



Kingston Choral Society
Thames Sinfonia

Conductor: Robin Page

PROKOFIEV

ALEXANDER NEVSKY

cantata from the film by Eisenstein

Jane Stevenson - alto

GRIEG

PIANO CONCERTO

Andrew Massey - piano

BORODIN

PRINCE IGOR

RACHMANINOV

3 FOLK SONGS

Kingston Parish Church
Saturday 17 May 1997

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Alexander Borodin

1833-1887

The illegitimate son of a nobleman, Borodin was bought up in St Petersburg, and showed an early aptitude for science and maths. His music remained a pastime, squeezed into the few leisure moments of an official career as scientist and doctor. He said that much of his composition was done when he was ill. Consequently, his body of work is small, but shows a natural creative genius, with a strong lyrical sense, informed by a sure touch in texture and structure.

He became one of the group known as 'The Five', including Musorgski and Rimski-Korsakov, who followed Glinka in rejecting the then dominant German style and seeking inspiration from Russian folk-music to develop a nationalist style. Borodin seems to have thought intuitively in the musical structures of the East, and the influence of modal scales is recognisable in his harmonic and melodic style. Likewise, the tonal plans for his three symphonies were founded on modal relations, not on the tonal relations of the major-minor system.

Prince Igor was begun in 1869, but the limited time Borodin had to spare the composition, coupled with his difficulty in fashioning a libretto from an old Russian chronicle, meant that it was unfinished at his death. The combination of a libretto which never really came right, and his own predilection for melody and closed forms, resulted in an opera which as been called 'tableau-esque and disjointed', and which has never won a regular place in the repertoires outside Russia. However, the music itself rises far above these problems, and the quality of the individual numbers has ensured its continued popularity. Several touching arias are the lyrical centrepieces of a loose design which includes fine choral scenes, crowned by the barbaric splendour of the Polovtsian Dances.

After Borodin's death, the work was completed by Rimski-Korsakov and Glazhunov, notable the orchestration of the sketchy Third Act, and the Overture, which Glazhunov recreated entirely from his memory of Borodin's piano extemporisations.

Prince Igor

Danse Polovtsienne

Borne on wings of gentle breezes,
Fly swiftly home, ye songs of grief and exile,
away to our far distant mother country,
where once we sang, rejoicing in our freedom.
There, beneath warm skies the languid air
moves softly,
There, the cloud-capped mountains dream
beside the whispering sea,
There, the green and fragrant pastures of our
dear land lie basking in the sunshine,
The crimson roses cluster in the valleys,
and nightingales sing loud in moonlit forests,
and dusky glades.
There the roses bloom and purple grapes
hang ripe and sweet.
Speed, O song, by zephyrs wafted,
Speed, O song, on gentle winds.

Sing we praises to our glorious Khan!
Praise him for his valour, peerless Khan!
Hail! Praise our Khan! All Hail!

He is like the sun at mid-day! Hail!
There is no-one like our glorious Khan!
Bend before him, lowly captives,
See'st thou these fair maidens, brought from
distant shores?
See'st thou these slaves from beyond the far
Caspian sea?

Tell me, O Prince, which maiden dost thou
favour? Shall she be thine? Fain would I give
thee unfettered choice.
Praise our Khan, our glorious Khan!

Sing we praises to our glorious Khan!
Praise his valour, praise his conquests, Hail!
Mighty Khan, Hail! Ruthless Lord, Hail!
There is no-one like our glorious Khan!
His is like the sun at mid-day! Hail!
Famous art thou as thy forbears, proud Khan
Konchak!

Mighty as thy sires art thou, ruthless Khan!
Khan Konchak!
Hail to thee Khan Konchak!
Hail, all hail Khan Konchak!

Borne on wings of gentle breezes,
Fly swiftly home, ye songs of grief and exile,
away to our far distant mother country, ...

May our dancing give him pleasure.
Look with favour on thy hand-maids, for lowly
slaves we strive to please thee,
Maidens charm our glorious Khan.
May we give thee pleasure,
Maidens dance to please our master,
Strive to please him, Khan Konchak!
Hail, Khan Konchak!

