



Reinhold Moritsevich

# GLIÈRE

Symphony No. 3

'Il'ya Muromets'

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra

JoAnn Falletta

## Reinhold Moritsevich Glière (1875-1956)

### Symphony No. 3 in B minor 'Il'ya Muromets', Op. 42

The Russian composer Reinhold Glière was born in Kiev in 1875 and began his life in music with lessons on the violin, encouraged by his father, a Belgian-born maker of wind instruments. His remarkable progress enabled him to enrol at the Kiev Conservatory in his early teens. He then transferred to the Moscow Conservatory where his gift for composition led to study with Arensky, Ippolitov-Ivanov and Taneyev. In 1920 Glière accepted the prestigious post of professor of composition at the Moscow Conservatory, where he remained for the rest of his life as a tutor and mentor to many gifted students, including Sergey Prokofiev and Aram Khachaturian.

Glière is best known today for his brilliant *Concerto for Horn*, the ballets *The Bronze Horseman* and *The Red Poppy* (which includes the well-known *Russian Sailor's Dance*), as well as his early *Symphony No. 3* of 1911. Subtitled *Il'ya Muromets*, the work is a prime example of Glière's lifelong penchant to compose music on national themes based on mythology and popular lore.

*Symphony No. 3* offers a suite of four picturesque tone-poems inspired by the adventures of Il'ya Muromets, the legendary warrior from the Middle Ages of Mother Russia. The work is scored for a robust orchestra of expanded woodwinds and brass including eight horns, two harps and celeste, full strings and extended percussion. With lavish tone-colours worthy of a Renaissance canvas, each movement tells a gripping tale from the saga, with florid themes, at times poetic, at times with ravishing effect. Leaving no doubt as to the sonic metaphor of each movement, Glière added a long narrative to the score in both Russian and French, from which the following commentary is partly derived.

#### 1 Wandering Pilgrims: Il'ya Muromets and Svyatogor

As the curtain rises over what will become a vast soundscape, deep-ruby timbres are intoned in the lower strings, representing the heart and hearth of Mother

Russia. An ancient church chant is heard in a pleading bassoon and English horn before the symphonic palette gradually converts to an expanse of brash colours and stark accents. In turn follows a frenzy of wailing horns and brass, offering cinema-perfect evocations of the unfolding storyline, with signature rôles for the strings à la Tchaikovsky.

The opening scene in the story takes place at the castle of Prince Vladimir, the Mighty Sun, where Il'ya Muromets resides as a guest. Il'ya accepts the counsel of wandering pilgrims who advise him to seek the great and aged warrior Svyatogor. Upon their meeting, as Svyatogor draws near death, he imparts his spirit and strength to Il'ya, conveyed by glorious effects from the brass choir. The torch has been passed and a mood of poignant sadness prevails. Il'ya Muromets then pledges to serve Mother Russia with his newfound powers, as the music conjures his vivid resolve in crimson D major.

#### 2 Solovey, the Brigand

In a dense forest, seven great oak trees provide shelter for Solovey, the Brigand, and his three daughters, each adorned with stolen pearls, gold and silver. With his ferocious whistle and harrowing shriek, Solovey is able to fell buildings, tall trees and even enemy soldiers. Glière tone-paints the deep woods with sylph-like strings and contrabassoon, as the play of sonic light scatters through the dark verdure of shapes and shadows. A hunting-horn announces that Solovey and his bejeweled daughters are present. Urgent low brass and frightened woodwinds represent Solovey's wicked whistle and wail, before he is struck in the right eye by a silver-steel arrow from the quiver of Il'ya Muromets.

A harsh orchestral drama conveys the capture of Solovey, who is attached to a stirrup on Il'ya's war horse and dragged back to the castle of Prince Vladimir. As the scene closes, only the abandoned woods remain, represented by souvenirs of forest music from the opening.

#### 3 At the Court of Vladimir, the Mighty Sun

In the castle of Prince Vladimir a grand feast is given for distinguished nobles and the invincible Bogatyr Knights. Scherzo-like music offers a glorious *scène-de-ballet* in the Bolshoy manner. Dance-like ostinatos frame a royal procession via heralding brass and strings. But when Il'ya Muromets arrives at the palace gate, Solovey, the Brigand, lets out his ferocious whistle and cry. At once the high roof of the palace shakes and bends, as all the guests and Bogatyr Knights are felled to the ground. Only Prince Vladimir remains standing.

In retribution, Il'ya Muromets beheads Solovey in a single stroke. As a gesture of thanks, Prince Vladimir gives Il'ya a place of honour at his table. All the Bogatyr Knights recognize Il'ya as their leader as joy returns to the palace in resplendent A major.

#### 4 The Heroism and Petrification of Il'ya Muromets

Probing, dark murmurs open the Finale, attended by fretful woodwind, strings and biting brass. The dreaded Tartars approach, led by Batygha, the Wicked. A battle-scene rages in the music, as Il'ya Muromets leads his soldiers against the Tartars for twelve days and nights. When Il'ya defeats the giant warrior Oudalaia Polenitsa, his Bogatyr Knights are briefly spared from harm, but an ancient Russian church lament is heard from on high – the chant of the Celestial Army. The battle resumes in garish, gripping orchestral tones. As the sacred chant slowly dominates the scene, Il'ya Muromets and his brave Bogatyrs are routed in defeat, each turned into stone one by one. The sadness of their fate is heard *In memoriam*, with antiphonal calls in the brass over weeping elegiac strings. The Petrification scene offers a final hymn in grave timbres, with plangent brass rising slowly to the eternal realm in solemn B minor. Glière ends the narrative with the line: "It has been since that time that the Bogatyr Knights have disappeared from Mother Russia".

