

FOR PLAYERS OF VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS, AND FIDDLE

STRINGS

Vadim Gluzman Firewalks with Bach & Priceless Strad Violin

Homage to Baroque master triumphantly spans three centuries of solo-violin repertoire

By Greg Cahill posted November 2012



photo: Marco Borggreve

At 39, Israeli violinist Vadim Gluzman delivers a powerful musical statement forged in the fires of J.S. Bach's nearly three-centuries-long legacy. On paper, the project is simple enough: Gluzman opens with an emotionally rich reading of Bach's Partita No. 2 in D minor, BWV 1004, alternately somber and joyous. He follows with the 2007 Lera Auerbach composition "par.ti.ta" for solo violin, a complex work dedicated to Gluzman.

It begins with stratospheric high-pitched harmonics and resounds with Bach-inspired dramatic melodies (the influence of the Brandenburg Concertos is singled out in the liner notes as is the sense of deconstructed Baroque music)—think of it as what a post-Ligeti Bach might have written if he lived under the nuclear umbrella and experienced global terrorism. Gluzman returns to the master, Bach's Partita No. 3 in E major, BWV 1006, in the third offering (the delicate, upbeat Preludio movement reportedly was one of the composer's favorites). It is the last of Bach's cycle of six solo-violin works and sets the stage for Ysaÿe's reflective 20th-century cyclical masterwork Sonata in A minor for solo violin, Op. 27, No. 2.

Indeed, you soon realize that the first three works have been a prelude for this monumental Ysaÿe piece, on which Gluzman breaks through into a high creative level. Gluzman infuses this underrated modern piece—filled with haunting harmonies and plaintive melodies—with a Baroque sensibility, especially the opening movement (Obsession—Prelude) that is a standout performance. This Baroque quality continues in the flowing second movement, Malinconia (Poco lento), in the staccato stabs of the fourth movement, Les Furies.

The trick is the execution. And Gluzman's ability to run the emotional gamut while paying homage to Bach's own fiery soul is a tribute to the violinist's considerable skill.

Bis has issued the recording on a high-definition, hybrid multi-channel and stereo SACD that captures the depth and richness of Gluzman's tone and his mastery of the technical demands presented by these works. No tricks. No gimmicks—just high art from a thrilling artist capable of fire walking while fiddling on the 1690 "ex-Leopold Auer" Stradivari.