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SHCHEDRIN

Carmen Suite

Concerto for Orchestra, 'Naughty Limericks'

Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra
Theodore Kuchar

Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin (b. 1932)

Carmen Suite

Concerto No. 1 for Orchestra: Naughty Limericks ('Ozornïye Chastushki')

Rodion Shchedrin, born in Moscow in 1932 and still living there, was arguably the most successful and officially accepted Soviet composer of his generation. He started piano lessons at a very early age and his subsequent musical training and interests were encouraged by parents who were largely musical in their own backgrounds. Having completed his studies at the Moscow Conservatory in 1955, he continued as a piano pupil of Yakov Fliyer and in composition as a pupil of Yuri Shaporin. His earliest compositions are characterised by elements that continue into his maturity, folk melodies from the various republics of the former Soviet Union and the *chastushka*, short but sometimes vulgar, clean, emotional or cynical, but always happy, 'mass songs', which, although rarely incorporated into serious music before this time, became a characteristic of Shchedrin's major scores, yet were already evident in his most successful early works, the *Piano Concerto No. 1* of 1954 and the ballet *Konek-Gorbunok* ('The Little Hump-Backed Horse'). In addition to his large-scale orchestral works, symphonies and concertos for orchestra, piano concertos, vocal and choral works, instrumental and chamber works, Shchedrin is best known for his for the theatre, the 1976 opera *Dead Souls* and the ballets *Carmen Suite*, written in 1967, *Anna Karenina*, written in 1972 and *The Seagull* of 1980, all first performed at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow.

The one-act ballet *Carmen Suite*, choreographed by Alberto Alonso, chief ballet master of the National Ballet of Cuba, was first performed by the Bolshoi Ballet at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow in 1967, with Maya Plisetskaya in the leading role. It was first presented in the US by the same forces at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1974. This was the first ballet Shchedrin wrote specifically for his wife, then prima ballerina of the Bolshoi. The *Suite*, scored for the unique combination of a large body of strings and the widest possible range of percussion instruments, handled simultaneously by five players, is divided into 13 movements.

The original score by Georges Bizet is regarded by many as perhaps the most perfect creation of its kind in the operatic repertoire, largely because of its highly concentrated yet economical dramatic structure and the simple fact that one is usually left with the impression that whichever role is being presented at a particular moment the human voice is never at odds with any continuing activity. In other words, the aural balance between the principal vocal roles and the orchestral forces allows the solo voice to penetrate more clearly and

with greater virtuosity than is the case in many operatic works. The 'transcription' maintains the musical image of Carmen, as created by Bizet, incorporating the wealth of thematic material by which the opera is known today. The colourful orchestration maintains the transparency of Bizet without in any way thickening his textures, yet, at the same time, while stretching the virtuosic potential of his orchestral resources, Shchedrin creates an atmosphere of white heat, enhancing the opera's already existing material by translating it into a language all its own.

The *Concerto No. 1 for Orchestra, Naughty Limericks* ('Ozornïye Chastushki'), received its first performance by the USSR Radio and Television Large Symphony Orchestra conducted by Gennady Rozhdestvensky, to whom the work is dedicated, at the Warsaw Autumn Festival in September 1963. Two years later it was performed in the US by the New York Philharmonic and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington. The immediate and lasting popularity of *Naughty Limericks* has been based on the composer's use of the *chastushka*, translating the composition into a modern symphonic understanding of popular Russian songs depicting both the past and present. The thematic material of the *chastushka* is presented in a whirlwind display of constantly changing activity yet the many different motifs are presented each in its own contrasting dynamic and character, all culminating in one of the most symphonic and virtuosic of codas. Although contemporary music can prove remarkably ephemeral, *Naughty Limericks* has become and remains a Soviet classic, not because of ingenious experimentation but because of a totally logical yet imaginative presentation of fragments known to the masses with a rare understanding of the technical possibility of each instrument, stretching each group of instruments to its own virtuosic limit.

Theodore Kuchar

Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra

Established in 1937 under Nathan Rachlin, the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra has continued to serve as one of the most celebrated and accomplished instrumental ensembles in the territories of the former Soviet Union. During its long history the orchestra has appeared with soloists and conductors of the greatest distinction. Praised by Shostakovich and David Oistrakh, the orchestra has made many recordings and its tours have taken it to cities throughout the former Soviet Union and Europe. Under its principal guest conductor Theodore Kuchar, appointed in 1992, it has continued to offer an extensive repertoire of music to audiences in the Ukraine and elsewhere.

Theodore Kuchar

The Ukrainian conductor Theodore Kuchar is currently principal guest conductor of the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, music director of the Ukrainian Chamber Orchestra and artistic director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. His professional career began as a principal violist in leading orchestras of Cleveland and Helsinki, followed by appearances as a soloist and chamber musician in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the US and the former Soviet Union. In 1980, at the age of 20, Theodore Kuchar was awarded the Boston Symphony Orchestra Paul Fromm Fellowship, allowing study at Tanglewood with Leonard Bernstein, Colin Davis, Seiji Ozawa and André Previn. After international appearances as a guest conductor, he was appointed, soon after his Australian debut in 1987, music director of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra in Brisbane, while also serving until 1993 as music director of the West Australian Ballet in Perth. In 1989 he was awarded a bronze medal by the Finnish government for services to Finnish music, while in 1994 he played in the world premiere of Penderecki's *String Trio* in New York. His recordings as a conductor include a number of important works for Naxos and Marco Polo.

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(b. 1932)

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Concerto for Orchestra, 'Naughty Limericks'

	Carmen Suite from the Ballet after Bizet's opera	**44:11**
1	Introduction	1:29
2	Dance	2:08
3	First Intermezzo	0:58
4	Changing of the Guard	1:55
5	Carmen's Entrance and Habanera	3:17
6	Scene	6:28
7	Second Intermezzo	2:04
8	Bolero	1:09
9	Torero	3:11
10	Torero and Carmen	4:49
11	Adagio	5:23
12	Fortune-Telling	4:44
13	Finale	6:36
14	**'Naughty Limericks' Concerto No. 1 for Orchestra**	**8:35**

Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra
Theodore Kuchar

Recorded: 28–30 April 1994 at the Studio of the State Broadcasting Company of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine
Producer: Leonid Bylchynsky • Engineers: Katerina Bazenova and Alexander Hornostai
Booklet notes: Theodore Kuchar
Cover painting: *Célestine Galli-Marié* as Carmen

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Playing Time
53:30

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