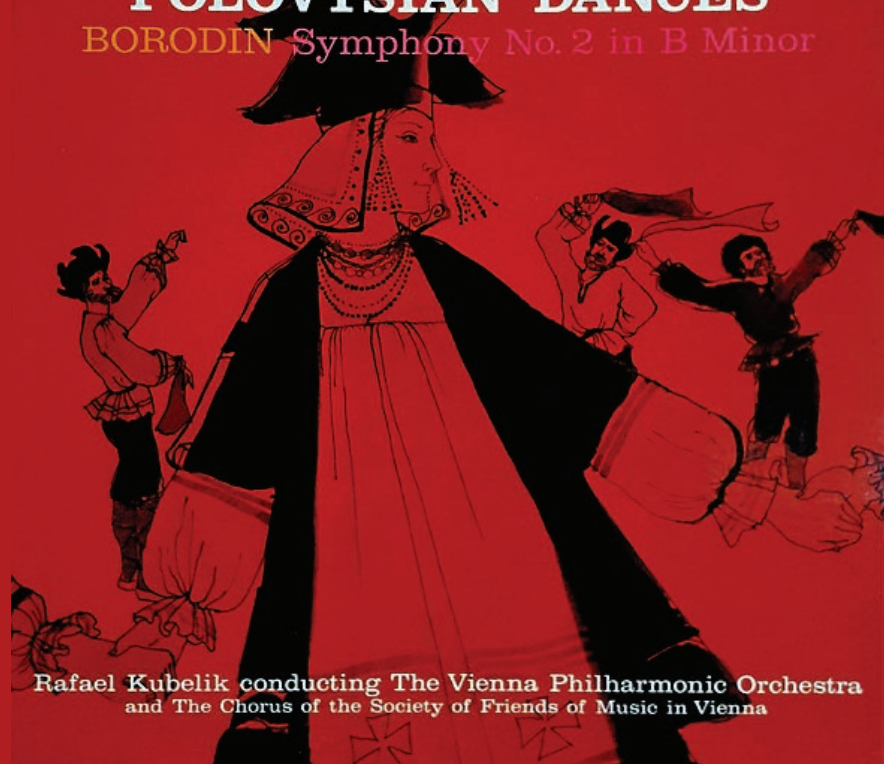


section introduces a gallop rhythm that affects fragments of the themes and lends a knightly feel to the proceedings, leading into a recapitulation whose longer notes and thicker orchestration make it even more emphatic than the exposition. The Prestissimo scherzo that follows uses a sustained brass chord to modulate from B minor to F major (a remote key), and then launches into a succession of quick, bright, lightly scored melodies. The Trio takes a graceful, winding theme (also derived from the abovementioned folk songs) and runs it through various keys. The Andante third-movement portrays a legendary minstrel named Bayan, and evokes the sound of his zither in the opening bars with harp and pizzicato strings. At first, a warm horn melody dominates, but soon a struggle develops between a nervous, minor-mode motive introduced on the woodwinds and the opening melody. Finally, the opening melody enters triumphantly in the strings, and leads into a coda that brings back the minstrel evocation; this in turn leads directly into the Allegro finale. This finale depicts a jubilant crowd, using an appropriately buoyant main theme (decorated with generous percussion) and a second theme that begins as a quiet lyric, but soon expands into a celebration itself. A new development theme recalls the symphony's opening music, but this soon yields to a supremely joyous, unstoppable elaboration of the two main themes, whose momentum propels the music through the recapitulation and the coda. Borodin's Symphony No. 2 deserves its exalted position in the annals of the Mighty Handful's orchestral music.

POLOVTSIAN DANCES

BORODIN Symphony No. 2 in B Minor



Rafael Kubelik conducting The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
and The Chorus of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna

Alexander Borodin was a chemist by profession, but is more readily remembered as among the finest of nineteenth century Russian composers. Borodin's dual life prevented him from completing a number of important musical works, among them the opera Prince Igor. The composer labored on the score (and text) intermittently for nearly 20 years, intending to create a great historical tableau based on an ancient ballad about a hero in Russia's struggles against the tribes of Central Asia. The Polovtsy tribe took Igor prisoner for a time, and this episode provides much of the dramatic impetus for the opera. Prince Igor -- later completed by Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, and others -- remains one of the most important works in the history of Russian opera, though it is only rarely staged outside of its native land. Various reconstructions of Borodin's original intentions have been made, and the vast dimensions of the work pose problems. The work combines influences from French grand opera (rarely staged much anymore either) with, especially in its depiction of the "exotic" Polovtsy, the typically Russian harmonic daring also associated with Mussorgsky.

The most famous music from the opera is a set of dances, the Polovtsian Dances, that accompany a banquet put on by the Khan of the Polovtsy. These are overwhelmingly brilliant and irresistibly barbaric in the best Romantic crowd-pleasing manner, particularly when performed with the original choral parts. The Dances gained an unexpected popular currency when one of the more memorable tunes was transformed into the song "Stranger in Paradise" as part of the Broadway

musical *Kismet* (1953).

Alexander Borodin's Symphony No. 2 in B minor took a long while to compose, as Borodin fit it in between labors on other works and his efforts as a scientist to ensure that women had access to chemistry courses. It was begun in 1869, but the piano score was not complete until 1875, and the orchestral version was not performed until 1877. That version was revised in 1879 after a poorly received premiere. Yet posterity has made the Symphony No. 2 not only Borodin's most popular symphony, but the most popular symphony written by any member of the nationalist Mighty Handful (Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Mili Balakirev, and Borodin), because of its vividly rugged harmonies, deft orchestration, and a seemingly inexhaustible fund of energetic, passionate, and, above all, Russian themes.

A program for all but the second movement of the symphony has survived, as Borodin told it to critic Vladimir Stasov. The sonata-form first movement depicts a gathering of Russian knights; it opens with a strong, noble theme played on unison strings, as brasses and winds provide dark color and essay a chivalric-sounding contrasting theme. After a few repetitions of the opening music, a second theme enters, based on motifs from the folk songs "The Terrible Tsar" and "The Nightingale" and distinguished by its easy lyricism. The development

Borodin Polovtsian Dances & Symphony No. 2

Rafael Kubelik conducting The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

1 Polovtsian Dances (From "Prince Igor") 10:50

Symphony No. 2 In B Minor

2 1st Movement: Allegro 7:17

3 2nd Movement: Scherzo (Prestissimo) 5:08

4 3rd Movement: Andante 14:38

5 4th Movement: Finale (Allegro) 2:28

Released by EMI 1961



For more info e-mail us:
admin@highdeftapetransfers.com
or visit our website:
www.highdeftapetransfers.com