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# RACHMANINOV SECOND PIANO CONCERTO

# LIKE THE FIRST TIME



Pianist Dejan Lazić achieves the seemingly impossible by making Rachmaninov's well-known, much-played work sound fresh

## WORDS MALCOLM HAYES

Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto is so familiar – as is the story preceding its creation (disastrous performance of First Symphony, collapse of composing confidence, hypnotherapy course and triumphant outcome) – that it's unusual to find yourself listening to it as if for the first time. But that's the achievement of this performance. Croatia's Dejan Lazić is an artist whose playing not only projects with effortless command but also conveys a quietly (though just as vivid) reflective streak. Take a musical mind as individual as this, add a beautifully supportive orchestral

accompaniment, and you're reminded of how special this work is, with its wonderful range of ideas and uniquely dark colouring.

The remainder of the disc is just as remarkable. Despite their modest title, the earlier six 'Musical Moments' make up an impressive half-hour solo piano cycle whose young composer's voice is already unmistakable. (How, after this, could he possibly have doubted his own ability?) The odd-numbered pieces are meditations in Rachmaninov's trademark manner: spacious, atmospheric, marvellously sustained. The even-numbered ones have quicksilver virtuosity or huge power – or (as in the magnificent No.6) both.



★★★★★  
**Rachmaninov**  
**Piano Concerto No.2;**  
**Moments musicaux, Op.16**  
**Dejan Lazić (piano),**  
**London Philharmonic**  
**Orchestra/Kirill Petrenko**  
**Channel Classics**  
**CCS SA 26308**

Lazić's affinity with the music is total, commanding all the imagination and technical immensity it requires. ■



## Vivaldi

Cello Concertos, Vol.2 – RV399, RV401, RV403, RV408, RV411, RV417, RV422  
*Christophe Coin (cello), Il Giardino Armonico/ Giovanni Antonini*

This is the second volume of Vivaldi concertos performed by these artists, and it's just as desirable as its predecessor. The opener is RV411 in F, whose tiny slow movement is enclosed by cheerful, immediately attractive Allegros, which French cellist Christophe Coin puts across with grace and vigour. In the slow movements of all but one of the concertos, Vivaldi dispenses with the orchestra: there are ravishing contributions from the archlute continuo in RV408 in E flat, and the organ tootles away delightfully in RV422 in A minor. Elsewhere, however, the harpsichord is too backwardly placed to be effective. The orchestral playing is sprightly, with a wonderful throwaway ending to RV403 in D.

**Naïve OP 30457**  
 Richard Lawrence



## Vivaldi

Cello Concertos – RV400, RV401, RV403, RV408, RV418, RV420, RV424

*Han-Na Chang (cello), London Chamber Orchestra/ Christopher Warren-Green*  
 Han-Na Chang, a Korean cellist who studied with Mischa Maisky and Rostropovich, has made several recordings, three of them with Antonio Pappano and the LSO. This is her first disc of Baroque music, and it's well worth hearing. She sounds a little uncomfortable in the high-flying passages of RV420 in A minor, but the compensation is more than ample in the slow movement of RV400 in C, where she produces a lovely singing line. The end of the Largo of RV408 in E flat, one of only three concertos that also appear on Christophe Coin's new disc, will have you holding your breath. Warren-Green provides good support with the modern instruments of the London Chamber Orchestra.

**EMI Classics 234 7910**  
 Richard Lawrence



## Holst

Orchestral Works, Vol.1 – Ballet from The Perfect Fool; The Golden Goose; The Lure; The Morning of the Year

*The Joyful Company of Singers, BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Richard Hickox*

Poor old Gustav Holst: the success of his *Planets* suite well and truly squashed the rest of his large and original output from the public consciousness. Three cheers, then, for Chandos as it releases the first volume of his complete orchestral works. Richard Hickox's feel for and knowledge of British music of this period made him the perfect channel through which to present these forgotten treats, and the performances here burst with energy and joy, wrapped in a cloak of the all-important visionary mysticism that Holst shared with his great friend Ralph Vaughan Williams. The choral ballets are particularly captivating.

**Chandos CHAN5069**  
 Charlotte Gardner



## Dušek

Piano Concertos in D, C and E flat

*Prague Chamber Orchestra/ Karel Košárek (piano)*

Nowadays, the name František Xaver Dušek may provoke blank stares, but the 18th-century Bohemian composer was highly regarded by his contemporaries. He shared with Mozart a gift for elegant lyricism, and it was in Dušek's Prague summer villa that Mozart completed *Don Giovanni*. In this world-premiere recording of Dušek's piano concertos, soloist Karel Košárek is at his best in the reflective passages, which showcase his melting touch, nuanced tempos and delicious phrasing – but the more fiery moments could do with greater drive. The orchestral interjections are similarly hypnotic in the slower sections, but when the lullaby comes to an end you can't help wishing for a little less decorum and a bit more sweat.

**Et'cetera KTC 1369**  
 Hannah Nepil