

Maxim Vengerov at the Royal Academy of Music

Sarasate: Carmen Fantasy Op 25

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Ravel: Tzigane

Zakhar Bron at the Verbier Festival Academy

JS Bach: Chaconne from Partita no 2 for Solo Violin

All Masterclass Media Foundation, £9.99 each



his own personal interpretative approach to these works. It is always difficult filming such an intimate situation for public viewing, but Vengerov handles the occasion with sensitivity, charm and wit. There is much laughter and joy, although in the 'Carmen Fantasy' masterclass one almost wishes sometimes for a little less public diplomacy! In this particular class Vengerov does not demonstrate with his violin at all, which is a shame since one demonstration is worth a thousand words. The masterclass on Ravel's *Tzigane* however seems to be more successful and here Vengerov is quite adamant in his exact adherence to the details of Ravel's score. This is a serious piece of music, not a gypsy piece in the 'café violinist' style! From time to time he does demonstrate here, although perhaps not as much as one would wish for. The informality and tact used by Vengerov are very much a part of today's approach to teaching and are in marked contrast to the formality of the classes of Heifetz.

The 'Chaconne' from *Partita No 2* by JS Bach is a monumental work and this masterclass lasts over twice as long as the two above. Although Zakhar Bron was the teacher of Maxim Vengerov,

here the similarity ends. After a very good complete performance by the student, Bron launches into a 15-minute monologue (in Russian with a somewhat irritating English voiceover) about his personal approach to the performance of the 'Chaconne' and the relevance of 'historically-informed' violin performances in large modern concert halls. During the next hour we are sitting in on a very musically and technically detailed lesson. There is a wealth of information about musical phrasing, using the violin to produce the effect of many voices simultaneously, melodic splitting of four note chords, use of the lower part of the bow, control of bow speed, etc. Such is the intensity of this lesson that one marvels at the stamina of the student! This masterclass is quite austere in style and although Professor Bron's presence during the student performance is almost intimidating, once the lesson proper starts, his passion is immediately apparent. He demonstrates continually, is extremely demanding, and whether or not one agrees with his musical approach it is obvious that this is teaching at a very high level and a privilege to observe.

Since 1962 and the celebrated filming of Jascha Heifetz at work with his violin class at the University of Southern California there have been several series of filmed masterclasses, but never before has the vision been on such a large scale. These three DVDs are a tiny fraction of what has already been made available very cheaply by the MMF, representing an amazing resource. The two Maxim Vengerov masterclasses deal with cornerstones of the virtuoso repertoire. They are simply and unobtrusively filmed, consisting of a complete student performance followed by a very thorough critical session where we discover Vengerov's thoughts not only about the particular student's performance and weaknesses, but also

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