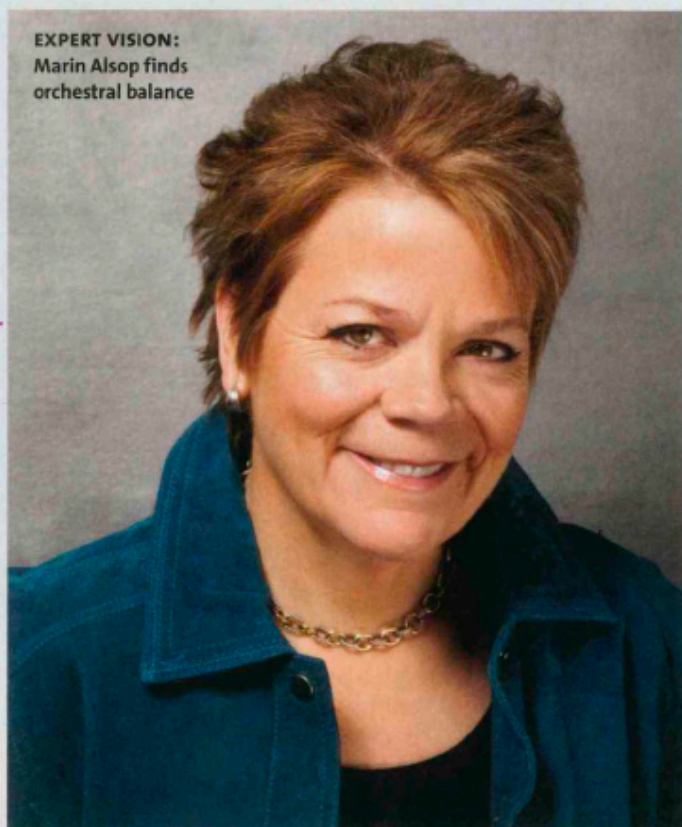



MUSIC ORCHESTRAL CHOICE

Fruit and fire in Prokofiev Five

Daniel Jaffé is impressed by the first in Marin Alsop's Symphony cycle

EXPERT VISION:
Marin Alsop finds
orchestral balance



PROKOFIEV

**Symphony No. 5;
The Year 1941, Op. 90**
São Paulo Symphony Orchestra/
Marin Alsop
Naxos 8.573029 59:48 mins

BBC Music Direct £5.99

This album, promised as the first in a new symphonic cycle,

certainly starts with a bang, though unexpectedly with *The Year 1941*. This three-movement suite was composed within months of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union and usually seems too discursive to qualify as one of Prokofiev's more inspiring scores. Yet the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and its conductor Marin Alsop held my attention as never before: the first movement here recalls the verve and colour of Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* (however frivolous this may seem for music portraying

such a calamitous event), while the second movement nocturne mixes lyrical charm with a sinister ghostly edge. Alsop and her orchestra even make a strong case for the would-be noble final movement, 'For the Brotherhood of Man', revealing it as a springboard for ideas to be used in the more powerful second movement of the Sixth Symphony.

The Fifth Symphony comes up trumps in a dramatic yet highly polished performance. Again, Alsop reveals its relationship with earlier Prokofiev works, in this instance *The Fiery Angel*, in some of the eerier string effects in the first and third movements. Yet all

The Fifth Symphony comes up trumps in a polished performance

the essential parries and thrusts of its symphonic argument tell in this expertly balanced and rich-sounding recording: I was particularly impressed by how Alsop brings out the first movement's characteristic power with a purposefulness that prevents it from seeming merely ponderous. In the second movement, the sneery, stalking brass procession that heralds the final section of the *scherzo* is hair-raising. Altogether, this first volume of Prokofiev is an outstanding achievement.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★



ON THE PODCAST

Hear excerpts and a discussion of this recording on our **BBC Music Magazine podcast**, available free on iTunes or at www.classical-music.com