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BRAHMS Piano Concertos (Maltempo)

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BRAHMS Piano Concertos (Maltempo)

BRAHMS Piano Concertos (Maltempo)

- Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 1
- Concerto for Piano and Orchestra No. 2

Selected comparisons

- [Brahms Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2; Handel Variations; Waltzes](#)
- [Brahms Piano Concertos 1 & 2](#)
- [BRAHMS Piano Concerto No 1. 4 Ballades](#)

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Brendel, Fleisher, Freire, Gilels, Graffman, Hough, Kovacevich, Lewis, Rubinstein, Serkin: 10 reasons why anyone contemplating recording the Brahms concertos should give pause. That's not to say there haven't been some fine accounts from younger artists coming my way of late, not least Sunwook Kim with Mark Elder and Adam Laloum with Kazuki Yamada. But this one, from Vincenzo Maltempo and the Mitteleuropa Orchestra under Marco Guidarini, doesn't really have enough individuality to make its mark.

Certainly Maltempo has the technique to play both concertos with conviction (not surprising, given that he has made a name for himself playing Alkan, and my esteemed colleague Patrick Rucker much liked his Liszt Hungarian Rhapsodies, 2/17). But I find a lack of subtlety in his approach in both concertos. In the opening movement of the D minor First, for example, the theme (from 4'48") lacks a sense of line that you find in the finest, while the chordal passage (from 6'15") begins well enough but then Maltempo can't resist overdoing rubato – at least to these ears. The mighty octave-writing also comes across somewhat opaquely. The orchestra itself is also not that noteworthy – entries are sometimes ragged, the wind is less characterful than some and the beautiful opening of the slow movement passes for relatively little (just hear Harding or Elder here for a masterclass in the shaping of lines). And the closing Rondo doesn't dance as Lewis's does. This movement is also afflicted by various noises off (eg from 0'55"). The horn solo that opens the Second Concerto immediately suggests we're in for a long listen – less a matter of tempo than of phrasing. Again, there's nothing wrong with Maltempo's playing technically – but it doesn't stand out among the myriad versions. The Allegro appassionato goes at a decent speed but the accentuation tends to hold up rather than drive matters forwards. The (uncredited) cello soloist in the Andante gives it his (or her) all, but again rubato can be a bit overdone in the movement as a whole and the finale is short on grace. Overall, I fear, not competitive.

<https://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/brahms-piano-concertos-maltempo>