

which he gave hundreds of concerts in Russia and abroad, and recorded over 200 works among which the complete symphonies of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Glazunov, and Bruckner, and many works by Schnittke, Denisov, and Gubaidulina.

Gennady Rozhdestvensky also conducted an impressive number of performances in some of the most prestigious European theatres: at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (*Boris Godunov*, and *The Nutcracker*), at the Paris Opera (*The Queen of Spades*), at La Scala (*The Legend of Tsar Saltan* by Rimsky-Korsakov, and Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*) among others.

He has also participated in dozens of world premieres of new or newly re-discovered works, some of which were dedicated to him, by composers such as Prokofiev, Shostakovich, John Tavener, Peter Maxwell Davies, Alfred Schnittke, and Rodion Shchedrin. In 2001 he gave the first performance of the original version of Prokofiev's opera *The Gambler* at the Bolshoi Theatre.

His proliferating discography reveals his insatiable curiosity and makes him one of the most recorded conductors of all time. His present catalogue features well over 400 records comprising the astounding number of 786 different works.

Rozhdestvensky is the recipient of the French Legion of Honour, of the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun, and an Honorary Member of the Stockholm and British Academies. For more than thirty years Gennady Rozhdestvensky has held the professorial Chair of Conducting at the Moscow Conservatoire. He regularly leads master-classes in various countries. In 2006 the first 'Gennady Rozhdestvensky International Competition for Conductors' took place in Bulgaria.

The distinguished French film maker Bruno Monsaingeon has recently devoted two of his films to Gennady Rozhdestvensky.



Glazunov & Shostakovich Violin Concertos

Sasha Rozhdestvensky
Gennady Rozhdestvensky



Glazunov • Shostakovich

Violin Concertos

Sasha Rozhdestvensky *violin*

State Symphony Capella of Russia
Gennady Rozhdestvensky *conductor*

Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

Violin Concerto in A minor Op.82 (1904)

21.35

1 I *Moderato—Cadenza—Allegro*

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)

Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor Op.77 (1948)

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| 5 | IV | Burlesque. <i>Allegro con brio—Presto</i> | 5.09 |

Total playing time

60.22

Recorded 20-21 December 2007 in the Great Hall, Moscow Conservatory.

Engineer : Igor Veprintzev.

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Sasha studied at the Central Music School in Moscow, the Moscow Conservatory, the Paris Conservatoire and the Royal College of Music in London with Dr. Felix Andrievsky, Zinaida Gilels, Maya Glezarova and Gérard Poulet.

He plays several violins, among which are a Guarneri del Gesù and a Stradivari loaned to him by the Stradivari Society. He recently became an ambassador for the Stradivari Society.

Gennady Rozhdestvensky, one of the greatest conductors of the day, was born in Moscow in 1931. He studied the piano with Lev Oborin and conducting with his father, Nikolai Anosov, at the Moscow Conservatoire. At the unusually early age of 20, still a student at the Conservatoire, he was engaged at the Bolshoi Theatre where he made his début conducting Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Sleeping Beauty*. His was to be a long term relationship with the Bolshoi: he became their principal conductor between 1964 and 1970, and in 2000 was appointed their General Music Director.

At the Bolshoi he has conducted more than thirty operas and ballets, and gave the world premiere of Khatchaturian's ballet *Spartacus*, and the Russian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. From 1956 on he toured regularly with the Bolshoi ballet in Europe, Asia and America.

For many years he also headed the Moscow Radio Orchestra and became the first Soviet conductor, a novelty at the time, ever to be appointed principal conductor of various foreign orchestras: the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London, the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, and the Stockholm Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

In the 1970s he headed the Moscow Chamber Opera. There he brought back to life Shostakovich's 'lost' opera *The Nose*, and conducted *The Rake's Progress* by Stravinsky. At the same time he created the new Ministry of Culture Orchestra with

Sasha Rozhdestvensky is considered one of Russia's finest young violinists. Yehudi Menuhin pronounced him to be "one of the most talented and refined violinists of his generation", while the legendary violinist Ivry Gitlis said of him: 'He belongs to the great line of outstanding artists. His approach and relationship to music and the violin is intense, highly sensitive and intelligent.'

