

HALLÉ

OPUS ONE CONCERTS

AT THE BRIDGEWATER HALL

2011-12 SEASON

Wednesday 16 and Sunday 20 May 2012, 7.30pm

Borodin Overture: Prince Igor

Borodin Symphony No.2

interval

Tchaikovsky Concert Fantasy Op.56

Tchaikovsky Overture: 1812

Sir Mark Elder conductor

Sofya Gulyak piano

Wednesday 16 May, Adopt-a-Player
education project sponsored by



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We are delighted that as part of the ongoing partnership between the Hallé and BBC Radio 3, the UK's leading cultural broadcaster, Wednesday's concert will be broadcast live as part of *Radio 3 Live in Concert*.



Sunday 20 May

At the end of the interval of Sunday's concert, The Duchess of Kent and Sir Mark Elder CBE will present the Future Champion Awards. Further information can be found on page 14 of this programme. There will be an announcement during the interval.

Programme notes
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The Hallé Concerts Society gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of Arts Council England, Manchester City Council, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and the Heritage Lottery Fund.



About the music

ALEXANDER BORODIN (1833–1887)

Overture: *Prince Igor* (1869–87, orch. Glazunov 1887)

Borodin's life was the stuff of fiction. The illegitimate offspring of an elderly Georgian prince who had him registered as the son of one of his serfs, he was a man of many parts. In fact, his first published work was not a piece of music but a scientific paper entitled 'Report on the Action of Ethyl Iodide on Hydrobenzamide and Amarine and the Constitution of these Compounds'. By profession a research chemist, he founded a School of Medicine for women (an early Russian advocate of women's rights, he regarded this as his greatest achievement), worked as a civil servant and looked after an apartment full of dependants, including his invalid wife, various impoverished relations and a posse of tomcats (according to Rimsky-Korsakov, this domestic scene was one of utter chaos). He died suddenly from a heart attack in 1887, while revelling at a fancy-dress ball.

Borodin knew exactly what he wanted, but simply didn't have time to commit his ideas to paper!

Given all this, it is amazing that Borodin wrote any music at all, and not surprisingly he completed very few pieces. One of several works that remained unfinished at his death was his vast patriotic opera *Prince Igor*, most of which was written down by the talented young composer Alexander Glazunov, who had heard Borodin playing through the opera at the piano (clearly, Borodin knew exactly what he wanted, but simply didn't have time to commit his ideas to paper!). Rimsky-Korsakov – one of Borodin's colleagues in the nationalistic group of Russian composers nicknamed the 'Mighty Five' – also contributed to its completion.

Prince Igor is a huge work, a grand historical narrative (with a libretto by Borodin himself, based on a scenario supplied by the art historian Vladimir Stasov) that recounts the campaign of Prince Igor against the invading Polovtsian tribes in 1185. The opera contains a great deal of quintessentially Russian scenes, though its storyline also allowed Borodin to show off his talent for writing exotic, 'oriental' music (actually something of a speciality for several Russian composers of the day, among them Rimsky-Korsakov). It was first performed at St Petersburg in 1890 and still remains a staple of the Russian operatic repertoire.

The music

The overture opens with a sombre slow introduction before a series of fanfares suggest a call to arms, utterly transforming the atmosphere. A Russian dance follows, then a somewhat oriental theme introduced by a clarinet and a noble French horn melody representing the character of Prince Igor himself. The remainder of the piece develops and reiterates this material to memorable effect. We owe its vivid orchestration to Alexander Glazunov (himself the composer of eight shamefully overlooked symphonies).

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Anthony Bateman is a former Hallé viola player who now writes on music for *The Guardian*, *Classical Music* and other publications. He is also co-editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Cricket*.

Passing Note

'It would have been possible to present *Prince Igor* in any number of different ways, but since our version is a good one, and has guaranteed the work's survival on the stages of the world, why change it?'

