefly to the movement's opening theme. Coppey plays this passage with eloquent simplicity, and with the most refined and rich tone. Even some of the best cellists have difficulty avoiding awkwardness in some of this concerto's more awkward passages, but not Coppey. He attended conservatories in his native Strasbourg, then Paris, and then Bloomington, and he won the Leipzig Bach Competition in 1988. I think that this is the first time that I have heard him play; I'm certainly going to be checking out his earlier recordings after this! His Bach cello suites are on YouTube. At first listen, they seem a little Romantic to me, but the sound and the assurance of his playing are not to be ignored.

Steven Kruger, Huntley Dent, and Jerry Dubins all beat me to reviews of this program because they were working with a download. (I'm old school, preferring, when I can, to review a physical CD.) I made a point of not reading their reviews until I had formed my own opinion and written the previous paragraph. Dent was similarly impressed with the evenness and beauty of Coppey's tone. Kruger also liked the program very much. Dubins, on the other hand, wrote, "In much of the technically difficult passagework, cellist Marc Coppey sounds labored, and even in relaxed moments of lyrical calm his tone, which is a bit on the grainy side to begin with, is not the loveliest I've heard. But Coppey's technical and tonal shortcomings are minor beside Kirill Karabits's lackadaisical conducting and the German Symphony Orchestra Berlin's lapses in good behavior." Much as I respect Dubins's opinion, I don't share it. (Maybe he should check his computer cables!) In a very competitive field, in which cellists such as Rostropovich, Starker, and Piatigorsky all have given us excellent recordings of this music, Coppey does not supplant them—but he has no reason to be ashamed in their august company. If you're looking for a modern

recording of these works in very fine sound, I have no hesitation about recommending this new release to you.