Edward Yadzinski

Glière's *Symphony No. 3* has always been a piece that

shimmered on my horizon – a cult piece, in a way, renowned as the composer's towering masterpiece but rarely played in concert. As long as a Mahler symphony and enormous in its instrumental requirements, it was a work that people spoke about reverently but almost never heard live.

I had never conducted the piece but had always dreamed of doing so, and when Naxos presented the challenge of recording the work, the Buffalo Philharmonic and I were thrilled at the opportunity. We made it the centerpiece of our concert season, surrounded it by a year of Russian themed music from Rachmaninov to Kancheli, and scheduled it for performances not only in Buffalo but at Carnegie Hall. It was an adventure that changed our orchestra, strengthened us, and became an artistic benchmark for our musicians.

We revelled in the gorgeous landscape of the symphony – from mysterious bass murmurings to crushing walls of brass *fortissimo* to breathtaking impressionistic renderings of forests and birds. The inspiring and tragic story of a flawed hero was fascinating – Il'ya Muromets grew from a powerless boy to become the national hero of his entire country, performing feats of unbelievable courage that are spectacularly portrayed in the music. Drunk with success and power, he finally challenges God to send down his heavenly army for him to fight, a fatal mistake that is Il'ya's undoing.

We performed and recorded this massive work uncut to preserve Glière's extraordinary architecture, and it was an unforgettable journey. This work is a cathedral in sound that unfolds in breathtaking swashes of color, poetry and monumental climaxes that combine a bejeweled and ancient Russian Orthodox influence with violent paganism.

In the most touching finale – after Il'ya and his warriors have been defeated and turned to stone – Glière tenderly presents echoes of the first three movements, a poignant reminiscence of Il'ya's life. The composer wrote at the end of the score "... and from that day on, the great warriors were never to be seen again in Mother Russia". The age had passed. Glière bids farewell to a time of innocence, of magic, of hope – of a Russia that was forever lost.

JoAnn Falletta

## Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra



Founded in 1935, the GRAMMY® Award-winning Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Music Director JoAnn Falletta, is Buffalo's leading cultural ambassador and presents more than 120 Classics, Pops and Youth Concerts each year. Since 1940, the orchestra's permanent home has been Kleinhans Music Hall, a National Historic Landmark, designed by Eiel and Eero Saarinen, one of the finest concert halls in the United States. The BPO has toured widely across the United States and Canada including the Florida Friends Tour with JoAnn Falletta in March 2010. The BPO performed at Carnegie Hall as a participant in the *Spring For Music* festival in 2013, as one of five orchestras selected from a national field. This was the orchestra's 24th appearance at Carnegie Hall and its first since its performance there under JoAnn Falletta in June 2004. Over the decades, the BPO has matured in stature under some leading conductors, including William Steinberg, Josef Krips, Lukas Foss, Michael Tilson Thomas, Maximiano Valdés, Semyon Bychkov and Julius Rudel. During the tenure of JoAnn Falletta the BPO has rekindled its distinguished history of radio broadcasts and recordings, including the release of 24 new CDs of a highly diverse repertoire on the Naxos and Beau Fleuve labels. The Philharmonic's Naxos recording of composer John Corigliano's *Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan* (8.559331), featuring soprano Hila Plitmann, won GRAMMYs® in two categories of the three for which it was nominated: Classical Vocal Performance and Classical Contemporary Composition.

## JoAnn Falletta



JoAnn Falletta serves as Music Director of the Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony in the United States and Principal Conductor of the Ulster Orchestra in Northern Ireland. She has guest conducted over a hundred orchestras in North America, and many of the most prominent orchestras in Europe, Asia, South America and Africa and is the Principal Guest Conductor of the Phoenix Symphony and Brevard Music Center of North Carolina. Recipient of the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, winner of the Stokowski Competition, and the Toscanini, Ditson and Bruno Walter conducting awards, Falletta has also received eleven ASCAP awards and serves on the U.S. National Council on the Arts. A champion of American music, she has presented over five hundred works by American composers including 110 world premières. Her Naxos recordings include the double GRAMMY® Award-winning disc of works by John Corigliano and GRAMMY® nominated discs of works by Tyberg, Dohnányi, Fuchs, Schubert, Respighi, Gershwin, Hailstork and Holst.

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(1875-1956)

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| ① | <b>Wandering Pilgrims: Il’ya Muromets and Svyatogor:</b><br>Andante sostenuto – Allegro risoluto | 21:24 |
| ② | <b>Solovey, the Brigand: Andante</b>   | 20:03 |
| ③ | <b>At the Court of Vladimir, the Mighty Sun: Allegro</b>   | 7:10  |
| ④ | <b>The Heroism and Petrification of Il’ya Muromets:</b><br>Allegro tumultuoso – Andante          | 23:04 |

**Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra • JoAnn Falletta**

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