

---

**BACH:** *Concerto No. 2 in E Major for Violin and Orchestra, S. 1042; (orch. RESPIGHI): Sonata No. 2 in E Minor for Violin and Figured Bass, S. 1023; Sinfonia in D Major, S. 1045; Partita No. 1 in B Minor, S. 1002; Partita No. 3 in E Major, S. 1006*

Gidon Kremer, violin; Academic Symphony Orchestra of the Leningrad State Philharmonia; Maris Yansons, conductor  
Musical Heritage Society MHS Stereo  
824324, 2 LPs \$8.90 members, \$13.90 nonmembers

Gidon Kremer is a young (thirty-four) Latvian violinist of some repute. Yet reading reviews of past records one

*American Record Guide*



Johann Sebastian Bach and his family

gets an impression of fiddle schizophrenia: sometimes good, sometimes not so good. Clearly, though, he is a violinist of considerable potential. All the more pity that his education did not include the Bach style. On the evidence of this record his stylistic sympathies go back only as far as Tchaikovsky. If you like your Bach *à la russe* (circa 1880), Kremer is your man. Interestingly enough, in the Musical Heritage Society's own puff piece on this record (*Musical Heritage Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, Feb. 16, 1981),

David M. Green cannot ignore the problem, and writes, "Only in the *adagio* do things get rather romantically treacly. However, I'm not sure whether that effect is owing to Respighi or to Kremer's violinistic training."

Kremer's performance of the Concerto is slow, insensitive and heavy, and he is accompanied by a keyboardless, velveteen, plush sounding orchestra, which does little to help matters. The *allegro assai* is particularly unforgettable, for the wrong reason, as it galumphs grotesquely along at a mild

*moderato*, with Kremer biting purposefully into the first note of every measure as though his life depended on it.

The performance of the Sonata, BWV 1023, in Respighi's tasteful orchestration, is the one saving grace of this set. I hesitate to state the matter categorically, but as far as I can discover, this is the first ever recording of this version of the Sonata. Kremer plays the lovely *adagio* with smooth tone and gentle *portamento*. His playing seems more at ease when he can sing out. The third movement *Allemande* trips along in delightful dancelike fashion. Oh, that he had retained the dance style for the solo Partitas. Paradoxically, this anachronistic orchestration is the only performance on these discs in which the orchestra includes harpsichord continuo; the "straight" Concerto and Sinfonia do not. The performance of the Sinfonia sounds like something that got lost out of Handel's *Water Music* and is trying to find a stylistic home. The orchestral contribution is a mess of befuddled textures and all is played at a continuous *forte*.

Sides 3 and 4 of this two-disc set contain insensitive, dull performances of two of the solo violin Partitas. Save your money for Luca's luminescent, joyful performances of the complete set of the solo violin Sonatas and Partitas (None-such HC-73030).

Kremer's violin is recorded much too close up, yet his tone sounds shallow. The orchestral sound has a woolly and indistinct bass to it. The first side of the first disc has pre-echo during the opening movement of the Concerto. The record sleeves contain copious notes by Nancy Hager and Clara K. Marvin, but no information is given regarding the recordings nor the editions used, which, especially in the case of the Partitas, were not Bach's.

**IFAN PAYNE**  
Kansas State University