

ZUILL BAILEY

CELLO

THE NEW ZEALAND HERALD

Zuill Bailey – Russian Masterpieces for Cello and Orchestra

Saturday February 28, 2009

Rating: * * * * *

Zuill Bailey may not be so well known for his cello playing in this part of the world although, a few years back, some might have caught him playing Bach and wielding his instrument with murderous intent in the late-night, small-screen prison drama Oz.

Over the last few years, Bailey has been making an impact through his recordings, particularly for his Beethoven Cello Sonatas with pianist Simone Dinnerstein; his latest outing, Russian Masterpieces for Cello and Orchestra, with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra under Martin West, should gain him wider recognition.

Bailey well understands the "rococo" in Tchaikovsky's Variations on a Rococo Theme, and it takes a ballet orchestra to come up with the perfectly pitched accompaniment for his lithe account of the work.

In these times, when the composer's original version is sacrosanct, Bailey daringly opts for the score as altered by its commissioner, the German cellist Wilhelm Fitzenhagen, and makes a convincing case for it.

Benjamin Folkman's programme notes make much of chuckling triplets, sizzling upward scales and non-stop virtuoso salvos; Bailey gives us all three and more.

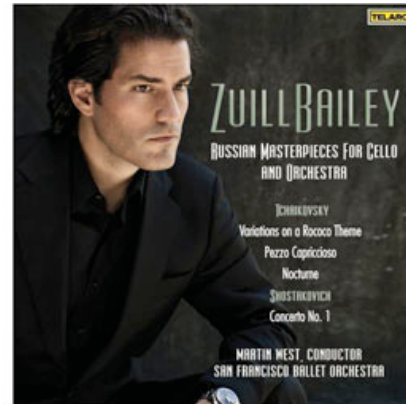
After two shorter Tchaikovsky pieces - a Pezzo Capriccioso that veers from the explosive to the exquisite at the turn of a bow and a Nocturne that must count among the composer's most gorgeous slow movements - the CD is completed by Shostakovich's popular First Concerto.

This Telarc recording, captured at the Skywalker Sound facilities of Star Wars man George Lucas, catches every flex and sinew of a work that ranges from the tender to the terrifying.

Many will be familiar with the way in which this Concerto is said to track Shostakovich's growing unhappiness with the Soviet oppression around him and, on this disc, his feelings are presented with the pacing of a thriller.

I guarantee that the finale, with its thundering drums and klezmerish clarinets, once heard, will have you determined to find a place for it on your record shelves.

– William Dart



Colbert Artists Management

111 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019
www.colbertartists.com ~ 212-757-0782