

# The Washington Post

## LALO: SYMPHONIE ESPAGNOLE

### Renaud Capuçon

Orchestre de Paris, Paavo Järvi, conductor



Last year, the French violinist Renaud Capuçon celebrated his 40th birthday by recording three concert pieces he first studied as a 12-year-old. Each is a chestnut, with a claim to be, depending on your point of view, either among the most beloved or threadbare of the violin repertory. Despite the fact that they've been recorded by just about everybody, it's easy to hear why Capuçon wanted to have his say, too. Aided by the Orchestre de Paris and its music director, Paavo Järvi, these performances are fresh, galvanizing and, musically speaking, deeply satisfying.

The poised, masculine grace of Capuçon's rhythmic finesse lends vigor and sanity to his strikingly original readings. He uses "tempo rubato" — literally "robbed time," a term for stretching the music's pulse for expressive purposes — subtly and never to excess. In the Habanera of Lalo's signature "Symphonie espagnole," for instance, scintillating wafts of nostalgia seem to emanate from straight-spined flamenco hauteur. Capuçon's ravishing sound and chaste phrasing in the andante allow the solo melismas to float above the orchestra, speaking with an urgency I've not heard from another violinist.

Passagework, in which Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen" (gypsy airs) is particularly abundant, sounds neither exhibitionistic nor routine but organically geared to the prevailing sentiment. Capuçon's and Järvi's determination to keep things moving skirts the quagmires of bathos to which the piece is prone. Dead-center pitch and an exhilaratingly precise acceleration give the concluding fireworks an unusual sparkle.

Capuçon's exquisite sound, with its judicious and varied vibrato, envelope Bruch's First Violin Concerto. The athletic finale seems ready to burst with energy.

Here is proof that even the most picked-over "greatest hits" can still yield robust pleasures when approached with open ears, taste, a great deal of talent and, maybe most important, a sincerity of purpose that disdains cynicism.

— Patrick Rucker