



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

Telemann: Viola Concertos, Overtures, Fantasias.

Antoine Tamestit; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Bernhard Forck concertmaster. Harmonia Mundi.

There's a reason J.S. Bach asked Georg Philipp Telemann to stand godfather to his son Carl Philipp Emanuel: he was good. Violists, too, can claim Telemann as a godfather. He wrote the first solo concerto for their instrument, and—prolific note-spinner that he was—treated it quite decently in a variety of other works as well. A handful of those works are on offer here, plus a couple orchestral suites that admirably reflect Telemann's fluency and imagination. One of them, the *Ouverture burlesque*, is a cut above. It shows the composer turning to the *commedia dell'arte* for imagery, and penning a rollicking, fun piece that gets a wonderful ride from the Akademie. But the real story here is Tamestit, who plays the viola like a rock star. Using a 1672 Strad that combines a buttery tone with the power of a cannon, he delivers a vivacious, warmly expressive account of that *ur*-concerto and is ably partnered by AAM violist Sabine Fehlandt in a later double concerto for *violettes* and duo sonata. Recorded at the Teldex Studio Berlin, this is the best thing that's happened to Telemann in a long time.

Ted Libbey

Further Listening: Bach: *Brandenburg Concertos* (AAM Berlin/HM); *Bel Cantata—The Voice of the Viola* (Tamestit, Tiberghien/HM)



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Gubaidulina: *Dialog: Ich und Du; The Wrath of God; The Light of the End.*

Vadim Repin; Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Andris Nelsons. DG.

The work that brought Sofia Gubaidulina to the attention of the West was *Offertorium*, her first violin concerto, written for Gidon Kremer in 1980. Comes now her third, *Dialog: Ich und Du*, coupled here with two other recent works on a release honoring Gubaidulina's 90th birthday. Composed for Repin in 2018, *Dialog: Ich und Du* takes its title from Martin Buber's seminal tract in existential philosophy, written a century ago. The piece, which unfolds as an "encounter" between violin and orchestra, is filled at times with "unutterable groanings," at others with anguish and violence. Its most notable features are the slow-moving walls of sound that pass in contrary motion—clusters of dissonance not dissonant at all, merely physical—and a surprise ending, the "still, small voice" of the violin held against a chord of D Minor in the orchestra. The chthonic sounds of *The Wrath of God* (2020) and the drama of *The Light of the End* (2003) are no less impressive, and proclaim Gubaidulina's uncanny way of turning instruments, and the orchestra as a whole, into "voices." Overall, a superb recording, with excellent performances from soloist, conductor, and orchestra. **TL**

Further Listening: Gubaidulina: *Offertorium* (Kremer, BSO, Dutoit/DG)



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Jeux de Création. Bertrand, harp; L'Ensemble Ondine. Naxos.

Great engineering: the harp is both rich and incisive, both transparent and diaphanous. Ravel's famous *Jeux d'eau* works well in transcription, and Bertrand gets the low strings to hum like a sustained instrument. E.T.A. Hoffmann's Quintet in C Minor for Harp and Strings (1806) has a modest amount of late-classical drama and mystery, and the relatively thick scoring gives it some lushness. Hoffmann's themes may not rank with, say, Mozart's best, but they're still engaging. The strings play with a healthy amount of vibrato and a full sound, so there is a warm, romantic glow. American composer Geoffrey Gordon's 2020 *Jeux de Création* evokes the sound world of French music from a century before; it is atmospheric and filled with pregnant pauses, spiky harmonies, and a mysterious ending. Debussy's *Dances sacrée et profane* are good but slightly under-cafeinated. André Caplet's two *Divertissements* are like red meat for the harp; Anne-Sophie Bertrand plays these workouts with vigor. The strings join again for Caplet's *Conte fantastique*, a nearly hallucinogenic post-impressionist tale with moods ranging from the grotesque to the eerie to the ecstatic. (Try this one with absinthe.) Highly recommended, especially for the top-notch playing.

Stephen Estep

Further Listening: Mozart, Golubev, Mosolov, Kikta: *Harp Pieces* (Vera Dulova/RCD)