Beethoven • Schubert

Beethoven: Violin Concerto & Solo Pieces; **Schubert:** 2 Scherzos (Arr. for Accordion by Viviane Chassot)
Viviane Chassot (accordion); Collegium Musicum Basel/ Jan Schultsz
Prospero PROSP0148 75:50 mins



My mother had an accordion. Growing up, I considered it a precious, almost sacred instrument. Never, though, did I imagine that it was sacred or nimble enough to perform Beethoven's Violin Concerto. But that was before the arrival of Viviane Chassot, the Swiss accordion wizard who has carved a significant reputation persuasively converting slivers of Bach and piano concertos by Haydn and Mozart into vehicles for an instrument far more versatile and classy than its old image may suggest. At the request of his publisher Beethoven himself turned his masterful creation into a piano concerto; but the accordion's ability to sustain notes for something like eternity puts it at an advantage over any keyboard instrument. There is also one disadvantage: the clicking of keys being alternated at high speed during the music's twiddly bits.

Obviously, Chassot's sensitive performing skills also come into play. The height of delicacy is reached when her solo line in the slow movement soars into the stratosphere, with depths of pianissimo precision beyond even a violin. Chassot's range of timbres, too, is colossal, from fruity blasts to the tiniest tinkle and everything inbetween, all summoned to give extra expression and vivacity to a performance equally blessed with the lively playing of Collegium Musicum Basel under conductor Jan Schultsz. The album is pleasantly rounded out with eight solo encores adapted from Beethoven piano pieces. After this triumph, an adaptation of the Violin Concerto for ondes Martenot cannot be far off.

Geoff Brown ★★★★

BBC Music Magazine - December 2026