

Sergey Lyapunov - Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2; Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes (2010)

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1. *Piano Concerto No. 1 in E flat minor, Op. 4* 22:16 2. *Piano Concerto No. 2 in E major, Op. 38* 19:27 3. *Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes, Op. 28* 16:35 Shorena Tsintsabadze - Piano
Russian Philharmonic Orchestra Dmitry Yablonsky – Conductor

This premiere recording by pianist Shorena Tsintsabadze includes the complete concerted piano works of Sergey Lyapunov. Lyapunov is certainly not one of the better-known or more imaginative Russian Romantics, but for those who are fascinated by the composers known as the "Mighty Handful" and their compatriots and followers, Lyapunov is a figure of interest. He was greatly influenced by Mily Balakirev, who provided Lyapunov with a good deal of advice on the composition of the Piano Concerto No. 1. Balakirev became the dedicatee of the work and also conducted its premiere in 1891. The two opening themes of the single-movement concerto -- one stern, one pastoral -- are unmistakably Russian. The piano writing in all three of these works shows the virtuosic legacy of Liszt, who was the teacher of one of Lyapunov's piano instructors. The Second Piano Concerto (1909), also a single movement, has proven slightly more popular than the first (this is only the second commercial recording of the Piano Concerto No. 1). It begins slowly, sounding more like the middle movement of a large, three-movement Russian concerto, but then moves into more rhapsodic and dramatic material.

The Rhapsody on Ukrainian Themes will appeal particularly to listeners who enjoy Rimsky-Korsakov's Russian Easter Overture and Borodin's In the Steppes of Central Asia. It has a similarly spring-like freshness and joyfulness to it, complete with prominent roles for the tambourine and triangle in the central episode of its rondo structure. (The recording's sound is extremely well-balanced among all the instruments.) Tsintsabadze and conductor Dmitry Yablonsky comport themselves skillfully and expressively in all three pieces, although there occasionally is the feeling that they need just a little more nuanced phrasing and shaping to satisfy those who revel in the passion of the Romantics. In the latter half of the Rhapsody there is a point where everyone's energy seems to flatten out a tad, which could have been exploited as a more sweeping change of demeanor in the music. Nonetheless, Tsintsabadze is certainly a

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very capable pianist, sounding as if she can handle the bigger Romantic concertos, and she effectively demonstrates where Lyapunov's concertos fall in the history of Russian music. ---
Patsy Morita, Rovi

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