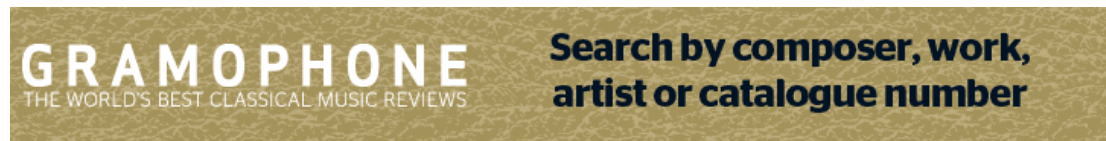


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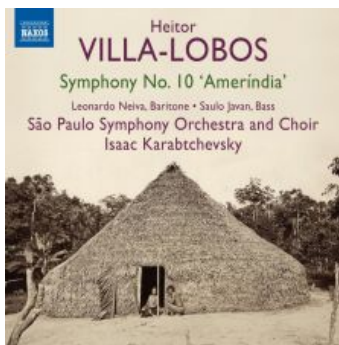
VILLA-LOBOS Symphony No 10

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This is the fourth recording of Villa-Lobos's enormous, magnificent, overblown, genre-melding Tenth Symphony (1952) I know of (those by Gisele Ben-Dor on Koch - 6/01 - and Victor Pablo Pérez on Harmonia Mundi - 1/04 - are no longer available) and it is the best. The orchestral playing is superb but the symphony stands or falls on the quality of the singing of the trilingual text.

The use of solo singers is curiously varied between recordings: Carl St Clair used solo tenor, baritone and bass, while here Karabtchevsky opts to have the tenor role sung by the choir; Ben-Dor even used a mezzo-soprano. I rather like Karabtchevsky's solution, varying the vocal-choral palette still more, with gradations of soli, tenor section and full choir. St Clair's German choirs surpassed his now unavailable predecessors in Santa Barbara and Tenerife in refinement and control but, unsurprisingly, the Brazilian choir in this new recording are audibly more comfortable with the language, and they make the text and Villa-Lobos's vocal writing spring off the page in ways that eluded the choirs in Stuttgart.

Author: Guy Rickards



Villa-Lobos Symphony No 10

VILLA-LOBOS Symphony No 10

Symphony No. 10, 'Amerindia'

Selected comparisons

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And there's the rub. For all the polish and élan of the Stuttgart recording (still the most satisfactory in sonic terms), and its advance over earlier efforts, as a performance it does not quite catch fire in the manner Karabtchevsky's does. His feel for Villa-Lobos's idiom, orchestral sound and expressive world is near unmatched, with only Minczuk and Neschling rivalling him, but they have not essayed the symphonies on disc. This new Tenth is the most convincing account yet, caught splendidly by Naxos in fine sound. Recommended with enthusiasm to all those interested in Villa-Lobos - and those who aren't.



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