Pyotr Illych TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893) Violin Concerto in D, Op.35 [37.38]
*So youn Yoon (violin)*
Górzów Philharmonic Orchestra/Piotr Borkowski
rec. Górzów Philharmonic, April 2012
* DUX 0336 [72.05]

Soloists and orchestras tackling the mainstream repertory can sometimes sound somewhat disengaged. It’s as if they have become bored with music they have performed so often. This is most certainly not the case here. In fact this disc is almost a celebration of the soloist’s victory at the Henryk Wieniawa Competition in 2011, which was also the year in which this orchestra was formed. The booklet note tells us that they consist of “young, talented and versatile musicians from different countries”. Their playing certainly has a freshness and enjoyment that jaded long-term professionals might envy. Even in the Tchaikovsky they sound as though they are discovering the music for the first time, and relishing the process. The conductor sounds as though he is enjoying himself too.

A similar sense of youthful enjoyment can also be found in the playing of this young Korean violinist. She first came to prominence at the age of seventeen when she won the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition in 2002. She approaches both these old warhorses with freshness and imagination. This is certainly not a carbon copy of performing ‘tradition’. At the same time she has a technical perfection that is always placed at the service of the music, rather than the other way around. There are some surprising tempo changes - one might cite the sudden acceleration at 4.24 in the finale of the Tchaikovsky concerto - but they never sound unmotivated or inspired by a simple desire to sound different and innovative. She floats the opening of the Sibelius as to the manner born. Throughout, the orchestra, which has plenty of personality, responds with alacrity and affection.

The recording is exceptionally clear and fine, and speaks volumes for the superb qualities of the traditional ‘shoe box’ design of the recently built concert hall. One could cast about to try and find something to complain about here – one could mention the particularly ugly mechanical redesign of the perfectly satisfactory thirty-year tradition of the jewel box – but the fact that one’s caustic can be so trivial says a great deal about the quality of this disc. What more can one say? Even if you think you know these pieces so well that no performance can say nothing more to you, have a listen to this one.

Paul Corfield Godfrey