
Jennifer Pike

Selected Reviews

Mozart Violin Concerto No. 5 Rheinische Philharmonie (March 2018)

"Pike's playing is characterised by a natural virtuosity that doesn't lack on impact" – **Julia Heinrich, Rhein-Zeitung**

Polish Music Day: Jennifer Pike and Friends Wigmore Hall (October 2017)

"Most music-lovers would be hard-pressed to name more than a handful of Polish composers, so one of the joys of Polish Music Day, presented by Jennifer Pike and Friends at Wigmore Hall, was the sheer scope of the programme. Around 20 composers were featured, and had stamina permitted we could have heard the same number again without ideas running dry. Still, the range was wide, stretching back nearly 600 years to the keyboard anthology assembled by Jan of Lublin and up to a world premiere by Paulina Załubska – both in the morning concert, where works ancient and modern were anchored by the versatile harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani.

Yet the violin dominated – rightly so, and not only because Pike, herself half-Polish, was in charge. With the exception of Chopin and his single-minded focus on the piano, Polish composers since the time of Karol Lipiński, Poland's answer to Paganini, have contributed richly to the violin repertoire, and it was rewarding to hear Pike in Szymanowski's Sonata for Violin and Piano and Karłowicz's Impromptu, both impassioned early works that showed off her warm, quicksilver tone. With its dizzying harmonics, Wieniawski's famous Polonaise No. 1 in D is often relegated to encore status, yet here Pike gave the music its full due in a bold, bravura performance. Her two excellent pianists, Petr Limonov and Tom Poster, got the afternoon's encore: exhilarating four-handed Paderewski from his Tatra Album.

The evening concert was equally wide in its scope and imagination, opening with Maria Szymanowska – no relation of the great 20th-century composer, but a musician idolised by many including Goethe and also the mother-in-law of the Poland's arch-poet Adam Mickiewicz. Tom Poster's account of her Polonaise in F minor caught all its noble melancholy. Eugeniusz Knapik's challenging Partita for violin and piano, composed in 1980 against the backdrop of Solidarity flexing its muscles in Gdańsk, proved a major work, using Baroque form to package fascinating sonorities.

Chopin featured in his often overlooked chamber music guise, and Pike and Poster were joined by the cellist Guy Johnston to play his early Piano Trio in G minor with sweeping high spirits. Chopin's affinity with Bellini comes through in the slow movement, and the finale has all the excitement of his works for piano and orchestra. Here the encore (appropriately, in a trio arrangement by the violinist's father Jeremy Pike, a one-time student of Gorecki) was Michał Ogiński's celebrated Farewell to the Homeland Polonaise." – **John Allison, The Telegraph *******

Dvořák Violin Concerto Royal Stockholm Philharmonic (January 2017)

"Jennifer Pike shaped the lyrical sections with vocal quality and grace... There was a lively beauty to the fiery finale. She showed clarity and poise throughout technical passages and was very well received by her audience." – **Lars Hedblad, Svenska Dagbladet**

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The Lark Ascending Chamber Orchestra of New York (Naxos)

"Pike's soaring Lark is a masterclass in expressive free flight. Jennifer Pike opens *The Lark Ascending* with delicacy and grace, her vibrato contained and expressive. As she moves into the first melody, that vibrato occasionally stops altogether, leaving pure, expressive notes within the exquisite soundscape. This whole first section is a masterclass in how to structure an extended musical paragraph. The young players of the Chamber Orchestra of New York then come into their own with some fine solo playing, particularly from the flute, as Pike pirouettes lissomly around them (the recording is clear and well balanced). Her playing is clean and fluent, each note perfectly focused and placed. Her double-stopped allargando phrases weaving down in 5ths (mostly) are magical. She has the gift of making time stand still, even as the music flows forwards. The final cadenza is sublime, as the Lark ascends to top B and disappears." – **Tim Homfray, *The Strad Magazine* (The Strad Recommends)**

"With so many recordings of *The Lark Ascending* available, a new one has to offer something special to soar clear of the crowd. Jennifer Pike's playing – at once forthright and beautifully yearning, with technique to match – puts her contribution into that category." – **Malcolm Hayes, *BBC Music Magazine* ******

"In *The Lark Ascending* Jennifer Pike soars aloft most bewitchingly." – **Andrew Achenbach, *Gramophone Magazine***

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto – BBC Concert Orchestra William Alwyn Festival, Aldeburgh (October 2016)

"The concert also included a wonderfully fluent performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto by Jennifer Pike. Still only 26, the British violinist has turned from child prodigy to superbly graceful virtuoso without airs or affectation." – **Richard Morrison, *The Times* ******

David Bednall Stabat Mater Benenden Chapel Choir (Regent Records)

"The violin [has a] sense of rhapsodic lament – played with passionate intensity by the superb Jennifer Pike." – **Malcolm Riley, *Gramophone Magazine***

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (January 2016)

"Jennifer Pike allies the luminous beauty of her tone to her innate musicality and mercurial technique to produce an exceptionally lyrical interpretation of the evergreen Violin Concerto in E minor." – **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer***

