Sergei Prokofiev: Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution

aud 97.754

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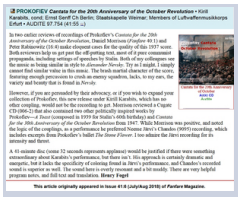
Fanfare (Henry Fogel - 2018.07.01)

In two earlier reviews of recordings of Prokofiev's Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution, Daniel Morrison (Fanfare 40:1) and Peter Rabinowitz (16:4) make eloquent cases for the quality of this 1937 score. Both reviewers help us get past the off-putting text, most of it pure communist propaganda, including settings of speeches by Stalin. Both of my colleagues see the music as being similar in style to Alexander Nevsky. Try as I might, I simply cannot find similar value in this music. The brash martial character of the score, featuring enough percussion to crush an enemy squadron, lacks, to my ears, the variety and beauty that is found in Nevsky.



However, if you are persuaded by their advocacy, or if you wish to expand your collection of Prokofiev, this new release under Kirill Karabits, which has no other coupling, would not be the recording to get. Morrison reviewed a Cugate CD (006-2) that also contained two other politically inspired works by Prokofiev—A Toast (composed in 1939 for Stalin's 60th birthday) and Cantata for the 30th Anniversary of the October Revolution from 1947. While Morrison was positive, and noted the logic of the couplings, as a performance he preferred Neeme Järvi's Chandos (9095) recording, which includes excerpts from Prokofiev's ballet The Stone Flower. I too admire the Järvi recording for its intensity and thrust.

A 41-minute disc (some 32 seconds represents applause) would be justified if there were something extraordinary about Karabits's performance, but there isn't. His approach is certainly dramatic and energetic, but it lacks the specificity of coloring found in Järvi's performance, and Chandos's recorded sound is superior as well. The sound here is overly resonant and a bit muddy. There are very helpful program notes, and full text and translation.

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PROKOFIEV *Cantata for the 20th Anniversary of the October Revolution* • Kirill Karabits, cond; Ernst Senff Ch Berlin; Staatskapelle Weimar; Members of Luftwaffenmusikkorps Erfurt • AUDITE 97.754 (41:55)

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