

warhorse *Symphonie espagnole* for violin and orchestra, it is surprising to learn that he is the author of over a half-dozen other vehicles for soloist and orchestra (and all kinds of other works, operatic, orchestra, chamber, and sacred, as well), including two other violin concertos and an absolutely unknown piano concerto. The only one of these other concerto-type works to have earned any kind of reputation at all is the Concerto for cello and orchestra in D minor composed in 1877, a favorite of student cellists that is nevertheless surprisingly and wonderfully colorful in a master's hands. Lalo was a better and more thoughtful composer than historians usually allow, and although the work sometimes veers toward the trite, the Cello Concerto is not short of charms.

Though a Frenchman, Lalo was of Spanish descent; Spanish idioms fill the three movements of the Cello Concerto, here subtly, there blatantly. The *Allegro maestoso* first movement is prefaced by a *Lento* introduction in which the cellist ponders the coming movement in recitative style -- there is no traditional orchestral exposition here. The body of the movement is built around three elements: a firmly chiseled tune first offered by the soloist, an unshakable descending accompaniment theme, and a gorgeous, *dolcissimo* second theme, during which the descending accompaniment theme takes on a new tenderness but does not dissolve. The second movement is an *intermezzo* that alternates between lyric *Andantino con moto* music and sprightly *Allegro presto* music. After a brief introduction (which temporarily moves into the unlikely realm of B flat minor and gives an advance copy of one of the upcoming themes), the last movement takes the shape of a robust *rondo*.



SCHUMANN

CELLOKONZERT A-MOLL OP. 129

LALO

CELLOKONZERT D-MOLL



JÁNOS STARKER

VIOLONCELLO

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

STANISLAW SKROWACZEWSKI

Robert Schumann wrote no fewer than seven concertante works, among which only the Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 54 (1841) and the Cello Concerto in A minor, Op. 129 (1850) find regular representation on concert programs and recordings. The Cello Concerto, composed during the early days of Schumann's ultimately unhappy stay in Düsseldorf, has long been a favorite among performers, especially given the relative paucity of great nineteenth century concerti for that instrument.

Schumann considered calling the work a "Concert piece for cello with orchestral accompaniment"; indeed, the orchestral writing in the concerto is far more transparent and unobtrusive than is normally associated with Schumann's concert works. It is a little-known fact that the composer learned to play cello as a child, and that after damaging his right hand during the early 1830s he intended to return to the cello in an effort to better his understanding of chamber and orchestral music. Nevertheless, the unfortunate idea that the Cello Concerto is poorly written for the instrument persists even to the present. Such a notion may result in part from the work's lack of flashy virtuosity typically associated with instrumental concertos, a feature found in Schumann's Piano Concerto.

Four lean bars -- three of them quiet pizzicato chords, one outlining a pianistic accompaniment figure -- introduce the cello's broad opening theme. The passionate second theme, with its chromatic inflections and upward minor-seventh leaps, is almost archetypal in its use of the cello. A comparison of the concerto with both earlier and later cello concertos demonstrates Schumann's palpable influence

on the way composers came to write for the instrument. The development, more Classical in tone, ventures into stormier territory and utilizes a triplet motive. Encouraged by the horn, the cello attempts a recapitulation of the initial theme; the orchestra, however, rejects the soloist's choice of F sharp minor and recommences its agitated passagework. The recapitulation proper is stunning and unexpected; characteristically, Schumann makes very little change in the exposition material as it reappears. The coda is interrupted by a recitative for the soloist that prepares a modulation to F major for the second movement.

The second movement, marked *Langsam*, is essentially a tender song. The soloist's rich melody floats on a sea of gently pulsating pizzicato triplets, while the passionate double-stopped outburst in the middle of the movement is a golden moment in the cellist's repertory. A brief recollection of the first movement interrupts the flow; the solo line, growing ever more excited, paves the way into the finale. While the two contrasting themes of the last movement -- one rather bold, the other more intimate -- are attractive enough, the level of inspiration in the finale falls short of that in the first two movements, particularly in the development. More successful, however, is the accompanied cadenza that precedes the final coda. The substitution by some players of flashier cadenzas (written by less insightful cellists) for Schumann's more musically convincing one seems, happily, to be a thing of the past.

For the many who know Edouard Lalo only as the composer of the

Schumann Cello Concerto

Lalo Cello Concerto

Janos Starker, cello
Stanislaw Skrowaczewski

The London Symphony Orchestra

Schumann Cello Concerto in A Minor, Op. 129 23:38

1 Nicht zu schnell 10:36

2 Langsam 4:01

3 Sehr lebhaft 9:01

Lalo Cello Concerto in D Minor 22:56

4 Prelude: Lento - Allegro maestoso - Tempo I 1:12

5 Intermezzo: Andantino con moto - Allegro presto 4:59

6 Introduction: Andante - Allegro vivace 6:45

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Co-producer - Harold Lawrence, Wilma Cozart

Engineer- Robert Fine



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com