

Mussorgsky

Pictures at an Exhibition (orch Ravel).

A Night on the Bare Mountain (orch Rimsky-Korsakov). The Fair at Sorochintsi – Introduction (orch Liadov). Khovanshchina – Prelude, Act 1 (Dawn over the Moscow River); Dance of the Persian Slave Girls

Russian National Orchestra /

Carlo Ponti

Pentatone ©  PTC5186 332 (61' • DDD)

Ponti brings out the Russian-ness in Mussorgsky's Frenchified Pictures



It may seem perverse with a Russian orchestra to have the least Russian-sounding orchestration of *Pictures*, albeit the most inspired one. Yet Carlo Ponti, so far as he can, brings out the

Russian-ness of Mussorgsky's inspiration with each of the pictures sharply characterised and with much delicate playing in such items as "The Fair at Limoges" set against the weight of the *tuttis*, notably in the final "Great Gate at Kiev". That goes with recording of extreme dynamic range, arguably too extreme for domestic comfort. The wind solos are specially impressive, as is the horn descant in the "Great Gate of Kiev". In short, an excellent version of a much-recorded showpiece.

Night on the Bare Mountain comes in the highly unauthentic but undeniably effective Rimsky version, brilliantly played here with powerful bite. The *Khovanshchina* excerpts make an effective, atmospheric filler, but the disc offers rather short measure at just on an hour. The Super Audio recording adds to the impact of the performances, well engineered by Pentatone technicians trained by Philips. **Edward Greenfield**