

Reviews

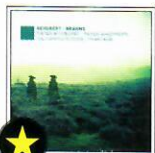
Your monthly critical round-up of performances, recordings and publications

CONCERTS

New York

THIS MONTH'S RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

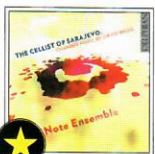
Our pick of the
new releases



**Pieter
Wispelwey**
makes Brahms
his own
PAGE 85



**Augustin
Hadelich**
displays flair
and spontaneity
PAGE 87



David Wilde
cries for the
war-torn
Balkans
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Leonidas Kavakos:
exchanging bow
for baton

JENNIFER KOH (VIOLIN) SHAI WOSNER (PIANO)
WASHINGTON IRVING HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
15 OCTOBER 2016

This popular recital venue was closed for more than a year for renovations but my first sight of the refurbished space disclosed nothing more extensive than new paint and a newly sealed hardwood floor. The austere bentwood chairs have survived, ensuring an attentive audience. Most importantly, the room's excellent, clear acoustics remain unchanged.

Koh and Wosner offered three sonatas on their programme, interspersed with a pair of novelties: Kurtág's *Tre Pezzi*, which these artists included on their 2013 Cedille recording *Signs, Games and Messages*; and *Tocar*, composed in 2010 by Kaija Saariaho, who was present to introduce the work. *Tocar* originated as a competition piece and the title means 'to touch'. Her objective, she said, was to compose something about the encounter of 'two instruments as different as the violin and piano', which would ask: 'How could they touch

each other?' (I recall that Stravinsky once posed a similar question that led to his *Duo concertant* for the same instruments.) If the question was answered in the music I failed to hear it, as the performance lasted barely longer than the composer's explanation.

Fauré's First Sonata followed in a stylistically aware and expressive performance. Koh, often restrained in her depiction of Fauré's lyric abundance, was sympathetically complemented by Wosner's warmly forthright but perfectly judged sonority. Those same qualities distinguished Debussy's Sonata, which opened the programme. Here, however, Koh was more engaged by the work's colour and often fey expression. The Kurtág pieces followed; fragments he justly called 'enigmatic aphorisms'.

Beethoven's op.96 was the only disappointment. Koh's technically unerring account lacked shape and sympathy, particularly in the first two movements. Happily, the latter two movements were a marked improvement.

DENNIS ROONEY