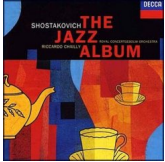


Dmitri Shostakovich - Jazz Album (1993)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 25 October 2009 23:08 - Last Updated Wednesday, 07 May 2014 09:55

Dmitri Shostakovich - Jazz Album (1993)



1. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.1 - 1. Waltz 2:39 2. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.1 - 2. Polka 1:42 3. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.1 - 3. Foxtrot 3:42 4. Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.1 for piano, trumpet & strings, Op.35 - 1. Allegretto 5:46 5. Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.1 for piano, trumpet & strings, Op.35 - 2. Lento 8:05 6. Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.1 for piano, trumpet & strings, Op.35 - 3. Moderato 1:44 7. Shostakovich: Piano Concerto No.1 for piano, trumpet & strings, Op.35 - 4. Allegro con brio 6:28 8. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 1. March 3:16 9. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 2. Lyric Waltz 2:37 10. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 3. Dance I 3:01 11. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 4. Waltz I 3:24 12. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 5. Little Polka 2:38 13. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 6. Waltz II 3:46 14. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 7. Dance II 3:38 15. Shostakovich: Jazz Suite No.2 - 8. Finale 2:23 16. Youmans: Tahiti Trot 3:43 Peter Masseurs (Trumpet) Ronald Brautigam (Piano) Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Riccardo Chailly – conductor

Shostakovich jazz music? Taken at face value, this CD is nothing of the sort. Shostakovich's lively and endearing forays into the popular music of his time were just that, and light years away from the work of real jazz masters such as, say Jelly Roll Morton or Duke Ellington And yet they do say something significant about Shostakovich's experience of jazz, as a comparison of these colourful, Chaplinesque Jazz Suite Suites with roughly contemporaneous music by Gershwin Milhaud, Martinu MartinJ, Roussel and others will prove. Shostakovich engaged in a particularly brittle almost Mahlerian form of parody—his concert works are full of it—and that is what comes across most powerfully here. Besides, and as annotator Elizabeth Wilson rightly observes, 'real' jazz was treated with suspicion in Soviet Russia and Shostakovich's exposure to it was therefore limited.

The two Jazz Suites were composed in the 1930s, the First in response to a competition to "raise the level of Soviet jazz from popular café music to music with a professional status", the Second at the request of the then-newly formed State Orchestra for Jazz (!). The First will make you chuckle, but it is the Second (subtitled "Suite for Promenade Orchestra") that

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contains the best music, especially its achingly nostalgic Second Waltz. The instrumentation is light (saxophone and accordion add a touch of spice to a generally bland recipe), while the playing here is quite superb. In fact, there's little to be said about Chailly's direction other than it is good-humoured, affectionate and utterly professional, his Royal Concertgebouw players sound at home in every bar and the recording (Grotezaal, Concertgebouw) is both clean and ambient.

Taiti trot came to life when Nikolai Malko challenged Shostakovich to score Vincent Youmans's Tea for Two in an hour, or less—which he did, as a sort of mini-concerto for orchestra, each refrain being dealt to different instrumental forces. Fun that it is, its charm is terminal. Which leaves the Piano Concerto, music that for sophistication and inventive ingenuity is actually closer to what we now think of as jazz than the Jazz Suites (sample the free-wheeling, improvisatory opening to the last movement, on track 7). Ronald Brautigam's instrument is twangy at the bass end, which mightn't seem too inappropriate, but as it was recorded two years before the other items on the disc (1988), I doubt that that was the intention. Still, it's a lively, fairly intense reading, neatly supported by Chailly and trumpeter Peter Masseurs, but ultimately less memorable than Alexeev (CfP) or Jablonski (Decca), not to mention the less refined but notably characterful composer himself (EMI). --Gramophone Magazine, arkivmusic.com

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