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Sergei Rachmaninov

1873-1943

Rachmaninov was one of the great pianists of the 20th century, possessing precision, rhythmic drive and the ability to provide complete clarity in complex textures. Naturally, the piano figures prominently in his compositions, either as solo instrument or in ensemble. His most popular work, the *2nd Piano Concerto* of 1897, demonstrates Rachmaninov predilection for sumptuous harmonies and broadly lyrical, passionate melodies. Although trained in St Petersburg, he was perhaps more influenced by romantic Muscovites, notably Tchaikovsky. His *2nd Symphony* (1906-7) and *3rd Piano Concerto* (1909), reveal his mature powers in an opulent but varied use of the orchestra and confident handling of large-scale structures. The themes are developed in a leisurely manner, while the structure of the *3rd Symphony*, in particular, is complex and ingenious.

After 1917, Rachmaninov left Russia, devoting most of his life to concert tours in the USA rather than to composition.

Rachmaninov had been working for several years on the three folk songs which KCS are performing this evening. These were completed in 1926, and the first performance of the work was given in Philadelphia in 1927, under the direction of Leopold Stokowski, to whom the work is dedicated.

Three Russian folk-songs

Opus 41

Over the River Oh, my Johnny!

The Whip

Edvard Grieg

1843-1907

Edvard Grieg was not only the foremost Norwegian composer of his day but also the first Scandinavian to win universal acceptance abroad. After studying in Leipzig and Copenhagen, he wrote his first *Symphony in C minor* in 1862, but was developing so rapidly as a composer that he soon forbade performances of it, which led to it being unheard for over 100 years until 1981. The cause of this dissatisfaction was his growing awareness of the rich heritage of Norwegian folk music. In the late 1860s he wrote his first book of lyric pieces and in 1868 the *Piano Concerto in A minor* played this evening by Andrew Massey. In 1874, Ibsen asked him to write the music for a stage performance of *Peer Gynt*. Thereafter, Grieg pursued vigorously a busy schedule of international tours, playing and conducting his own pieces.

Basically a miniaturist, Grieg has always been considered the artist who, more strongly than any other, evokes a nation's music and folk song. Grieg himself was occasionally indignant about this, and was adamant that 'out of all my hundred-odd songs, only one, Spirit of Norway, has a borrowed tune'. Nevertheless, it is true that his music captures the spirit of Norway, and suggests an intense response to the musical language of its people. Yet Grieg's strongly individual feeling for harmony whose originality deepened throughout his life, has ensured that his music transcends national boundaries to find universal popularity.

Piano Concerto in A minor

Allegro molto moderato Adagio

Allegro moderato et marcato - Quasi presto - Andante maestoso



INTERVAL

BIOGRAPHIES

Robin Page - conductor

Robin is based in London where he is the Principal Conductor and Musical Director of Thames Sinfonia, the Thames Symphony Orchestra, the Purcell Orchestra and the Kingston Choral Society. He has also worked with the London Symphony Orchestra Chorus and has made many appearances at the Royal Academy of Music, London, as a conductor and lecturer specialising in the contemporary repertoire and Scandinavian music.

Robin specialises in the Nordic repertoire, giving acclaimed performances of Sibelius and Nielsen symphonies, and conducting the inaugural concert of the UK Sibelius Society in London. He has also given first UK performances of many Swedish works, including such names as Stenhammar, Rosenberg, Lidholm and Bortz. Last season he travelled to Sweden as guest conductor with the Sundsvalls Kammarorkester. Robin has strong links with the Baltic States. As guest conductor to the Estonian State Symphony Orchestra he gave the first Estonian performance and broadcast of the Elgar Enigma Variations. He has also performed and broadcast in Hungary and Poland.

For many years Robin was principal conductor of the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra, and he has also conducted the Halle Choir, Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and the West Sussex Philharmonic Choir, where he is musical director. He has given broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 with the BBC Ulster Orchestra and has appeared on BBC television.

Robin studied at Magdalen College School, Oxford, Cambridge University and the Royal Academy of Music, London. He is a visiting lecturer at Kingston University and is Principal Conductor of British Youth Summer Music.

