



Conductor

Theodore Kuchar



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Theodore Kuchar – Biography

The multiple award-winning conductor Theodore Kuchar is the most recorded conductor of his generation and appears on over 100 compact discs for the Naxos, Brilliant Classics, Ondine and Marco Polo labels. He has served as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of two of Europe's leading orchestras, the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra (formerly the Czech Radio Orchestra) (2005-2013) and the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine (1994-2004). In the 2011-12 season he commenced his tenure as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela. He presently also serves as Music Director and Conductor of the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra (2002-) and the Reno Chamber Orchestra (2003-). Since January 2013 he has served as Principal Conductor of the Slovak Sinfonietta. An avid chamber musician, he served as the Artistic Director of The Australian Festival of Chamber Music (1990-2006), and presently serves as the Artistic Director of the Nevada Chamber Music Festival since 2005.

Among Mr. Kuchar's numerous accolades include BBC Record of the Year, Australian Broadcasting Corporation Record of the Year, Chamber Music America Record of the Year, Gramophone Magazine's Editor's Choice and a nomination for a Latin Grammy Award (in the category of Best Instrumental Album of 2013). The 2014-15 season will see the release of seven new compact discs, devoted to the complete symphonies of Ukrainian Boris Lyatoshynsky and Yevhen Stankovych (National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine), orchestral works by the Turkish composer Ulvi Camal Erkin (with the Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra) and American composers Paul Chihara and Walter Saul.

Highlights of the past several seasons have included a four-week, 20 concert tour of the USA with the Czech Symphony Orchestra while guest conducting engagements including the BBC Symphony, BBC National Symphony Orchestra of Wales (filling in on one day's notice to conduct Josef Suk's epic Asrael Symphony), Berlin Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra, Israel Symphony Orchestra, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Munich Philharmonic, Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. He has collaborated with major artists including James Galway, Jessye Norman, Lynn Harrell, Shlomo Mintz, Itzhak Perlman, Yo-Yo Ma, Sarah Chang, Mstislav Rostropovich, Joshua Bell, and Frederica von Stade, among others.

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Theodore Kuchar – Biography

With the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra, Kuchar has recorded 15 compact discs devoted to the complete symphonies of Carl Nielsen, the complete overtures and tone poems of Dvorak, and the complete orchestral works of Czech composer Bedrich Smetana for the Brilliant Classics label. Also completed for Brilliant Classics was a world premiere recording of Rachmaninoff's Fifth Piano Concerto, a reconstruction of that composer's Second Symphony based on the composer's earliest manuscripts, and the Piano Concertos of Ravel and Bartók. With the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra, Kuchar has conducted tours of Australia, Germany, Italy, Korea, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and the USA.

During his tenure with the National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine, Kuchar conducted cycles of the complete symphonies by Beethoven, Bruckner, Mahler, Prokofiev, Schubert and Shostakovich, and led eleven international tours to Asia, Australia, Central Europe and the United Kingdom. Under Mr. Kuchar's direction, the National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine became the most frequently recorded orchestra of the former Soviet Union. Between 1994 and 2004 the orchestra recorded over 80 compact discs for the Naxos and Marco Polo labels, including the complete symphonies of Kalinnikov, Lyatoshynsky, Martinu and Prokofiev, as well as major works of Dvorak, Glazunov, Mozart, Shchedrin, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky. They also recorded the symphonies and orchestral works of Ukraine's leading contemporary symphonist, Yevhen Stankovych. The recording of Lyatoshynsky's Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3 was awarded ABC's "Best International Recording of the Year" in 1994. Their recording of the complete works for violin and orchestra by Walter Piston for the Naxos label was hailed by Gramophone (January, 2000) as a "Record of the Year" for 1999. The complete symphonies of Prokofiev, on the Naxos label, are regarded by many critics as the most accomplished cycle available on compact disc.

Kuchar remains as strong an advocate of composers of the present day as he does of the great composers of the past. In addition to his recordings of contemporary works with the NSO of Ukraine, he has also conducted premieres of works by Lukas Foss (the Capriccio for Cello and Orchestra, with Yo-Yo Ma as soloist), Giya Kancheli, Joseph Schwantner, Alfred Schnittke, Peter Sculthorpe, Osvaldo Golijov and Rodion Shchedrin, among others.

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Theodore Kuchar – Biography

Theodore Kuchar graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Music and in 1981, he was awarded the Paul Fromm Fellowship from the Boston Symphony Orchestra at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, subsequently re-invited for the following summer. He continues to devote several periods annually to one of his most serious passions, the performance of chamber music and has been a participant at major international festivals, including Kuhmo, Lockenhaus, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music and the Nevada Chamber Music Festival. His colleagues have included James Buswell, Martin Chalifour, Sarah Chang, Lynn Harrell, Alexander Ivashkin, Truls Mork, Paul Neubauer, Irina Schnittke, and Thomas Zehetmair. In 1994, he participated with colleagues Oleh Krysa and Alexander Ivashkin in the world premiere of Penderecki's String Trio in New York City. He has appeared as violist in recordings on the Naxos label of works by Alfred Schnittke (with Irina Schnittke and Mark Lubotsky – this recording was awarded the BBC's "CD of the Year" award for 2002), Bohuslav Martinu and Walter Piston. The latter recording was awarded the Chamber Music America/WQXR "Record of the Year" for 2001.

