



Show One Productions – National Philharmonic of Russia

Reviewed by Paula Citron

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Works by Liadov, Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev

Conducted by Vladimir Spivakov

Featuring pianist Denis Matsuev

At Roy Thompson Hall

The National Philharmonic of Russia was founded in 2003 at the instigation of Vladimir Putin no less, to be the cultural ambassador of the New Russia. The players are the cream of the crop, and gifted principal conductor Vladimir Spivakov is their fearless leader. Their generous Toronto concert included four encores and demonstrated that these players are one of the world's top orchestras.

Spivakov and company are Russian to their souls. Their glorious sound is big but not vulgar. In the quiet moments, the music shimmers, then rises again like a volcanic rush of excitement, sweeping every listener with it. The maestro builds climaxes around tension, lengthening pauses just long enough so that the audience is panting for the next note.

Pianist Denis Matsuev, who performed Rachmaninoff's *Concerto No. 1*, is a big, strapping fellow whose imposing presence belies his sensitivity. His physical strength allows him to assault the keys in breath-taking fashion, yet his reflective moments are achingly beautiful.