Andrew W Massey - piano

Andrew Massey was born in Leicestershire, and began to play the piano at the age of five. Before he was ten, Andrew had given several public performances, including a concerto with orchestra.

After studying in Leicester, he went to the Royal College of Music in London, to work with E Kendall Taylor and Irina Zaritskay. During his time there Andrew won all the major prizes for solo and chamber music, notably the Chappell Gold Medal and the Dannreuther Prize (for outstanding concerto performance), and represented the college on many occasions, both in England and Europe.

Since leaving the RCM, Andrew's performance schedule has become even busier, and has taken him to Vienna to play a series of concerti in the Mozart Festival, to Germany for live radio broadcasts, to Berlin, Zurich and Paris, amongst other places, and around the world giving recitals on P & O and Cunard ships.

Andrew has become a popular choice with British orchestras, festivals and music clubs, giving over forty concerts last season, and his chamber group, the Apollo Piano Trio marks his passion for and involvement with chamber music.

Andrew gratefully acknowledges the support of Her Grace the Duchess of Westminster and the Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

Andrew is Kingston Choral Society's regular accompanist, and performed a Beethoven Concerto at a concert with the Choir last year.

Jane Stevenson - alto

Jane was born in Wolverhampton in 1971. In 1990 she won an entrance scholarship to the Guildhall School of Music, graduating in 1994 after winning the Frances Collins Lieder Prize in her final recital. She is now in the final year of the School's post-graduate Opera Course, studying with Rudolf Piernay. In 1995 Jane won the School's most prestigious award, the Gold Medal.

Roles at the Guildhall include Bianca in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Orsala in Wolf-Ferrari's *Il Campiello* and Pierotto in Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix*. Among other solo works are Mrs Noye in Britten's *Noye's Fludde* at the Fairfield Halls, Walton's *Gloria* at the Royal Festival Hall, Handel's *Messiah* at Lincoln Cathedral, and *Five Tudor Portraits* and the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at the Leith Hill Festival, where she was the Festival's Award Winner in 1994.

Jane most recent plans include the role of Amestre in Handel's *Xerxes* with the Early Opera Company, Verdi's *Requiem* in Estonia, and Popova in Walton's *The Bear*, directed by Jonathon Miller, to be performed at the Walton estate on the island of Ischia, followed by a production at the Buxton Opera House.

THAMES SINFONIA

Formerly known as the Purcell Orchestra, the Thames Sinfonia was formed in 1982 from the very best musicians just entering the profession. Its members are now to be found in all the major London Orchestras and play all over the world.

The Orchestra plays regularly throughout the south of England and has appeared at the Bournemouth and Exeter International Festivals. In London, it has performed in the Queen Elizabeth Hall and St John's, Smith Square.

Reviewing a South Bank concert, *Music and Musicians* wrote, "With Robin Page in charge, their interpretation was intriguingly illuminating and riveting by turns."

The orchestra in both its forms has accompanied the choir on many occasions.



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George Prokofiev

1891-1953

Prokofiev was a composing prodigy, who had completed four operas, two sonatas and a symphony by the age of twelve. After studying under Gliere and Rimski-Korsakov in St Petersburg, he spent many years abroad, performing as well as writing compositions including the *Scythian Suite*, *The Love of Three Oranges*, and ballets for Diaghilev. Never fully at home in the West, he returned to Russia in 1934, an inopportune moment, since the artistic doctrine of 'social realism' had just been propounded. Despite this constraint, Prokofiev excelled in a range of forms: film music (*Lieutenant Kije* and *Alexander Nevsky*), ballet (*Romeo and Juliet*) and opera, tackling *War and Peace* in a style appropriate to its sweep and grandeur. His richest and most heroic symphony, the 5th, was composed in 1944. However, at the end of the war, he was accused of 'formalism' and was still under a cloud when he died on the same day as Stalin in 1953.

