



'A MUSICAL MIRACLE'

Heather Kurzbauer reports from Amsterdam on a recital given by Maxim Vengerov and Irina Vinogradova

On the evening of July 12, 1989, the Concertgebouw was still, enthralled. Maxim Vengerov, a 14-year-old Russian violinist and his veteran accompanist, Irina Vinogradova, gave a recital which will live on in the memory of all who heard it. A concentrated, contemplative silence reigned over the Main Hall of the Concertgebouw as the collective took a deep breath while witnessing a musical miracle.

Reaching far beyond the high level of today's 'wunderkinder', Vengerov offered intensely personalized performances of major cornerstones of the violin repertoire. A protégé of Zakhar Bron (STRAD June 1989), Vengerov commands an enormous technique, a richly nuanced tone, a refined sense for line and unwavering concentration. From the opening chords of Beethoven's 'Kreutzer' Sonata Op.47, to its closing Presto, we were invited into the realm of an artist with great communicative power. Vengerov opted for a fast tempo for his 'Kreutzer' somewhat remi-

niscient of Heifetz's choice. Speed of execution did not prevent the young artist from making music — his interpretation of the Andante con variazioni showed an attentiveness to musical detail and an unfolding tonal palette rarely heard in contemporary performances. Following a short interval, Vengerov and Vinogradova gave a magical performance of Schubert's Fantasy in C. Vengerov held us spellbound with his ethereal, non-vibrato opening phrases. The Fantasy gave him ample opportunity to prove himself as a master in sound production.

Tchaikovsky's *Meditation* could well have been written with an artist of Vengerov's stature in mind. In a tender yet powerful interpretation, Vengerov played close attention to the subtle characteristics associated with change of octave and string changes. Within their unified frame, the four strings of the violin were given individualized attention enhancing this memorable rendition. In place of the muscular approach to Ravel's *Zigane*

frequently presented nowadays, Vengerov gave an impassioned, operatic performance of the work. Tension mounted as Vengerov slowly unleashed the full force of his powerful technique. Dynamics reached explosive levels in a madcap celebration of violinistic possibilities.

In response to an overwhelming ovation, Vengerov performed three jewels from the romantic repertoire as encores. His rendition of Tchaikovsky's *Valse-Scherzo* combined subtlety with solid technique. An arrangement of Debussy's *L'après midi d'un faun* was tasteful and understated. Singing octave passages and lyrical first finger shifts were complemented by imperceptible bow changes. I have never witnessed a performance of Bizet-Waxman's 'Carmen Fantasy' which rivals Vengerov's in terms of perfect execution and lyrical interpretation. A 14-year-old who plays with the charm of Kreisler, the robust power of Oistrakh and has plenty to say in his own right is the stuff that dreams are made of.