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# PAGANINI

## Violin Concertos Nos. 3 and 4

Ernö Rózsa, violin

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra

Michael Dittrich



## Nicolò Paganini (1782-1840)

### Violin Concertos Nos. 3 and 4

Paganini's popular reputation rested always on his phenomenal technique as a violinist, coupled with a showman's ability to dominate an audience and to stupefy those who heard him by astonishing feats of virtuosity. His playing served as an inspiration to other performers in the nineteenth century, suggesting to Chopin, in Warsaw, the piano *Etudes*, and to Liszt the material of the Paganini studies that he wrote in 1838. The very appearance of Paganini impressed people. His gaunt, aquiline features, his suggestion of hunched shoulders and his sombre clothing gave rise to legends of association with the Devil, the alleged source of his power. These stories were denied by Paganini himself, who, with characteristic understanding of the value of public relations in a more credulous age, told of an angelic visitation to his mother, in a dream, foretelling his birth and genius.

Paganini was born in Genoa in 1782 and was taught the violin first by his father, an amateur, and then by a violinist in the theatre orchestra and by the better known player Giacomo Costa, under whose tuition he gave a public performance in 1794. The following year he played to the violinist and teacher Alessandro Rollo in Parma, and on the latter's suggestion studied composition there under Paer. After a return to Genoa and removal during the Napoleonic invasion, he settled in 1801 in Lucca, where, after 1805, he became violinist to the new ruler, Princess Elsa Baciocchi, sister of Napoleon. At the end of 1809 he left to travel, during the next eighteen years, throughout Italy, winning a very considerable popular reputation. It was not until 1828 that he made his first concert tour abroad, visiting Vienna, Prague and then the major cities of Germany,

followed by Paris and London in 1831. His international career as a virtuoso ended in 1834, when, after an unsatisfactory tour of England, he returned again to Italy, to Parma. A return to the concert-hall in Nice and then, to considerable acclaim, in Marseilles, was followed by an unsuccessful business venture in Paris, the Casino Paganini, which was intended to provide facilities equally for gambling and for music. With increasing ill health, he retired to Nice, where he died in 1840.

Many of Paganini's compositions for the violin remained unpublished in his lifetime, part of his stock-in-trade, to which he had exclusive access. He wrote a quantity of music for violin and orchestra, including six concertos. The *Violin Concerto No. 3 in E major* was written in 1826, a time of some difficulty. In 1824 he had started a liaison with a young singer, Adriana Bianchi, who bore him a son, Achille, the following year, a child to whom Paganini became very attached. Adriana Bianchi, however, was a troublesome partner, jealous and unpredictable in her behaviour, while Paganini, twice her age, was increasingly subject to illness. In 1826 indisposition forced him to rest in Naples, where he wrote two concertos, the present work and the *Violin Concerto No. 2 in B minor*. It was only in January the following year that he was able to resume public performances. These continued, with appearances in Rome, Florence, Perugia and Leghorn, only to be interrupted by the need to look after Achillino, who had broken his leg and needed constant attention, and a recurrence of his own illness. In 1828 he accepted an invitation from Prince Metternich to visit Vienna, where the new concerto was first performed at

the Redoutensaal on 24<sup>th</sup> July in one of the fourteen lucrative concerts Paganini gave in the city. Public enthusiasm, in which Schubert joined, was enormous, starting a fashion for everything à la Paganini.

