

King John Orchestra Concert

Sunday, 26th November 2017, 7.00 pm

PROGRAMME

Conductor – Chris Jessop

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857), Overture, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, Op. 5



Glinka spent his early years as assistant secretary of the St Petersburg Department of Public Highways, but in his mid-20s he gave this up to study music in Italy and Berlin. He is today credited with creating a uniquely Russian national music by fusing the European musical tradition with Russian folksongs and a nationalist approach. He proved hugely influential on later composers including Balakirev, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky.

His first opera, *Ivan Susanin*, was a great success. His second in 1842, *Ruslan and Ludmilla*, was initially less well-received (perhaps because the scenario was reportedly devised by a friend of his 'in a quarter of an hour while he was drunk!'), and is now chiefly remembered for the overture.

The opera, based on Pushkin's poem of the same name, tells the story of the abduction of Ludmilla, the daughter of Prince Vladimir, by the evil wizard Chernomor, and the attempt of Ruslan, one of her suitors, to rescue her. Ruslan triumphs in the end, after encountering a hut on hen's legs, magical gardens, dragons, a giant human head, witches, castles, and a magic sword.

The melodies of the overture mostly come from the general rejoicing at the end of the opera. A bold and confident opening for the brass, wind, and timpani mingles with bustling passages for strings. The more lyrical theme that first appears in the bassoon and lower strings represents Ruslan; Chernomor is represented by whole tone scales that do not 'fit' in the tradition of Western harmony, and would have sounded very unfamiliar to listeners at the time. The themes develop in sonata form before a coda that brings the piece to a rousing conclusion that befits the happy ending.

Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975), Piano Concerto No. 2 in F Major, Op. 102

1. Allegro 2. Andante 3. Allegro



Shostakovich wrote this concerto in 1957 for his son Maxim's nineteenth birthday. Perhaps as a result of the greater artistic freedom he was enjoying following Stalin's death four years earlier, it is far more cheerful than a lot of his works, and full of family in-jokes. It also contains some of his most romantic writing.

The first movement is characterized by light and elegant rhythmic interplay between the orchestra and the soloist, with octaves in both hands for the piano part. This playfulness gives way to the intensely soulful second movement, with the piano emerging out of a gorgeous and tender introduction for the strings. The music moves from minor to major and back again, in some of Shostakovich's most moving writing.

There is no pause between the second movement and the dance-like third. Here Shostakovich includes material based on Hanon's infamous piano exercise, as a joke between him and Maxim – he claimed it was the only way he could get him to practice them!

Lopsided rhythms propel the concerto to its conclusion; although this concerto is sometimes thought of as one of Shostakovich's less important works, its youthful vigour and cheekiness have ensured its popularity with pianists and listeners alike.

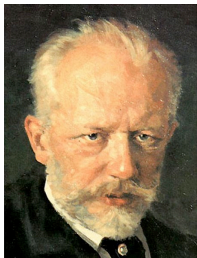
Soloist - Gavin Richards

Gavin Richards is Assistant Head at the Perse School, having served as Director of Music there between 2002 and 2014. He has an Honours degree in Music from Cambridge University and also studied piano at the Royal Academy of Music under the late Alexander Kelly. He has taught piano to students of all ages and has performed widely as a concerto and recital soloist – including performances of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 2 at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham, and also with the King John Orchestra in 2015. He created the MusicLand website, which has become one of the leading online communities for music education in the UK; he has contributed as a freelance writer to Rhinegold Publishing's Classroom Music and he has examined for the Cambridge International Examinations Board.

--Interval--

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64

1. Andante – Allegro con anima 2. Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza – Moderato con anima – Andante mosso – Allegro non troppo 3. Valse: Allegro moderato 4. Finale – Andante maestoso – Allegro vivace – Molto vivace – Moderato assai e molto maestoso – Presto



Like Glinka, Tchaikovsky struck a balance between the European musical tradition and the inspiration he drew from Russian folk music, and his fifth symphony typifies his approach in this regard.

The composer sketched various notes for the first movement in April 1888: "Murmurs, doubts, laments, reproaches...shall I cast myself into the embrace of *faith*? A complete resignation before fate, which is the same as the inscrutable predestination of fate...". The extent to which he developed this idea is doubtful (by June 1888 he was claiming that the piece was not programmatic at all), but it certainly is significant, and it has been suggested that the recurring theme that occurs in all four movements represents an evocation of the idea of fate.

The symphony opens with the fate motif in the low woodwind; this ominous start develops into a tentative, questioning allegro, with a theme reminiscent of Slavic folk tunes. The second movement opens with a gorgeous main theme adapted from a popular love song, played by the solo horn. A lush orchestral climax is interrupted by the return of the fate theme before the music fades away.

The third movement is a graceful waltz, with a busy semiquaver section for strings – again, the fate theme reappears at the end. The fourth movement reintroduces the fate theme, but in a major rather than minor key. The music grows in strength and grandeur, and after the energy and drive of the middle section, the symphony comes to a triumphant conclusion with a grand march, in which the fate theme is proclaimed loudly in the brass section.

