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THEODORE KUCHAR CONDUCTOR



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*** Discography available upon request.

BIOGRAPHY

Theodore Kuchar is one of the most prolifically recorded conductors of the past decade, having recorded over 70 compact discs for the Naxos and Marco Polo labels. He has served as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine since 1992, in a contract spanning through the beginning of 2000; upon completion of that agreement, he was awarded the title of Conductor Laureate for Life. For the past thirteen years, since 1990, he has served as Artistic Director of The Australian Festival of Chamber Music, an annual event regarded as the pre-eminent chamber music festival of the Southern Hemisphere. He presently also serves as Music Director and Conductor of the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra, the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra and the Reno Chamber Orchestra. During the past several seasons, guest conducting engagements have taken him to major musical centers including Amsterdam, Berlin, Chicago, Helsinki, Hong Kong, London, Madrid, Prague, Seoul and Sydney.

Soloists with whom Kuchar has collaborated through the 2002 season include James Galway, Jessye Norman, Lynn Harrell, Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Sarah Chang, Mstislav Rostropovich and Frederica von Stade, among others.

Through the 2003-04 season he is to conduct the opening subscription weeks and a three-week European Tour and in February, 2005, he is to conduct a three week United States Tour with the Berliner Symphoniker (Berlin Symphony). In November, 2003 he is to conduct a two-week tour of The Netherlands with The Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra.; during the next 18 months, he will have conducted nearly 40 concerts with this distinguished orchestras, in cities including Berlin, London, New York and Miami, among others. Additional engagements include collaborations in Amsterdam (Concertgebouw), Berlin, Bucharest, Kiev, Palermo, Prague, Rome and Rotterdam.

Under Mr. Kuchar's direction, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine has today become the most frequently recorded orchestra of the former Soviet Union. During the past eight years, the orchestra has recorded over 60 compact discs for the Naxos and Marco Polo labels, including the complete symphonies of Kalinnikov, Lyatoshynsky, Martinu and Prokofiev, as well as major works of Dvorak, Glazunov, Mozart, Shchedrin, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky and the symphonies and orchestral works of Ukraine's leading contemporary symphonist, Yevhen Stankovych. The first of these recordings, devoted to Lyatoshynsky's Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3, was awarded the ABC's "Best International Recording of the Year" in 1994. Their recording of the complete works for violin and orchestra by Walter Piston for the Naxos label was hailed by Gramophone (January, 2000) as a "Record of the Year" for 1999. The recently released complete symphonies of Prokofiev are regarded by many critics as the most accomplished cycle available on record. As a violist, his recording of works by Walter Piston was awarded the Chamber Music America/WQXR "Record of the Year" for 2001. Their most recent releases, in 2003, include recordings, on the Naxos label, of Mussorgsky (Pictures at an Exhibition and Night on Bald Mountain in the familiar Rimsky-Korsakov version and rarely heard original version), Tchaikovsky (Romeo and Juliet, 1812 Overture, Capriccio Italien and Marche Slav) and Roy Harris (Symphonies Nos. 7 and 9).

Critical acclaim has included the following:

Kuchar's account is as infectiously spirited an account as you could wish for ... To sum up, this is a quite remarkable CD on all counts - outstandingly fine orchestral playing, vividly exciting and very Russian music-making, and a very tangible sound picture, consistently in the demonstration bracket.
Gramophone

This is the best Roy Harris symphony recording since Bernstein's first Third. Why? Because it gives us Harris's "sound" in a way I rarely hear it - deep, broad sonorities played at tempos slow and steady enough to create sweep, breadth and intensity without being logy ... I always suspected there was a great symphony in the Seventh, but Kuchar is the first to bring it out. Eugene Ormandy's 1955 Columbia

recording is competent but the sound is too bright and raw. None of the broadcasts I've heard does it Kuchar's kind of justice. The Ninth is not a great work, but it's a good one, and Kuchar's is the best performance I've heard.

American Record Guide

During the 1996-97 season, Kuchar and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine undertook a project devoted to the performance of the cycle of complete symphonies of Anton Bruckner, in their original versions. This historic project, commemorating the centenary of Bruckner's death, was sponsored by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the 1997-98 season, they undertook a cycle of the complete symphonies of Franz Schubert, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the composer's birth. Kuchar remains as strong an advocate of composers of the present day as he does of the great composers of the past; during the past season, he has conducted works, in the presence of the composers, of George Crumb, Sofia Gubaidulina, Giya Kancheli, Benjamin Lees, Alfred Schnittke, Rodion Shchedrin and Yevhen Stankovych, amongst others. In May, 2000 Mr. Kuchar conducted the world premiere, at the invitation of Yo-Yo Ma, the Capriccio for Cello and Orchestra, with Mr. Ma as soloist, by American composer Lukas Foss.

