

he maintained a devotion to music.

Under the influence of Mily Balakirev, whom he met in 1862, Borodin became interested in applying elements of Russian folk music to works for the concert hall and stage. He joined a circle of like-minded composers -- Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky, and Cui -- famously dubbed "The Five" or "The Mighty Handful." The influence of Balakirev in particular is at once in evident in the Symphony No. 1 in E flat major (1867). Borodin began the much craggier Symphony No. 2 in B minor in 1869, the same year he commenced labor on his most important work, the opulent four-act opera Prince Igor. While it took him more than five years to complete the symphony, work on Prince Igor dragged on for decades. Borodin, who had in the meantime completed a number of other works, left the opera unfinished at the time of his death. It was completed posthumously by Rimsky-Korsakov, a skillful craftsman and a particularly apt match for Borodin's colorful musical character, and Alexander Glazunov. Glazunov also completed the Symphony No. 3 in A minor, which the composer had been working on until the time of his death.

Aside from teaching chemistry and conducting research, Borodin helped found a series of medical courses for women in 1872. Such activities, as well as the poor health that plagued him in the 1880s, drained the energy that he might have devoted to composition. Still, as a part-time composer, he left a significant oeuvre: more than a dozen worthy songs, miscellaneous piano pieces, two string quartets (the second of which contains a ravishing Nocturne often performed in an arrangement for string orchestra), and the popular tone poem In the Steppes of Central Asia (1880). Borodin died while attending a ball in St. Petersburg on February 27, 1887.

BORODIN

POLOVETSIAN DANCES

WITH CHORUS (FROM "PRINCE IGOR")

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

LE COQ D'OR SUITE

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
AND CHORUS

ANTAL DORATI

CONDUCTING



Rimsky-Korsakov's last opera *Zolotoy petushok* or *The Golden Cockerel* is a "dramatized fable" (*nebilitsa v litsakh*), based on a imitation folk tale in verse by Pushkin. The work was prevented from being performed by the censor until after the composer's death. The materials in question were the character of a lazy autocrat involved in harebrained conflicts with invading neighboring countries, and lines in the libretto such as the mention of "a new dawn...without the Tsar" (which, nevertheless, had already appeared years before in Pushkin's published text). Because of the restriction, only the "Introduction and Wedding Procession" (*Introduction et Cortège de Noces*) were performed during the composer's lifetime. These excerpts were premiered at a Russian Symphony Concert presented under the auspices of the Belayev publishing house in February 1908.

These excerpts are masterpieces of timbral color and the artful evocation of imagery. Entering unaccompanied, two trumpets with mutes perform a fortissimo call, and are joined by two oboes in unison in their high register, creating an exotic timbre suggesting something akin to a Middle-Eastern army band. A violin diminuendo on the sustained tone leads into a new subtle atmosphere. Muted cellos enter with a gradually descending figure. The full orchestra then unfolds a velvety impressionist landscape filled with descending high woodwinds doubled by celeste and fluttering (tremolo) violins, as the harp and bass clarinet perform ascending punctuations, a cymbal rolls, and everyone else quietly sustains low rich harmonies. The clarinets, other woodwinds, and violins exchange runs in non-Western scales underscored with harp glissandi and low string tremolos and pizzicati.

The next change in atmosphere combines the tubular bells and very high harp notes in octaves arpeggiating an unusual progression. This is punctuated by solo winds, and played in contrary motion against ascending cellos and bassoon in major and whole tone scales. The effect is plaintive and eerie, yet

in a way religious. The music crescendos and suddenly breaks forth in a new setting of the trumpet call, answered in imitation by the woodwinds, and surrounded with quickly arpeggiated violins and lower strings in *sul ponticello* and then regular tremolo. The Introduction then closes on a powerful sustained unison.

"In the street, the triumphal procession begins. The king's militia come first with their important airs and bragging; next, the Queen of Chémakha's retinue; a promenade from an oriental fairy tale: certain persons that only have one eye in the middle of their forehead, others have horns, others the heads of dogs. Large and small Ethiopians, veiled slaves carry caskets and precious vessels. This strange pomp dissipates the people's anger for a moment. They are amused like children." Against drones, odd bassoon and cello pulses, bright modal melodies with sliding chromatics, sonorous brass, and gradually amassing percussion, the procession moves to a brilliant end when the king and queen finally appear.

Though far from prolific as a composer -- by day he was a scientist noted for his research on aldehydes -- Alexander Borodin nevertheless earned a secure place in the history of Russian music. As a creative spirit, he was the most accomplished of the Russian nationalist composers. He had a particular gift for the distinctive stripe of exoticism so evident in his most frequently performed work, the "Polovtsian Dances" from the opera *Prince Igor*.

The illegitimate son of a Georgian prince and a doctor's wife, Borodin enjoyed a comfortable upbringing. As a child he learned to play several instruments and tried his hand at composing, but other aptitudes directed his formal education. He studied chemistry at St. Petersburg's Medico-Surgical Academy, obtaining his doctorate in 1858 and pursuing further studies in Europe until 1862. Upon his return to Russia, he became a professor at his alma mater, but even as an academic career apparently loomed before him,

Rimsky-Korsakov and Borodin

Antal Dorati London Symphony Orchestra & Chorus

Suite From "Le Coq D'Or"

1. King Dodon In His Palace 8:55
2. King Dodon On The Battlefield 4:05
3. King Dodon With Queen Shemakha 6:28
4. Marriage Feast And Lamentable
End Of King Dodon 5:59

Prince Igor - Excerpts

- 5 Overture 11:17
- 6 Polovetsian Dances 11:20

Recorded 1956 by Mercury at - Walthamstow Assembly Hall
Engineer - C. R. Fine Recording Supervisor - Wilma Cozart



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