The *Concerto in E major* contains all the technical devices of which Paganini was a master, extended writing in octaves, passages in tenths, double stopping, often in the highest register, artificial harmonics, bowed staccato and left-hand pizzicato, all faithfully carried out in the present recording, without abridgement or simplification, as has sometimes been the case. The first movement starts with a slower introduction in which dynamic contrasts are calculated to arouse the attention of the audience. The principal subject follows, marked *Allegro marziale*, an apt description of its character. The orchestral exposition also brings a secondary theme, in similarly operatic style, and the main theme returns, to prepare the way for the solo entry with a dazzling series of rapid arpeggios, an ostentatious use of the lowest string of the violin in a higher register than usual, and more ornate material. This leads eventually to the second subject, passages of octaves and, once again, a use of the lowest string of the instrument. The movement continues in a pyrotechnic display of virtuosity, the return of the secondary theme proceeding to a brilliant cadenza, capped by the brief return of the first theme in a short coda. The A major slow movement, marked *Adagio, cantabile spianato* (singing and smooth) has the shortest of orchestral preludes, before the soloist introduces the principal theme, which frames a contrasting central passage. The concerto ends with a *Polacca* and a corresponding *Trio*. This starts with a lively melody, entrusted to the soloist, followed by the orchestra, a procedure followed with the subsequent material, after which the violinist exhibits his prowess in passages of tenths, left-hand pizzicato

and artificial harmonics, all part of Paganini's technical armoury, before the return of the familiar opening theme brings the work to a close.

In the summer of 1828 Paganini was able to reach a settlement with Adriana Bianchi, paying her off to end a highly unsatisfactory relationship and retaining custody of his son. After Vienna he travelled through Germany and to Poland, winning particular success in Berlin and Warsaw. In August 1829 he reached Frankfurt and established a base for himself there for the next eighteen months of continued tours, during which he visited Leipzig, now agreeing to play there, after earlier disagreements, and played for Goethe in Weimar. The young Robert Schumann had heard Paganini play in Frankfurt in early April 1830, an experience to be reflected in his later music. In the same city, two weeks later, on 26<sup>th</sup> April, Paganini gave the first performance of his *Violin Concerto in D minor*, written the previous year.

The concerto, a more lyrical work than its predecessor, follows the usual pattern, with an orchestral exposition that presents the two elements of the first subject, the portentous opening and more lyrical following material, framing the second subject and returning to prepare for the solo entry. The soloist at first seems about to embark on the opening material of the concerto, but treats this with great freedom in displays of bowed staccato, before the related lyrical secondary element. A passage of double stopping, followed by artificial harmonics, leads to the F major second subject, after which there is further virtuoso activity from the soloist in double stopping, passages of octaves and tenths and a final trill in the highest register, before the orchestra concludes the exposition. A central section in A minor is followed by a recapitulation in which a passage in harmonics is again used to herald the

return of the second subject, now in D major. A brilliant cadenza leads to the orchestral coda. The F sharp minor slow movement, *Adagio flebile con sentimento* (tearful and with feeling), starts with hints of a funeral march, bringing a ray of light in its central section. The concerto ends with a *Rondo galante*, in which the opening theme is used as a framework for contrasting episodes. These bring continued opportunities for a

phenomenal technical display in the service of the music. A trio section, heralded by the brass, is largely in harmonics, followed by rapid bowed staccato arpeggios across the strings, as the movement returns from B flat major to its original key of D minor and principal theme.

**Keith Anderson**

## **Ernő Rózsa**

The Hungarian violinist Ernő Rózsa was born at Tîrgu-Mures in Romania in 1970 and took German citizenship in 1993. From the age of three until the age of ten he was taught by his father, Ernest Rózsa, for many years leader of the State Philharmonic of Tîrgu-Mures and from 1982 first leader of the Philharmonia Hungarica. Between 1983 and 1985 he took part in master-classes with Tibor Varga in Detmold and Sion and with Ruggiero Ricci in New York, followed, in subsequent years by master-classes with Rosa Fain in Düsseldorf and Mintcho Mintchev in Essen. Early success in competitions came in 1982 with first prize in the National Music Competition in Bucharest. In the same year he appeared throughout the country as a soloist with the Tîrgu-Mures State Symphony Orchestra. He made his first appearance as a soloist with the Philharmonia Hungarica in 1984, taking first prize in the same year in the Enescu International Violin Competition in Bucharest. In the following years he received particular support and encouragement from Sir Georg Solti, with an invitation to London, and embarked on a career that brought appearances as a soloist with various orchestras throughout Europe. His remarkable recordings of works by Paganini for violin and orchestra for Naxos with the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra and concert tours with this repertoire mark a further stage in Ernő Rózsa's career as a virtuoso. From 1987 to 1994 he received a German student scholarship, owed much from 1993 to the practical help of Sir Georg Solti and from 1992 to the personal support of the directorate of GAF-GHC-Hüls-Konzerns, Marl, Dr. F. Kuhlmann and through the Hüls-Stiftung, Marl, Prof. Dr. Hupe und Dr. Sage. In 1990 Ernő Rózsa made a critically acclaimed recording for Marco Polo of the *Violin Concerto* of Max von Schillings and further releases of music by Paganini are planned for Naxos.

