

## Rakov, Kabalevsky, Shebalin - Russian Violin Concertos (1995)



Nikolai Rakov - Violin Concerto No. 1 (30:07) 1 *I. Allegro* 13:53 2 *II. Andante* 8:48 3 *III. Allegro Molto Vivace* 7:16  
Dmitry Kabalevsky - Violin Concerto in C Major, Op. 48 (16:23)  
4 *I. Allegro Molto E Con Brio* 4:20 5 *II. Andante Cantabile* 6:23 6 *III. Vivace Giocoso* 5:36  
Vissarion Shebalin - Violin Concerto, Op. 21 (33:09)  
7 *I. Introduzione E Fuga* 11:08 8 *II. Aria. Andante* 8:23 9 *III. Rondo. Allegro* 13:35  
Andrew Hardy - violin Symphony Orchestra Of Russia Veronika Dudarova - conductor

Here are three tunefully grateful Russian violin concertos from the 1940s.

The Rakov's undulating topography is sweetly intoned by Hardy who plays a Cremona Guadagnini of 1793. It's a romantic work steeping lightly between the worlds of Glazunov's lissom concerto and something very close to Hollywood. There's a lush and lissom autumnal Andante after the 14 minute Allegro first movement. This is followed by a flashing blade of a finale which is pointedly thrust forward, turned, swung and parried by Hardy, Dudarova and her orchestra. There's a touch of Prokofuiev's First Violin Concerto about this engaging movement.

Rakov was a pupil of Gliere. He became a leading member of the Moscow Conservatoire staff and taught Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Elena Firsova, Boris Tchaikovsky and Karen Khachaturian (the nephew of Aram). His works include three symphonies, two piano concertos and two violin concertos.

We are on more familiar soil with the Kabalevsky concerto which is in fact his only one for violin. It is one of a trilogy of concertos for Soviet Youth. The others are Cello Concerto No. 1 (1949)

and the Third Piano Concerto (1953) which was premiered by the 14 year old Vladimir Ashkenazy. It is positive, fluent, exciting and registers its emotional message without evasion. Like the Rakov it has a dreamy central movement before diving into a playful Vivace giocoso with sparkling Cossack rhythms and considerable unsubtle brilliance.

Vissarion Shebalin was a pupil of Miaskovsky and became director of the Moscow Conservatory (1942-1948). His Violin Concerto is a more nuanced work than the other two. It deals in half-lights, tragedy, protest, brutality and fury. No wonder he attracted official criticism. He was far from being an ecstatic but he was evidently a free-thinker whose freed thoughts turned to gloom and found satisfaction in the expression of the ascent into sunlight. Towards the end of the first movement the music takes on a scorching redolence of Shostakovich. The middle movement is no dreamy pre-echo of the Rakov or Kabalevsky. Shebalin calls up a meditation on beauty in some lightless kingdom. After two such movements the composer turns a more optimistic page for the Rondo finale with what you might think of as a playful synthesis of the Glazunov and the Miaskovsky concertos.

Three fascinating works. The Rakov and Kabalevsky have more in common with each other than with the Shebalin. All of these works are ones you should really get to know if you enjoy the more famous concertos by Prokofiev and Miaskovsky. None of them are in the Shostakovich league though the Shebalin sometimes comes closest but it's not that close.

The recording has an ideal balance of detail and impact from both orchestra and soloist.

Good liner notes by Per Skans.

You might be interested in comparing this with another Soviet Violin Concerto collection on the new deleted Russian Revelation label.

Let's have more reissues like this please Regis. Meantime snap up this delectably lyrical and completely unhackneyed collection and wonder whether Hardy might return to record other rare Soviet concertos of the period 1930-60. ---Rob Barnett, musicweb-international.com

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