



**AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE**  
**MAY/JUNE 2004**

**RACHMANINOFF: Piano Concerto 2;  
Paganini Rhapsody**  
**Robert DeGaetano; Slovak Radio Orchestra/  
Kirk Trevor—Crystonyx 1005—60 minutes  
(9 W 123rd St New York 10027)**

It has been a long time since I listened to Rach 2. It's a beautiful work, but an easy one to get tired of. Not having heard it in a while, I was curious about this one, and put it in the player with some eagerness. I was not disappointed.

DeGaetano strikes a fine balance between logic and emotion. He is romantic without excess sentimentality, poised and sensible but not detached and dull. His tempos are carefully thought out, his dynamic shadings near-perfect. Maestro Trevor offers attractive orchestral backing, and the Slovak orchestra does its part nicely, but without erasing memories of the Philadelphia Orchestra of old—or of other fine ensembles who have been part of great recordings of the work.

There is, of course, no shortage of recordings of a warhorse concerto like this one. My favorites include Earl Wild (Chandos), Arthur Rubinstein and Van Cliburn (RCA), and Entremont (Sony). Our latest Rachmaninoff Overview (March/April 1999) goes into a lot more detail and offers many more choices.

The performance of the Paganini Rhapsody shares most of the virtues of its discmate. It too is appropriately romantic, without wallowing in sentimentality. There is an intimacy about it, a warmth and closeness not always found in performances of such a blockbuster. It is on a smaller scale than many performances, but it works. The famous 18th variation is less melodramatic than some, but still effective and attractive. The work is a complete, balanced entity, something that cannot always be counted on. Here too Maestro Trevor and his musicians do their job with taste and flair. And in this work too there is a bewildering array of choices. My favorite is Kapell (RCA), monaural 1950s and all. Again, refer to our Overview for detailed recommendations.

This recording was made in Bratislava in March 2002, and the sound in both works is very good; clean and clear, never drawing undue attention to itself. Notes, if we may call them that, consist of a six-paragraph essay of the music by the pianist and a brief bio of him by his PR person.

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