



Yet there is so much more to this when played clearly, as a recent live performance under Gergiev shows. The remainder gets underway brightly but lacks enthusiasm. The 13-instrument collage section misses its relationship to the First Symphony, again evident with Gergiev. What makes me most reluctant to recommend this version is the factory whistle (Fanning reports this is “used here for the first time in the symphony’s recorded history,” which is inaccurate). Gergiev used a hand-cranked siren with a long decay that sounded great; here the effect is an unpleasant, unpitched electric humming (and no, we do not want a Philip Glass effect for this work). The chorus sound decent enough but less than excited about their banal lyrics. Alternative recordings of merit are those by Ashkenazy (Decca 436 762-2; deleted) and Järvi (Deutsche Grammophon 469 525-2; deleted). I am eagerly awaiting Gergiev’s recording of Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, sure to be released in the coming fall or winter.

In Symphony No. 12, Jansons’ approach is again rather anaemic, lacking real drive and spark, and the sound is too diffuse. Contrast this with the plodding beginning of Cox’s rendition with the London Shostakovich Orchestra (Dunelm Records DRD0234; reviewed in *DSCH* No. 24), which quickly leads to excitement and real drama until the hammered conclusion, or the vigorous approach of Järvi with the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (Deutsche Grammophon 459 415-2). The best part of Jansons’ recording is the slow, thoughtful, Khachaturian-like *Razliv*, played with brooding dignity and respect. At the end of the work, Jansons doesn’t hammer the repetitions to get across the point of deliberate heavy-handedness Shostakovich may have sardonically intended. Without this stress, the end-

ing has insufficient meaning or emotion to carry off the rest of this often misunderstood and unloved symphony. Mravinsky (recently returned to the catalogue on the resurrected Melodiya label; MELCD1000770), Rostropovich (Teldec 0630-17046-2), Cox, and Järvi are good alternatives.

*Richard Pleak*

### **Symphony No. 7 in C major, Leningrad, op. 60.**

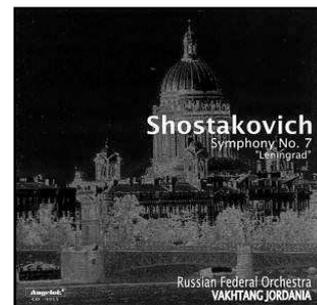
#### **Vakhtang Jordania, Russian Federal Orchestra.**

Angelok1 CD-9915. DDD. TT 71:12. Recorded in the Bolshoi Hall, Tchaikovsky Conservatory, Moscow, January 2003.

The opening string theme of Jordania’s *Leningrad* bursts out energetically enough but acoustically is a little unfocused when compared to more crisp and muscular accounts from Vladimir Ashkenazy with the St. Petersburg Philharmonic (Decca 448 814-2) and Yevgeny Svetlanov with the USSR Symphony Orchestra (Scribendum SC 025). Thereafter the *poco piu mosso* is well controlled and the flute and piccolo soar majestically. The march theme sets out at an appropriate tempo and works through the first two variations nicely. The third variation, the call and response for oboe and bassoon (Fig. 25), is omitted! Whether or not a conductor (or the manufacturer, if they were responsible for the edit after the fact) considers it tautological, the composer had a reason for it in his grand scheme: the *stretto* of variation 5 (Fig. 31) represents an intensification of a compositional tactic already explored. If you take issue with conductors or nameless others wielding the knife, this is not a disc for you.

The string version of the theme in parallel major chords (Fig. 33) leaps out dramatically in volume, creating the effect of terraced dynamics (though Jordania keeps more than sufficient resources in reserve) rather than the more graduated course of Ashkenazy,

Svetlanov or Rostropovich with the National Symphony Orchestra (Apex 0927414092). Jordania’s approach is an effective ploy in that the garish harmony is thrust to the fore, the theme’s course of malignant mutation vividly underscored. In this variation Rostropovich pays close attention to the composer’s articulation of the repeated notes at the end of each phrase of the tune - they should not be rendered uniformly staccato as they are by Jordania, Ashkenazy and Svetlanov.



Towards the climax, the *fff* horns prior to Figure 41 are not quite strong enough in tone, and in the ensuing variation the balance of the chromatic thirds is not allowed to monster the main tune to my liking. Not so Ashkenazy and Svetlanov, whose four horns in unison are magnificent, whilst the parallel thirds in the ensuing variation enshroud the tune like a filthy blanket.

Jordania’s *frullato* brass at the climax fails to bare its teeth. Thereafter, the snare part comes unstuck from the rest of the ensemble as the music accelerates to Figure 52. The *moderato* that follows maintains a rather brisk tempo and lacks the grim pathos of Ashkenazy and Svetlanov. Jordania’s bassoon eulogy is expressive nonetheless, as is the remainder of the movement.

