

## Prokofiev: Symphony No 5; The Year 1941, CD review

This performance of the symphony by the Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Marin Alsop is one of considerable power, writes Geoffrey Norris.



Symphony sympathy: Marin Alsop is the ideal choice for Prokofiev

By Geoffrey Norris

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### **São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, cond Marin Alsop**

**Naxos 8.573029, £5.99**

When Marin Alsop left the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to take on the Baltimore, it seemed she might have a yen for orchestras with the initials BSO. But now she has bucked the trend by combining her commitments to Baltimore with a new post as principal conductor of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra. At least Brazil gives her the B.

The orchestra has not hitherto been prominent on the international scene, but Alsop is bringing it to the BBC Proms on August 15 for a programme of Dvořák, Villa-Lobos and Ginastera, and her long and fruitful relationship with Naxos has spawned this disc of

Prokofiev's Fifth Symphony, coupled with another of his (albeit less successful) wartime works, The Year 1941.

The performance of the symphony is one of considerable power, more expansive than some but conceived with a judicious balance between emotional weight and structural cohesion. A recent Radio 3 CD Review comparison of the available versions of Prokofiev's Fifth singled out Herbert von Karajan's with the Berlin Philharmonic (DG 437 253-2) as the top choice, a disc that has been a classic since it first came out in 1968.

The field of Prokofiev 5 recordings is an ample and competitive one, but, if Karajan's is not toppled by this new disc, the São Paulo has a great deal to offer in terms of energy, atmosphere, humanity and also technical accomplishment in those passages (notably in the finale) where Prokofiev taxed an orchestra's togetherness. These are healthy qualities on which to build, and, as this is the first disc of a planned series of all the Prokofiev symphonies, Alsop is the ideal conductor to make it happen.

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