

Review can be found here:

http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2016/Aug/Rachmaninov_Rabotkina_CAG114.htm



Availability

[Concert Artists Guild](#)

REVIEW

[Plain text for smartphones & printers](#)

Sergei RACHMANINOV (1873-1943)

[Piano Concerto No. 4](#) in G minor, Op. 40 [26:38]

Maurice RAVEL (1873-1937)

Piano Concerto in G [21:37]

George GERSHWIN (1898-1937)

Rhapsody in Blue [18:04]

Daria Rabotkina (piano)

Tatarstan National Symphony Orchestra/Alexander Sladkovsky

rec. live, 15-18 September, 2014, Saydashev State Big Concert Hall, Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia

CONCERT ARTISTS GUILD CAG114 [66:18]

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The best performance comes first. Daria Rabotkina is an extraordinary Rachmaninov pianist, alive to his many moods and the autumnal inner sadness of his Fourth Concerto. At the same time, the technical challenges pose no great difficulty for her: this is a very clean live performance. Truth be told, they seem to have stitched together live performances from multiple

nights, although you can still hear the audience coughing.

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Maurice Ravel's piano concerto might seem riskier for an orchestra located 800 kilometers east of Moscow (and 3,500 kilometers east of Paris). But the virtues of emphatic percussion and personality-filled woodwind and trumpet soloists are huge assets in this score, and conductor Alexander Sladkovsky's big idea, ending the first movement on a gigantic accelerando, is devilish good fun. Rabotkina is once again on point. The toccata-like passages of the first and last movements stretch her abilities to very near their limits, although I mean this in a good way. She never does lose control, so all we are left with is a thrilling reminder of just how incredibly difficult an artistic endeavor this piano concerto is. In a way, hearing Rabotkina's limits emphasizes just how talented she is.

Rabotkina is at her best in Ravel's first movement's second subject, and similar moments of calm in the Rachmaninov. The Gershwin *Rhapsody in Blue* is the least interesting performance on the disc, in part because the performers use the later full-orchestra arrangement rather than the original jazz band version. But there's still great stuff here: Sladkovsky sets some really energetic tempos, and Daria Rabotkina handles the jazz idiom of her solos better than many more prominent classical musicians. Many classically-trained pianists think that playing a jazz piece means they can indulge in as much wacky ornamentation and tempo-changing as their imagination conceives, a pitfall Rabotkina avoids. There is a bit of improvisation, but it's well-thought-out and serves as a linking device between two episodes.

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