He has worked with many of the world's renowned conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Yuri Bashmet, Jean-Claude Casadesus, Valery Gergiev, Vernon Handley, Jacques Mercier, Gennady Rozhdestvensky, Gerard Schwartz and has appeared internationally with many leading orchestras including the Bayerische Staatsorchester, Boston Symphony orchestra, L'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, The Mariinsky Orchestra, The Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, The Tonhalle Orchester Zürich and the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony.

He has appeared at major festivals including the BBC Proms, Tanglewood, Schleswig-Holstein, Gstaad, Istanbul, Colmar, Ravinia, Florida, Taormina, Sienna, Lockenhaus, Montreux.

Sasha has recorded numerous works for Thesis and Chandos, including the Double Concerto (Concerto Grosso No.6) written by Alfred Schnittke especially for him and Viktoria Postnikova.

His dedication to contemporary music is highlighted through close contact with several eminent composers, such as Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina and Giya Kancheli. He also devotes his time to the performance of traditional Latin American music together with the instrumental group 'Ambar' and 'Paris Gotan Trio'. Both groups recently released CDs *El Diabolo Suelto* and *Champan Rosado*.

Both Russian violin concertos presented here share a key of A minor, precede their respective composer's finest symphony and sidestep the genre's traditional structure of three separate movements. In character and effect, however, they are strikingly dissimilar: one delights as a genial, richly melodic and warmly Romantic showcase for a virtuoso performer, whilst the other impresses as a powerfully dark, intensely individual utterance, drawing heavily upon the soloist's emotional as well as technical resources.

The substantial output of **Alexander Konstantinovich Glazunov** (1865-1936) includes the ballet scores *Raymonda* (1897) and *The Seasons* (1899), a series of seven string quartets, dating from 1881 (his Op.1) to 1930 and a sequence of eight symphonies, the last of which, dating from 1905, has been singled out by several commentators (including Shostakovich) as the most outstanding. Glazunov began writing pieces for soloist and orchestra relatively late in his creative life: all the concertante works date from the twentieth century. Perhaps surprisingly, considering he was an accomplished and assiduous pianist, his first contribution to the medium was for violin. Later examples consist of two for piano (1910 and 1917), one for cello, subtitled *Concerto ballata* (1930), and a single-movement work for alto saxophone and strings, written in 1934, which turned out to be his last significant large-scale piece before his death in Paris two years later at the age of seventy.

Glazunov's gloriously lyrical Violin Concerto was completed in the summer of 1904, the year before he became Director of the Leningrad Conservatoire. It is cast in two movements linked by a solo cadenza, all played without a break. The violin predominates to an exceptional degree, introducing all of the first movement's themes and is rarely absent from the score throughout the concerto's twenty-minute duration.

Dynamic extremes are largely eschewed in favour of a vibrant lyricism in which the ubiquitous violin line is variously supported, developed and expanded by the orchestra. According to Shostakovich, as recounted in Solomon Volkov's *Testimony*, Glazunov learned to play the violin while writing the work, a tribute to the latter's avowedly practical approach to composition.

The first movement, marked *Moderato*, is a sonata-form structure which may be divided into three clearly defined sections. Atypically, Glazunov dispenses with a time-honoured substantial orchestral introduction; instead, the opening bars, lightly scored, directly introduce the dolefully expressive initial melody in the home key of A minor, located in the violin's lower register. Its melancholic, unmistakably nationalistic outline contrasts effectively with the poetic second subject in F major, marked *Tranquillo*. A modulation into D flat major and a more measured pulse paves the way for the deeply nostalgic extended *Andante* third theme, which the soloist introduces on the G string accompanied sumptuously by divided cellos and harp. Two plucked chords signal the end of the expository material. An abbreviated development section reflects upon the principal ideas before a restatement of the second subject leads to the cadenza that revisits the main themes, transforming them into a technical display for the soloist.

