

National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine

(until 1994 known as Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra)

The National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine was formed in November 1918 by the Ukraine Council of Ministers. The first conductor was Oleksander Horiylj, and Nathan Rachlin was Artistic Director of the orchestra from 1937 for 25 years. Stefan Turchak, Volodymyr Kozhuchar, Fedor Glushchenko, Igor Blazhkov and Theodore Kuchar followed as Principal Conductors. Other conductors who have worked with the orchestra include Leopold Stokowski, Igor Markevitch, Kurt Sanderling, Evgeny Mravinsky, Kirill Kondrashin, Evgeny Svetlanov and Gennady Rozhdestvensky. Soloists who have performed with the NSOU include Artur Rubinstein, Yehudi Menuhin, Isaac Stern, David Oistrakh, Sviatoslav Richter, Mstislav Rostropovich, Emil Gilels, Leonid Kogan, Gidon Kremer, Oleh Krysa, Montserrat Caballé, José Carreras, and Juan Diego Florez. The orchestra has given premières of works by Sergey Prokofiev, Dmitry Shostakovich, Aram Khatchaturian, Boris Lyatoshynsky, Valentin Silvestrov, Myroslav Skoryk, and Yevhen Stankovych. Winning high praise from Shostakovich, among others, since 1993 the NSOU has made more than 100 recordings, including Ukrainian and international repertoire, winning international awards, and has undertaken concert tours throughout the world. Since April 1999 Volodymyr Sirenko has been Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, and since June 2006 Alexander Hornostai has served as Managing Director and Producer.



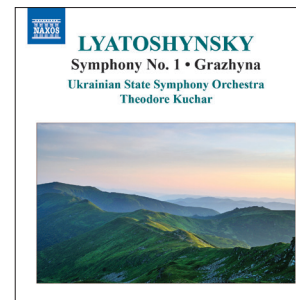
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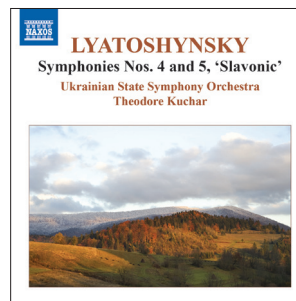
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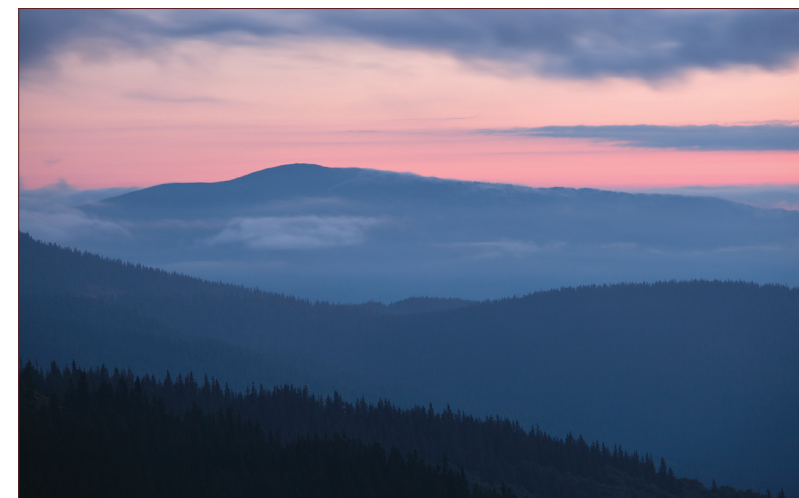
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LYATOSHYNsky

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

During the first third of the twentieth century, Ukrainian society underwent several seismic shifts as a result of political instability and oppression. Following the long and bitterly fought Ukrainian War of Independence from 1917-21, the Soviet government introduced a new policy of tolerance and 'Korenizatsiya' – literally 'putting down roots' – allowing smaller Soviet nations and republics far greater control and freedom. This resulted in a vibrant, if short-lived, cultural renaissance, and the emergence of a new generation of artists, writers and musicians, who drew on both eastern and western models as well as looking to their own national heritage.

Boris Lyatoshynsky was a leading member of this new generation of Ukrainian composers, and is today honoured as the father of contemporary Ukrainian music. Arriving in Kiev from his native city of Zhitomir in 1913, Lyatoshynsky enrolled first in the law school of Kiev University, and subsequently also at the recently-founded Kiev Conservatory, where he studied composition with Reinhold Glière. Having completed his law studies in 1918, he graduated in 1919 from the Conservatory, and took up a teaching post there in the very same year. He continued to teach in Kiev for the rest of his life, and became a professor of the Conservatory in 1935. Additionally, from 1935-38 and 1941-44 he taught at the Moscow Conservatory, and in later life acted as an adjudicator for the Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow on several occasions.

Lyatoshynsky composed in a broad variety of genres. His output includes five symphonies, several symphonic poems and other short orchestral works, choral and vocal music, two operas, and a number of chamber and solo piano pieces. He also provided incidental music for both stage and film productions. His earliest compositions were heavily influenced by the tastes of his teacher, Glière, and are Romantic and lyrical in style, with frequent references to the music of

both Schumann and Borodin. By the time he completed his *Symphony No. 1*, part of which formed his graduation work from the Conservatory, he had become interested in the impressionist music of Scriabin. But five years later, with his *Piano Sonata No. 1* (1924), he moved away from Russian models in favour of the new musical developments of Central and Western Europe – specifically, atonality. This exploration of musical expressionism, and in particular the music of Alban Berg, lasted until 1929, when Lyatoshynsky increasingly turned his attention to his Ukrainian musical heritage. For the rest of his career, and drawing on the research of the late nineteenth-century ethnomusicologist Mykola Lysenko, Lyatoshynsky drew together Ukrainian folk-songs and melodies with contemporary harmonic and formal approaches.

