

January



Everything feels ‘in the moment’, a quality of improvisation like music created in the playing of it

Edward Seckerson is enthralled by violinist Lisa Batiashvili’s master storytelling in Tchaikovsky

Sibelius · Tchaikovsky

Sibelius Violin Concerto, Op 47
 Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto, Op 35
 Lisa Batiashvili *vi*
 Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim
 DG © 479 6038GH (70' • DDD)

There is no violinist currently playing the high end of the international circuit that I would sooner go out of my way to hear than Lisa Batiashvili. There is something so super-intuitive about her playing that, while she is performing, the brilliance of her technique, the range of her colours and the sheer invention of her phrasing are subsumed into the intrigue (there seems to be no other word) of her musical storytelling. The last thing on the listener’s mind is how she tells that story but rather where it might be leading. Everything feels ‘in the moment’, a quality of improvisation like music created in the playing of it. Her musicality always comes with an element of surprise.

What strikes me (and indeed surprised me) more than anything about this popular coupling is the distinctive character that she and her seasoned collaborator Daniel Barenboim find for both pieces. For sure, the pieces themselves belong in different sound worlds – and that could hardly be more apparent from the nature



From well-upholstered Tchaikovsky to the elemental chill of Sibelius: Daniel Barenboim and the Staatskapelle Dresden conjure varied sound worlds

of the sound that soloist and orchestra have fashioned here – but it is the very particular musical personalities that make Tchaikovsky and Sibelius who they are that Batiashvili explores so tellingly.

The Tchaikovsky exudes a melancholic warmth fusing classical and romantic sensibilities. That’s a crucial balance in performing this music. The first statement

of the first subject is tender and understated, the second a little more persuasive, but never is the poise and purity of Tchaikovsky’s innate classicism compromised. There is undeniable relish for the expressive opportunities that the piece throws up at every turn but for all the colour and invention of Batiashvili’s playing it is never, ever self-regarding.