



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

aud 97.754

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Fanfare (James H. North - 2018.07.01)

Our tradition has it that Shostakovich and Prokofiev wrote a lot of potboilers to appease Stalin at the time of the terrors. This is a rare opportunity to hear one of their “patriotic” works. Fascinating! It is indeed dreadful stuff, with a blasting brass band as well as full symphony orchestra and huge chorus; yet there is never a moment of doubt as to its composer. There are many suggestions of Alexander Nevsky, Lieutenant Kijé, and Romeo and Juliet; at one moment the percussion looks forward to the final measures of the Fifth Symphony. There is some superb choral writing—if one can disregard its bombastic accompaniment. But there are also words shouted as if over the radio, screaming choruses, and silly little military marches. What a hodgepodge! The texts (printed in transliterated Russian, English, and German) are taken from speeches and articles by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin. It is just as well that we can understand little of it in this performance. One of the 10 movements, “Symphony,” is wordless; unfortunately it is of less interest than the music for much of the patriotic drivel.

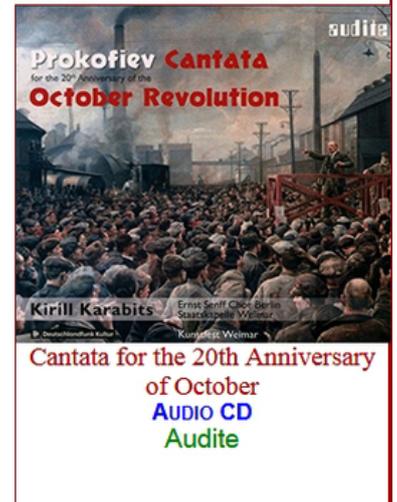
How does one judge a performance of such stuff? The chorus shouts a lot, but that seems appropriate. The orchestra is rough, even when the brass band is silent. Overall, the performance does justice to the score. It’s also hard to evaluate the recorded sound of such music. I haven’t heard any of the several other recordings (Järvi, Kondrashin, Titov) and don’t want to. Recommended, I guess, to Prokofiev completists.



**a** **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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