

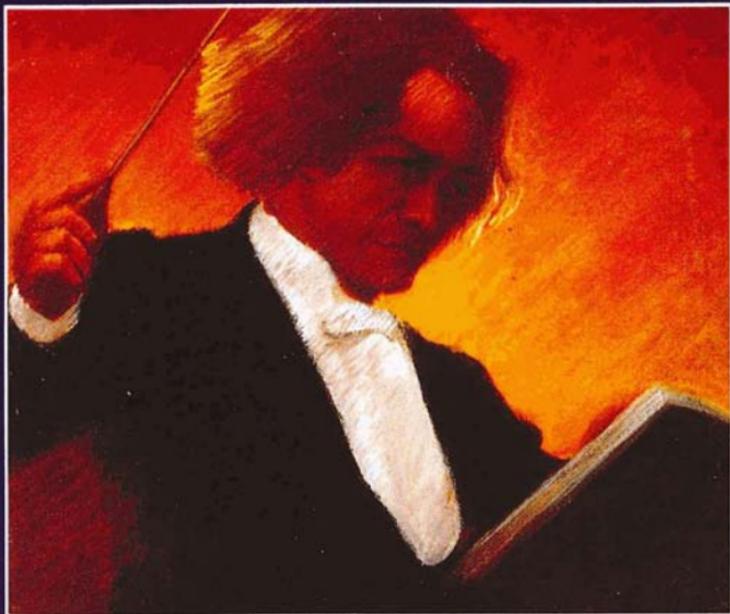
MARCO POLO

DDD

8.223320

Anton
RUBINSTEIN
Symphony No. 5
Dmitry Donskoy • Faust

George Enescu State Philharmonic Orchestra
Horia Andreescu



Anton Rubinstein (1829 - 1894)

Symphony No. 5 in G Minor, Op. 107

Overture: Dmitry Donskoy

Faust, Op. 68

It was Gustav Mahler who described himself as three times homeless: a Bohemian in Austria; an Austrian among Germans; a Jew throughout the whole world. The nineteenth century provided chances for Jewish assimilation into a Gentile world. The Jewish poet Heine described baptism as a ticket into European culture, and it was a course chosen by some, such as the Mendelssohn family and in Russia by the Rubinsteins. Nevertheless, as Jewish fortunes prospered, anti-Semitism became more overt. There is no doubt that Anton Rubinstein's reputation suffered because of his racial origins, much as it suffered among Russian nationalists as a result of his obviously cosmopolitan or German musical proclivities.

Anton Rubinstein was born at Vkhvatinet in the Podolsk district of the Russian Empire, on the borders of Moldavia, in 1829. A few years later his family moved to Moscow, and after early instruction on the piano from his mother he took lessons from a teacher there, a certain Villoing, later to be the teacher of his brother Nikolay. He gave his first public concert in Moscow at the age of ten. There followed four years of touring as a child virtuoso, years that took him to Paris, to Scandinavia, Austria and Germany, and to London, where he played for Queen Victoria. In 1844 the family settled in Berlin, where Rubinstein took lessons in harmony and counterpoint from Glinka's former teacher the Prussian royal music librarian Siegfried Dehn.

In 1846 Rubinstein's father died and the rest of the family returned to Russia, while he remained abroad in Vienna and in Pressburg (the modern Bratislava), earning a living as he could by teaching and cynical about the support that the ever-generous Liszt had seemed to offer, which took the form of a visit to his

garret, with his entourage of disciples. As a pianist Rubinstein was to rival Liszt in fame, and the latter speaks of him with grudging respect as a composer and player, a clever fellow, but unduly influenced by the classicism of Mendelssohn, adding a less charitable description of him as the pseudo-Musician of the future on the occasion of a visit to Weimar in 1854 for the first performance of his opera *The Siberian Huntsman*.

Rubinstein's fortunes had changed as a result of a meeting with members of the Russian Imperial family during the course of an earlier visit to Paris. On his return to Russia in the winter of 1848 he found support from the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, a German princess and sister-in-law of the Tsar, and with her active encouragement he established in 1859 the Russian Musical Society and three years later the St. Petersburg Conservatory. His brother Nikolay, whose childhood prowess as a pianist had had similar exposure, founded similar organisations in Moscow. Tchaikovsky was to be among the first pupils at St. Petersburg Conservatory and among the first teachers on the staff of its humbler counterpart in Moscow.

