

Liszt - Les Concertos pour Piano (1961)

Written by bluesever

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Concerto pour piano et orchestre n°1 en mi bémol majeur 1. *I Allegro maestoso* 2. *II Quasi adagio* 3. *III Allegretto vivace - Allegro animato* 4. *IV Allegro marziale animato*

Concerto pour piano et orchestre n°2 en la majeur

5. *I Adagio sostenuto assai - Allegro agitato assai* 6. *II Allegro moderato* 7. *III Allegro deciso - Marziale un poco meno allegro* 8. *IV Allegro animato*

Sviatoslav Richter, piano Orchestre Symphonique de Londres Dir : Kyril Kondrachine

These live broadcast concerto performances from Sviatoslav Richter's 1961 London debut concerts have circulated on numerous independent labels. None of these, however, sounds as good as BBC's "official" restorations here. Collectors familiar with Richter and Kondrashin's classic studio-recorded Liszt Concertos for Philips will want to know how these contemporaneous live counterparts compare. They're just as exciting, faster and technically sloppy in spots, and not nearly as well recorded. More to the point, they don't add anything to what we know of Richter in these works. By contrast, the pianist never recorded Liszt's Hungarian Fantasy, although his playing is better controlled and more intense in another live version available from Music and Arts.

Richter's ideas about Chopin's Andante Spianato and Grande Polonaise are strange. For instance, he takes the opening section at a lethargic crawl. Even the pianist's patented, hypnotic legato and multi-hued pedal effects can't save phrases that melt into a static ooze. The Polonaise is oddly straightlaced and emotionally detached, lacking the rhythmic point and swagger characterizing Horowitz, Rubinstein, and Hofmann's interpretations. Incidentally, the Chopin was programmed on the same concert as one of the most scintillating and inspired Dvorak Piano Concertos preserved in sound, far superior to Richter's heavier-gaited studio recording with Carlos Kleiber (EMI). Had BBC opted for the Dvorak in place of the Liszt Concertos and the Chopin, we'd have a more valuable release. The annotations discuss the performances in the context of Richter's emergence in the West. --- Jed Distler, classicstoday.com

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