

Beethoven Concerto in C for Piano, Violin and Cello, Op. 56.

Jaime Laredo (vn); **Leslie Parnas** (vlc); **Rudolf Serkin** (pf); **Marlboro Festival Orchestra / Alexander Schneider**.

CBS/Speakers Corner Ⓢ Ⓣ MS6564. Rec. Columbia 30th Street Studio, New York, 23/5/62. From CBS SBRG72202.

Beethoven's Triple Concerto seems at last to be achieving the exposure in concert hall performances that it deserves, despite the expense of having three soloists. In the past prestigious but not necessarily compatible soloists have sometimes been brought together especially to record the work, and have produced uneven performances. I first got to know the record under review via the CBS LP listed above, and it has always struck me as the best I've heard. Firstly, Alexander Schneider conducts like a man possessed, producing fiery and richly expressive playing from the no doubt top-class musicians who comprised this festival orchestra. And it's clear that the three soloists are of one determined mind. They will almost certainly have already played the work together at a Marlboro Festival concert, and maybe the performance went so well that it was decided to perpetuate it on record.

Rudolf Serkin is the highest profile performer here, but he doesn't hog the limelight, and he listens and responds sensitively to his colleagues. Laredo is a fine player (he made some outstanding recordings as soloist/director of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra on the IMG/Pickwick label), and Parnas is one of those artists who seems to have been admired more by the cognoscenti than by the musical public at large. From first to last the performance has tremendous concentration, vitality and expressive power, and it sounds completely spontaneous.

Yet I wonder why Speakers Corner chose this item for a new LP release. They have cloned the original American "stereo 360 sound" edition, and as usual their work seems to be completely faithful. But the recording was never state of the art. The orchestra makes a big, boomy sound, and the soloists are artificially spotlit and closely miked in order to make their instruments heard above it. As a performance, this issue is to my mind unchallenged; as a recording it leaves something to be desired. And my old late 1980s CBS Masterworks CD transfer (Ⓢ MPK44842) yields a sound quality that is scarcely inferior to that of the new LP. **Alan Sanders**