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Classical CD of the Month: Golijov's Oceana

By MATTHEW ERIKSON / star-telegram staff writer

I'll never forget the first time I heard the music of Argentine-born composer Osvaldo Golijov.

It was in 2004, when his chamber opera *Ainadamar* premiered at the Tanglewood Festival in Lenox, Mass. Based on an original libretto recounting the murder of Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, Golijov's opera resonated deep inside the subconscious. Lyrical, full of infectious rhythms and evoking several folk traditions, the music synthesized the best of disparate sonic and cultural elements to create something that was highly original and pulsating with vitality.

The CD of a revised version of *Ainadamar*, released last year by Deutsche Grammophon, won Golijov two Grammys. A new CD, *Oceana*, features three of his earlier works -- performed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Kronos Quartet and soprano Dawn Upshaw -- that show the composer's formidable range in orchestral and chamber music.

In January, the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Miguel Harth-Bedoya (a Golijov pal) will present the world premiere of a Golijov work for cello and orchestra at New York's Carnegie Hall. Local listeners can hear more of the composer's work this fall when the new-music ensemble Voices of Change and the Cliburn at the Modern series present some of his chamber music.

To prepare for those, the first work and title piece on this new album is as good an introduction as any to Golijov's world. Beginning with the atmospheric sounds of amplified guitar, percussion and harp, the 1996 piece (revised in 2004) weaves in the words of Chilean poet Pablo Neruda -- sung here by the sensuous-sounding Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza and a double chorus. (Neruda's poetry seems ubiquitous these days. An outstanding CD of composer Peter Lieberman's *Neruda Songs*, sung by the late mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberman, was issued last year.)

There's an undeniable theatricality to the five-movement, 26-minute composition. It culminates in the final movement with a sparse, almost religious setting for chorus that just fades into the ether. Here, the music realizes the poetry of its source material.

The somber string quartet *Tenebrae* captures some of the same magic as *Oceana*. Yet the album's most irresistible track is the song *Lua Descolorida*. Heard also in Golijov's breakthrough 2000 work, *St. Mark Passion*, the song spins one melting phrase after another, made ever more

dazzling by Upshaw's singing. Befitting Golijov's musical polyglotism, the CD also features songs performed in Yiddish and English.

Oswaldo Golijov

Oceana

**** 4 of 5 stars

Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the Kronos Quartet and Dawn Upshaw

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