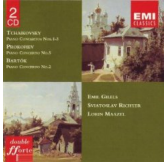


Pyotr Tchaikovsky – Piano Concerto No.2 Op.44 (Gilels) [1972]

Written by bluesever

Monday, 26 October 2009 23:07 - Last Updated Wednesday, 04 June 2014 12:27

Pyotr Tchaikovsky – Piano Concerto No.2 Op.44 (Gilels) [1972]



1. Allegro brillante 2. Andante non troppo 3. Allegro con fuoco Emil Gilels (piano) New Philharmonia Orchestra Lorin Maazel (conductor)

In some circles, Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 2 is thought to be superior to his ever-popular First, one of the most played and recorded concertos ever written. Still, defenders of the Second must concede to certain imperfections; the first two movements, for example, are rather long for their material. The latter, in fact, was heavily abridged by Rachmaninov's cousin, Alexander Siloti. The concerto was actually published in this cut edition, which was for a time quite popular.

This mammoth three-movement work, performances of which typically exceed three-quarters of an hour begins with a proud theme first stated in the orchestra, then by the piano in big chords. A warm, romantic alternate theme, introduced partially by the clarinet, is taken up by the piano. Eventually Tchaikovsky introduces a brief cadenza, and soon afterward a massive cadenza appears, the main theme permeating it, often in subtle guises. A reprise initiated by the orchestra follows, with a brilliant coda closing the movement.

The second movement features lengthy solo appearances by the cello and violin, the former instrument introducing the main theme at the outset, soon joined by the violin, with the piano silent for the first four minutes or so. The lovely melody is at last taken up by the piano, and the mood seems to swim in serenity and beauty. Tension develops in the middle section in a long orchestral passage. The cello and violin return again, with the piano eventually reentering, but in an accompanimental role, and thereafter not really seizing center stage. While the piano has a limited role in this central panel, the music is imaginative and finely crafted.

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The final begins with the piano playing an ebullient theme whose joyous ascending chords at the outset are followed by a playful descent. A busy second theme of strong Russian flavor quickly follows. The piano then delivers a lyrical variation on it that bleaches its ethnicity out and imparts a carefree, infectious joy. The whole movement bustles with energy and happiness, with brilliant piano writing and Tchaikovsky's typically imaginative orchestration. ---Robert Cummings, Rovi

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