

Mark Swed, LA Times, November 1, 2009

A strong contender for classical CD of the year and one that early Christmas shoppers should begin stocking up on is the latest ECM release featuring the extraordinary Armenian American violist Kim Kashkashian. The disc is titled "Neharót," after a stunningly beautiful and profoundly moving piece written for her by the Israeli composer Betty Olivero.

"Neharót Neharót" was written in 2006 in the midst of [Israel's](#) war with Hezbollah in Lebanon. The title is Hebrew for "Rivers Rivers," an allusion to the tears of women but also to *nehar*, which means ray of hope. For viola, accordion, percussion, two string ensembles and tape, it melds many sad songs, not only Jewish but Kurdish and North African, into a rapturous whole; the viola (which has a range common to the voices of women and men) is here the great healer.

Olivero's piece is followed on Kashkashian's CD by Tigran Mansurian's "Three Arias (Sung out the window facing Mount Ararat)," resplendent works for solo viola and chamber orchestra by Armenia's leading composer. This disc concludes with another beautiful Israeli work -- Eitan Steinberg's "Rava Deravin" for viola and string quartet -- a haunting prayer in muted but glowing colors that finds common spiritual ground in Hasidic and Armenian song, the song of Holocaust-scarred peoples.

A warning: Do not download this recording. Buy the CD and play it through loudspeakers. This is music that embraces the world, and it needs to radiate in a space far more expansive than your cranium.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/arts/la-ca-violat1-2009nov01,0,4256543.story>