

Gliere - Concerto for colatura soprano and orchestra op. 82

Written by bluesever
Monday, 15 July 2013 15:53 -

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1. *Andante* 2. *Allegro* Joan Sutherland – soprano National Symphony Orchestra Richard Bonyngue - conductor Kingsway Hall, London , 1968

Reyngol'd Moritsevich Glier, or Reinhold Glière, as his name more commonly reads, is one of those fascinating Russian composers who witnessed the transition from the late Romantic period to the Soviet era. While Glière was born into the nationalist-driven (but ultimately French-oriented) musical world of mid- to late nineteenth century Russia, he lived all the way up to 1956, gathering up armfuls of official Soviet artistic commendations and teaching, until 1941, at the Moscow Conservatory. During none of the U.S.S.R.'s various political or artistic upheavals, however, did he feel compelled to abandon his gently melodic musical style. The Concerto for coloratura soprano and orchestra, Op. 82, of 1942-1943, shows that style off as well as any piece he wrote; it also demonstrates how little interested Glière was in the sharper, grittier music of Dmitry Shostakovich and his many followers.

The most striking thing about the Concerto for coloratura soprano and orchestra, Op. 82, is, of course, its instrumentation. The idea of writing music without text for a singer was not new (Glière's contemporary Sergey Rachmaninov wrote perhaps the most famous such piece, the treasured Vocalise, Op. 34/14), but the idea of making a full-scale concerto for such an "instrument" certainly was. The concerto has two movements -- *Andante* and *Allegro* -- and lasts between ten and twelve minutes. A melancholy, unharmonized tune in the strings ushers in the first movement; the winds join in to fill out the texture, and the soprano promptly enters. Great spans of melody, thrown against washes of deep, rich orchestral texture, drive the movement from climax to climax. The warm *Allegro* has a great deal of lighthearted humor to it, and one can hear in it strands reminiscent of Tchaikovsky's ballets and even, somewhat more surprisingly, Wagner's music-dramas. --- Blair Johnston, Rovi

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