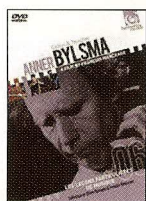


DVDS & BOOKS

ANNER BYLSMA – CELLIST AND TEACHER

A film by François Manceaux
HARMONIA MUNDI HMD 9909035



Between 1987 and 1991, French television broadcast a dozen programmes

eavesdropping on top musicians in teaching roles. Dutch cellist Anner Bylsma was one of them and in this entrancing 56-minute film we watch him teaching works ranging from a Gabrieli canzone and the Prelude and Fugue of Bach's Fifth Suite on Baroque cello, to Auguste Franchomme's Etude op.33 no.11 for two cellos and Henri Pousseur's *La ligne des toits* on the modern instrument.

Bylsma's searching gaze and calm, measured voice and the

Watching this DVD is a soothing as well as an enlightening experience

way that lessons are separated by voiced-over sequences of him playing with his children and cycling around his home town, make watching this DVD a soothing as well as an enlightening experience.

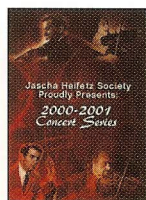
Speaking in English for all but the final interview, Bylsma shares his deep historical knowledge and refreshing insights on everything from vibrato on the Baroque cello to the art of making simple things sound complicated and complicated things sound easy. With his thought-provoking reflections – 'In school I learnt to practise as much as possible; the knack is to practise as little as possible' – this is a film that leaves you with plenty to think over.

JANET BANKS

JASCHA HEIFETZ SOCIETY 2000-2001 CONCERT SERIES

Recitals by Ruggiero Ricci, Sherry Kloss, Erick Friedman & Aaron Rosand

JASCHA HEIFETZ SOCIETY
WWW.KLOSSCLASSICS.COM; FOUR DVDS



Three of these recitals in the Munson Hall of Azusa Pacific University, California, are required

viewing for students, teachers and violin buffs. At 82, Ruggiero Ricci holds an audience mesmerised with solo music, just as I saw him do several times. Bach's D minor Partita, Kreisler's Recitative and Scherzo, Wieniawski's Staccato Study, Paganini's Paisiello Variations and Eleventh Caprice, and Ernst's *The Last Rose of Summer* have irresistible impetus. Acrobatic youngsters should see how still Ricci stands, concentrating on bow and fiddle. Is it all in tune and immaculate? No, of course it is not. Enescu's Ballade pleases me less, and in Ricci's transcription of Tarrega's guitar tremolo study the tune almost disappears. But what a master.

Next, two great tonalists and colourists. Erick Friedman ravishes the senses – my notes include 'lovely' nine times – in Grieg and Fauré sonatas. A pity about the insensitive pianist. The Air from Goldmark's Concerto is absolutely beautiful, with a rainbow of hues. The Debussy–Heifetz *Beau soir* (learnt specially) is gorgeous. The Paganini–Kreisler Caprice no.20, Sarasate's Introduction and Tarantelle, and Saint-Saëns's Introduction and Rondo capriccioso show off every aspect of technique, not least Friedman's exemplary bow division. Laying aside his Joseph Curtin instrument, he plays the Goldmark again on the more silvery 1709 'Vécsey' Stradivari.

Aaron Rosand, at 73 not far past his best, playing from memory and well-partnered by Gerald Robbins, is his velvet-toned self in Vivaldi, Bruch, Bach's Chaconne, Ravel's *Tzigane* and a string of short pieces, best of all the Brahms–Heifetz *Contemplation* and the Chopin–Milstein Nocturne.

Sherry Kloss looks terrific and plays with poise but without much personality tonally or musically. She is best when trying to sound like her teacher Heifetz, as in Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Sea Murmurs*. Cyril Scott's *Tallahassee Suite*, despite its faded idiom, also finds her in good estate.

TULLY POTTER

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Simon Fischer

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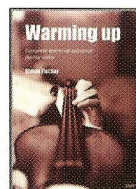
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Warming Up is the latest publication from player and teacher Simon Fischer, author of the *Basics* and *Practice* books and the long-running *Basics* article on violin technique in *The Strad*. It consists of a series of 19 exercises that cover the left hand, the right hand and arm, vibrato, intonation and shifting, and describes a total of 36 minutes' work (which reduces over time with practice) over its 24 pages of sheer technical gold. Based on his own playing and his work with students, Fischer's book does not teach

the techniques themselves, but instead reinforces good practice and habits. The exercises can be done complete as a daily routine, in parts, or once or twice a week, building what Fischer calls 'a solid basis for everything else you do on the instrument'.

Explanations are clear, and they describe how physical movements feel, rather than how they look. Feedback comes via the ears rather than via the eyes, although there are some useful photos at the end of the book providing further details about the exercises.

There are also suggestions for varying practice on different days – the aim is for variety to make it more likely that students will use the book. Although only one minute is allocated to developing a light left hand, the benefits can be enormous, and the seven minutes on soundpoints are likewise well invested.

The Secrets of Tone Production, a four-hour DVD set, is based on a class Fischer has given many times over the past 20 years. In a series of carefully sequenced chapters (handily bookmarked for ease of use) Fischer alternates between explanations of each exercise straight to camera, complete with demonstrations, and calm, concentrated work with twelve students aged eleven to twenty, including cellists and bassists. The work is at once detailed and very simple, and the feedback that Fischer gives makes the content extremely accessible to students working either alone or with their teachers.

The concept of the DVD is simple. Everything can be broken down into easily learnt steps. Both beginners and advanced players face the same problems – they're just harder to spot in those playing at a higher level. Fischer also cites Casals as a role model in his insistence on daily technical practice and points out areas of overlap between their approaches. His combination of formidable authority, clarity and generosity makes Fischer a beacon for both players and pedagogues.

PHILIPPA BUNTING