'Klezmer Concertos and Encores'

Ellstein Hassidic Dance  
Golijov Rocketekya  
Schoenberg Klezmer Rondos  
Starer K'li zemer  
Weinberg Canzonetta, The Maypole  
Alberto Mizrahi ten  
Scott Goff fl  
David Krakauer cl  
Alicia Svigals vn  
Martha Mooke ebar  
Pablo Aslan db  
Barcelona Symphony Orchestra; Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra; Seattle Symphony Orchestra / Gerhard Schwarz

Naxos American Classics/Milken Archive @ 8 559403 (68' • DDD)

An important archive in light-hearted mood

This superbly documented release from the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music (one of a tranche of releases newly released into the UK) doesn’t take itself too seriously. Folk music has long inspired orchestral composers to borrow melodies or to write new ones based on traditional material. When it comes to so-called ‘klezmer’, authenticist qualms are more than usually out of place. The idea of a clarinet-led wedding party ensemble has more to do with the Catskills than the Carpathians and the word itself is a convenient contraction, meaning merely ‘instrumental musician’.

Two of these pieces nonetheless stand out. You may have caught Paul Schoenfield’s Klezmer Rondos in a previous incarnation on the defunct Argo label (6/94, nla), while Osvaldo Golijov’s Rocketekya pushes further into post-modernism with its fusion of Latin rhythms, rock aesthetics and Jewish modes.

The rest of the programme makes easier (soggier?) listening. Robert Starer’s contribution recalls the concerto he wrote for Itzhak Perlman, which Michael Oliver rather cruelly described as ‘like Bloch with chilli sauce’. Fortunately, standards of recording and execution are high: Gerard Schwarz extracts sensitive accompaniments and the jazz-inflected playing of David Krakauer is always provocative. David Gutman

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