



## Piotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto & Symphony No. 4

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[American Record Guide](#) 4/2003 (Lawrence Hansen - 2003.07.01)



This concert from 24 April 1969 demonstrates how the concerto should be--but often is not--done. The relaxed, sinuous entry of the violin in the first movement immediately tells us we're about to be treated to some great musicmaking. The 21-year-old Zukerman's unforced, sweet-toned playing has all the fresh, vibrant, unaffected honesty of an astonishingly gifted young performer riding the great wave of confidence and energy that comes with first arriving at artistic maturity. His grasp of the solo part is masterly and completely self-contained. Nothing is wanting.

Zukerman tackles the first movement cadenza with no apologies for its virtuoso-showpiece qualities, but he also brings to it nuanced expressiveness. He links it organically to the rest of the movement, rather than treating it as a tacked-on party piece. As it is through the entire performance, his tone is firm but never forced, harsh, squeaky, or abrasive. There is polish without blandness, and a wonderful silvery quality to it, like nicely patined fine silver.

The slow movement starts off shakily in the orchestra, with some untidy ensemble and sour playing from the clarinet. Then Zukerman enters and all becomes sweetness and expressive light again. Despite his brilliant handling of the first movement's keen technical demands, his playing in II is tinged with just the right gentle Tchaikovskian melancholy. It is neither heavy and tragic nor sentimental. The finale is remarkable for its freshness, vitality, and breathtaking, crisp articulation from the soloist, despite the brisk pace he and Kubelik take. The atmosphere of these proceedings is anything but "ho-hum, we're doing the Tchaikovsky again".

Kubelik was not a great Tchaikovsky conductor, but here he leads a solid, sensitive accompaniment and he doesn't fight the soloist for control. They work together, and we--and the audience at the concert--are the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, there is some inconsistency to his handling of the orchestra.

For example, the two waltz-like orchestral climaxes in I are superb--noble, spacious, elegant--but the transitional passages directly afterward are slack and directionless. The Bavarian Radio Symphony, then as now, is clearly not one of the world's first-rank orchestras, but the unfortunate moments from the orchestra pass fairly quickly.

Zukerman's playing binds the proceedings together with a superb concentration and focus that are all too rare even in concerts. One question: Is the solo work as beautiful as Repin's on the new Philips disc I reviewed last issue? Oh, yes--much more so. It approaches the level of the classic Szeryng/Munch RCA recording. Even in an outrageously overcrowded field, this performance stands out, though patches of scrappy orchestral work prevent me from making an unqualified recommendation. Rather than serve as one's only recording of the piece, this is a good supplement for a collection that already contains the Szeryng, Heifetz/Reiner (RCA), Stern/Rostropovich (Sony), and Mutter/Karajan (DG). After all, who can get by with only one copy of the Tchaikovsky concerto?

Kubelik's take on the symphony is clean and professional but nothing special. The trumpets in the ominous first movement fanfares are strident and shrill, but the woodwind playing is better than in the concerto. Kubelik churns up some fury in the big, gangly first movement, but he lets it become episodic, lacking the dramatic build this music should have. The conviction and frisson of the great performances just isn't anywhere to be heard. Kubelik is serviceable, not incandescent, and efficient rather than moving, despite his audible stomping during some of the high-stress passages. At least the Munich audience is pleasantly quiet, despite the April date of the concert.

There are many better recordings out there, starting with Kubelik's own earlier Chicago Symphony account. Even there, his take on the work is rather driven, hard-edged, and forced--and not helped by Mercury's glassy LP sonics (which would undoubtedly benefit from modern digital remastering). I certainly would turn to Bernstein (Sony, rather than the later DG), Karajan (preferably EMI), Muti (EMI), Ormandy (Sony), and Monteux (RCA) first. Those interpretations differ widely in character, but they all have far more to say than Kubelik.

Audite's sound is good FM-quality stereo, with a natural balance between soloist and orchestra and no distortion. There is some hail ambiance, a sense of air around the instruments, and a touch of reverb (added in the remastering?). The lower bass is a bit muddy. The sound is not dry but also not lush and tropical. Tape hiss is minimal--almost inaudible on speakers, though I could hear it when I put on some high-end headphones and boosted the treble unnaturally high. The packaging doesn't indicate if the recording has been put through No Noise or a similar noise-reduction process. Under normal playback, the treble is clean and clear but not brittle.

