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RUSSIAN MUSIC FOR CELLO & PIANO
NIKOLAI MIASKOVSKY
Cello Sonata No. 2 in A minor
SERGEI RACHMANINOV
Cello Sonata in G minor
Wendy Warner (cello); Irina Nuzova (piano)

Cedille- 90000 120(CD)
Reference Recording - none for this coupling

Artistic Quality **10/10** *Sound Quality*

Wendy Warner is a magnificent cellist, and in Irina Nuzova she has found a keyboard partner who matches her in passion, elegance, and imagination. The result is as beautiful a chamber music recital as we have any right to expect, with the music intelligently organized to make an extremely satisfying full program. Miaskovsky's lovely sonata, written for Rostropovich in the late 1940s, can sound monotonous, with two moderately-paced movements preceding the lively finale. Not here. Warner and Nuzova time each movement perfectly and find so much variety of phrasing and timbre that there's never a dull moment. Instead, we focus on the music's abundance of soulful lyricism before the brilliant finale brings the piece to a virtuosic close.

Between this work and the Rachmaninov, Warner and Nuzova offer three charming short pieces: Scriabin's Etude Op. 8 No. 11, transcribed by Piatigorsky; Schnittke's Nostalgica; and the Adagio from Prokofiev's Ten Pieces from Cinderella. They make an arresting and highly varied assortment, but it's the Rachmaninov that's the real prize.

Just to hear the wonderful use of rubato at the opening is a treat. Warner has a real gift among cellists: a low register that never sounds like the proverbial dying cow, and a remarkable evenness of timbre throughout her range. Nuzova, for her part, glitters in the scherzo and finale, but never overpowers her colleague. Perfectly balanced engineering puts you in the same room as the players. A stunning release. [10/13/2010]

--David Hurwitz