A heroic, fanfare-like theme in dotted-quaver rhythm on trumpets denotes the start of the *Allegro* rondo-finale in A major. Here, the orchestral palette is enriched by the addition of trombones and glockenspiel and, on occasion, illuminated by the deft use of harp and triangle. Meanwhile, the soloist's virtuosity is challenged by the thrilling use of harmonics, double-stopping, left-hand pizzicatos and tremolos. The increasingly lively closing pages round off the work in truly bravura style.

Remarkably, aside from an orchestration of the *Mazurka-oberek* for violin and piano

Concerto, though it is considerably less genial and relaxed; originally Shostakovich gave it to the violin, but Oistrakh persuaded him to allow the soloist a crucial break after the emotional and physical strain of the cadenza. Accordingly, the composer entrusted the woodwinds and xylophone with the principal melody. Unexpectedly, the passacaglia theme reappears like a spectre at the feast in a biting sardonic version on woodwind and xylophone, before the relentless, knockabout coda leads to an abrupt, trenchant conclusion in A major with an absence of pessimism as opposed to an air of optimism.

So ends one of Shostakovich's most compelling and affecting works. It occupies a pivotal position in the composer's output by consolidating previous achievements, such as a successful blending of serious and ironic elements and also pointing the way forward to later preoccupations, including the use of the DSCH motif. Perhaps the concerto's most miraculous aspect lies in its success as a superb vehicle for a consummate violinist within the context of a sincere and profoundly personal statement.

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broadly conceived 17-bar theme announced on cellos and basses embellished by an imposing, portentous horn fanfare and reinforced by bold timpani strokes. Eight variations follow, of which the first gives the theme to the tuba and contrabassoon accompanied by a haunting and liturgical-sounding chorale-like idea on cor anglais, clarinets and bassoons (flutes and piccolos remain silent throughout this movement). The soloist, who enters in the second variation, provides increasingly eloquent counter-themes as the main melody processes through various instrumental groups. A fiercely expressive climax is reached in the sixth variation, scored for strings only. By the time of the eighth and final variation, the opening material returns, pared down and subdued, with the theme given to timpani and pizzicato strings, whilst the soloist intones the initial horn fanfares.

These declamations build into upwardly striving arpeggios, announcing the cadenza, one of the most intricate and substantial examples of its kind. In addition to fulfilling the crucial role of a bridge between slow movement and finale, it develops ideas already encountered, such as the DSCH motif and Jewish dance from the scherzo and the passacaglia's fanfares, as well as anticipating material from the ensuing finale as it gathers pace. Though testing the player's virtuosity as expected, it is far more than the customary technical firework display and in this respect it presages the equally vital role played by the cadenza in Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto. Virtually a separate movement in its own right, it is almost the equal of the finale in terms of duration and surpasses it in terms of symphonic weight.

Briefest and most Russian-sounding of the four movements, the vigorous and vital closing 'Burlesque' brings the concerto back to its tonal centre of A and revisits the scoring and character of the scherzo, including its dance-like elements. The opening rondo theme is written in the style of a *trepak*, recalling the finale of Tchaikovsky's Violin

of 1917, the concerto is the only piece Glazunov wrote for violin and orchestra. It was first performed on 4 March 1905 by the dedicatee Leopold Auer, a celebrated virtuoso to whom Tchaikovsky originally dedicated his own Violin Concerto. Auer's pupil, the fourteen-year-old Mischa Elman introduced it to London under the baton of Henry Wood (a lifelong champion of Glazunov's work) on 17 October 1905. It remains among the composer's most popular compositions, unarguably the finest of his concertos and one of his most satisfying works in any medium.