Tchaikovsky initially had doubts about the symphony, deeming it 'too insincere' and 'repellent in its excesses'. Critical reception was also somewhat mixed to begin with – one American reviewer likened it to 'a horde of demons struggling in a barrel of brandy'! However, the piece grew in popularity after Tchaikovsky's death, and became one of his most popular large-scale works.

One of the most memorable performances was by the Leningrad Radio Orchestra during the Siege of Leningrad in the Second World War. The orchestra continued performing during the siege to raise morale, and on October 20th 1941 played Tchaikovsky's fifth, broadcasting live to London. Bombs began to fall as the second movement began; the orchestra continued playing until the very last note.

➤ *This performance is dedicated to the memory of Jamie Gardiner, 1994-2017* ➤

THE KING JOHN ORCHESTRA – KJO

www.kingjohnorchestra.org.uk

Conductor - Chris Jessop

Chris Jessop has been Musical Director of the King John Orchestra since 2010. He has previously conducted the Orlando Singers of Cambridge, Swavesey Community Choir, St Ives Choral Society and the Addenbrooke's Musical Society, and has also been the Choral Director of the Huntingdonshire Philharmonic Society. Repertoire conducted includes Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, Handel's *Samson*, *Messiah* and *Dixit Dominus*, and Elgar's *Spirit of England* and *The Music Makers*. He has been a GP partner at Cromwell Place Surgery, St Ives, since 1996.

Our Players

The KJO was founded in 2006 by parents of King's College School and quickly expanded to include parents from St John's and anyone else who would like to join us. We welcome anyone who would like the opportunity to play in an orchestra: no particular connection with the schools is necessary. There are no auditions and anyone is welcome to join until a section is full, but to enjoy it you will need to be (or have been at some point!) at least Grade 6 standard. We rehearse fortnightly on Monday evenings during term time. We have some vacancies in the strings and brass sections at the moment. If you are interested in playing, please use the contact form on the website at <http://www.kingjohnorchestra.org.uk/aboutjoining.html>, and we will get in touch.

Violin 1*Laurence Drake (Leader)*

Frances Baxter

David Cope

Julian Edge-Partington

Alexandra Hayes

Joanne Newton

Rebecca de Rafael

Elizabeth Taylor

Rosamund Williams

Violin 2*Anthea Millar*

Joanna Cargill

Sheila Hunter

Kit Stoner

Andrew Tusa

Ann Winterborn

Viola*Heather Sutcliffe*

Sarah Steed

Catriona Ball

Josh Healey

Mary Kasanicki

Mary Reid

Cello*Fiona Cornish*

Giles Barton-Owen

David Carruthers

Jonathan Chapter

John Cheney

Helen Clayton

Rosemary Grande

Jax Parsonson

Charlotte Sale

Ursula Wolff

Double Bass

Alison McNaught

Carol Patton

Alan Grayer

Flute 1/Piccolo

Robert Gardiner

Flute 2

Lucinda Czernin

Alice Garnett

Oboe

Philippa Elloway

Alan Jackson

Mary Jane O'Sullivan

Clarinet

Penny Barton

Wendy Fray

James Loudon

Bassoon*Jonathan Gadsby*

Jeremy Fairbrother

Horn

Chris Rogers

Sachiko Rocca

Holly Baker

Susan Fairley

Trumpet

Naomi Wrycroft

Rory Gordon

Trombone

Nigel Low

Jim Rowley

Bass Trombone

Liz White

Tuba

Robert Sansom

Timpani

Kate Wishart

OUR CHARITY TONIGHT

This year at our KJO concert we are supporting the literacy charity Schoolreaders.

In 2016 one in three children failed to reach the required reading standard at the age of 11. This means that thousands of children are not benefitting fully from their secondary education. Even more frightening is the fact that 48% of the prison population in the UK has a reading age of 11 or less: evidence that the long-term effects of illiteracy can radically affect a child's life chances.

Schoolreaders is the only national literacy charity in the UK which recruits, matches and supports reading volunteers to read on a weekly basis with primary school children, at no cost to the school. We recruit reading volunteers from networks such as the WI, and we match them to primary schools in their local area. The school then carries out the necessary security check and links the volunteer to those pupils who need extra one-to-one reading support. On average our volunteers spend 2 hours each week reading with 10 children.

The cost to Schoolreaders of giving reading support to one child for a year is just £15, as the Schoolreaders model is built on volunteers: from our readers themselves, to those who recruit them at county level, to our county-based fundraisers – all are giving their time for free.

This year we are expanding our service in Cambridgeshire and aim to be working with 830 children in 39 primary schools by July 2018. Please help us to reach as many of these children as possible.

Thank you for your support!



Please support generously!

And finally, special thanks to:

Katherine Firth for the poster illustration

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The staff of King's, St John's and the Perse Schools for all their support and encouragement

Robert Ziegler, our Patron for his continued enthusiasm and support