

MARCO
POLO

Boris
LYATOSHYNSKY

DDD

8.223540

Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3

Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra
Theodore Kuchar



Boris Lyatoshynsky (1895 - 1968)

Symphony No. 2, Op. 26

Symphony No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 50

The history of Ukrainian culture during the first third of the twentieth century reflects the history of the people of the Ukraine, their greatness and their tragedy, with their deliverance from bondage and from the oppression of their national dignity. The period, in short, brought about a short-lived Ukrainian resurrection, when the people worked hard to create an entirely independent land and culture. This brought great creative power in literature, art and theatre, with Ukrainian music taking the lead in the cultural development of these years.

Boris Lyatoshynsky, a composer, conductor and teacher, was a leading member of the new generation of twentieth century Ukrainian composers and is today honoured as the father of contemporary Ukrainian music. Arriving in Kiev from his native city of Zhitomir in 1914, Lyatoshynsky enrolled in the law school of Kiev University, while continuing his musical studies at the new Kiev Conservatory in the composition class of Reinhold Glière, with whom he was to continue a life-long relationship. Having completed his law studies in 1918, he graduated in 1919 from the Conservatory, where he was soon to take up a position as a teacher and later professor, continuing this connection until his death. From 1935 to 1938 and from 1941 to 1944 he taught concurrently at the Moscow Conservatory. As a composer he wrote a variety of works, including five symphonies, symphonic poems and other shorter orchestral works, choral and vocal music, two operas, chamber music and a number of works for solo piano. His earliest compositions were romantic and lyrical in style, influenced most of all by his esteem for the music of Schumann and Borodin. By the time of his *Symphony No. 1*, his graduation composition, he had begun to be influenced by the impressionist music of Scriabin, but with his *Piano Sonata No. 1* of 1924, he finally turned away from tradition, moving towards the new musical language of Central and Western Europe, atonality.

This period lasted until 1929, when there gradually appeared more and more evidence of simplification in harmonies, following the broad outlines of Ukrainian national music, with increased reference to the folk-songs and music of the Ukraine, relying on the earlier research in this field of Mykola Lysenko.

There is now general awareness of the tragic effects of the gradual suppression of cultural life in the Soviet Union, with complete state control of all musical activities. By the late 1920s the Soviet government strenuously opposed the development of a national Ukrainian musical style, repressing all the arts and using them as a means of political propaganda, with a consequent disastrous decline in artistic standards. Eventually the Central Committee condemned the formalism of Western European music, while firmly controlling popular taste and the creativity of composers. Systematic purges and censorship enforced the principles of Socialist Realism.

The *Second Symphony* of Lyatoshynsky, written in 1935-36, is the first example of a Ukrainian-Soviet symphonic drama of conflict, with underlying contrast of pictures and moods by means of linear polyphony in the development of symphonic material. Here, however, is an example of a masterpiece doomed for long to remain unheard through historical circumstances. The history of early critical opinion and the consequences of the symphony reflect the general situation in that period of Ukrainian culture, when each new work was judged by its effectiveness in the promulgation of the canons of Socialist Realism. Censors were not satisfied with Lyatoshynsky's success in portraying a complex and eccentric reality and a generally insulting atmosphere throughout the symphony, a work turbulent, nervous, filled with deep pain and flashes of protest, yet, equally clearly, showing the composer's love of life and his ideal of artistic and ethical responsibility towards his own people. Immediately after the completion of the symphony in 1936 came the most damaging insinuation, a review published before the scheduled first performance and resulting in its cancellation, although the cancellation was attributed to the death of a leading member of the Communist Party. Although revised in 1940, the symphony joined the ranks of works by Prokofiev and Shostakovich, whose *Fourth*

Symphony had to wait 26 years for its first public performance. With others held guilty of formalism, forgotten and awaiting eventual rehabilitation, the symphony was not performed until 1964.

It is difficult to find a Ukrainian musician who is not familiar with Lyatoshynsky's *Third Symphony*, written in 1951 and revised in 1954, a work that represents a typical illustration of continued Party criticism. The symphony, which was first performed in 1951 at the Congress of Ukrainian Composers in Kiev, is the most frequently performed and recorded of the composer's five symphonies. The first performance caused a great sensation, but the Soviet censors still forced the composer to rewrite the last movement, changing the original concept and removing the epigraph "Peace will defeat war", if he hoped to see it performed again. After a long period of indecision, the composer offered a revised version, but only after a further revision did the Party permit a performance. In its new form the symphony was performed in Leningrad in 1955 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Evgeny Mravinsky, and subsequently in Moscow, Kiev and other cities throughout the Soviet Union. Although the symphony was accepted, after revision, the four years separating the two versions, the second of which is heard in this recording, proved very damaging to Lyatoshynsky. Accusations of formalism, decadence, aggression, sadism and cacophony were levelled at him in official discussions of his work. In spite of this, the *Third Symphony* represents the greatest example of Ukrainian symphonic music and for many of us remains one of the great symphonies of the twentieth century.

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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 by 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

Theodore Kuchar graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and by the age of 25 held the position of principal viola in orchestras of Cleveland and Helsinki. He has appeared as soloist and chamber musician throughout the world, performing at major festivals including Blossom, Edinburgh, Kuhmo and Tanglewood. In 1980 he was awarded the Paul Fromm Fellowship from the Boston Symphony Orchestra for study and performance at Tanglewood, where his mentors included Bernstein, Colin Davis, Ozawa and Previn, while at the same time working under the guidance of Lorin Maazel as music director and conductor of the Cleveland Sinfonia. He has subsequently served as music director of the Finnish Chamber Orchestra,

Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra and West Australian Ballet while having guest conducted the leading orchestras of Cape Town, Helsinki, Kiev, Prague and Tallinn, amongst many others. He also serves as artistic director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. In 1992 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, with which he records for Marco Polo the complete symphonies of the leading Ukrainian composer of the twentieth century, Boris Lyatoshytsky.

Lyatoshynsky was the leading Ukrainian composer of his generation, writing symphonies in the tradition of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, works that have been described as philosophical dramas, reflecting the stresses of the period of their composition. His highly personal musical language reflects Russian tradition and the music of his native Ukraine.

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STEREO

**Boris
LYATOSHYNKY**
(1895 - 1968)

**Playing
Time:**
76'40''

Symphony No. 2, Op. 26

- | | | |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Lento tenebroso e con maesta - Allegro deciso ed impetuoso | (14:00) |
| 2 | Lento e tranquillo (Alla ballata) | (8:27) |
| 3 | Andante - Allegro precipitato | (7:36) |

Symphony No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 50

- | | | |
|----------|---|----------------|
| 4 | Andante maestoso - Allegro impetuoso | (15:44) |
| 5 | Andante con moto | (13:13) |
| 6 | Allegro feroce | (6:14) |
| 7 | Allegro risoluto | (11:15) |

Recorded at the Concert Studio of Ukrainian Radio
in Kiev from 4th to 9th June, 1993.

Engineers: Leonid Bylchynsky, Katherina Bazhenova
and Andrei Gerasimenko

Music Notes: Theodore Kuchar

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