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Theodore Kuchar – Reviews

Smetana: Complete Orchestral Works (Brilliant Classics CD)

Janacek Philharmonic, Theodore Kuchar, conductor

(This article originally appeared in Issue 31:6 (July/Aug 2008) of *Fanfare Magazine*)

This is a recording of very high worth by a conductor of genius. Theodore Kuchar, former viola-player of the Cleveland Orchestra and a fervently committed chamber music musician, is one of the very few conductors I've ever heard who adopts a conducting style similar to that of Arturo Toscanini, by which I mean not only quick tempos and an inexorable forward momentum but also a view of a symphony orchestra as a large chamber group. This approach divides the orchestra into discrete sections to achieve maximum clarity. (I understand that Kuchar did a poor job with the Prokofiev symphonies for Naxos, but perhaps he had too little rehearsal time and the Ukrainian orchestra couldn't or wouldn't follow him. These things happen nowadays; or maybe he was still coming into his own.) The big difference between Kuchar's recordings and Toscanini's, of course, is that in place of the flat two-dimensional monophonic sound favored by the Italian maestro we hear this orchestra in a roomier hall acoustic with natural reverb, such as we only hear from Toscanini in the Philadelphia Orchestra recordings and a few of his live concerts with the BBC Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Buenos Aires Philharmonic, La Scala, and Philharmonia Orchestras. Kuchar also imparts a bit more of a natural Bohemian accent to this music, though to compare his reading of *Ma vlast* to that of Rafael Kubelik (my favorite of his versions is the May 1984 recording on Orfeo) is to hear even more ruggedness of sound and accent in Kubelik's interpretation. I happen to love both in their own ways, but you are free to choose the one that speaks to you more eloquently.

Each and every minute of every piece on this three-CD set, then, is emotionally committed, tautly controlled, propulsive, and stunning. I haven't heard a *Ma vlast* or *Bartered Bride Overture* this good on records in eons. As good as Vaclav Neumann, Libor Pesek, and Zdenek Macal were, Kuchar is one step beyond. His conducting, if one must compare it to a more modem maestro from the stereo

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Theodore Kuchar – Reviews

era, is like Antal Dorati with a finger plugged into a DC socket. And I was a big Dorati fan, make no mistake about that.

One difference between Kuchar's approach and Toscanini's may be heard in the work that both recorded, "Vltava" (The Moldau). In the lyrical middle section, Kuchar relaxes his drive somewhat, allowing the strings to sing sweetly, whereas Toscanini continues to nudge the rhythm, and he does not make the cut in the coda that Toscanini did, yet their readings are oh-so-close in overall feeling and impact. The third tone poem, "Sarka," starts with the explosive impact of a hand grenade. This is fabulous conducting, no question about it. I was not previously familiar with Smetana's three "Swedish symphonic poems," though I'm not sure that a tone poem based on Shakespeare's *Richard III* could honestly be called Swedish. *Wallenstein's Camp* is the most extroverted of the three, but even in the moodier pages of *Hakon Jarl* and *Richard III* Kuchar finds the right tempos, the right way of creating continuity. The second of these was, for me, one of the highlights of the entire set, a work I think should be a concert staple, but that's just me. The *Doktor Faust Overture* begins as a dark and interesting piece with a sad, elegiac piano interlude before moving into a more up-tempo folk theme, conducted with splendid atmosphere by Kuchar. The two polkas, though well written and charming, are more lightweight material. So too is the *Festive Symphony in E*, written to mark the wedding of Emperor Franz Josef to Empress Elizabeth. It is not terribly well constructed; Haydn's Imperial anthem keeps popping up like a bad penny, and the square rhythm tends to wear on one's nerves; yet there are pages of great charm, such as the soft and lyrical middle theme in the first movement. Smetana was quite young at this time (29 years old) and had only recently moved into the orchestral sphere after years of being a pianist. The two *Festive Overtures* are much more lightweight than the symphony, as is the *March of the National Guard*, but the *Prague Carnival* music has some wonderful moments and the *Shakespeare Festival March* is splendid as well.

The Janacek Philharmonic is a wonderful orchestra, and I suspect that their slightly edgy string sound, more focused and metallic, less lush than Western orchestras, helps Kuchar greatly in his interpretations. As an overall set of

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Theodore Kuchar – Reviews

Smetana's complete orchestral works, this one is hard to beat. But keep an eye out for Kubelik's *Ma vlast* as an alternative performance!

