

and virtuosic cello concerto. Its saturated, cinematic quality would suggest an author already exiled to Hollywood, but in fact it dates from 1935, revealing the Italian's predilection for strongly rhythmic, big-boned melody and sumptuous brass just made for movies.

With Piatigorsky as muse, it's hardly surprising this is a cellistic assault course, and rarely performed: in fact, this claims to be the first professional performance in 80 years. The writing is effective, exploiting pizzicato and multi-voiced writing, with lashings of warm ardour and heroic rhetoric. A little material goes a long way in the bold first movement; the charming serenata-style *Allegretto* shimmies with exotica à la Rimsky-Korsakov, while the galloping *Vivo* finale opens with some glorious solo acrobatics. In Brinton Averil Smith, Castelnuovo-Tedesco has found a worthy exponent: his is a cast-iron technique of verve and refinement put entirely at the service of the music, and the sort of dead-pan panache that recalls János Starker.

Castelnuovo-Tedesco had a special talent for reimagining, and the arrangements here were the happiest discoveries for me. He conjures up opera roles for the cello, from Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* to *Don Giovanni's* Serenade, and a truly blistering paraphrase on 'Largo factotum' from *The Barber of Seville*. The artistry on display here is breathtaking; a shame that Evelyn Chen's playing doesn't quite rise to its outrageous comedy.

The brilliantly reconfigured 'Alborada del gracioso' from Ravel's potent *Mirrors* would set alight any recital stage. Young cellists, take note. *Hezen Vallace*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★★★

## **Goldschmidt** **Cello Concerto** **Reizenstein** **Cello Concerto in G**

Raphael Wallfisch (cello);  
Konzerthausorchester Berlin/  
Nicholas Milton  
CPO 555 109; 56:06 mins



Raphael Wallfisch's series of recordings of mid-20th century cello concertos by Jewish composers in exile, *Voices in the Wilderness*, highlights significant works by



A sumptuous romantic:  
Joshua Bell plays  
Bruch sympathetically

what still remains, tragically, a lost generation. Some have found wider rehabilitation, like Korngold's; others, like these two, have not. Franz Reizenstein and Berthold Goldschmidt were able to escape Nazi Germany and settle in Britain, but struggled to keep their art alive – especially Goldschmidt who, after much frustration in an unwelcoming climate, eventually succumbed to 25 years of musical silence. Franz Reizenstein, 22 when he came to the UK, was better able to study and adjust, but it tells us much about his artistic fate that this massive cello concerto, written in 1936, revised twice and premiered in 1951 by William Pleeth, has been neglected for decades.

Its musical language calls to mind variously Holst's 'Mars' from *The Planets*, Hindemith's *Trauermusik* and more: a thick-textured, anguished work with driving rhythms and a cello part that pushes the soloist to high intensity in the instrument's stratospheres. The Goldschmidt Concerto is a terser, more concentrated work – which does it no harm – and its strength of character is if anything greater still, notable for tense atmospheres and sardonic, Mahlerian snarling, especially in the finale, a large-footed tarantella.

Raphael Wallfisch navigates both concertos with a hefty, penetrating sound, unfailing intellect and oak-strong conviction. The Berlin Konzerthausorchester under Nicholas Milton prove heroic partners, though the somewhat

dry recorded sound does perhaps too little to add bloom to these ambitious and challenging works.

*Jessica Duchon*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★

## **Khachaturian**

### **Piano Concerto; Concerto-Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra**

Stepan Simonian (piano);  
Staatsorchester Rheinische  
Philharmonie/Daniel Raiskin  
CPO 777 918-2 54:57 mins



Khachaturian's Piano Concerto of 1936 combines broad melodies inspired by the folk music of the composer's native Armenia with teeming virtuoso piano writing, which sometimes slips engagingly into jazzy syncopated patterns. Stepan Simonian plays the solo part with assured technique, but the cadenzas in particular occasionally take on a hesitant start-stop character. (Xiayin Wang on Chandos offers greater fluency, as well as an attractive crystalline clarity.) The recording keeps a good balance between the soloist and the supportive orchestra, but fails to bring out the most striking innovation in Khachaturian's scoring, the doubling and blurring of a violin melody in the slow movement by a flexatone.

Khachaturian's three concertos, for piano, violin and cello, are matched by a series of

single-movement Concerto-Rhapsodies for the same instruments, written late in his career. The piano work, from 1968, seems at first to be cut from the same cloth as the Concerto; but at around the half-way mark an apparent reference to the composer's famous 'Sabre Dance' acts as the starting-pistol for an extended and exhilarating stretch of sustained rhythmic energy. For Khachaturian enthusiasts, this performance (more taut than Oxana Yablonskaya's on Naxos) may well constitute the main attraction of CPO's disc.

*Anthony Burton*

**PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★  
**RECORDING** ★★★

## **Liszt: Athanor**

### **Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Totentanz**

Beatrice Berrut (piano); Czech  
National Symphony Orchestra/  
Julien Masmonde  
*Aparté AP180 55:58 mins*



Who's 'Athanor'? Actually, it's a what, and it clearly needs explaining, so the Swiss

pianist Beatrice Berrut spends a good while in the booklet doing so; briefly, it's the furnace used by alchemists in their 'search for the philosopher's matter'... implicitly symbolising a 'quest for perfection and the absolute'.

OK, now we know. Otherwise, this title heralds a straightforward disc of Liszt's two piano concertos and the *Totentanz*. To pull off the latter, ever-baffling work without letting it descend into schlock-horror-movie parody is quite an art, and although this can seem an effect-driven performance with plenty of thumping etc, Berrut does succeed in responding to the music with an immediacy that makes some moments feel genuinely hair-raising.

The two concertos fare well, too, No. 2 especially strong on rhetorical flair, and virtuoso passagework milked throughout both. Tempos are good and brisk and the triangle has a field day in its solo spot on No. 1. Berrut has a brilliant touch which turns heavy only when it needs to; her playing is crisp, clear, and sometimes vivid enough to seem possessed of an electrical charge. The Czech National Symphony Orchestra