

Rodion Shchedrin – Carmen Suite (Pletnev) [2001]

Written by bluesever

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1. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 1. Introduction Russian National Orchestra 1:47
2. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 2. Dance Mikhail Pletnev 2:19
3. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 3. First Intermezzo Mikhail Pletnev 1:05
4. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 4. Changing of the Guard Mikhail Pletnev 1:57
5. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 5. Carmen's Entrance and Habanera Mikhail Pletnev 3:10
6. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 6. Scene Russian National Orchestra 5:45
7. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 7. Second Intermezzo Russian National Orchestra 2:02
8. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 8. Bolero Russian National Orchestra 1:08
9. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 9. Torero Mikhail Pletnev 2:44
10. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 10. Torero and Carmen Mikhail Pletnev 4:27
11. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 11. Adagio Russian National Orchestra 5:47
12. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 12. Fortune-Telling Russian National Orchestra 4:31
13. Carmen Suite after Bizet's Opera - 13. Finale Russian National Orchestra 6:18
14. Concerto for Orchestra No.1 "Naughty Limericks" Mikhail Pletnev 8:17
15. Concerto for Orchestra No.2 "The Chimes" Russian National Orchestra 10:30

Russian National Orchestra
Mikhail Pletnev - conductor

Rodion Shchedrin...probably not the most commercial composer the Big Yellow Label could throw at us right now, but their instincts on contemporary music have been so sound over the last couple of years we'd better have a look. There are two very obvious selling points: Shchedrin's Carmen Suite after Bizet, so you get all the familiar tunes dressed up in a way Bizet would never have imagined, and with a sly grin and a twinkle in the eye. Definitely not to be taken too seriously, especially with all the percussion and special effects from the strings. The Carmen Suite came into existence in a rather roundabout fashion. Shchedrin was asked for a new Carmen ballet, but found it was impossible to think of the story without Bizet's famous tunes going through his head...so in the end he gave in and decided to exploit the original

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opera: "a creative meeting of minds" he calls it. But this was the Soviet Union in the late 60's, and after the first performance it was banned by the authorities as "insulting to Bizet's masterpiece". It took Shostakovich's intervention to get the ballet back on the approved list, and it's become Shchedrin's best-known work.

So what's the other selling point? The Russian National Orchestra and Mikhail Pletnev; if you wanted to convince someone to take a punt on Shchedrin's music, you couldn't do much better than them. And anyone taking the risk will receive possibly unexpected rewards; the Carmen Suite is the easy sell, but I reckon it's the sound of Shchedrin's two Concertos for Orchestra that'll be spinning round your ears long after the cd's stopped - the jazzy brilliance of Naughty Limericks (not quite an accurate translation of the Russian title, but the booklet explains it well), and the impressive soundscape of The Chimes, a direct successor to Rachmaninov's The Bells. That, by the way, was the last thing Pletnev's Russians recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, so there's an obvious logic to recording The Chimes, and a pretty good excuse to check it out. -
-John Armstrong

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