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CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1921)

Piano Concertos. Vol. 2

- No. 3 E-flat major, Op. 29
- No. 5 F major, Op. 103

Anna Malikova, piano
Thomas Sanderling, conductor
WDR Symphony Orchestra
Cologne

Outside France, **Camille Saint-Saëns** (1835-1921) is still perceived as a composer of charming show-pieces and grandiose orchestral works such as the “Organ Symphony”. However, the oeuvre of this universal French musician and cosmopolitan of such broad interests reveals many other fascinating sides. From grand opera, through film music, to the “Zoological Fantasy” (as he subtitled his Carnival of the Animals) he examined every genre. By studying his forbears, Saint-Saëns developed a “classical” style for the nineteenth century, though never losing romantic lyricism and a direction towards modernism. Saint-Saëns viewed **his five piano concertos** in particular as fields for experimentation. “The solo part of a concerto must be conceived and treated as a dramatic Character”, according to the composer who was also a successful pianist. With his first concerto the 22-year-old had already caused a great stir amongst his audience who remained enthused until the premiere of his fifth piano concerto in 1896. Saint-Saëns rearranged the traditional sequence of movements, improvised long solo passages à la Bach and quoted melodies from North Africa, his favourite holiday destination during the last decades of his life (he died in Algiers in 1921). This complete recording of his piano concertos, written in the space of four decades, presents a portrait of a composer who, with his extreme and masterly craftsmanship, is waiting to be rediscovered. The Russian pianist **Anna Malikova** is prize-winner of numerous international competitions; the First Prize in the ARD competition in 1993 was her break through and the beginning of her international carrier. The **WDR Symphony Orchestra** under **Thomas Sanderling** accompanies her in a competent and sensitive manner.

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