

leaps for the piano and much difficult writing. A lyrical clarinet melody contrasts well with the main material and the movement eventually comes to a brilliant conclusion with a final backward leap on the piano. The second movement carries the marking Moderato ben accentuato, and while a bit less effervescent and driven, it is also lively in its march theme and contains glissandos and glissando-like elements that leap about and emphasize the grotesque and humorous nature of the main theme. Those coming to the concerto for the first time may find this colorful, rhythmic movement the most appealing of the five.

The third movement Toccata derives its main theme from the opening of the first, and serves almost as a belated development section to it. Its furious pace (Allegro con fuoco) and challenging writing for the orchestra, especially for the string section, give the piece a mood of brilliance and breathlessness typical of the composer's earlier Toccata and of other similar piano works. The Larghetto fourth movement is the deepest of the five and also the most lyrical. Its main theme is gentle and lovely. A tense middle section is brilliantly conceived, with crashing chords on the piano at the climax accompanying the eerie orchestral rendering of the profound theme. The finale, marked Vivo, contains a mixture of menace and humor, of otherworldliness and joy. Near the end of the exposition a variation on a theme from the third movement appears, and at the same racing tempo. After a dreamy, unearthly middle section, the mood brightens and the piece ends brilliantly.

Prokofiev was the soloist in the work's October 31, 1932, premiere in Berlin, led by Wilhelm Furtwängler and on the same program with Paul Hindemith as violist in Berlioz's Harold in Italy. While Prokofiev was only midway through his career, he wrote no more works for piano and orchestra after the tepidly-received Fifth Concerto.

PROKOFIEV

Violin Concerto No. 1 / Erick Friedman

Piano Concerto No. 5 / Lorin Hollander

Boston Symphony Orchestra / Erich Leinsdorf

Prokofiev began composing his First Violin Concerto in 1915. He was very fond of the opening theme, but was busy working on his opera, *The Gambler*. He regretted not having more time to work on the Concerto's "pensive opening." When he got back to it, he intended to compose a "concertino" for violin and orchestra, but the piece grew into a three-movement concerto. As musicologist and Prokofiev scholar Israel Nestyev has noted, Prokofiev consulted Polish violinist Paul Kochanski while writing the violin part. Kochanski advised him on bow markings and other technical details, and was supposed to have been the soloist at the premiere, planned for November of 1917. The piano score of the work was completed in the summer of 1917, but because of the revolution in Russia, the Concerto did not receive its first performance until 1922, in Paris.

Instead of the usual fast-slow-fast concerto structure, Prokofiev's outer movements are slow, while the middle movement is a fast scherzo. The order of the Concerto's movements is not the only unusual aspect of this violin concerto: the role of the solo violin is also atypical. While the violin dominates the piece, it is not set dramatically against the orchestra; instead, as Russian music critic I. Yampolsky wrote, the violin is "the first among equals," dominant but integrated into the orchestral texture.

The opening theme of the piece is simple and lyrical. The first movement is in sonata form, with the lyricism and simple sincerity of the first theme contrasted with a chromatic, angular second theme. The two themes are rigorously developed after the exposition, almost unrecognizably transformed. Prokofiev's love for the first theme is reinforced in the recapitulation, where only this theme is heard: the second theme and bridge material are eliminated. The second movement is typical Prokofiev, a virtuosic, "grotesque" Scherzo. It is cast in rondo form, and is full of numerous and sudden shifts of articulation and accent. It is, says Nestyev, music in which "images of sneering sarcasm and sinister forces

predominate." In the final movement, Prokofiev returns to the calm, lyrical character of the opening movement, but with added harmonic color. This final movement is a work of ingenious thematic integration, realized in the large coda: the lyrical theme of the finale is played in the orchestra, against the "pensive," lyrical first theme from the opening movement, played by the solo violin.

While Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto is an important piece in the contemporary concerto repertoire, it was not well received earlier. Critics condemned the work for its non-traditional formal arrangement and treatment of the soloist and tutti. By this time in his career, Prokofiev was certainly growing accustomed to this kind of criticism of his innovations, particularly from Russian critics. The Concerto is a pivotal work, one which displays a maturation of the composer. If one compares the First Violin Concerto to Prokofiev's earlier piano concertos, it is easy to see that the former is decidedly more natural in its thematic unfolding, and formally less academic.

After the Fourth Piano Concerto, for the left hand, the Fifth is the least popular of the five piano concertos Prokofiev wrote. Yet the work offers much of great appeal and delivers a challenge to the finest virtuosos. The composer spoke of the Fifth's abundance of melody, pointing out that each of its five movements contains four or more melodies. Those unfamiliar with the concerto might conclude from that statement that the work must be a large one; yet its duration is typically only 22 to 25 minutes.

The formal structure of the concerto is unusual and rather episodic, hardly clinging to a typical sonata-allegro scheme. If a tag can be put on the work, one to capture both its music and performance features, it would be "athletic," or perhaps "acrobatic." The first movement, marked *Allegro con brio*, offers a colorful, jumpy main theme, containing wide

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Violin Concerto No. 1

- 1. Andantino**
- 2. Scherzo**
- 3. Moderato**

Piano Concerto No. 5

- 4. Allegro Con Brio**
- 5. Moderato Ben Accentuato**
- 6. Toccato: Allegro Con Fuoco**
- 7. Larghetto**
- 8. Vivo; Coda: Allegro Non Troppo**

Recorded by RCA records 1964

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