

**Dvořák & Tchaikovsky: Serenades**

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Toshio Yanagisawa founded the Balkan Chamber Orchestra back in 2007, and evidently they have developed into an exceptionally fine outfit. While both works are usually given light and flowing accounts, as befits their shared title, Yanagisawa takes a more relaxed view in the Dvorak, and imbues the Tchaikovsky with a symphonic intensity reminiscent of Herbert von Karajan's digital remake from the 1980s with the Berlin Philharmonic. Imagine Karajan's velvety cantabile on a chamber scale imbued with Rafael Kubelik's gentle freshness and charm, and you'll have an idea of the sound and manner of these beguiling performances. As recorded, the sound above the staff occasionally thins a little, although this finds compensation in an unusually light and agile (four-player) bass section, whose presence is clearly felt with a detailed sense of bass extension.

If the Dvorak might have benefited from a more imperative sense of its lyrical impulse, the Tchaikovsky possesses a greater sense of forward momentum and grip. The tricky waltz swings with an infectious lilt, the exchanges between upper and lower strings being deftly handled, and the elegiac slow movement is radiantly voiced and textured. The pizzicato accompanied secondary theme sounds resplendent here, as do the series of heartfelt swoons and sighs towards the end. The finale is unusually disciplined in attack and one hears a wealth of internal detail normally obscured by high-speed scampering.