

**St Petersburg**

New

**Balakirev** Octet, Op. 3.**Glazunov** String Quintet in A,  
Op. 39.**Glinka** Trio pathétique in D minor<sup>3</sup>.**Shostakovich** Piano Trio No. 1 in  
C minor, Op. 8.**London Conchord Ensemble** (Daniel Pailthorpe, flute; Emily Pailthorpe, oboe; Maximiliano Martin, clarinet; Andrea de Flammineis, bassoon; Nicholas Korth, horn; Maya Koch, Ning Kam, violins; Joël Waterman, viola; Thomas Carroll, Gemma Rosefield, cello; Beverley Jones, double bass; Julian Milford, piano).**Orchid Classics ORC10009** (full price, 1 hour 12 minutes). Website [www.orchidclassics.com](http://www.orchidclassics.com).Producers Jeremy Hayes, <sup>3</sup>Maya Koch. Engineer Patrick Allen. Dates September 25th-27th, 2009.

The great Russian composers of the nineteenth century were more drawn to the orchestra than they were to chamber forces. Colour was a primary concern and their mastery of it is incontrovertible. This valuable disc centres on real rarities, which will be unfamiliar even to connoisseurs in the field. The excellent London Conchord Ensemble puts us all in its debt in offering this repertoire. Let me say straight away that they all play with great intelligence and musicianship and are blessed with a natural recorded balance and vivid sound recording.

The earliest piece is Glinka's *Trio pathétique* of 1832 about which David Brown in his masterly biography (*Glinka, A biographical and critical study*; Oxford, 1974) is less than enthusiastic. Written at a time when he was under the spell of Italian opera, its ideas are unmemorable: as Professor Brown put it 'there is really no reason why we should remember it any more than Glinka's other Italian compositions'. It certainly appears in its best light in this lively and persuasive account.

Edward Garden is equally unenthusiastic about the Octet for piano, flute, oboe, horn, violin, viola, cello and double bass in his study of Balakirev (Faber; 1967), though he rightly approves the inventive quality of the piano writing (it was composed in the mid-1850s). The Glazunov String Quintet, written nearly four decades later, when its composer was in his early twenties, is a rarity on disc. It includes a second cello rather than viola, and has a sustained lightness of colour and

sweetness of temperament. Its invention unfolds with great naturalness and generosity.

I had forgotten how rewarding Shostakovich's early Piano Trio, a student work, which precedes the First Symphony, is. It leaves you in no doubt that here is a composer of quality, even if the familiar personality is yet to emerge. Recommended with enthusiasm.

*Robert Layton*