

1994

26th Feb. ✓
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(82)



Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra

Conductor Ben Daglish

with

The Moscow Prokofiev School String Ensemble

Conductor Alexander G. Kanievsky

present

A Russian Spectacular

Programme

- Polotsvian Dances - Borodin
- Lieutenant Kije - Prokofiev
- Six assorted Pieces - Various (TBA)

***** Interval *****

- St John's Night on Bald Mountain - Mussorgsky
- Classical Symphony - Prokofiev

Dear Audience member,

Welcome to you all, and especially to our guests from Moscow. As some of you may know, due to relocation this will be my last concert as a conductor of 'Wizzo'. Over the past year-and-a-half, I have gained immeasurable experience through my association with the orchestra, and I would like to say thank you, not only to them, but to you also, for coming to concerts and supporting the orchestra both spiritually and financially.

With the loss of the City Hall concerts and the underfunding of both professional and amateur music in this country, (to say nothing of music education), WSO is the last 'classical bastion' remaining in this area. I am confident of their musical future under Michael Darke, my co-director, and I hope that you continue to give them the warm reception and support that they deserve.

Horns
Percy Cotterell
Stuart McCourt
Hazel Whirefoot
Neil Scapelhorn

Timpani / Percussion
James Hood
Robert Worallo
Claire Magray

Trumpets / Cornets
Jeremy Cross
Karen Hale
Cliff Parker
Gill Banks

Trombones
Don Howard
Chris Manasseh
Ben Sedgewick

Tuba
Paul Lacey

Clarinets & Tenor Sax
Diana Cotterell
Robert Porter

Lynn Sargeant

Bassons
Michael Darke
Douglas Servant

Flutes / Piccolo
Diana Manasseh
Jane Caxon

Krista Bromley

Oboes / Cor Anglais
Richard Anderson
Tony Evans

Second Violins
Helen Beke
Barbara Bostock
Michael Clement
Ken Hawkins
Margaret Myatt
Ros Rayner
Jenny Walton
Philip Ward

Violas
Sharon Bayley
David Cope
Sheila Freeman
John Morse-Brown
Philip Turley

Basses
Chris Lewis
Norman Satterthwaite
Ian Parry

First Violins
Katalin Beke
Colin Elton
James Gosling
Jennifer Lewis

Susan Bellingham
Margaret Friar
Jo Jordan
David Smith

'Cellos
Margaret Bell
Louise Lawrie
Richard Painter
Maggie Wenham

Glyn Davies
Sheila Moore
Sylvia Ulrich

Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra
Leader Martyn Blythe
Conductor Ben Daglish

Programme notes and design by Ben Daglish

Polotsvian Dances

Alexander Borodin (1833 - 87)

It has always been a mystery to me (although my bias is obvious) as to why Borodin, the son of a prince and a musical child prodigy, should decide to devote the greater part of his life to chemistry teaching, thus leaving us only two and a half symphonies, half an opera, a tone poem and a handful of chamber works.

The Polotsvian dances are from that unfinished opera, 'Prince Igor' which, although started in 1869, was only completed after his death by two other members of 'The Five', Glazounov and Rimsky-Korsakov (of whom more later). The dances are from the ballet scene, depicting the wild dancing of the Polotsvy, the nomadic invaders of Russia who capture Igor. With the exception of the famous 'Strangers in Paradise' tune, they are wild and frenetic, capturing perfectly the savagery and intensity of the Steppes horsemen.

Lieutenant Kijé

Serge Prokofiev (1891 - 1953)

The Birth of Kijé

Song

The Wedding of Kijé

Troika

The Burial of Kijé

This suite is taken from the music Prokofiev composed for the 1933 film of the same name, based upon a story by the satirical 19th century Russian author Yuri Tynyanov. In this, a mistake by an army clerk creates an officer (Lieutenant 'That', more or less) on the battle reports given to the Tsar, who is so intrigued that he demands a full account of this strangely-named soldier's career. As the Tsar can never be wrong, a full military (and private) career is swiftly created. The fictitious Lieutenant is just as swiftly killed off though, when the Tsar's curiosity becomes too great.

The concert suite was arranged in 1937 for orchestra and baritone voice, but the alternative usage of a solo tenor saxophone is most often performed, as tonight. The music mirrors perfectly the satirical story, parodying both military pomp and the 'whiter than white' officer's life - full of gaiety and romance, as befits any of the Tsar's officers!

St John's Night on Bald Mountain

Modeste Mussorgsky

(1839 - 81)

This piece has a confusing history. Early sketches date back to 1860, and a letter to Balakirev (Mussorgsky's mentor, who was expecting to conduct the finished work for the Russian Musical Society) in 1866 confirmed that a full score was on its way, which was completed in 1867. On receiving this, Balakirev criticized and refused to play it, feeling it was naive and 'raw'. While hotly contesting this, Mussourgsky was forced to set it aside, and although material from it was used in his 'The Fair at Sorochintsy' and in the abortive collaborative project 'Mlada', the full version was never performed in his lifetime.

After Mussorgsky's death, Rimsky-Korsakov rearranged and re-orchestrated material from the 'Sorochintsy' version, publishing it in 1886 as 'Mussourgsky's Night on a Bare Mountain', and this is the piece that is now generally performed. I always had my doubts about this piece, but it wasn't until I first played the original 1867 version that I realised what a 'hatchet job' Rimsky-Korsakov had done on it. Stripped of its power (and half of its tunes), it became an undemanding popular concert standard. Tonight we present the full original version, possibly for the first time ever in Wolverhampton. I hope you enjoy it, and give it the regard it deserves.

Symphony No. 1 (The Classical) in D

Serge Prokofiev

(1891 - 1953)

First performed in 1918, this symphony was written over the period of the Russian Revolution. Although the neo-classical fashion in music at that time was considered a backlash against the atonal excesses of the beginning of the century (the 'Rites of Spring' et al) one cannot help but wonder how the sudden political turmoil, overthrowing of the monarchy and of course the Great War affected the writing of this piece. It is composed in the style of a typical Haydn or Mozart symphony, although the odd 'modern' arrangement creeps in and the traditional third movement Minuet is replaced by the older (Bach or Handel) Gavotte.

Although Prokofiev was only 25 when it was completed, the symphony shows great maturity and wit, being a tribute rather than (as so often is the case) a parody. The Gavotte became so popular, he used it again in his 'Romeo and Juliet' ballet music.