

## Grechaninov - Symphony No. 5, Missa oecumenica (Polyansky) [2000]

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 30 December 2014 17:03 -

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*premiere recording* Missa oecumenica, Op. 142 42:02 1 I Kyrie 5:59 2 II Gloria 5:15 3  
III Credo 8:53 4 IV Sanctus 6:27 5 V Benedictus 6:21 6 VI Agnus Dei 9:04

*premiere recording* Symphony No.

5, Op. 153 37:12 in G minor - g-Moll - sol mineur

7 I Maestoso - 10:33 8 II Andante - 11:40 9 III Scherzo: Allegro - 5:46 10 IV Finale:  
Allegro moderato 9:12

Tatiana Sharova - soprano Ludmila Kuznetsova - mezzo-soprano Oleg Dolgov - tenor  
Dmitry Fadeyev - bass Margarita Koroleva - organ Russian State Symphonic Cappella  
Russian State Symphony Orchestra Valeri Polyansky – conductor

This is a wonderful disc and a glorious conclusion to Chandos's survey of Grechaninov's symphonies. Stylistically, Grechaninov's music is of course firmly rooted in the romantic tonal language of the Russian Silver Age, and there is hardly a trace of anything more modern, even though the symphony was written as late as 1936 (and the Mass not much earlier). That is not to deny that there is a certain individuality to the symphony even if the main influences, Glazunov and Borodin in particular, are undeniably present - the well-constructed and hugely appealing first movement seems to offer explicit homages to Borodin (maybe mostly because of the opening figure).

The second movement is the only one to enter darker waters - and as usual with Grechaninov, it is also the weakest movement (although it is still appealing and interesting, and the funeral march theme is stirring). The third movement, however, is another glorious, brilliant and tuneful scherzo in the best Russian tradition. The finale is also a superbly life-affirming, optimistic and wonderfully memorable affair. In short, this is a work of unbridled optimism given the time of writing, but it is a magnificent work, perhaps even a great one; atmospheric, well-crafted, glitteringly scored and full of superb themes and memorable melodic material.

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The Missa oecumenica is a splendid work as well. Premiered by Koussevitzky, the Missa oecumenica was supposed to address members of a variety of religious traditions (not only the orthodox, as most of Grechaninov's earlier church works). As a result (it seems), Grechaninov's musical language became slightly more eclectic as well - it is still firmly rooted in the Russian Silver Age style, but there are Gallic touches as well (even, at points, Les Six, it seems). It is a marvelously inventive work whose numbers range from the grippingly serene to the almost catchy. Grechaninov's melodies are strong, and despite the somewhat eclectic style, he brings the various elements very convincingly together. It is, in short, another superb work.

The Russian State Symphonic Cappell makes as good a case for this work as one could imagine, and the soloists are very fine. Indeed, the performances are very good throughout; the orchestral playing is spirited and colorful, and Polyansky is not afraid to play up the sheer excitement of the music (both, in fact, though of course in particular the symphony). There are perhaps a few rough patches in the strings, but it doesn't detract from the overall impression. This is a magnificent disc that really should not be missed by anyone. I have no complaints about the sound quality - the sound in the symphony is a little drier than in the Missa (Chandos used different recording venues); that was of course done on purpose and works very well. Very strongly recommended. G.D. (Norway), amazon.com

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