



Dmitri Hvorostovsky ... a young Soviet whose voice is a welcome cultural exchange.

Picture of the baritone as a young man

THE word was out — the US debut of 27-year-old Soviet baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky in Alice Tully Hall, March 4, was going to be the recital event of the New York concert season. Tickets sold out quickly.

The New Yorker magazine declared the next day that Hvorostovsky, in masterly fashion, deployed one of the best voices to be heard today.

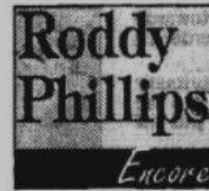
Everywhere he goes, this 27-year-old Siberian has created a sensation, and listening to his debut recording on Philips Classics (426-7402), it is easy to understand why.

He has, without doubt, the most beautiful natural voice of any baritone since Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, with expressiveness and musicality that already rank him with the greats.

His voice is dark and rich in resonance but also flexible and capable. His breath control is perfect, and his way of finding the life inside the musical line is nothing short of miraculous.

There are audiences who positively crave an involved singer like Hvorostovsky, and they respond eagerly whenever such a phenomenon turns up — a young artist who connects directly with his work and is emotionally equipped to share his musical discoveries intelligently, honestly and compellingly.

With his good looks and magnetic presence, there is something of the natural with a head start in this young



man, but happily, his talent does not end there.

He has already been compared to the great Russian baritone Lisitsyan. A characteristic depth and soulfulness of timbre are his hallmarks.

Oddly, Hvorostovsky's voice does not seem to match up with his looks or his youthfulness. This is a voice matured to near perfection by years of experience, and not necessarily of the vocal variety. It is hardly surprising that he won last year's Cardiff Singer of The Year.

Now he seems to have the operatic world at his feet, sought after by every opera house in Europe and able to take his pick from the engagements offered. Next year, he will be seen in operas from Venice to San Francisco and Covent Garden to La Scala.

In his first recording for Philips, he sings a selection of arias which admirably show off the unique quality of his voice, including the noble Eugene Onegin.

Inclusion of Tchaikovsky is probably obvious, considering the maestro's nationality, but

it is refreshing all the same to hear these arias delivered with such conviction and power.

Conducting Hvorostovsky and the Rotterdam Philharmonic is another up-and-coming Russian star, Valery Gergiev.

Gergiev, however, has his own disc out on Philips (426-4372) — a recording of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition — probably one of the most over recorded works in the classical repertoire. This performance, however, ranks high in the top five.

So why is the piece so popular?

"Because it means different things to different musicians, young and old," stated Gergiev. "This is the secret, the vitality inside this music. It is so strong. Mussorgsky was like a musical minimalist in this work. Each piece in Pictures is unforgettable."

"Mussorgsky was probably one of the most progressive musicians of his day. I am not saying he was more progressive than Wagner, but there is something in his music which makes a bridge with French music or with Prokofiev."

I remain convinced that the popularity of Pictures has a lot to do with Ravel's innovative orchestration. Given the choice between Mussorgsky's original piano version, I know which one I would choose — probably this latest recording from Gergiev and the London Philharmonic.

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