

Gramophone "Editor's Choice" April 2011

'Echoes of Paris' -

Augustin Hadelich (vn) Robert Kulek (pf)

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(72' • DDD)

Poulenc Violin Sonata Stravinsky Suite after Themes,
Fragments and Pieces by Pergolesi Debussy Violin Sonata
Prokofiev Violin Sonata No 2, Op 94a

This imaginative recital disc dips into the bubbling cauldron of artistic ideas that distinguished Paris in the early decades of the 20th century, drawing on sonatas by Debussy and Poulenc, and Stravinsky's Pulcinella, to illustrate the breadth and variety of expression that the city could foster and entertain. Prokofiev also nudges himself

in because of his Parisian exile in the 1920s and '30s, though his Second Violin Sonata - a reworking of the Flute Sonata - was written when he was back in Russia in the 1940s.

Hand in hand with the intelligence of the programming go the wondrous playing of the violinist Augustin Hadelich and his like-minded pianist Robert Kulek. These are exceptionally compelling performances, sharply defined in character, immaculately articulated, rich in interpretative acumen and blessed with extraordinary finesse. Hadelich has a marked and dynamic capacity to identify and convey the qualities that render each composer so individual, the juxtaposition of Poulenc's Sonata and Stravinsky's Pulcinella offering perhaps the most graphic example. The Poulenc, dedicated to the memory of Federico García Lorca, has a dramatic intensity

allied to that winsome tunefulness and sanguine harmony that were Poulenc's stocks in trade. The Stravinsky, here

played in the 1925 transcription that the composer made in collaboration with the violinist Paul Kochanski as opposed to the usual Samuel Dushkin one, is, by contrast, spare, astringent, grippingly incisive and vibrant of colour. The players also get

right to the nub of Debussy's Sonata and the Prokofiev on a disc that cannot be recommended highly enough.

Geoffrey Norris