



## MASSENET

**Visions**  
(Symphonic Poem)

**Brumaire • Phèdre**  
(Overtures)

**Espada** (Suite)

**Les Érinnyes**  
(Incidental Music)

Royal Scottish  
National Orchestra

Jean-Luc  
**TINGAUD**

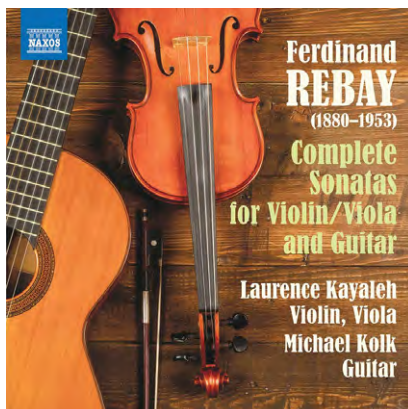


MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

**Massenet: Orchestral Music.** Royal Scottish NO, Tingaud. Naxos. eClassical.com (24/96)

How about 75 minutes of untroubled, tuneful, and vividly scored Romantic symphonic music? Jules Massenet was primarily a composer of operas—*Manon*, *Werther*, and *Thaïs* are solidly entrenched in the core operatic repertoire today. But he wrote a good deal of purely instrumental music as well, though this well-played collection still has manifest connections to the theater. The *Brumaire* Overture served as a curtain-raiser for a stage play by Édouard Noël that observed the centenary of Napoleon's coup-d'état ending the French Revolution. Massenet's *Phèdre* Overture was inspired by Racine's neoclassical drama. The four-movement ballet suite *Espada* trades in the fake Spanish tropes so popular at the time, and with the incidental music for *Les Érinnyes*, the style is fake-baroque. The album's high point is the 14-minute *Visions*, a symphonic poem modeled after those of Liszt, in which the daily strife of human existence is calmed by visions of an existence beyond the earthly sphere—thanks to an off-stage ensemble of wordless soprano, solo violin, harp, harmonium, and something called an “electrophone.” Cool, if a little campy. The mid-hall sonic perspective is spacious and weighty, though a bit murky in the midbass. **AQ**

**Further Listening:** *French Music for Ballet* (Järvi)

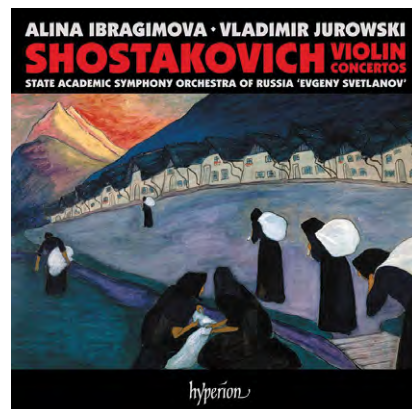


MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

**Rebay: Sonatas for Violin or Viola and Guitar.** Laurence Kayaleh, Michael Kolk. Naxos

On a drop-the-laser test, most of us would place these playful pieces around the 1870s, yet the two sonatas with violin and guitar are from 1942; the date of the sonata with viola is unknown. Vienna-born Ferdinand Rebay lived from 1880 to 1953 but composed in a sunny, conservative style that makes me think of Italy. His harmonic language is engaging—deceptively simple but not simplistic, and he often takes an opportunity to enjoy a bit of silence or a spare texture, reducing both instruments to one line each. I appreciate a composer who doesn't try to cram a symphony into a chamber piece. The menuet in the E-Minor Sonata may be a little cloying, but the trio, where the violin's pizzicato plays off of the guitar, is more adventurous. Both Kayaleh and Kolk play beautifully; Kayaleh has a 1742 Petro Guarneri, and from it she gets a rich, dusky tone. The writing here is not the most challenging, but many moments still reveal her technical control: the delicious long, high diminuendo that ends the E-Minor Sonata is one of those spots. Kolk contributes plenty of tasteful playing of his own. **Stephen Estep**

**Further Listening:** Paganini: Violin & Guitar Works (Bianchi, Preda/ Dynamic)



MUSIC ●●●●○ SONICS ●●●●●

**Shostakovich: Violin Concertos.** Ibragimova; Evgeny Svetlanov Symphony, Jurowski. Hyperion.

Not only are these performances top-notch, but this is the first commercial recording of the Concerto No. 1 as originally written. When David Oistrakh, the dedicatee, first saw the score, he asked for a bit of a break after the demanding cadenza that leads into the final movement, *Burlesque*. Shostakovich rewrote that section, giving the opening theme to the orchestra alone. Here, instead of a loud tutti where the orchestra has slipped the reins and can finally run free, the ensemble joins the violin in reduced numbers and builds the main theme up more naturally. The *Burlesque* has more integrity and better dramatic pacing this way. Ibragimova has a lustrous tone, but she adds some appropriate grit when needed. Her deliberate, brutal eighth notes in the cadenza seem to chip away at the score with mighty hammer strokes. The engineering doesn't always keep her in the spotlight: this pays off in the Nocturne, where the orchestra's oppressive waves threaten to submerge her, to haunting effect. The Second Concerto is not the equal of its older brother, but Ibragimova's serene beauty and long, sinuous lines make the piece more appealing than any other recording I know. Sonics are excellent. **SE**

**Further Listening:** Rakov, Kabalevsky, Shebalin: Violin Concertos (Hardy, Dudarova/Olympia)