The golden age of cultural freedom in the Ukraine was to come to an abrupt end in the late 1920s, as Stalin took control and Socialist Realism became the new order of the day. Ukrainian national music was brutally repressed, Western European developments were condemned, and systematic purges and censorship were employed to enforce the new regime. It was not until the mid-1950s that the next generation of Ukrainian composers, all pupils of Lyatoshynsky, were able to establish a free avant-garde with the help of their mentor.

Lyatoshynsky's *Second Symphony, Op. 26*, composed between 1935-36, was doomed to remain unheard until 1964, due to the intervention of the Soviet authorities. Early critical responses to the work reflect the general situation in this period of Ukrainian culture, when each new work was judged by its effectiveness in the promulgation of the canons of Socialist Realism. (That is, a doctrine by which artworks had to promote a sense of collective, and positive, human destiny and purpose.) Lyatoshynsky's turbulent Symphony evidently

confused and unsettled the censors – whilst its outer movements are sharp-edged and nervous, punctuated by violent outbursts, the *Lento e tranquillo* in particular retains elements of the romantic expansiveness that characterised his *First Symphony* (1917-19), and the rich orchestral textures of Scriabin. Lush passages for high strings and harp sit alongside edgy woodwind outbursts; brooding, ominous cellos and basses are knocked aside by punchy brass and percussion; and thematic material is cleverly layered across the orchestra to contribute to a sense of discomfort and claustrophobia. Consequently, the censors felt that Lyatoshynsky had not satisfactorily adhered to the positive, Soviet nationalist tenets of Socialist Realism. A highly damaging review was published shortly after he completed the work – before the première – as a result of which the performance was cancelled (although the cancellation was attributed to the death of a leading member of the Communist Party). Lyatoshynsky returned to the Symphony in 1940 to revise it; but as with Shostakovich's *Fourth Symphony*, which was composed in the very same years as Lyatoshynsky's, it was to be several decades before the work finally received its first public performance, almost thirty years after its composition.

It is difficult to find a Ukrainian musician who is not familiar with Lyatoshynsky's *Third Symphony, Op. 50*, written in 1951 and revised in 1954, a work that provides yet another example of Party criticism. Generally considered to be one of Lyatoshynsky's finest (and most frequently performed) compositions, and his most successful integration of nationalist and expressionist

approaches, this work was first performed in 1951 at the Congress of Ukrainian Composers in Kiev. The première caused a great sensation; but Soviet censors were not satisfied and insisted that the composer would have to rewrite the last movement. This finale, which had initially borne the epigraph 'Peace will defeat war', had to be substantially altered – and the epigraph removed – if Lyatoshynsky hoped to see it performed again. After several years of agonising indecision, he eventually offered a revised version in 1954; but it was only after yet more adjustment that the Party agreed to permit a performance. In its new form, the *Symphony* was given in Leningrad (St Petersburg) in 1955 by the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Evgeny Mravinsky; and it was subsequently repeated in Moscow, Kiev and a number of other cities throughout the Soviet Union. Although the piece became an accepted and celebrated composition, the process of official rejection and forced revision proved hugely damaging to Lyatoshynsky. The Party continued to level accusations of formalism, decadence, aggression, sadism and cacophony at his music, and it was not until the later 1950s that he felt able to operate once more with a sense of creative freedom. Despite this painful creative history, the *Third Symphony* is a supreme example of Ukrainian symphonic music, and stands among the most important symphonies of the twentieth century.

Theodore Kuchar
Edited Katy Hamilton 2014

Theodore Kuchar



Theodore Kuchar, one of the most prolifically recorded conductors of the past decade, appears on over a hundred recordings for the Naxos, Brilliant Classics, Ondine and Marco Polo labels. He has served as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of two of Europe's leading orchestras, the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra (formerly the Czech Radio Orchestra) (2005-) and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine (1994-2004). In the 2011-12 season he commenced his tenure as the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orquestra Sinfónica de Venezuela. He presently also serves as Music Director and Conductor of the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra (2002-) and the Reno Chamber Orchestra (2003-) in the United States. An avid chamber musician, he served as the Artistic Director of the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (1990-2006), and has served as the Artistic Director of the Nevada Chamber Music Festival since 2005. Highlights of the past several seasons have included a four-week, twenty concert tour of the United States with the Czech Symphony Orchestra and guest conducting engagements including the BBC Symphony, BBC National Symphony Orchestra of Wales, Berlin Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic and the National Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. He has collaborated with major artists including James Galway, Jessye Norman, Lynn Harrell, Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Sarah Chang, Mstislav Rostropovich, Joshua Bell and Frederica von Stade, among others. Between 1994 and 2004 the orchestra made over 80 recordings for the Naxos and Marco Polo labels, including the complete symphonies of Kalinnikov, Lyatoshynsky, Martini and Prokofiev, as well as major works of Dvořák, Glazunov, Mozart, Shchedrin, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky. They also recorded the symphonies and orchestral works of Ukraine's leading contemporary symphonist, Yevhen Stankovych. The recording of Lyatoshynsky's *Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3* was awarded ABC's "Best International Recording of the Year" in 1994. Their recording of the complete works for violin and orchestra by Walter Piston for the Naxos label [8.559003] was hailed by *Gramophone* (January, 2000) as a "Record of the Year" for 1999. The complete symphonies of Prokofiev, on the Naxos label, are regarded by many critics as the most accomplished cycle available on compact disc.