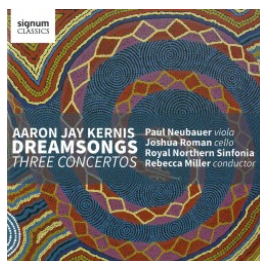


**Aaron Jay Kernis – Dreamsongs: Three Concertos - Paul Neubauer; Joshua Roman;
Royal Northern Sinfonia; Rebecca Miller**

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**Aaron Jay Kernis – Dreamsongs: Three Concertos
Paul Neubauer; Joshua Roman; Royal Northern Sinfonia; Rebecca Miller
Signum Classics SIGCD524 (signumrecords.com)**

In these three very disparate concertos, composed between 2009 and 2014, Pulitzer Prize laureate Aaron Jay Kernis has drawn inspiration from very disparate sources, ranging from African instruments to Bach, Schumann and Yiddish folk song.

Bittersweet melodies pervade the three-movement Viola Concerto, dedicated to and performed by superb violist Paul Neubauer, former principal of the New York Philharmonic. The 32-minute concerto is dominated by its third movement, A Song My Mother Taught Me, lasting nearly 20 minutes, in which Kernis elaborates on the Yiddish song Tumbalalaika and the Fughette from Schumann's Klavierstücke Op.32.

The 26-minute, two-movement Dreamsongs is dedicated to and performed by virtuoso cellist Joshua Roman. The first movement, Floating Dreamsongs, pits dreamily, plaintive melodies in the cello against orchestral textures featuring harp, marimba and vibraphone. Kora Song, the second movement, is more animated, cello pizzicati evoking the sound of the kora, a plucked gourd, with the orchestra augmented by a West African djembe drum.

Echoes of Bach's Brandenburgs inhabit the 16-minute Concerto with Echoes, scored without soloist or violins. Its three movements encompass a vigorous Toccata, a poignant passacaglia (Slowly) and a nostalgic Aria that gently fades away.

Many critics, myself included, have commented in the past that Kernis' lyrical lines often lapse into sentimentality, as can be heard on this CD. I'm convinced, however, that this very sentimentality has actually been the basis of his music's audience appeal and the key to the ongoing success of his compositional career.