In 1980 Mr. Kuchar was awarded the Paul Fromm Fellowship from the Boston Symphony Orchestra to undertake advanced study and performance at Tanglewood. He graduated from The Cleveland Institute of Music in 1982 as a student of Robert Vernon, Principal Violist of The Cleveland Orchestra, and, immediately afterwards, accepted positions as the Solo Violist of the Finnish National Opera and Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Helsinki through early-1988. During this period, he was a regular participant at a number of Europe's most prestigious chamber music festivals, including Kuhmo and Lockenhaus. Subsequently, he appeared as a guest conductor with the leading symphony orchestras of Brisbane, Cape Town, Helsinki, Perth, Prague, and Tallinn, among many others. Soon after his Australian debut in 1987, Mr. Kuchar was appointed Music Director of the Queensland Philharmonic Orchestra in Brisbane, whilst also serving as Music Director of the West Australian Ballet in Perth until 1993. During his time in Brisbane Kuchar's activities ranged from initiating a three year project devoted to performing the complete symphonies of Mozart to conducting Australian premieres of works by Prokofiev, Schnittke and Shostakovich. In 1989, he was awarded a bronze medal by the Finnish Government in recognition of his work in performing and promoting that country's music, both in Finland and abroad.

Theodore Kuchar continues to devote several periods annually to one of his most serious passions, the performance of chamber music. His colleagues during the past few seasons have included Boris Berman, James Buswell, Martin Chalifour, Lamar Crowson, Leila Josefowicz, Oleg Kagan, Dong-Suk Kang, Isabelle van Keulen, Oleh Krysa, Mark Lubotsky, Truls Mork, Paul Neubauer, Irina Schnittke, Torleif Thedeen and Thomas Zehetmair. In 1994, he participated with colleagues Oleh Krysa and Alexander Ivashkin in the world premiere of Penderecki's String Trio in New York City. In July of 1999, he appeared as violist in two recordings for the Naxos label, in works by Alfred Schnittke (with Irina Schnittke and Mark Lubotsky) and Walter Piston.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"The National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine brings to the fore some intricate instrumentation in its adept performance under the guiding hand of Theodore Kuchar."

The Observer

"Kuchar commands the Ukrainian orchestra with a meticulous, all-embracing authority and intensity resulting in vivid performances."

The Sydney Morning Herald

"Kuchar, conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, is energetic and emphatic on the podium.... leaves his players no doubt what he wants and from whom. They respond with the sound of performers giving the music everything they've got."

The Chicago Tribune

"Conductor Theodore Kuchar packed every punch known to musical mankind in his dramatic reading of Dvorak's New World Symphony."

The Daily Telegraph

"Ideal and colourful performances from the fine Ukrainian orchestra under their American conductor, in sound that readily captures the music's high impact."

The Yorkshire Post

"Well, you haven't lived until you've heard Harris' Seventh and Ninth Symphonies performed wonderfully by the National Symphony Orchestra Ukraine under Theodore Kuchar, the 42-year old Ukrainian orchestra leader who is now the orchestra's "Conductor Laureate for Life."

Buffalo News

"It was the excellent and extrovert conducting of Theodore Kuchar, able to reach an intensity level of one thousand degrees, that left the strongest impression."

Antonio Iglesias, Madrid ABC

"Kuchar brought more intensity ... consistently demonstrated a strong affinity for Russian masters of our century, and this stirring, marvelously shaped performance must rank as one of his finest."

Denver Rocky Mountain News

"Kuchar shows us that this music means something. The finale bursts forth with pounding fury and vigor. If the orchestra has to scramble a bit to keep up with the conductor's pace and intensity ... well, who cares? This is exciting stuff."

American Record Guide

"Theodore Kuchar was magnificent. When have we last heard such a power of music-making?"

The Australian

"Kuchar finds far more substance and humor in his rendition.... Kuchar's reading is unfailingly bracing, effectively recorded, and comes with a budget price tag."

American Record Guide

"This Naxos disc is by far the most compelling rendition of the Second Symphony you're likely to find for a long time to come.... This is the best album by far in Kuchar's on going distinguished Prokofiev survey. Highest possible recommendations!"

Classical Net Review

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