-Lynn Rene Bayley, Fanfare Magazine

Shostakovich: Jazz and Ballet Suites, Film Music (Brilliant Classics CD)
National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine, Theodore Kuchar, conductor

The main competition for this material comes from Riccardo Chailly's excellent selection of film and dance music for Decca. While the repertoire is not identical, its substance really is, and given the choice between them I have no hesitation in recommending this inexpensive three-disc set, for several reasons. First, Chailly's discs (even assuming that they are all still available) must be purchased separately, and this entire set costs just about as much as any one of those single CDs. Second, I like the inclusion of a few more substantial pieces, such as the Overture on Russian and Kirghiz Themes, as well as the brilliant performance of the Festive Overture Op. 96. Third, while Chailly delivers beautifully played renditions, Kuchar's are simply more exciting, particularly in the many gallops and waltzes. This isn't music that requires the ultimate in polish, though the playing of the Ukrainian orchestra is very good—and it's also significant that Kuchar reveals more instrumental detail than does Chailly, particularly in the Jazz suites, or (for example) the Folk Fest segment of the suite from *The Gadfly*. Terrific sonics add up to an irresistible package that makes an easy first recommendation for this repertoire.

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH - Jazz Suites Nos. 1 & 2; Festive Overture; Novorossijsk Chimes; Overture on Russian & Kirghiz Themes; Ballet Suites from *The Bolt*, *The Limpid Stream*, & *The Golden Age*; Film Music Suites from *Hamlet* & *The Gadfly*
Artistic Quality: 10

Sound Quality: 10

-David Hurwitz, ClassicsToday.com

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Theodore Kuchar – YouTube Links

Mozart: Symphony No. 39
Janacek Philharmonic, 2012
Theodore Kuchar, conductor
29:58

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlcPgkuiho>

Smetana: The Moldau
Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014
Theodore Kuchar, conductor
11:43

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tLSlziVnAs>

Kodaly: Hary Janos Suite
Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014
Theodore Kuchar, conductor
25:15

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9yaUzAGPn8>

Richard Strauss: Don Quixote, Op.35
Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014
Theodore Kuchar, conductor
47:12

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IngBUje_jjI

Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto in E minor, Op.64, 1st mvt
Koh Gabriel Kameda, soloist
Orquesta Sinfonica de Venezuela (OSV), 2011
Theodore Kuchar, conductor
10:01

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSHtVlwtxf0>

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Theodore Kuchar – YouTube Links

Peter Sculthorpe & William Barton: Music for Didgeridoo and Orchestra

William Barton, soloist

Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

19:14

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3xfqAntOZE>

Mozart: Symphony No. 36, “Linz”, 1st mvt

Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

11:21

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKHbIypgJHE>

Mozart: Symphony No. 36, “Linz”, 2nd mvt

Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

7:24

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVQuO5T8Buk>

Mozart: Symphony No. 36, “Linz”, 3rd mvt

Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

3:21

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRwrbCVWhbE>

Mozart: Symphony No. 36, “Linz”, 4th mvt

Janacek Philharmonic, uploaded 2014

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

7:17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQSjt0zR1Ss>

Mozart: Symphony No. 41, “Jupiter”, 1st mvt

Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, 2011

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

12:07

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMPI9wAtKN4>

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Theodore Kuchar – YouTube Links

Mozart: Symphony No. 41, “Jupiter”, 2nd mvt

Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, 2011

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

8:23

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBwoYDkyXJQ>

Mozart: Symphony No. 41, “Jupiter”, 3rd mvt

Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, 2011

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

4:39

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD0mgI5DIYY>

Mozart: Symphony No. 41, “Jupiter”, 4th mvt

Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, 2011

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

8:46

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GFB9UyFLzCM>

Theodore Kuchar conducts Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela in their Latin Grammy nominated album “Latin American Classics” Featured Composers:

Fernández, Ginastera, Hung, Márquez, Moncayo, Revueltas, Romero. 2013

Uploaded on Jan 6, 2014

Audio only 55:44

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI2rIQaQ1Mo>

Moncayo: Huapango from “Latin American Classics” Album

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Audio only 8:14

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiOBYsl-I-Q>

Oscar Lorenzo Fernández: Batuque from “Latin American Classics” Album

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Audio only 4:09

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuDdmo9pX0E>

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Theodore Kuchar – YouTube Links

Marquez: Danzon No. 2 from “Latin American Classics” Album

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Audio only 9:30

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5JecUKBSGQ>

Ginastera: Four Dances from Estancia, from “Latin American Classics” Album

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Audio only 11:57

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq5caUIowVo>

Dvorak: Orchestral Works, Vol. 1 of 3

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Uploaded on Dec 9, 2011

Czech Suite Op.39, My Home Overture Op.62, Husitska Overture Op.67, In Nature’s Realm. Otello

Audio only 1:11:19

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeFxXjcOQbM>

Dvorak: Orchestral Works, Vol. 2 of 3

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Uploaded on Dec 9, 2011

Symphonic Variations Op.78, Carnival Overture Op.92, Water Goblin Op.107

Audio only 1:03:05

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4MA_Paq-f0

Dvorak: Orchestral Works, Vol. 3 of 3

Theodore Kuchar, conductor

Uploaded on Dec 9, 2011

Golden Spinning Wheel Op.109, Wood Dove Op.110, A Hero's Song Op.111

Audio only 1:06:06

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhO8O3H7F8c>

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Theodore Kuchar – Conducting Photos



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