Considered impossibly dissonant in his youth, Prokofiev now seems to be in the great tradition of Russian composers, inheritor of the boldness and colour of the 19th century nationalists, to which he added the pungent brittleness of a 20th century sensibility. This mixture of traditional lyricism and stringent modernism is the essence of his style. The score for *Alexander Nevsky* was written in 1938, after Prokofiev had returned from Hollywood where he had discussed film music composition. Its style is a compromise between his early modernism and an extension of the nationalist style derived mainly from Borodin, resulting in a luxurious orchestration and choral theme, with bells, xylophone, and maracas, and tense sombre passages for the build-up to the centrepiece battle.

Alexander Nevsky was prince of Novgorod and arguably the first King of Russia. In 1246 he rallied a peasant army to defeat the invading Teutonic knights at the Battle of Lake Peipus. Eisenstein's tale of this early Russian hero suffered the vagaries of political correctness on release: it was initially received favourably; withdrawn a year later when the German-Soviet Pact was signed; then patriotically rehabilitated when the Germans did actually invade Russia. In fact, its greatness lies in its technique rather than its story: the tightly controlled, formal visual composition, the remarkable battle on the ice, and above all, the close sympathy between composer and director which results in the score providing a brilliantly integrated aural dimension to the visual effects.

Russia rehabilitated Prokofiev in 1959, long after the rest of the world had recognised him as one of the most versatile and enduring composers of the century, not least for his charming young person's guide to the orchestra, *Peter and the Wolf*.

Alexander Nevsky

Cantata Opus 78

- 1 Russia under the Mongolian Yoke
- 2 Song about Alexander Nevsky

It was on the River Neva it occurred.
On the Neva's stream, on the waters deep.
There we slew our foes, pick of fighting men,
Army of the Swedes.

Ah, how we did fight, how we routed them
Yes, we smashed their ships of war to kindling wood.
In the fight our red blood was freely shed
for our great land, our native Russian land. Hey!

Where the broad axe swung was an open street,
through their ranks ran a lane where the spear was thrust.
We mowed down the Swedes, the invading troops
just like feather grass, grown on desert soil.

We shall never yield native Russian land.
They who march on Russia shall be put to death.
Rise against the foe, Russian land arise,
rise to arms arise, great town Novgorod.

3 The Crusaders in Pskov

*Peregrinus, expectavi
pedes meos, in cymbalis,
peregrinus, expectavi.*

4 Arise, Ye Russian People

Arise to arms, ye Russian folk,
in battle just, in fight to death,
arise ye people free and brave
defend our fair, our native land.
To living warriors high esteem,
immortal fame to warriors slain
for native home, for Russian soil
arise ye people, Russian folk.
In our Russia great, in our native Russia no foe shall live.
Rise to arms, arise, native mother Russia.

Arise to arms ...

No foe shall march across Russian land,
no foreign troops shall Russia raid.
Unseen the ways to Russia are.
No foe shall ravage Russian fields.

Arise to arms ...

5 The Battle on the Ice

*Peregrinus, expectavi
pedes meos, in cymbalis,
peregrinus, expectavi.
Vincant arma crucifera! Hostis pereat!*

6 Field of the Dead

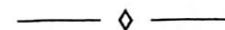
I shall go across the snow-clad field,
I shall fly above the field of death,
I shall search for valiant warriors there,
those to me betrothed, stalwart men and staunch.
One lies quiet where sabres mangled him,
here one lies impaled by an arrow shaft,
from their wounds warm red blood like rain was shed
on our native soil, on our Russian fields.

He, who fell for Russia in noble death
shall be blessed by my kiss on his dead eyes,
and to him, brave lad, who remained alive
I shall be a true wife and a loving friend.
I'll not be wed to a handsome man:
earthly beauty fast fade and die.
I'll be wed to the man who's brave.
Hark ye warriors brave, lion hearted men!

7 Alexander's Entry into Pskov

In a great campaign Russia went to war
Russia put down the hostile troops;
in our native land foemen shall not live,
Foes who come shall be put to death.
Celebrate and sing, native mother Russia!
In our native land foemen shall not live,
foe shall never see Russian towns and fields.
They who march on Russia shall be put to death!

In our Russia great, in our native Russia no foe shall live.
Celebrate and sing, native mother Russia!
To a fête in triumph all of Russia came.
Celebrate, rejoice, celebrate and sing, our motherland!



KINGSTON CHORAL SOCIETY

8 November 1997



To celebrate their

50th season

Handel's

Messiah

see press for details

Kingston Choral Society has been making music in Kingston for almost fifty years and performs a wide variety of music from Bach to Gershwin. The choir has over one hundred singers and has gained a reputation for enthusiasm and high quality music making. Not afraid of ambitious projects, over the last few years, Kingston Choral Society has even sung in old Czech and medieval Swedish! KCS usually performs four concerts a year in Kingston Parish Church in the heart of Kingston, accompanied by professional orchestras, with workshop events and special concerts adding to their activities.

Looking further ahead, the 1997/98 season marks the choir's 50th anniversary and to recreate the choir's first ever concert in 1948, KCS are planning a very special performance of Handel's *Messiah*.

The Society's membership is drawn from a wide area of South West London and North Surrey, and new members are always welcome. Rehearsals take place every Thursday evening at Hollyfield School Hall, Surbiton Road, at 7.45pm to 10.00pm.

MEMBERS OF THE CHOIR

Liz Airey, Carole Boothman, Julie Cooper,
Emma Colman, Elizabeth Cronin,
Shirley Davenport, Catherine Edge,
Avril Elson, Wendy Faulkner, Alison Green,
Marigold Haworth, Gillian Holdsworth,
Valerie Hodgson, Blanca Illionova,
Margaret Jephcott, Pat Keep, Nora Lack,
Tina Leach, Valerie Moeri, Tricia Nicholls,
Bridget Parkin, Ruth Rees, Jackie Rhodes,
Amy Robinson, Elizabeth Salzman,
Julia Siberry, Sarah Stokes, Ruth Stroud,
Roshni Thoppil, Marion Thorpe,
JackieThurston.

Pat McCarthy, Anneliese Mackenzie,
Chrissie Melhuish, Anne Miller, Audrey Mills,
Christine Norgate, June Pearson, Pam Pocock,
Heather Rooke, Madi Schmidt,
Elizabeth Siberry, Heather Smith, Jill Telfer,
Lucy Thomas, Remke Verzee, Vanessa Welling.

Jim Addington, Peter Carey, Richard Clift, Martin Corry, Norman Clothier, John Cracknell, Izzy Dodgson, Martin Evans, John Hull, Wesley Johnson, Roderic Pearson, Roger Price, Richard Siberry, Ian Smith, Chris Stotesbury, David Todd, John Whitnall.

Maggie Baker, Alex Benoy, Sharon Berry,
Gina Broderick, Susan Brodie, Gene Butt,
Catherine Carey, Clare Clark, Anna Cronin,
Mary Catlow, Jane Clift, Margaret Crocker,
Pam Deacon, Fiona de Quidt,
Antoinette de Souza, Madelaine Dunnington.
Elisabeth Finch, Daphne Hall, Dee Hipwell,
Christie Hogh, Shirley Hull, Olive Jahn,
Ruth Knight, Halcyon Leonard, Sarah Lunt,

Bass
John Bassett, Dominique Bastien, David Bilson,
Paul Bleasby, Alan Brough, Paul Chambers,
Adam Christie, Bill Cox, Tony Cunningham,
Jon Denbigh, David Ferguson, Denis Gibb,
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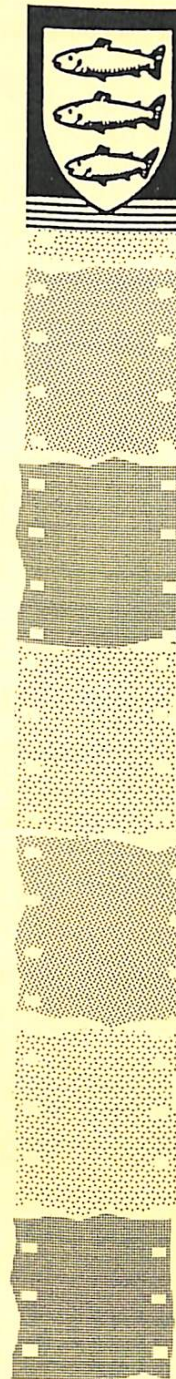
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