The new Conservatory aroused immediate enmity, in particular from the nationalist group of composers, bullied into collaboration by the eccentric Balakirev. Rubinstein had opened battle by attacking the whole notion of national opera, pointing to the alleged failure of Glinka's work. Balakirev, self-taught as a composer, objected to formal German musical training, and it was left to following generations to benefit from a profitable synthesis of the primitive nationalism of the Five and the cosmopolitan sophistication of the Conservatories. Rubinstein, however, coupled technical assurance with a less overtly Russian approach, although by the time of his death in 1894 he had come to a better understanding of Russian nationalism in music, while a younger generation had come to understand the necessity of professional musical training.

Rubinstein remained director of the St. Petersburg Conservatory until 1867, when he also gave up the directorship of the Russian Music Society concerts,

which now fell to Balakirev. He returned to direct the Conservatory once more in 1887, towards the end of a career that had established him as one of the greatest contemporary pianists and as a conductor of significant ability. As a composer he was prolific, leading his younger brother Nikolay, when asked about his own compositions, to reply that Anton had written enough for both of them. By the end of his life, however, he had lost the respect of the younger generation, so that his name had become synonymous with kitsch - c'est du Rubinstein had become a familiar jibe. It is only now, with hindsight, that we can begin to reassess his very remarkable and substantial achievement in opera, orchestral and chamber music, and in his writing for the piano, so long remembered invidiously only by the notorious Melody in F.

Rubinstein wrote the fifth of his six symphonies in 1880. The first movement opens with a thoroughly Russian theme, entrusted to the woodwind, a section that also embarks on the second subject, a theme of less obvious national provenance. The material is treated with Rubinstein's usual Mendelssohnian economy of means and technical competence according to established classical procedure. An equally Russian theme is passed from clarinet to oboe, to flute and to the violins, in the first theme of the second movement scherzo, with its contrasted minor trio section, dominated by more melancholy national sentiments. A solo French horn sets the mood of the slow movement, followed by the lively thematic material of the finale, brought together in a finely crafted conclusion. Modern writers have commented on the connection between this symphony and Tchaikovsky's First Symphony, in the same key, a work written as a student of Rubinstein, and again very much under the influence of Mendelssohn. Yet Rubinstein's Fifth Symphony is in no sense either merely derivative or a shadow of his pupil's work. Dedicated to the memory of the Grand Duchess Elena Pavlovna, to whose support he owed his career, the symphony is Russian in its melodies, but lacks any of the crudity that can be found all too often in the contemporary work of the dilettante nationalist composers then in the ascendant.

Rubinstein's first opera, *Dmitry Donskoy*, attempted a thoroughly national Russian theme. It was completed in 1850 and first staged in St. Petersburg two years later. The subject of the opera, derived from the pseudoclassical drama of Vladislav Alexandrovich Ozerov, is the grand prince of Moscow who in the fourteenth century defeated the Tatars and established the supremacy of Muscovy. Prince Dmitry's title, *Donskoy*, is a reference to the site of his second victory. The opera had little success, leading Rubinstein to declare nationalism in opera an impossibility, while accusing nationalist composers, with some justification, of dilettantism. It is of significance to notice that Rimsky-Korsakov, recalling in later life his early experience of opera in St. Petersburg, mentions "somebody's opera" *Dmitry Donskoy*.

Faust, written in 1864, originally formed part of a *Faust* symphony. The single movement that Rubinstein preserved was described as a musical picture after Goethe. In this respect the music speaks for itself, following something of the fortunes of *Faust* from the study to rejuvenation and later retribution, narrowly avoided.

Horia Andreescu

The Romanian conductor Horia Andreescu was born in Brasov in 1946 and received his musical training at the Academy in Bucharest and at the Vienna Music Academy, where his teachers included Hans Swarowsky and Karl Oesterreicher. He has won a number of awards, national and international, and has appeared in major cities in Eastern and Western Europe.

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STEREO

DDD

Playing
Time :
71'23"

Anton
RUBINSTEIN
(1829 - 1894)

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Dmitry Donskoy • Faust

George Enescu State Philharmonic Orchestra
Horia Andreescu

Symphony No. 5 in G Minor, Op. 107

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|----------|--|----------------|
| 1 | Moderato assai | (11:21) |
| 2 | Allegro non troppo - Moderato assai | (7:26) |
| 3 | Andante | (9:27) |
| 4 | Allegro vivace | (11:04) |
| 5 | Dmitry Donskoy, Overture | (11:55) |
| 6 | Faust, Musical Picture after Goethe, Op. 68 | (19:43) |

Recorded in Bucharest in July 1988.

Producer: Javier Berganza

Music Notes: Keith Anderson

Cover: Anton Rubinstein
(Painting by Benjamin Chai)

COMPACT
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Distribution: MVD Music und
Video Distribution GmbH,
Oberweg 21c, Halle V,
8025 Unterhaching-München,
Germany



4 891030 233201

Made in Germany

Cover: Anton Rubinstein
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