

**BARTÓK: *Violin Concerto No. 2***

Peter Zazofsky, violin; Orchestre National de Belgique; Georges Octors, conductor  
Deutsche Grammophon Stereo 2535 012,  
\$9.98

Peter Zazofsky, born in Boston in 1954, has won at least nine prizes in major violin competitions, culminating in the Gold Medal Second Prize at the 1980 Queen Elizabeth International Competition in Brussels. This disc contains the live recording of his prize-winning performance of the Bartók Concerto No. 2 at that competition.

That this magnificent record is of a live performance raises in my mind a number of questions regarding the musical value of the usual studio recording of symphonic music.

I realize that the record, like the camera, always lies, but I will assume

9



Peter Zazofsky, violinist

that this performance has not been re-touched in the studio. (I wish I knew the real facts regarding this.) Not only is the performance of this Concerto the equal of any other on record, but it supersedes most in tension and coherence. Both the quality of the sound and of the playing have a vibrancy and electricity that is so often missing from studio recordings.

The Bartók Concerto cannot be an easy one to perform. Its constant changes from tension to relaxation and the shifts of rhythm, tempo, and mood pose problems for melding the music into a coherent whole. All of these problems Zazofsky and Octors surmount triumphantly.

From amongst the many fine moments in this performance, I must single out the magic of the opening to the *Andante tranquillo* second movement. Zazofsky captures well the half-lit sense of mystery, and invests it with a forlorn feeling of unutterable loss and sad regret. In that

same movement, he also succeeds in playing the repeated thirty-second notes, measures 105 and following, some of which are flying *staccato* and many of which are *tremolo*, more successfully all-of-a-piece than I had previously heard.

The only question concerning Zazofsky's playing that is raised in this performance is in regard to the power of sound that he can generate. He is fundamentally a poetic, lyric player and I would wonder whether he can produce a large enough sound to make a full effect at large climaxes, as in measure 594 of this Concerto, for example.

The sound on the record is excellent. Only between the second and third movements is one aware that there is a large audience present. Balances are excellent, and this is especially so where the relationship of soloist to orchestra is concerned. I wish that every engineer who rams the microphone down the throat of a solo piano or violin would listen to this record. Or better still, attend a few real concerts.

Good, anonymous notes on Zazofsky, but skimpy notes on the music with lots of empty white space on the sleeve. The edition used is listed (good!) but despite telling us that this is a live recording, no date or venue is given (shoddy!).

As I suggested above, Zazofsky is a poetic player, and it is the lyric aspect of Bartók's music that he brings out. If you are looking for a recommendation regarding performances of this Concerto, no single one encompasses all of the multiple facets of this complex work. Buy the Zazofsky for its poetry and buy the Menuhin/Furtwängler version for its biting, dramatic nervous tension. Then play whichever one you feel in the mood for.

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# PEDAGOGICAL LINEAGE OF PETER ZAZOFSKY

