

© BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE - CD review

To be published November 2009 edition

[n.b. This is raw copy, and so may have some minor changes when published]

## NEHARÓT

Works by Olivero, Mansurian, Komitas & Steinberg

Kim Kashkashian (viola); with Robyn Schulkowsky (percussion), Tigran Mansurian (piano); Kuss Quartet; Munich Chamber Orchestra/Alexander Liebreich; Boston Modern Orchestra Project/Gil Rose

ECM 476 3281 60:10 mins

ECM sometimes perversely eschew liner notes, but this disc - showcasing Kim Kashkashian's virtuosity - includes an illuminating essay on Armenian and Jewish lament by Paul Griffiths. Armenia's sacred mountain, Ararat, dominates the view from Yerevan, yet it's in no-go Turkish territory: Mansurian speaks for all his compatriots. He opens with over-strenuous portentousness, but moves towards an ever more intense expressiveness, with the viola singing out over delicately Stravinskian effects. Eitan Steinberg's 'Rava Deravin' translates as 'favour of favours', and its version here - for viola plus string quartet - was made at Kashkashian's suggestion: its gleaming harmonies are sometimes reminiscent of the Japanese sho mouth-organ, and its interplay of textures is exquisite.

But the piece de resistance on this CD is Betty Olivero's powerful and densely-worked 'Neharot neharot' ('rivers, rivers', denoting, says the composer, women's tears). Scored for two string ensembles plus accordion and viola solo, this may only last 16 minutes, but it has the resonance of a major work. Opening with dark chords made even darker by internal dissonances, it develops a floridly mellifluous momentum through which viola and accordion cut their path in duet; its denouement is a brilliant rumination, at first veiled, then gradually more explicit, on the lament of Monteverdi's Orpheus.