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PROKOFIEV: Symphony No. 5 – NY Philharmonic/ Leonard Bernstein (Columbia LP, 1966) – Speakers Corner vinyl

by [Audiophile Audition](#) / November 29, 2016 / [SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews](#)

A great remastering of a truly excellent work and performance.

SERGEI PROKOFIEV: Symphony No. 5 – NY Philharmonic/ Leonard Bernstein (Columbia LP, 1966, MS 7005) – Speakers Corner vinyl



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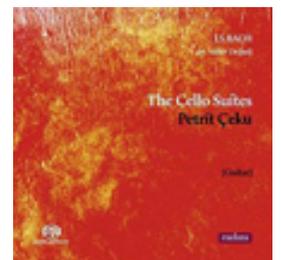
(2016) ***:**

The *Fifth* is probably the most-performed of the seven symphonies penned by Prokofiev for its many lovely melodies and its development work being of a nature that makes it more immediately accessible to the unsophisticated listener. I'm thoroughly familiar with the symphony because in the university I played the bass drum in a performance of it, and there is plenty of bass drum here – especially in the concluding movement.

Somehow after Prokofiev moved back to the Soviet Union in 1933, he failed to have the many problems with the party which his colleague Shostakovich had. He somehow toed the party line and became highly privileged. In this symphony he had a general air of cheerfulness, and saw it as a “hymn to free and happy Man.” This is especially noted in the theme heard on the clarinet in the second movement. The first movement is full of orchestral radiance and a host of great melodies. In this symphony, Prokofiev wanted to get away from the idea most listeners had of his music lacking a lyrical quality.

There are some sarcastic sounds here and there, which Prokofiev got away with throwing in once in a while, and the final movement is full of jagged and percussive sounds that make great demands on all the musicians in the entire orchestra. The spread across the stereo speakers of the instruments of the orchestra and their location is excellent – never mind the poorer separation between the two channels of the vinyl disc as compared to digital.

Most of the Columbia recordings, including all of the Bernstein ones, suffer from a rather glassy digital sound, especially in the louder sections. Perhaps this was an attempt to sound higher-fi on the poor phono cartridges in most turntables during this period. (But the Living Stereo recordings don't have this problem.) This has been carefully minimized in the remastering of the original tapes made in New York's Lincoln Center Philharmonic Hall to vinyl by Ray Staff at AIR. While the Sony Classical CD reissue in “The Royal Edition” (No. 64) also contains the “Classical” Symphony of Prokofiev, and is remastered using 20-bit technology, it still suffers from the glassy digital sonics which are noticeable most on the louder climaxes and which the vinyl doesn't completely eliminate but makes much easier to take. There is also an original Living Stereo vinyl,



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RCA Victor LSC-2272, of the Symphony No. 5 recorded by Jean Martinon and the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra. It is a 1959 release and is free of the glassy sonics, but is not quite as exciting a performance as the Bernstein.

–John Sunier

16, 2015



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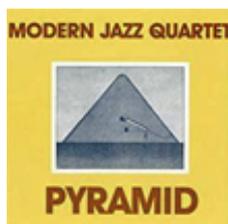
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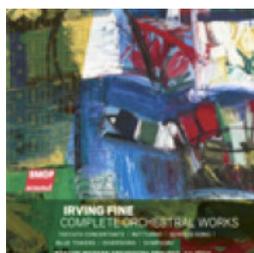
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