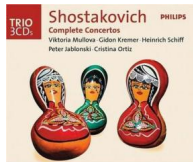


Dmitri Shostakovich – Complete Concertos (2004)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 12 September 2011 18:51 - Last Updated Tuesday, 06 May 2014 22:24

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CD1 Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.99 (formerly Op.77) 1. - 1. *Nocturne (Moderato)* Viktoria Mullova 10:56 2. - 2. *Scherzo (Allegro)* Viktoria Mullova 6:29 3. - 3. *Passacaglia (Andante)* Viktoria Mullova 11:44 4. - 4. *Burlesque (Allegro con brio - Presto)* Viktoria Mullova 4:45

Viktoria Mullova - violin Royal Philharmonic Orchestra André Previn – conductor

Shostakovich: Violin Concerto No.2 Op.129

5. - 1. *Moderato* Gidon Kremer 13:56 6. - 2. *Adagio* Gidon Kremer 9:32 7. - 3. *Adagio - Allegro* Gidon Kremer 8:21

Gidon Kremer - violin Boston Symphony Orchestra Seiji Ozawa – conductor CD2

Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No.1, Op.107

1. - 1. *Allegretto* Heinrich Schiff 6:04 2. - 2. *Moderato* Heinrich Schiff 10:59 3. - 3. *Cadenza* Heinrich Schiff 6:05 4. - 4. *Allegro con moto* Heinrich Schiff 4:27

Shostakovich: Cello Concerto No.2, Op.126

5. - 1. *Largo* Heinrich Schiff 14:08 6. - 2. *Allegretto* Heinrich Schiff 4:06 7. - 3. *Allegretto* Heinrich Schiff 15:20

Heinrich Schiff - cello Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks Maxim Shostakovich

– conductor CD3 Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.1 for piano, trumpet & strings, Op.35

1. - 1. *Allegretto* Peter Jablonski 6:01 2. - 2. *Lento* Peter Jablonski 8:26 3. - 3. & 4. - *Moderato - Allegro con brio* Peter Jablonski 8:18

Peter Jablonski – piano

Raymond Simmons – trumpet Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Vladimir Ashkenazy - conductor

Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.2 in F, Op.102

4. - 1. *Allegro* Cristina Ortiz 7:01 5. - 2. *Andante* Cristina Ortiz 7:29 6. - 3. *Allegro* Cristina Ortiz 5:29

Cristina Ortiz - piano Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Vladimir Ashkenazy - conductor

This bargain-priced collection of the complete Shostakovich concertos features recordings that span a period of more than forty years. Clearly the recorded sound varies enormously; but the quality of the performances – each of them – is such that the whole enterprise can be

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enthusiastically recommended.

After the fifteen symphonies and the fifteen string quartets, the six concertos – two each for piano, violin and cello – represent one of the most important aspects of Shostakovich's creative achievement. While they are not all known as well as they might be, they are all masterly examples of his strongly characterized art, at the same time as varied in their natures and contexts.

Brilliant Classics has gathered these performances from very different sources. The two cello concertos were recorded in Moscow in the autumn of 1997 and they sound particularly well. Valeri Polyanski is one of the best among today's Russian conductors, and he and his firm-toned soloist Alexander Ivashkin always seem to choose the right tempo. In music as direct as the opening movement of the Cello Concerto No. 1 any miscalculation can be dangerous, since everything will relate to the opening bars. But these artists are spot-on, and so it remains throughout this strongly characterised piece.

The Cello Concerto No. 2 is a more complex and dark experience in every way. Some of the most penetrating parts of the score rely upon the cellist (originally Mstislav Rostropovich) to command the attention by force of musical personality. Ivashkin follows nobly in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor. The lengthy finale is the biggest challenge and it comes off particularly well, making the 'death-rattle' ending just as compelling as the composer surely intended. Across the extremes of emotion and technique the recorded balance is exemplary.

David Oistrakh was the dedicatee of both the violin concertos and he features in both these recorded performances. That of the Concerto No. 1 dates from the 1950s and frankly it sounds fifty years old. However, this Brilliant Classics transfer is a whole lot better than the previous Chant du Monde issue of this performance, which sounded dreadfully dim. The problem is the lack of lustre, particularly in the orchestral string sound. Tutti have only limited impact, but even so the evident strengths of Oistrakh's playing, supported by one of the great orchestra-conductor partnerships to have come out of Russia, make this a special experience.

The Violin Concerto No. 2 probably rates as the least known among these six concertos; but it is well worth knowing, and some listeners may prefer it to the more famous Concerto No. 1. It was written as a 60th birthday offering for Oistrakh, but Shostakovich got his sums wrong since the violinist was only 59 when he gave the premiere in 1967. This recording was made the following year in Moscow, and gets right to the heart of the matter. For this is not merely a

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virtuoso showpiece, but rather a deeply felt and penetrating work, just like the Cello Concerto No. 2 of 1966. The meditation with which the concerto begins sets the tone; Shostakovich described this theme as the 'betrayal motif', which was possibly a reference to the harsh Brezhnev regime and its treatment of dissidents who were in many cases his friends. But soon the despair of this lyrical meditation transforms the motif into a frenetic, even grotesque, rhythmic activity. These somewhat disconcerting shifts of mood, which form a fundamental aspect of the composer's style, recur throughout. The sinister pantomime is emphasised by the extremities of the scoring: at one point the soloist shares a competitive duo with beating tom-toms. The central slow movement is more lyrical, lading without pause into a lively finale in which Oistrakh is able to confirm his virtuoso credentials. This is an extraordinary piece and it receives an extraordinary performance.

If the string concertos were written for the leading players of the day, the two piano concertos are family affairs. Shostakovich himself introduced the Concerto No. 1 in 1933. It uses the distinctive orchestral combination of trumpet and strings, and does so with the utmost imagination. This performance was recorded in 1975 in Southampton Guildhall, which was through the 1970s and 1980s the favoured recording venue of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in their many successful projects for EMI. This was one of them, not least because the sparkling form of the pianist, Cristina Ortiz, is matched by the BSO's then principal trumpet Rodney Senior.

The Second Piano Concerto may date from the post-war era, but it has become one of Shostakovich's most loved compositions. The outer movements are notable for their vigour and pointed wit, while at the heart of the piece lies a warmly expressive slow movement that is immediately lovable. The uncomplicated manner of this concerto for the composer's son Maxim is its very strength. Cristina Ortiz captures just the right tone, and the (EMI) sound is atmospheric and pleasing.

As a filler Ortiz plays the three short Fantastic Dances that the student composer wrote in 1922. They too have an immediate appeal, and serve as a welcome bonus to this strongly recommended collection of concertos. ---Terry Barfoot, musicweb-international.com

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