

Rodion Shchedrin - Piano Concerto No.1 & No.3 (1974)

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Piano Concerto No.1 1. *Maestoso con moto* 8:28 2. *Scherzo-toccata. Molto vivo* 2:55 3. *Passacaglia. Sostenuto* 5:33 4. *Finale. Presto festoso* 6:05 Piano
Concerto No.3

5. *Variations and Theme* 21:34

Rodion Shchedrin – piano USSR Academic Symphony Orchestra Yevgeny Svetlanov – conductor

Such a potpourri of styles! Rodion Shchedrin's Piano Concerto #1 (1954) is a playful work, composed when he was twenty-two. It shows. Indeed, the piece wears preciousness over its shoulder like a maroon sash. Its bouncy final movement (*Presto festoso*), with its repetitive melodies and sweeping tutti, resembles the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto #1. Even though Shchedrin revised it twenty years later, he didn't modernize it. This concerto could be a pastiche concerto from the late Romantic era. Yet Shchedrin plays it so seriously, there is no room for ironic high jinks.

Piano Concerto #3 (1973) is his most sophisticated. It uses thirty-three variations on a theme (perversely unstated until the end). Sometimes Shchedrin plays eerie night music, other times it's high-pitched white-key tones. Meanwhile, the orchestra rumbles, as if the musicians are champing at the bit, but Shchedrin won't let them loose. Not as bumptious as the second, the concerto is so aleatory, it seem as if the piano and orchestra aren't working together. But they are. In the pensive final movement, the orchestra disappears until the coda, inexplicably puncturing the silence with symbol chords played *diminuendo*. This CD's a cornucopia of wild fun. ---Peter Bates, classical.net

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