

ALBUM REVIEW

Alexandre Kantorow: Saint-Saëns review — this piano star is the real deal

Also reviewed: Patricia Kopatchinskaja — *Le monde selon George Antheil*

Geoff Brown

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Music



French pianist, Alexandre Kantorow

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Alexandre Kantorow

Saint-Saëns

BIS

★★★★☆

Patricia Kopatchinskaja

Le monde selon George Antheil

Alpha Classics ★★★☆☆

Phenomenal, tremendous, incandescent, compelling, a true artist. These were among the words sprayed over 24-year-old pianist Alexandre Kantorow after his [London recital in January](#). On that occasion he'd been journeying through hell and heaven, with Liszt, Scriabin and other heavyweights as tour guides. This week brings further proof that this new star in the classical firmament is also phenomenal, tremendous etc when the fare is simpler and lighter, as with Saint-Saëns' five piano concertos.

He recorded three of them in 2019 — the year he swept to fame, winning first prize at the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition — now we get the first two, plus shorter works. Bearing in mind the music's high sugar content, listening in one fell swoop is not advised. It's impossible, though, not to be amazed by the dancing clarity of Kantorow's fingerwork, especially magical in the decorative icing of the *Wedding Cake* valse-caprice and the second concerto's finale.

At the same time, he always gives the more serious side of his French countryman its due, with sobriety, grandeur, and a tiger's strength taking their place beside kittenish games and delicate charm. The lively orchestra is the Tapiola Sinfonietta, conducted by Jean-Jacques Kantorow, the soloist's proud father.

Enjoyment isn't so straightforward in the latest release from the prolific violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, although her impetuous, sometimes rough-hewn assault on Beethoven's Violin Sonata No 7 with pianist Joonas Ahonen certainly demands our attention. So does their unflagging delivery of the machine-age repetitions and Stravinsky-isms of George Antheil's Sonata No 1 — not a work, however, that earns all the 25 minutes it takes to play.