

KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI

Violin Sonata No. 1 (1953); Miniatures (1959); Cadenza for Solo Violin (1984); \

Ida Bieler (violin); Nina Tichman (piano)

Naxos- 8557253(CD)

Reference Recording - This one

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*Artistic Quality* **10/10** *Sound Quality*

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Penderecki composed his first violin sonata at age 20, a work in three compact movements lasting seven and a half minutes and strongly influenced by Shostakovich's spiky, acerbic wit. The three Miniatures evoke Webern's "pocket music" language and time scale, but without the Viennese master's fierce commitment to each note and silence alike. Nearly 50 years later, Penderecki's second violin sonata revisits his Shostakovich roots in more ways than one (its five-movement arch form, for instance), yet with plenty of room for the Polish composer to exercise the rhapsodic abandon that typifies the climactic moments of his concerted and choral works. This is particularly true of the 13-minute adagio that serves as the sonata's structural and emotional centerpiece. Lastly, the solo cadenza Penderecki added to his viola concerto is effectively recast for violin.

Violinist Ida Bieler's dynamic and impassioned interpretations ooze accomplishment and commitment in every bar, to say nothing of pianist Nina Tichman's robust tone and ability to sustain long lines in continuous arcs (the first sonata's Andante is a case in point). Naxos' excellent engineering, moreover, effects balances between instruments in the first sonata superior to CPO's recording, where the violin is prominent to a fault (although the latter's finale benefits from slightly faster tempos and from violinist Hans Kalafusz's more fanciful inflections). For this premiere recording of the second sonata Bieler and Tichman set high standards that future interpreters will have to work hard to match. Fine booklet notes by Richard Whitehouse add to my enthusiastic recommendation.

--Jed Distler