

Bartok: Violin Pieces.

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BARTOK: Violin Pieces Sherban Lupu; Ian Hobson, p Zephyr 13004 [2CD] 156 minutes

Sherban Lupu is a Romanian violinist and currently professor of violin at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Much of Bartok's musical inspiration came from the folk music of Romania, and Lupu's roots serve him well in this music. Aside from the posthumously published Sonata of 1903, which gives the impression of having been learned in haste and recorded prematurely, the whole recital is of a remarkably high quality. Indeed, these performances withstand comparison with the finest in the catalog. Lupu breathes this music. Phrasing is everything it should be, and he doesn't miss a nuance where one should be, no matter how seemingly slight.

Ian Hobson is a worthy partner too, as any pianist should be who plays keyboard parts that the composer, a superb pianist, wrote for himself.

Another virtue of this collection is the inclusion of Lupu's unaccompanied renditions of folk melodies that Bartok appropriates in many of these works. When Lupu plays these, he abandons his conservatory manners and adopts a playing style similar to the folk fiddlers of southeastern Europe. This is the first time I have ever heard this material. This release has value for the Bartok aficionado and anyone wishing to get all this music on one disc. Excellent notes.