As opposed to the comparatively slight concertos for piano (1933, 1957) by **Dmitri Shostakovich** (1906-1975), his examples for violin (1955, 1967) and cello (1959, 1966) all share a concentrated intensity and emotional commitment with the composer's chamber works for strings. Indeed, the First Violin Concerto is one of his most intimate and eloquent statements. It is dedicated to the great Russian violinist David Oistrakh (1908-1974), whose musicianship Shostakovich greatly admired (and who, incidentally, played the Glazunov concerto in Kiev in 1926, under the composer's baton). The work was completed in March 1948, just after leading Russian composers including Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Miaskovsky, Khachaturian, Shebalin and Popov had been accused by party dogmatists led by Andrey Zhdanov of Western-style 'formalistic distortions and anti-democratic tendencies'. Shostakovich felt compelled to withhold his concerto, along with such comparably challenging and serious pieces as the song cycle *From Jewish Poetry* (1948) and the Fourth String Quartet (1949) and instead turned to the cinema, generating some much-needed income from the uninspired but politically acceptable patriotic film scores for 'The Fall of Berlin' (1950) and 'The Unforgettable Year 1919' (1952) until a gradual return to some sort of artistic freedom was made possible by the death of Stalin in March 1953. Thus, the First Violin Concerto was suppressed until 1955 when it was premièred by Oistrakh in

Leningrad on 29 October with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under Yevgeny Mravinsky to an enthusiastic reception, during which the conductor lifted the score towards the audience as though to allow the new work to participate in the ovation. Though published in 1956 as the composer's Op.99, the work has now reclaimed its original op.77 number, appropriately reflecting its period of composition.

Shostakovich calls for large but distinctive forces, including triple woodwind, four horns, tuba, two harps, celesta and a modest percussion section consisting of xylophone, tam-tam and tambourine, but omits trumpets and trombones. Unusually, there are four movements, a design also employed in the First Cello Concerto of 1959, reflecting the symphonic breadth and intensity of both works. The First Violin Concerto's movements each have titles suggesting specific archetypes; this concept of a 'suite' or a succession of 'character pieces' dates back to the Piano Quintet of 1940 and was also adopted by the composer in the Second, Eleventh and Fifteenth String Quartets (1944, 1966, 1974), though not in any other of his serious orchestral compositions.

Formal originality is also apparent in the first movement, which is a hypnotically poised and serenely introspective *Nocturne* with sonata characteristics in place of the expected bold statement in conventional sonata-form. This deeply felt soliloquy in A minor unfolds via the soloist's long and rhapsodic line, constantly developing, responding to and redefining a frequently recurring undulating idea introduced on lower strings. Whilst the shadowed first half operates mainly within deeper registers as the sonorous violin line is supported by low woodwind e.g. bass clarinet, bassoons and contrabassoon, in the second half the soloist introduces more vertiginous phrases, refined by triplet figurations, with colourful, if limited, contributions from harp, celesta and tam-tam (this is the only movement in which these instruments appear). An eerie

version of the main idea on celesta and harp catches the ear before a marked increase in expressive intensity culminates in a virtuosic chordal passage for the soloist, eloquent and anguished. In a brief, desolate coda, the triplet-laced solo line vaporises into the ether and the ghostly episode on harp harmonics and celesta is summoned up once more before the movement dies away with a soft tap on the tam-tam.

In contrast to the repressed, meditative and virtually monothematic initial movement, the bitterly ironic scherzo which follows (in the sharply opposed key of B minor) is protean in its thematic invention, crackling with febrile activity and nervously mocking energy. Its garrulous main dance tune is introduced on flute and bass clarinet, whilst the soloist gruffly spits out disjointed and sharply accented interjections. The woodwinds later generate a four-note figure taken up in declamatory octaves by the soloist: this is the first incarnation of Shostakovich's celebrated DSCH musical signature, anticipating its use in the Eighth String Quartet (1960) and in the great Tenth Symphony of 1954 (whose structural assurance and emotional weight the concerto presages). A trio-like central section is dominated by a wildly exuberant idea in a Chasidic dance rhythm (other notable works by Shostakovich containing Jewish elements include the Second Piano Trio (1944), the Fourth String Quartet, the song cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry* and the Thirteenth Symphony, 'Babi Yar' of 1962). Throughout this movement the solo violin part is powered by bravura passagework, culminating in the *presto* coda's technical fireworks.

More profound emotions return in the F minor *Andante* slow movement. This is a nobly lamenting passacaglia (a set of variations above an unchanging bass line), which forms the heart and soul of the piece, a position similarly occupied by the compelling passacaglia movements in the Second Piano Trio, the Eighth Symphony (1943) and the Third String Quartet (1946). In the case of the concerto, it is based upon a

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