Overall, this is a fluent reading of the first movement, though momentary infelicities at the ensemble level make this juggernaut (the march in particular) less clinical than Ashkenazy’s or Svetlanov’s. The difference is slight, but the grand arch from the innocuous, to frenzied hysteria, to a sense of collapse is not quite compelling

enough to rank alongside present company.

The second movement certainly holds its own, wan and emotionless to begin with, stoutly protesting in the middle. The solo bass clarinet passage with harp and flutter-tongue flute and piccolo is beautifully rendered, ice cool and apprehensive.

The third movement is a little on the slow side for my liking, coming in at 17:52 as opposed to Ashkenazy's 15:41. My reviews seem to go on like a stuck record on the subject of overly slow tempi in Shostakovich's slow movements, but I think this movement benefits from keeping relatively close to Shostakovich's markings, as Ashkenazy does. The movement contains passages of comparatively simple (yet direct) invention that are rendered overly morose by a sluggish tempo; Rostropovich's performance also suffers a little in this regard.

The finale makes for compelling listening, especially in terms of energy early on, though once again some of the climactic moments don't quite make a big enough impression. The four horns at Figure 202 lack force, and the trombone's intonation between Figures 205 and 206 goes a little awry (Ashkenazy's players are totally assured here). Earlier the pizzicato punctuations in the 7/4 section (Fig. 177) lack the authority and bite of Ashkenazy's performance. Elsewhere, the period where the movement draws breath (Figs. 179-198) before the final assault gets a little bogged down and turgid. Rostropovich does an excellent job of maintaining intensity through this section.

In conclusion, although this is a creditable and at times enjoyable reading, I would rate the comparison discs slightly higher for their consistency and controlled intensity, especially in the first movement. Jordania's recording possesses many fine moments but occasionally gives the impression that

members or sections of the orchestra are pushing against the conductor's authority. Its acoustics favour the quieter moments but lack intensity in some of the crucial climaxes.

Graeme Downes

**Symphony No. 9 in Eb major, op. 70; Two Choruses after A. Davidenko, op. 124, for chorus and orchestra[a]; Concerto No. 1 for piano, trumpet and string orchestra in C minor, op. 35[b]; The Adventures of Korzinkina, op. 59, Suite from music to the film[c].**

**Valeri Polyansky, Russian State Symphony Orchestra, Russian State Symphonic Cappella[a,c], Tatiana Polyanskaya (piano)[b,c], Vladimir Goncharov (trumpet)[b], Elena Adamovich (piano)[c].**

Chandos CHAN 10378. DDD. TT 66:28.

Recorded at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, June 2003.

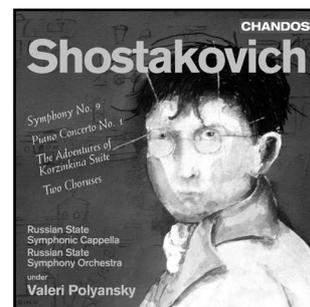
This Chandos release contains a varied selection of works, linked by elements of circus music (with the exception of op. 124) and interconnected instrumental forces: the pianist from the concerto (the conductor's daughter) reappears - with a friend - in *The Chase* from op. 59; Polyansky's first-rate choir feature in both op. 59 and op. 124.

Polyansky's account of Symphony No. 9 is marred by the second movement, which is much slower than the speed desired by Shostakovich (crotchet = 208) and - at 7:57 - is on a par with Oleg Caetani's recording (Arts Music 47675-2; reviewed in *DSCH* No. 22). Unfortunately the solo clarinet lingers unnecessarily between phrases, ignoring the fact that Shostakovich changed the time signature from 3/4 to 4/4 at each phrase end to allow a one-beat rest. Even worse, the reverberant acoustic blurs the rich tones of the clarinet, particularly when the line is chromatic. W. Mark Roberts made a similar complaint about the

Chandos/Polyansky recording of Symphony No. 10 (CHAN 9522, reviewed in *DSCH* No. 15).



Davidenko's two unaccompanied choruses formed part of *The Path to October* (1927), a collaborative cantata written for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Shostakovich's orchestration, made in the early 1960s, has been recorded only once before, by Rozhdestvensky with the USSR Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra and Chamber Choir, for which Polyansky was chorus master (Melodiya LP C10 31619 002). The first chorus, *At ten versts from the capital*, is a mostly homophonic Eb minor lament for the mass execution and burial of revolutionaries. In contrast, *The street in turmoil* is a more polyphonic and jubilant call to overthrow the Tsar, using the bright, joy-affirming key of C major. Polyansky's recording is the first on CD for this rare revolutionary curio, sung with superb diction and intonation by the Russian State Symphonic Cappella.



Both soloists and orchestra give a very spirited performance in the concerto. Goncharov deserves a special mention for his spooky muted trumpet in the second movement, radically different from any other recording I have heard. There are extra *col legno* percussive effects in the final movement at figure 74, which are neither in the old Collected Works score (Volume 12) nor all recordings, though they appear in Jerzy Maksymiuk's recording with Dmitri Alexeev, piano, and Philip Jones,