**Arte 02.04.2003 (Mathias Heizmann - 2003.04.02)**

**arte**

Audite n'en finit pas de parcourir le legs de Raphael Kubelik. Aujourd'hui, on...

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**Audiophile Audition April 2003 (Gary Lemco - 2003.04.01)**



Some discs you just know are going to be exciting; and when I saw this one...

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**Auspuff 01.01.2003 ( - 2003.01.01)**

Er erhielt seine Chance durch Zufall. Als Nathan Milstein erkrankte und der...

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**Das Orchester November 2003 (Kathrin Feldmann - 2003.11.01)**



Wer diese Einspielung gehört hat, ist verdorben für all die anderen, und seien...

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**El País 19.04.2003 (Javier Pérez Senz - 2003.04.19)**



**Kubelik, en el corazón de Mahler**

*Dos sinfonías de Gustav Mahler grabadas en vivo abren la edición que el sello Audite dedica al director checo Rafael Kubelik, uno de los grandes mahlerianos de la historia.*

[...] dirige el célebre adagietto con un encendido lirismo y una intensidad que hipnotiza al oyente –, situándose entre las mejores de la discografía.

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**Fono Forum 3/2003 (Anselm Cybinski - 2003.03.01)**



Nathan Milstein, der in München das Tschaikowsky-Konzert spielen sollte, musste erkrankt absagen. Columbia Artists schickte einen 21-jährigen Wunderknaben Pinchas Zukerman. Die Kritiker überschlugen sich. Joachim Kaiser scheute nicht den Vergleich mit Szeryng und Oistrach. Und noch Harald Eggebrecht spricht in seinem Buch „Große Geiger“ von einem „der sensationellsten Debüts in Deutschland nach dem Krieg“. Welche Untertreibung! Der auch klangtechnisch ausgezeichnete Mitschnitt des Bayerischen Rundfunks aus dem Herkulesaal ist eine Droge. Eine Droge, die ein bisschen traurig macht. Was ist bloß passiert in den vergangenen 33 Jahren? Warum wirken diese natürliche Kraft, die geradezu existentielle Unbedingtheit des Musizierens heute als ein solches Naturereignis? Wann hört man noch eine so riskante Hingabe an die Emotionalität der Musik? Zukerman „macht“ gar nichts Spezielles, es stimmt nur einfach alles. Die Mehrstimmigkeit zu Beginn der

Durchführung des 1. Satzes kommt mustergültig heraus. Die Übergänge sind schlüssig, die Kantilenen entfalten sich ohne Schmalz und falsche Süße. So sehr die Geige leuchtet, reibt und brummt, immer spürt man: Diese überirdische Schönheit ist einer fast vulkanischen Energie abgerungen: Vor allem in den Spiccato-Passagen dringt sie ungebärdig an die Oberfläche. Geigen-Aficionados werden sich an sensationellen Flageolets erfreuen, an superintensiven Höhen und wuchtigen Akkorden. Übrigens: Rafael Kubelik und das – abgesehen von einer arg quäkenden Solo-Klarinette – fantastische Orchester begleiten genau und voller Verve – und liefern dann noch eine großartige Vierte.

**Gramophone October 2003 (Rob Cowan - 2003.10.01)**

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### **Kubelik takes the Stage**

Some years ago I was involved in a discussion concerning Wilhelm Furtwängler's potential artistic heir. Who might he be? There was no lack of candidates. My suggestion, for the following reasons, was Rafael Kubelik. Both were composers; both preferred an old-fashioned orchestral layout (violins divided, etc) and achieved weight of sonority by allowing a chord to fall naturally rather than slamming it shut. Both favoured flexibility within the bar, an often orgiastic excitability and, most important in this particular context, an overall preference for live performance over recording.

For example, compare Kubelik's 1975 DG studio recording of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony with the Israel Philharmonic with the live Bavarian RSO Audite version of four years later. The IPO account is taut and incisive, with an explosive fortissimo just before the coda (at 5'52", i.e. bar 312) that sounds as if it has been aided from the control desk. Turn then to the BRSO version, the lead-up at around 4'25" to that same passage (here sounding wholly natural), so much more gripping, where second fiddles, violas and cellos thrust their responses to tremolando first fiddles. The energy level is still laudably high but the sense of intense engagement is almost palpable. Again, with the Boston recording of the Fifth, handsome and well played as it undoubtedly is (and with the finale's repeat intact, which isn't the case on Audite), there is little comparison with the freer, airier and more responsive live relay. I'm thinking especially the slow movement, so humble and expressive, almost hymn-like in places – for example, the Bachian string counterpoint from 4'27". Also, the Boston recording places first and second violins on the left: the Audite option has them divided, as per Kubelik's preferred norm.