Alexander Glazunov, writing to the Russian musicologist Boris Asafiev

About the music

Timeline: 1890

- Borodin's opera *Prince Igor* is posthumously premiered in St Petersburg
- Premieres of Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria rusticana* in Rome, Messager's *La Basoche* in Paris and Tchaikovsky's opera *The Queen of Spades* and ballet *The Sleeping Beauty* in St Petersburg; posthumous premiere of Berlioz's *La prise de Troie* (Acts 1–2 of *Les Troyens*) in Karlsruhe (sung in German)
- Births of composers Jacques Ibert, Frank Martin and Bohuslav Martinů, conductor Erich Kleiber, pianist (Dame) Myra Hess, tenors Beniamino Gigli and Lauritz Melchior, writers Karel Čapek, Boris Pasternak, Agatha Christie and H. P. Lovecraft, Soviet politician Vyacheslav Molotov, Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh, future US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, future French President Charles de Gaulle and comedian Groucho Marx
- Deaths of Belgian-born organist-composer César Franck, Catholic convert Cardinal Newman, English explorer and orientalist Richard Burton, Italian children's writer Carlo Collodi (author of *Pinocchio*), Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh (presumed suicide), Native American tribal chief Sitting Bull (from gunshot wounds), German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann (discoverer of Troy) and Joseph Merrick, 'The Elephant Man'
- Convicted murderer William Kemmler becomes the first person to be executed by electric chair (in Auburn Prison, New York)
- Opening of the Forth Bridge (in Scotland), then (and until 1917) the world's longest single cantilevered bridge-span
- Opening of the City & South London Railway, the world's first electrically operated underground railway
- Publication of Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

ALEXANDER BORODIN

Symphony No.2 in B minor (1869–76, rev. 1879, 1886)

1 *Allegro*

2 *Scherzo (Prestissimo) – Trio (Allegretto)*

3 *Andante –*

4 *Allegro*

Although originally published (and still widely billed) as 'revised by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov', Borodin's Second Symphony is not only his greatest work but also entirely his own work, and one that was successfully performed during his lifetime, both in Russia and abroad. The suggestion that it, like *Prince Igor*, had been posthumously completed by Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov was added by the work's first publisher, Bessel, simply in order to secure copyright (and performance royalties) outside Russia.

In fact, Borodin not only orchestrated his B minor Symphony himself, he orchestrated half of it twice, after discovering, just months before its 1877 premiere, that he'd carelessly mislaid the original full scores of the two outer movements. Two years later he revised the symphony's orchestration, thinning out the originally over-thick brass parts and generally lightening the texture, before Rimsky-Korsakov successfully premiered the revised version at a Free Music School concert in 1879. It's true that Borodin was still tinkering with the symphony while preparing the full score manuscript for publication

Borodin was still tinkering with the symphony while preparing the full score manuscript for publication at the time of his sudden death in 1887.

About the music

at the time of his sudden death in 1887, but Rimsky's role thereafter was essentially that of a posthumous proofreader, and his only editorial interventions consisted of supplying a few missing metronome markings and tempo indications, almost certainly deriving from the 1879 performance that he had prepared under Borodin's own supervision.

That said, there is a link between the composition of *Prince Igor* and that of the B minor Symphony. Borodin began work on the latter in 1869, but then broke off to focus on the opera. As ever with Borodin, for reasons mentioned above (and specifically the founding of the women's medical school), progress on the opera was slow, and the disheartened composer transferred some of the heroic music he had written for it into his symphony. For this reason, the work is known in Russia as the 'Bogatyrskaya' ('Knightly' or 'Chivalric') Symphony. According to Borodin's friend, Vladimir Stasov, it has 'the flavour of an ancient Russian epic', while others have suggested it is a distillation of the spirit of *Prince Igor* itself: the first movement representing the princely court and preparations for war; the *Scherzo* the wide-open skies of the Russian Steppes; the poetic third movement, the romance between Igor's son and a Tartar maiden; and the finale, feasting and revelry.

The music

Certainly the engaging opening *Allegro* has 'knightly' qualities. It is music teeming with the sounds of battles and that Borodin speciality, exotic, oriental-sounding melodies. The arresting first statement is a bold one, an announcement of warlike intent that recurs throughout the movement in various guises, acting to bind its structure together. By contrast the second subject, introduced by the cellos, is mellifluous and lyrical, though it cannot wholly banish the declamatory first theme which even now insists on making its presence felt. The mood darkens and for a while anxiety seems to prevail, before the establishment of a galloping rhythm suggests knights on horseback riding into war with steely resolve. Eventually the dramatic opening motto reappears, followed once again by the expressive second subject, here re-introduced by a reflective oboe. Not surprisingly, however, that booming initial statement has the final say.

The key of the *Scherzo* – F major, a remote one from the home key of B minor – suggests a very different kind of landscape, as do this movement's boundless energy and rich orchestral colours. The main part of the movement is a busy affair that both sways and chatters, two instances of which surround a slower central section with a luxurious oriental theme.

