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Kim Kashkashian, Lera Auerbach, Dmitri Shostakovich, Arcanum
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<http://classicalmodernmusic.blogspot.com/2016/10/kim-kashkashian-lera-auerbach-dmitri.html>

The viola, so says Lera Auerbach in the liner notes to the album up today for consideration, is the sound of mystery. I never thought of it that way, especially, particularly when I owned a cheap viola and attempted valiantly to coax sounds out of it. Of pain, frustration, lack of rosin, in my case, and the mystery was how long I was going to keep at it. But then I think of Walter Trampler as an example of a master and yes, I suppose I can hear that. Or Kim Kashkashian on the CD at hand with Lera, Arcanum (ECM New Series 2375), surely there is a mysterious ineffability.

But there is a full range of evocative sounds surrounding the mystery too, questioning, playful sarcasm, puckishness, sureness of assertion, I could go on. Kashkashian on viola and Auerbach on piano obtain a remarkable sensibility and a tremendous sort of panache as they perform Auerbach's reworking of Shostakovich's "24 Preludes, Op. 34" (1933), originally of course for solo piano, for the duo, then go on to Lera's "Arcanum, Sonata for Viola and Piano."

The two works come alive in the duo's hands, with the Shostakovich taking on a fullness and communicative vibrancy new-found as Kim handles the singingly melodic parts with a pointed personal expressiveness and the logic of the piano part holds forth alongside with a sympathetic and harmonic exceptionality. It makes of the work something major, indeed.

Auerbach's "Arcanum" has the misterioso viola in beautiful synchrony with an exploratory harmonic rhapsodic touch that anchors this as a paradigm for a new modernism attached to Auerbach in the best lineage of chamber intimacy.

The music is central and endlessly absorbing, the performances very personal and characteristic, poetic and well beyond what words can express.

I am put into a place of wonder and ecstatic appreciation as I hear the album once again. This is music of great value, performances of great presence.

A hearty and heartfelt recommendation I give for this one!