

# ZUILL BAILEY

## CELLO

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### CLASSICS TODAY



PETER ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY  
Variations on a Rococo Theme; Pezzo Capriccioso; Nocturne  
DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH  
Cello Concerto No. 1  
Zuill Bailey (cello)

San Francisco Ballet Orchestra

Martin West

Telarc- 80724(CD)  
Reference Recording - Shostakovich: Rostropovich (Sony)

*Artistic Quality* **9/9** *Sound Quality*

**Zuill Bailey's bold and impassioned take on Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations is quite unusual for this piece, which is usually presented in a more sedate manner. There's no chance of drowsiness with Bailey, whose vigorous and rough-hewn playing style proves a winning tonic for this music, causing you to hear it afresh, and perhaps even to reappraise its merits.** The cello writing is quite fine, reaching virtuoso status in some passages, though Bailey treats the entire work as a cello tour de force. He's just as committed in Tchaikovsky's Pezzo Capriccioso and Nocturne in D minor.

The Shostakovich Concerto No. 1 of course is a better-known piece, with greater challenges. Again, **Bailey employs a big, solid tone as he digs into the music, yet he's also quite sensitive to the composer's pointed rhythms, prickly accents, and subtle dynamic shadings.** However, Shostakovich requires more than the pleasant but rather undistinguished playing Martin West and the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra provided for the Tchaikovsky works. There's nothing really wrong with West's accompaniment, but to hear Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra for Rostropovich (admittedly an ungenerous comparison) is to experience the deep emotion and bitter irony Shostakovich wrote into the music--qualities not readily discernible in the San Francisco ensemble's performance.

**Still, it's Zuill's playing that matters most to cello aficionados, and he does not disappoint, especially as Telarc's recording gives him the lion's share of the sound stage. It's an unusual program, but the pieces work well together. For that, and for Bailey's playing, this disc is well worth a listen.** [1/22/2009]

--Victor Carr Jr

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