Elaborate harp figurations introduce the beautiful *Andante*: Borodin once claimed that this third movement represented the figure of an ancient bard or minstrel, hence the choice of that traditionally 'bardic' instrument. A warm French horn solo ensues, noble and characteristically Russian in character, and the music steadily builds to a passionate but controlled climax. The movement's central section is more animated and assertive, but by the end calm prevails.

The finale follows without a pause. According to Borodin, it was intended to depict 'the sumptuous feasting and carousing of warriors'. It is certainly a festive affair, an exultant orchestral revel (and one replete with energetic syncopated rhythms) that culminates in a mood of shimmering glory.

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Passing Note

'Mr Borodin, busy yourself a little less with songs. I'm putting all my hopes in you as my successor, but all you think of is music: you can't hunt two hares at the same time.'

A mid-lecture remark by Nikolay Nikolayevich Zinin, Professor of Chemistry at St Petersburg's Medical-Surgical Academy, as recorded by Borodin's friend, Vladimir Stasov. (Borodin did in fact succeed Zinin as Professor of Chemistry in 1864.)

About the music

Timeline: 1877

- Eduard Nápravník premieres the original version of Borodin's Second Symphony
- Premiere of Brahms's Second Symphony in Vienna
- Premieres of Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* in Moscow, of Gilbert & Sullivan's operetta *The Sorcerer* in London, of Saint-Saëns's opera *Samson et Dalila* in Weimar and of Planquette's operetta *Les cloches de Corneville*, Massenet's opera *Le roi de Lahore* and Chabrier's comic opera *L'étoile* in Paris
- Publication of Henry James's *The American*, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, Émile Zola's *L'assommoir* and the final instalments of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*
- First production of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*
- Queen Victoria is proclaimed Empress of India
- Imperial Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire
- Samurai defeat in the Satsuma Rebellion ends feudalism in Japan
- The first Lawn Tennis Championship is held in Wimbledon
- The first cricket Test match between England and Australia is held in Melbourne
- Thomas Edison invents the phonograph
- Discovery of Phobos and Deimos, the moons of Mars
- Births of the British mathematician G. H. Hardy, German writer Hermann Hesse and Swiss pianist Alfred Cortot
- Deaths of the British pioneer photographer Henry Fox Talbot, French painter Gustave Courbet, American Mormon leader Brigham Young and Sioux chief Crazy Horse

interval

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840–1893)

Concert Fantasy for piano and orchestra, Op.56 (1884)

1 *Quasi rondo: Andante mosso*

2 *Contrastes: Andante cantabile – Molto vivace – Vivacissimo – Allegro moderato – Vivacissimo – Molto più tranquillo – Vivace*

The huge popularity of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto has tended to overshadow the composer's other works for piano and orchestra. The Second Piano Concerto – first performed in New York in 1881 by a young disciple of Charles Hallé, Madeleine Schiller – is only rarely performed, though it equals the first concerto in its profusion of great melodies and virtuoso pianism, if not in its overall effectiveness. There is also a so-called 'Third Concerto': actually an unfinished single-movement piece once familiar to ballet enthusiasts as the score to George Balanchine's *Allegro Brillante*. In between the second and third concertos Tchaikovsky composed his lovely *Concert Fantasy*, a work now enjoying something of an overdue revival.

As was often the case with the insecure and severely self-critical Tchaikovsky, the work's origins are somewhat complicated and drawn-out. The composer mentions a 'piano concerto' in a number of letters dating from spring and early summer 1884, but it seems substantial work on what became the two-movement *Concert Fantasy* did

About the music

not begin until August of that year, when Tchaikovsky went to stay with his brother Anatoly and his family at Skabeyevo, a village near Podolsk, some 50km south of Moscow.

Initially, however, the auspices were not good. On arrival at Skabeyevo, Tchaikovsky opened his bag to discover that the sketches of the *Concert Fantasy* had gone missing. He was also worried about the prospect of working without an instrument: ‘... there is no piano, and I came here to write a piano piece,’ he wrote to his other brother, Modest (Anatoly’s twin). A piano duly arrived and by 15 August Tchaikovsky reported to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, that ‘my work [on the *Concert Fantasy*] is going very well’. Six weeks later he told her that the work was complete.