## **Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra**

The Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1929 as the first professional music ensemble to meet broadcasting needs in Slovakia. The orchestra was first conducted by the Prague conductor František Dyk and in the course of the past seventy years of its existence has worked under the direction of several prominent Czech and Slovak conductors. Ondrej Lenárd was appointed its principal conductor in 1977 and a number of the orchestra's successful performances abroad are connected with his name. When Robert Stankovsky took over the orchestra in 1993, regular concert performances followed, at home and abroad, with important recordings for the radio and for foreign companies. The major recording partner of the orchestra remains HNH International Ltd, the parent company of Naxos and Marco Polo, for which the orchestra has so far recorded over 140 CDs. The orchestra has undertaken a number of successful tours in Europe as well as in Japan, Korea and Hong Kong.

## **Michael Dittrich**

Michael Dittrich was born in Silesia and was trained as a violinist at the Music Academies of Detmold and of Vienna, a background that has served him well as a conductor. As a student he served as second concert-master

and assistant conductor of the Tübingen Chamber Orchestra and as a violinist in the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, with which he has been associated since 1970, influenced there by the example of the conductor Hans Swarowsky. His further training as a conductor was at the Vienna Musikhochschule with Karl Österreicher and Otmar Suitner, with Franco Ferrara and through the friendship and advice of Carlo Maria Giulini. In 1977 he established the ensemble Bella Musica, undertaking concert-tours throughout Europe and the Americas. Prize-winning recordings followed and invitations to appear as a guest-conductor in Europe and in Japan. In 1989 he made his début in Moscow with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra, the beginning of further association with the orchestra, and concerts and recordings have followed in the 1990s in Bratislava, Stettin and Vienna, with a wide repertoire that has included notable recordings of music of the avant-garde. In 1995 he was honoured by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra with the presentation of the Golden Bruckner Ring.

*Ernö Rozsa gratefully acknowledges the support from Dr. F. Kuhlmann and Dr. Marlis Gaul.*

Regarded as the greatest violinist of his time, Paganini caught the attention of his contemporaries for his outstanding virtuosity, colourful lifestyle and an alleged pact with the devil. Although his concertos are dazzling rather than profound, they contain a formidable array of technical innovations that brought about a revolution in violin playing. These are the first recordings of the uncut original versions of both Concertos as played by Paganini himself.

Nicolò  
**PAGANINI**  
(1782-1840)

**Concerto No. 3 in E major for violin and orchestra** 41:52

- |   |                              |       |
|---|------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Andantino - Allegro marziale | 22:16 |
| 2 | Adagio, cantabile spianato   | 7:27  |
| 3 | Polacca: Andantino vivace    | 12:09 |

**Concerto No. 4 in D minor for violin and orchestra** 33:48

- |   |                               |       |
|---|-------------------------------|-------|
| 4 | Allegro maestoso              | 16:47 |
| 5 | Adagio flebile con sentimento | 6:11  |
| 6 | Rondo galante: Andantino gaio | 10:49 |

*All Cadenzas by Ernő Rózsa*

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