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FRYDERYK CHOPIN (1810-49)

PIANO CONCERTOS Nos.1 & 2

MARTINO TIRIMO, Piano

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Conductor: Fedor Glushchenko

Piano Concerto No.1 in E minor, Op.11

[1] <i>Allegro maestoso</i>	21.13
[2] <i>Romanza-Larghetto</i>	10.56
[3] <i>Rondo-Vivace</i>	10.27

Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor, Op.21

[4] <i>Allegro vivace</i>	15.05
[5] <i>Larghetto</i>	9.19
[6] <i>Allegro vivace</i>	9.04

Total time: 76'07"

Piano supplied by Steinway & Sons

Executive Producer: John Kehoe

All Saints, Petersham, June 1994

Producer: Marian Freeman (Modus)

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Fryderyk Chopin

Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2

**Martino
Tirimo**

**Philharmonia Orchestra
Fedor Glushchenko**

alto

Chopin composed his *Concerto in F minor* through the winter of 1829-30; the *Concerto in E minor* was completed in August 1830, but it was this later work which first achieved publication, by the Parisian firm of Schlesinger, in July 1833, the F minor piece having to wait until 1836 before being published by Breitkopf. The conventional numbering, recognising dates of publication rather than order of composition, has been followed ever since. No great issue is involved, for the two works belong to the same creative period.

The *Concerto in E minor* was dedicated to the German pianist/composer Friedrich Kalkbrenner, an artist of fame and sensibility. Chopin's concerto models came from John Field and Johann Nepomuk Hummel, both of whom he admired. Each made his own contribution to the development of the piano concerto as a vehicle for lyric emotion rather than the powerful drama wrought into the form by Beethoven. Chopin had been stupidly berated for alleged shallowness in his approach to the concerto form, as well as for failures in orchestration. Both criticisms fall wide of the mark, for they miss the essential point - that Chopin's concertos are purposely piano-dominated: his orchestration is uncluttered by design. Within his chosen palette, Chopin achieves many a deft stroke: his use of the bassoon is particularly effective, and his general tone is lyrically romantic.

What must surely impress the unbiased listener to the E minor piece is the lithe energy of the first movement's main theme. *Allegro maestoso* is Chopin's injunction, and there is clear need to unfold this uplifting melody with non-pompous, carefully-calculated tonal weight. The song-like second theme is shared between orchestra and soloist with airy charm. Chopin develops this material with emphasis on piano figuration, always structured in terms of the thematic framework, but wonderfully varied in poetic inflection and technical audacity: Two points need special attention: after the first great climax, the orchestra subsides into a whispered C major statement, and this is marvellously recalled at the movement's close. The passage clearly anticipates the junction so finely effected by Mendelssohn at the union of the first two movements of his violin concerto. Fascinating !

The central *Larghetto*, subtitled *Romance*, needs little comment: here is the Chopin of the great Nocturnes, practising his craft with delicate skill. How far we have moved from Beethoven ! The dawn of the 19th century's third decade was a high-water mark of romanticism, and in this movement Chopin throws his hat into the ring.

The concluding *vivace* is called a *Rondo* - but it is more of a free sonata movement, adapted to fit the rhythms and spirit of the *Krakowiak*, one of Poland's national dances. No matter where he went, Chopin never forgot such basic influences, and it is no wonder that when he played the work at the Town Hall shortly before leaving his national capital for good, the composer's Warsaw audience gave him the warmest of responses.

Though dedicated to the Countess Delfina Potocka, a member of the Polish émigré circle in Paris, and a lady of somewhat clouded reputation, the *Concerto in F minor* stands as the composer's confession of love for a young soprano, Konstancja Gladowska. The slow movement is particularly inspired by sentiments which seem to have been feebly returned. The first movement, *Allegro maestoso*, is built from three themes. First, there is a rhythmic figure based on the F minor chord and supported by a sub-theme which will be used much later on. Then there is the true second subject, lyrical and full of emotional import; finally Chopin brings in almost casually, a C minor episode based on rising *arpeggi*, which is to establish itself as a binding force. This potent material is handled with conspicuous textual clarity, the whole movement being in celebration of Chopin's inexhaustible flair for varied figuration.

Critics have complained that Chopin offers no coda, but, of course, this type of invention demands no such thing; the Beethoven coda was necessitated by that composer's intensely dramatic arguments. How hard it was for some people to acknowledge that Chopin knew what he was doing! As for the *Larghetto*, it stands as an astonishing tribute, not only to the composer's unrequited love, but to his lyrical genius, here deployed at full stretch in an unending melodic line, whose richly varied outlines are never wholly obscured. Here again, is the unleashing of the romantic spirit, which was to change music forever. Note especially the central episode – a recitative featuring sustained *tremolando* and *pizzicato* double basses. A master-stroke from an alleged orchestral nincompoop !

Another of Chopin's sonata-rondos forms the first movement – discursive, but fine material for a top-grade pianist. Chopin's mazurka-style second theme is magically transformed into a romantic horn-signal on its reappearance. Some of the piano's filigree is of such diaphanous quality that we seem to be anticipating Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

© Geoffrey Crankshaw

Martino Tirimo

Described as 'a pianist of vision' and 'an inspiring poet of the piano' (Daily Telegraph), Martino Tirimo's playing is often compared to that of Schnabel, Arrau and Rubinstein. His extensive discography of over 50 recordings for EMI, Nimbus and other companies includes the piano concertos of Brahms, Chopin, Rachmaninov, Tippett (Tippett conducting), the complete solo works of Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy, Janáček and the first complete set of Schubert's 21 Sonatas (EMI). For his Rachmaninov 2nd Concerto and Paganini Rhapsody, one of EMI's best sellers, he received a Gold Disc.

Tirimo was born into a musical family in Cyprus and as child prodigy appeared both as pianist and conductor, at 12 conducting La Traviata seven times with soloists from La Scala, Milan. At 16 he won the Liszt Scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, later completing his studies in Vienna. He came to world attention in 1971/72 when he won the international competitions in Munich and Geneva and has since appeared with many of the world's great orchestras, with conductors such as Barbiroli, Boult, Masur, Sanderling and Rattle. He has also directed from the keyboard several cycles of the Beethoven Concertos, with the Dresden Philharmonic, in Germany and at the Royal Festival Hall in London.

He has a repertoire of 70 Concertos and has given numerous series devoted to Mozart's complete works, Beethoven's 32 Sonatas, Schubert's 21 Sonatas, Robert and Clara Schumann's principal works, series of Mozart Concertos, directing the Prague Chamber Orchestra, and in 2010 Chopin's complete works at London's Kings Place. In 2004 he performed at the Athens Festival, during the Olympic period, with the Vienna Philharmonic and prior to the Games had the honour to run with the Olympic torch, perhaps the first classical musician to do so.

Since 2002 he has also been more active in chamber music, touring extensively with his Trio, the Rosamunde Trio (See alto ALC 1005 Shostakovich/Tchaikovsky, ALC 1058 Dvořák). *Music and Vision* recently declared that 'Tirimo's playing belongs to a past generation of 'greats'. Listening to him I conjure up aural images of Solomon, Arrau, Kempff, Serkin, Schnabel, Backhaus and Rubinstein. Throughout the evening one was consistently aware that this supreme musician placed himself entirely at the service of the composer'.