"I'm tempted to have an open-hearted rave-up about the latest disc (Volume Four) in Chandos' Mendelssohn in Birmingham series... There is no concerto more-loved than Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. It is one of the most-familiar of early Romantic Violin Concertos, multiply-recorded and staple fare in the repertoire. It is so familiar it has become almost hackneyed. Edward Gardner and Jennifer Pike have given it a re-think and complete re-fit... I felt I was hearing it for the first time. Pike's playing sings the concerto: it is breathtakingly beautiful, and the sophistication of orchestral thinking and playing is out of this world." – **Michael Tumelty, *Sunday Herald***

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"With her sweet, singing tone and graceful phrasing, (Jennifer Pike) walks in the footsteps of many illustrious predecessors." – **Roger Nichols, *BBC Music Magazine***

"Superb new recording....Pike's lyrical performance clearly demonstrates that she has been performing this piece for many years. Her phrasing shows she knows this work inside out and has discovered all of its ethereal subtlety and beauty." – **Classic FM**

"Jennifer Pike's interpretation is dramatic, passionate and always nuanced....This performance is certain to become one of the great standard recordings." – **John France, *Music Web International***

Sibelius Violin Concerto Bergen Philharmonic (March 2014)

"One of the finest ever actual recordings, the richness and clarity of SACD sound revealing a wealth of detail and scale from the superb Bergen orchestra, and giving Jennifer Pike's violin a tremendous sense of presence. And she plays it with impressive mastery." – **Michael Scott Rohan, *BBC Music Magazine* *******

"This is an exceptionally fine reading of a testing concerto from a young British prodigy who has been unfussily maturing into a compelling violinist. She catches the sinuous ethereality of Sibelius's vision, and the loneliness as well, but there's plenty of passion where it matters and tremendous technical skill. The Bergen Philharmonic and Andrew Davis also offer a kind of Your Hundred Best Sibelius Tunes, including Karelia and Finlandia." – **Richard Morrison, *The Times***

"Here is an absolute whopper of a disc from Chandos. If you are an addict of Sibelius's Violin Concerto, you might already possess many recorded versions. Do not doubt and do not hesitate to add this one to your collection. Jennifer Pike plays it with all the urgency, passion and immediacy of the young woman she is. In the great slow movement, this translates into a kind of molten intensity which – at the end, as the violin curls skyward while the magnificent strings of the Bergen Philharmonic softly pulse away – will break your heart... Get it now." – **Michael Tumelty, *The Herald***

"Of special note here is a gripping interpretation of the Violin Concerto by Jennifer Pike. The concerto's technical hurdles are surmounted consummately, but, even more important, Pike delves into the substance of the music to project its distinctive traits of emotional expression. The chill rhapsodising start gives way to shifts of darkness and light... Intensity, strength and malleability of tone, breadth of line and firmly focused bravura coalesce in the central Adagio and in the fearsome virtuosity of the finale, always underpinned by secure, stylistically aware musicianship." – **Geoffrey Norris, *The Telegraph* *******

"This sequence of unashamed Sibelius classics deserves the success it is sure to receive. Aged only 24, Jennifer Pike has an unwavering command of the Concerto and a keen grasp of its elemental power. The long climax that closes the first movement is driven by both Pike and Davis with inexorable momentum. The first theme of the slow movement is played is a huge melodic outpouring, richly vibrant at the lower end with subtle but telling portamentos. Pike finds a range of colours across the violin's register and lovingly voices her double-stops, no matter what the speed. Her gliding harmonics in the finale are both pristinely in tune and deftly elided... a gutsy and mature reading. A disk with popular appeal and unquestionable substance." – **Edward Bhesania, *The Strad (The Strad Recommends)***

"CD of the Week. Jennifer + Sibelius = violin genius... Her remarkable progress continues with her beautifully poised account of the Sibelius Violin Concerto... she draws a gleaming silvery tone of great purity." – **David Mellor, *The Mail on Sunday* *******

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Miklós Rózsa Violin Concerto BBC Philharmonic (December 2012)

"Jennifer Pike immediately evokes memories of Heifetz with her silver purity of sound and quicksilver agility, inflected by a narrow, medium-fast vibrato. What sets her apart, however, is the gentle cushioning of her lifted strokes, her enhanced dynamic range and radiantly seductive playing during the more lyrical episodes. Where Heifetz verges on the relentless in his virtuoso intensity and brilliance, Pike gives us more light and shade, especially welcome in the finale's playful dance rhythms, making this her finest recording yet." – **Julian Haylock, *BBC Music Magazine* *******

"This brand-new version in sumptuous modern sound has the gifted young British soloist Jennifer Pike with the BBC Philharmonic and Rumon Gamba. Pike plays with an ideal blend of lyricism and technical assurance – her sense of singing lines brings out the rhapsodic eloquence of Rozsa's writing in this work most winningly and she's very well partnered by the BBC orchestra and Gamba. Any collector looking for a thoroughly persuasive modern version of this lovely concerto need to look no further... Pike's way with this music is exceptionally satisfying." – ***International Record Review***

"This new interpretation by the young British violinist Jennifer Pike is the most appealing I have heard since Heifetz. Pike is terrific with the opening movement fireworks and tender in the gorgeous Lento movement. The furious Hungarian rhythms of the finale belong to Bartok, whom Rózsa knew well. At times, the concerto feels like the work of an equal master." – **Norman Lebrecht, *Open letters monthly (CD of the Week)***

"The playing requires and here receives virtuosity and a dazzling display of instrumental colouring. The soloist, Jennifer Pike – who is an exclusive artist to Chandos – plays a stunning concerto. We will surely hear much more from her." – ***Music Web International***