**‘... there is no piano, and I came
here to write a piano piece,’**
Tchaikovsky

Various occurrences delayed the premiere – not least the death of Tchaikovsky’s friend, the violinist Iosif Kotek, and the indisposition of the conductor, Max Erdmannsdörfer – but it eventually took place in Moscow on 22 February 1885 with Sergey Taneyev at the piano. Tchaikovsky described himself as ‘delighted’ with the performance and recorded that ‘it was a great success with the public’.

The music

At the beginning of the first movement, over a long sustained bass note (or ‘pedal’), flutes introduce the decorous first theme before the piano enters dramatically, its busy elaborations contrasting with the more measured tread of the orchestra. A solo flute then follows the piano’s energetic lead – as do other instruments in turn – but it is the piano that steals the show. A typically balletic Tchaikovsky melody emerges from all the activity before the opening section closes with a series of emphatic chords. What follows is the centrepiece of the movement: an extensive piano cadenza that is both highly expressive and very virtuosic, its luscious chromatic harmonies and astonishing pianistic flourishes reminiscent of Liszt. The cadenza builds to a passionate climax before ending in a mood that is calmly expressive, even slightly resigned. Thereafter the opening music returns with only slight alterations to complete the movement’s three-part (A–B–A) structure.

The second movement, ‘Contrastes’, contains material from a discarded opening movement of Tchaikovsky’s *Orchestral Suite No.3*, a work completed earlier in 1884. Its title is highly appropriate, given that it is structured around the contrast between lyrical, largely minor-key music and fast, dance-like music in the major. The opening is a beautifully melancholic affair, the piano providing both a guitar-like (or balalaika-like) accompaniment and the most poignant of melodies before it is joined by a soulful solo cello. With the entry of the orchestra, we are treated to one of those gloriously radiant Tchaikovsky moments, the piano weaving intricate patterns amid the stillness that surrounds it. A clarinet suddenly introduces a tone of levity, and for a while this is manically juxtaposed with the passionate music that had preceded it. Soon a mood of madcap revelry is established. A horn solo heralds a section of introspection but this is short-lived: apart from one other brief moment of reflection, the remainder of the movement is essentially an invigorating (and, for the pianist, stunningly virtuosic) dash to the finish line.

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About the music

Passing Note

'Land is quite unnecessary to me – ie. I want only a modest house with a nice garden, but an established one. A river is certainly desirable. If there is a wood nearby, so much the better – but I mean, of course, a wood belonging to someone else – for, I repeat, I want to own only a modest house and garden. This *dacha* or cottage must be completely detached, and not in a row of other *dachas* and, most of all, it must be not far from a station so that Moscow is always at hand ... The most important and vital condition is that the location should be sympathetic, beautiful. If the house is situated somewhere low down so that there is no view from the windows, then it does not answer my requirements. A factory nearby is also very undesirable. That, I think, is everything.'

Tchaikovsky, setting out the specifications for his perfect home in a letter written to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck, while staying at his sister Alexandra's home in Kamenka during the spring and summer of 1884, shortly before moving to his brother Anatoly's place at Skabeyevo and beginning work on the *Concert Fantasy*.

Timeline: 1885

- Premiere of Tchaikovsky's *Concert Fantasy* in Moscow, with Sergey Taneyev as the piano soloist
- Premieres of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* in London, Johann Strauss II's *Der Zigeunerbaron* (The Gypsy Baron) in Vienna and Massenet's *Le Cid* in Paris
- Premieres of Brahms's Symphony No.4 in Meiningen and of Dvořák's Symphony No.7 in London
- Fall of Khartoum; Anglo-Egyptian garrison massacred by the Mahdi's troops; death of General Gordon
- The first official cremation takes place in the UK at Woking Crematorium, following the trial and acquittal of the Welsh neo-Druid William Price for the (then illegal) cremation of his infant son the previous year
- The crated-up sections of the Statue of Liberty arrive in New York Harbour
- Prussia begins expelling all ethnic Poles and Jews not in possession of German citizenship
- Louis Pasteur successfully vaccinates a boy bitten by a rabid dog
- First meeting of the Indian National Congress, soon to become prime movers for Indian independence
- First steel-frame 'skyscraper' (the 10-storey Home Insurance Building) goes up in Chicago, Illinois
- British inventor John Kemp Starley produces the Rover, the first commercially successful chain-driven, rear-wheel-drive 'safety bicycle', replacing the old penny-farthing design
- Births of composers Jerome Kern, Alban Berg and George Butterworth, conductor Otto Klemperer, writers Karen Blixen and D. H. Lawrence, poet Ezra Pound, film mogul Louis B. Mayer, actor/director Erich von Stroheim and Nobel Prize-winning physicist Niels Bohr
- Deaths of writer Victor Hugo, American Civil War General and US President Ulysses S. Grant and star of the Barnum & Bailey Circus, Jumbo the elephant (killed by a collision with a locomotive)