Audite's Tchaikovsky coupling is an out-and-out winner. Kubelik made two studio recordings of the Fourth Symphony (with the Chicago SO and Vienna PO), both set around a lyrical axis, but this live version has a unique emotive impetuosity, especially in the development section of the first movement. The Andantino relates a burning nostalgia without exaggeration, whereas the scherzo – taken at a real lick – becomes a quiet choir of balalaikas. The April 1969 performance of the Violin Concerto was also Pinchas Zukerman's German début and aside from Kubelik's facilitating responsiveness, there's the warmth and immediacy of the youthful Zukerman's tone and the precision of his bowing. Both performances confirm Kubelik as among the most sympathetic of Tchaikovsky conductors, a genuine listener who relates what he hears, not what he wants to confess through the music.

Much the same might be said of Kubelik's Mahler, whether for DG or the various live alternatives currently appearing on Audite. In the case of 'Das Lied von der Erde' there is no DG predecessor, but even if there was, I doubt that it would surpass the live relay of February 1970 with Waldemar Kmentt and Dame Janet Baker, so dashing, pliant and deeply felt, whether in the subtly traced clarinet counterpoint near the start of 'Von der Jugend' or the way Baker re-emerges after the funereal processional in 'Der Abschied', as if altered forever by a profound visitation.

klassik-heute.com 16.12.2002 (Benjamin G. Cohrs - 2002.12.16)



Eine besondere Sternstunde hält dieser vorzüglich remasterte Live-Mitschnitt...

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L'éducation musicale Septembre/Octobre 2003 (Francis  
Gérumont - 2003.09.01)



Dans cet enregistrement public remontant à 1969, le jeune Pinchas Zukerman (21...

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[Musik & Theater](#) 4/2003 (Attila Csampai - 2003.04.01)



Sinnlichkeit und Leidenschaft

Sinnlichkeit und Leidenschaft

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Musikmarkt 46/2002 ( - 2002.11.11)

**musikmarkt**

Es war das gefeierte Debütkonzert des damals 21-jährigen, in Europa völlig...

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**Platte 11** 3. Oktober 2010 (Heinz Gelking - 2010.10.03)

**platte 11**

Short Summary in English: Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto has probably never...

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**Scherzo N° 184, Marzo 2004 (Enrique Pérez Adrián - 2004.03.01)**



**sch***er***zo**

**Pinchas Zukerman y Rafael Kubelik - Chaikovsky en Estado puro**

*Un disco sensacional. Soberbio Zukerman e inspirado, intenso y elocuente Kubelik, o sea, Chaikovsky en estado puro. No se lo pierdan.*

Pinchas Zukerman y Rafael Kubelik - Chaikovsky en Estado puro

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**WDR 3 28.10.2002 (Michael Schwalb - 2002.10.28)**



Redakteur am Mikrophon ist Michael Schwalb, und mitgebracht habe ich Ihnen die...

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**WDR 3 03.02.2003 (Antje Hinz - 2003.02.03)**



Die Geige sei das widernatürlichste Instrument - meint ein weltberühmter...

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**www.ClassicsToday.com 01.10.2002 (David Hurwitz - 2002.10.01)**



Rafael Kubelik recorded a good if not spectacular Tchaikovsky Fourth for EMI...

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## Inhaltsverzeichnis

American Record Guide 4/2003.....	1
Arte 02.04.2003.....	2
Audiophile Audition April 2003.....	2
Auspuff 01.01.2003.....	3
Das Orchester November 2003.....	3
El País 19.04.2003.....	3
Fono Forum 3/2003.....	3
Gramophone October 2003.....	4
klassik-heute.com 16.12.2002.....	5
L'éducation musicale Septembre/Octobre 2003.....	5
Musik & Theater 4/2003.....	5
Musikmarkt 46/2002.....	5
Platte 11 3. Oktober 2010.....	6
Scherzo N° 184, Marzo 2004.....	6
WDR 3 28.10.2002.....	6
WDR 3 03.02.2003.....	6
www.ClassicsToday.com 01.10.2002.....	7