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## JS BACH Complete Solo Keyboard Concertos

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Julia Zilberquit's Bach concerto cycle for Musical Heritage Society gains a new lease of catalogue life on Warner Classics.

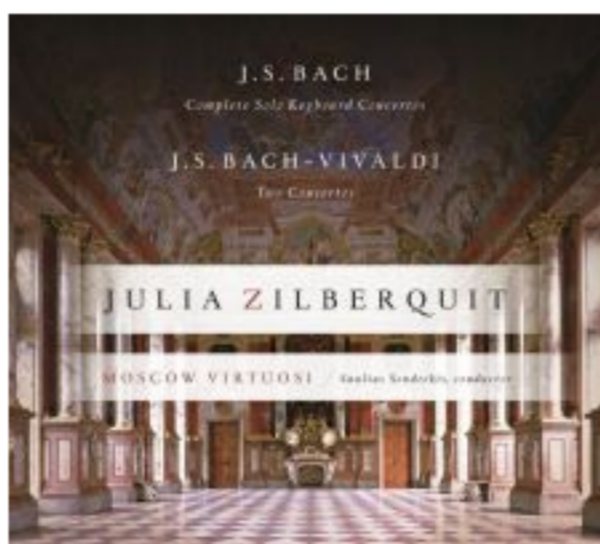
The set begins and ends with two Bach organ arrangements of Vivaldi concertos in Zilberquit's own versions for piano and chamber orchestra – transcriptions of transcriptions, so to speak. In the opening concerto, BWV593, originally for two violins and cello (RV565), the first-movement fugue's four-voice texture is judiciously apportioned between piano and strings, while the imitative writing in the finale loses nothing in translation when applied to the piano. The fast outer movements unfold in a stern and relatively uninflected manner that suggests little of the music's ebullience, although Zilberquit's singing tone and innate sense of line come home to roost in the central *Largo e spiccato*. Similar comments apply to the revamped Vivaldi A minor Concerto, BWV596 (RV522), highlighted by a slow movement laced with lovely embellishments in the piano part.

As for the Bach concertos proper, the Moscow Virtuosi are nothing if not disciplined and precise. Attacks and releases in fast movements boast unquestionable point and unanimity, notably in the downward scales of BWV1055's finale and the repeated-note phrase in BWV1054's first-movement theme. Slow movements best demonstrate the orchestra's expressive potential. In the central movement of BWV1053, the subtle colours emerging from the *arco* strings against the *pizzicato* bass and cello parts justify the unusually broad tempo. Also notice the continuo part adding discreet splashes of colour during Zilberquit's gorgeous rendition of the *Largo* of BWV1056.

Still, one misses the intelligent dynamic scaling, textural variety and dance-like character that distinguishes the András Schiff, Murray Perahia and Angela Hewitt Bach concerto cycles. To cite one example, the Zilberquit/Sondeckis BWV1054 finale pounds the music into your ears, with little differentiation between beats, while Hewitt/Tognetti's faster tempo, suppler phrasing and more transparent sonority bring the music to uplifting life. Likewise, the *Allegro assai* of the revamped Fourth *Brandenburg Concerto* (BWV1057) here defines the three Ls: literal, laboured and listless, in comparison to Hewitt/Tognetti's playful aura and understated rhythmic snap. The close-up impact of the engineering reveals a well-balanced but slightly strident ambience and, in sum, Zilberquit and company have their memorable moments.

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Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings

Grandfather's Wooden Leg

Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings

Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings

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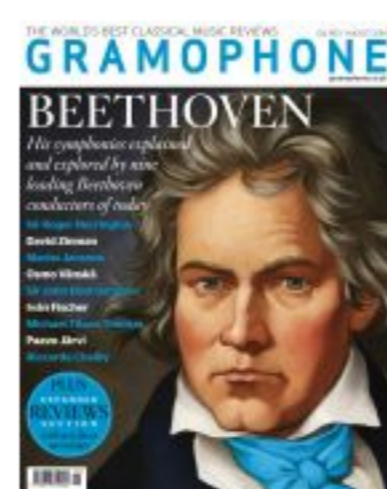
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