About the music

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Overture: 1812, op.49 (1880)

Tchaikovsky's resplendent *1812* overture was written for the opening ceremony of the All Russian Art and Industrial Exhibition held in Moscow in 1882. That year marked the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Borodino in 1812, when Russian forces had inflicted a severe blow upon Napoleon's invading armies. To mark the occasion, Tchaikovsky composed this ambitious 'festival overture', a work full of patriotic themes in keeping with its grand historical subject matter.

Tchaikovsky, however, detested the work, claiming it 'was written without any feeling of love and would therefore probably have little artistic merit'. Yet the public, both in Russia and beyond, immediately took the *1812* to their hearts. In 1891 Tchaikovsky himself conducted it in New York, during his only tour to North America, and it was recorded as early as 1916. The work is now a staple of 'Classical Spectaculars' all over the world and even features in Fourth of July celebrations throughout the USA.

The music

The overture opens with a solemn introduction featuring a solo group of four cellos and two violas, who present a plaintive Russian Orthodox hymn called 'God Preserve Thy People'. The atmosphere then becomes more fraught, a reflection of Russian anxiety in the face of the invading French army. After a dramatic climax the cavalry arrive on the scene accompanied by drums and trumpets, and battle begins. Throughout, we hear snatches of 'La Marseillaise' (representing the French), the Russian imperial anthem 'God Save the Tsar' and a number of Russian folk tunes. Eventually Russia is victorious, the French retreat and there is a triumphant reprise of 'God Preserve Thy People'. As Tchaikovsky himself put it, it's all 'very loud and noisy', something for which we can be most grateful!

After a dramatic climax the cavalry arrive on the scene accompanied by drums and trumpets, and battle begins.

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Passing Note

'It seems you think writing ceremonial pieces for an exhibition is some sort of ultimate bliss of which I shall hasten to avail myself, and that I shall straightway proceed to pour out my inspiration, not knowing properly where, how, what, why, when and so on. I won't lift a finger until something is ordered from me ... I need stimulating, encouraging and galvanising features in the form of precise indications, prescribed dates, and 100 rouble notes (a lot) coming in the more or less distant future. You give me the choice of this or that festal occasion, as though any one of these could attract me!'

Tchaikovsky's first, tetchy response to the idea of writing the *1812* overture, in a letter to his friend and publisher, Pyotr Ivanovich Jurgenson, dated 5 July 1880.

About the music

Timeline: 1882

- Premiere of Tchaikovsky's *1812* overture in Moscow
- Premieres of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *The Snow Maiden* in St Petersburg, of Wagner's 'stage dedication play' *Parsifal* in Bayreuth, of Dvořák's *Dimitrij* and Smetana's *The Devil's Wall* in Prague, and of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Iolanthe* in London; posthumous premiere of Donizetti's unfinished *Il duca d'Alba* in Rome
- German physician Robert Koch isolates the bacterium that causes TB
- American outlaw Jesse James is shot dead
- Lord Cavendish, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, is assassinated in Phoenix Park, only hours after arriving in Dublin
- Attempted assassination of Queen Victoria in Windsor; the assailant, Roderick McLean, is later declared insane
- Britain invades Egypt and seizes control of the Suez Canal
- Manet exhibits his painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* at the Paris Salon
- Ibsen writes *An Enemy of the People*
- Viennese physician Joseph Breuer first uses hypnosis to treat hysteria, leading to the development of psychoanalysis with his pupil Sigmund Freud
- Births of composers Igor Stravinsky, Karol Szymanowski, Percy Grainger, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Joaquín Turina and Zoltán Kodály, pianist Artur Schnabel, conductor Leopold Stokowski, actors Bela Lugosi and Sybil Thorndike, writers A. A. Milne, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, artists Georges Braque and Edward Hopper, sculptor and designer Eric Gill and Manchester-born suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst
- Deaths of poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, naturalist Charles Darwin, writer Anthony Trollope, philosopher-writer Ralph Waldo Emerson and Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi