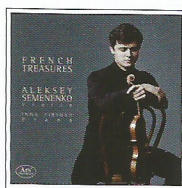


sessions. Reading her booklet note, it clearly matters to her that she is playing the 'Soldat' 1742 Guarneri 'del Gesù', from the same maker and year as Paganini's 'Cannon', and you can hear it is in tip-top shape. She uses a transitional bow, an early Tourte, and her strings are Vision Titanium Solo, 'wound on an advanced synthetic core'.

My own prejudices favour the Italianate sonority of Salvatore Accardo or Massimo Quarta, but I happily give room to the Caprices of Perlman, Papavrami, Ricci, Renardy and Kawaciuk, and less happily to Rabin. Pine makes a terrific sound that is all her own: firm, focused, beautifully equalised – G-string tone is full but not fulsome. Harmonics sound wonderful and the violinistic gymnastics are mostly superb, trills, glissandos, difficult intervals, left-hand pizzicato (in no.24). She plays all repeats – I have never before heard no.4 take eleven minutes – yet never seems robotic, as Rabin can.

Criticisms are slight: some over-premeditated staccato, a very few tuning questions – no.8 still bothers me – and she almost falls over herself in the second variation of no.24. Sometimes the very last note of a piece sounds dodgy, as in the first thing she plays, the Paisiello variations. Her own composition,



on New Zealand's national anthem, is fun. Will any of her interpretations linger in the mind, like Kawaciuk's Caprice no.6? Time will tell.

TULLY POTTER

FRENCH TREASURES

POULENC Violin Sonata **CHAUSSON**

Poème op.25 **DEBUSSY** La plus que lente

(arr. Roques), Clair de lune (arr. Roelens), Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune (arr.

Heifetz) **YSAÏE** Caprice d'après l'étude en forme de valse de Saint-Saëns

Aleksey Semenenko (violin)

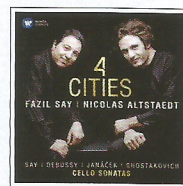
Inna Firsova (piano)

ARS PRODUKTION ARS 38 544

An all-French programme yields a strong debut for a young violinist

Aleksey Semenenko and Inna Firsova mine a rich seam on this disc of 'French Treasures', the passion and poetry of the vividly coloured collection burnished to a rare gleam and captured in clear, warm sound. It marks the Ukrainian-born violinist's debut CD, and his effortless virtuosity and finesse is heightened by beautifully drawn support from regular chamber music partner Firsova.

The arching lines of Poulenc's Sonata are etched with tenderness and spontaneity, from the brittle Allegro con fuoco to the dreamy, searching



Intermezzo – an elegy to the poet Federico García Lorca. The final Presto tragico is furious and bittersweet, Semenenko and Firsova unfurling its tightly wound, enigmatic phrases with clear delight. Particularly impressive in these most ardent of works is Semenenko's daring to allow a bare, non-vibrato tone to surface in places, a perfect foil to the heady opulence of his tone colour elsewhere. It gives extra light and shade to Chausson's sensuous *Poème* – in the composer's own arrangement for violin and piano – and though Semenenko does over-egg the glissandos in places, it's still a reading full of interpretative richness. In Heifetz's arrangement of *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, the same spare tone quality adds to the haunting wonder of its famous opening phrase.

The arrangement of *Clair de lune* is too breathy for my taste, but all told this is a strong debut from a promising young player, unafraid to dig deep to discover new bounty in these familiar gems.

CATHERINE NELSON

★ 4 CITIES

FAZIL SAY Cello Sonata 'Four Cities'

DEBUSSY Cello Sonata in D minor

JANÁČEK Pohádka; Presto for cello and piano **SHOSTAKOVICH** Cello Sonata in D minor op.40

Nicolas Altstaedt (cello) Fazil Say (piano)

WARNER CLASSICS 9025867249

A musical grand tour that inspires a first-class cello-piano partnership

Sivas, Hopa, Ankara and Bodrum: these are the four Turkish cities evoked so vividly by Fazil Say in his 2013 cello sonata. At least in music, their beauties are more than picturesque, and I would jump on a plane to see them, but I'd want to keep my wits about me amid the wild tumult of Hopa and the nocturnal thrum of Ankara.



Sonorous, gymnastic Paganini from Rachel Barton Pine