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Shostakovich in all his moods

Erik Levi voyages through the composer's kaleidoscopic chamber works

Musik · Unterhaltung

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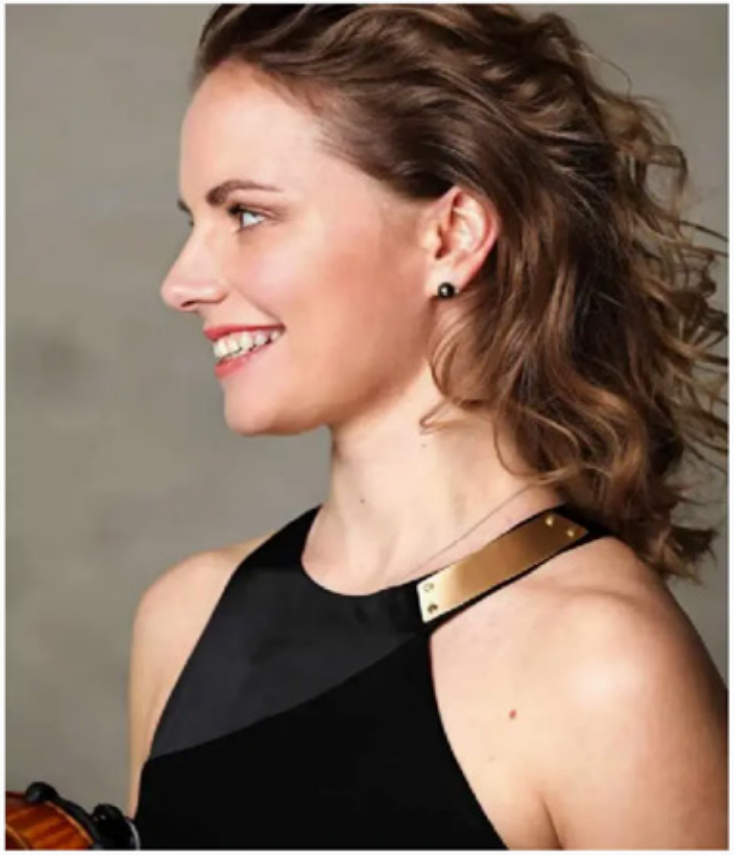
Shostakovich Piano Trios; Piano Quintet, Op. 57*

*Julia Fischer (violin), *Nils Mönkemeyer (viola); Oliver Schnyder Trio Prospero PROSP0035 76:52 mins Shostakovich's Piano Quintet explores a bewildering variety of moods in a musical journey that opens with almost neo-bachian severity in the Prelude and Fugue. A Scherzo of hollow jocularity is followed by a brief Intermezzo which can hardly contain its overriding sense of despair. Not surprisingly, the Finale hardly provides closure, preferring instead to retreat in the closing bars into an all-too- brief vision of childhood

Julia Fischer and friends certainly convey the Quintet's disturbing emotional subtext, delivering a performance of great distinction. Where other ensembles make a hugely dramatic statement out of the

Prelude, Fischer opts for restraint, even when the opening material returns with seemingly greater urgency later on. This feeling of austerity is extended into the Fugue, which is taken at an extremely slow tempo – a ploy that may not be to everyone's taste. Yet it has the desired effect, since the sudden change of mood in the Scherzo creates the necessary destabilising impact, before we are again plunged back into



Star turn: Julia Fischer leads a stellar ensemble in the Piano Quintet

visions of darkness in the Intermezzo. If anything, the rest of this beautifully recorded album is even more impressive. The Oliver Schnyder Trio presents a suitably theatrical account of the youthful First Piano Trio. They follow this up with a probing Second Piano

Trio, achieving maximum impact through a masterly handling of the tricky changes of tempo in the outer movements. As in the

Piano Quintet, their focus is on contrast, with a breathless almost unhinged scherzo followed by one of the bleakest performances I've ever heard of the Largo.

★★★★★

> This beautifully recorded album is impressive