

Programme

Mussorgsky: Prelude to Opera 'Khovanshchina' –
"Dawn on the Moscow River"

Elgar: "Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op 85"
Soloist Kevin Kirs Verstege

--Interval--

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 - "The Pathétique"

Welcome

You are in for an emotional roller-coaster ride tonight with the great romantic works of Tchaikovsky and Elgar. We invite you to share with us in the heights and depths of passion expressed by these great works. First relax with Mussorgsky's Dawn on the Moscow River, which reminds me of the River Eden on a foggy morning.

Thank you to St John's Church whose welcome and hospitality makes it much more than just a venue to hire. We are also grateful to Bookcase (17 – 19 Castle St, Carlisle) who sell our advance tickets. Advance tickets are at discount rates and when you purchase your tickets you can browse their wide and tempting selection of books and CDs. You can also get advance tickets from any member of the orchestra. To keep in touch with orchestra do link up online. We're grateful to Graham Barke (playing in the violins) who has done a great job of revising our website. Have a look at www.cityofcarlisleorchestra.co.uk. Thank you Graham.

We are pleased to welcome back regular listeners to City of Carlisle Orchestra and anyone who is attending for the first time. Come again to hear us on Sat. 4th July 2015 for our programme of American music to celebrate American Independence Day. With a Music Director from Los Angeles we thought an American concert on the 4th July fitting. Ryan, we hope it will give you a little reminder of home. Carlisle Youth Orchestra will be joining us for this concert. You'll also notice some younger players who have made the transition from youth ensembles to City of Carlisle Orchestra regularly playing in our string sections.

Enjoy the concert!

Sarah Wilson
(Chair City of Carlisle Orchestra)



About Tonight's Music

Mussorgsky: Prelude to Opera 'Khovanshchina' - "Dawn on the Moscow River"

Mussorgsky's "national music drama" *Khovanshchina* occupied him roughly from June of 1872, when he first got the idea for a historical grand opera on the troubles surrounding Peter the Great's accession to the throne, until his premature death in 1881. The bicentennial of Peter's birth was 1872, and with Vladimir Stasov's help Mussorgsky began to assemble various historical documents, from which he would craft his own libretto.

He started composition the following year, and worked at it intermittently through his final alcohol-fueled descent into loneliness and poverty. He was fired from his government post at the beginning of 1880. Friends guaranteed him an allowance, providing he finish *Khovanshchina*; another group of well-meaning friends gave him another allowance provided he finish his comic opera *Sorochintsy Fair*. The thus-conflicted and always afflicted composer finished neither, with his last work on *Khovanshchina* done in August. In February 1881 he suffered several seizures, was admitted to a military hospital and died a few weeks later from the effects of chronic alcoholism.

At this point *Khovanshchina* was unfinished in several sections and almost entirely unorchestrated. Rimsky-Korsakov, another well-meaning friend, stepped in and completed the work. The legend of Mussorgsky already alive held that the composer was a wild, original, but untutored genius, much in need of technical correction. Certainly Rimsky believed that, and gave himself unstintingly to his friend's work. His version of *Khovanshchina* was published in 1883 - with not a ruble coming to Rimsky - and was first performed by an amateur group in St. Petersburg in 1886. This became the standard performing version of the sprawling opera, although Ravel and Stravinsky created a variant for Diaghilev in 1913.

Khovanshchina, or *The Khovansky Affair*, deals primarily with the opposition to Peter's accession by Prince Ivan Khovansky and his son. More philosophically, it deals with the transition of Russia into a modern state on the line of Western European models. Progress may be inevitable, but comes at a price, and Mussorgsky clearly felt that much was lost as well as gained. The heroes, if any, are not the political plotters nor the off-stage Peter - Tsarist censors forbade the dramatic representation of any of the Imperial family - but rather the priest Dosifei and his Old Believers, a cultish group of schismatics who equated Peter with the Antichrist and committed suicide rather than countenance the rise of Imperial power.

The Prelude to *Khovanshchina* is an elegantly descriptive account of "Dawn over the Moskva River," before the opera opens on a scene of dozing Moscow sentries.

Cello Concerto in E Minor, Op 85

Elgar's name and the *Enigma Variations* are inextricably bound, but those who think of him as a one-piece composer need only look at his large catalog of compositions in virtually all instrumental and vocal forms to realize the scope of the man's creativity.

The major part of that creativity was compressed within a relatively few years. Although he was musically precocious, having begun writing pieces when a child, he did not come into his own until he was about 40, and did not produce his first symphony until he was 51. By that time, however, his reputation had been firmly established, beginning with the impression he had made with the *Imperial March*, written for the day of Queen Victoria's *Diamond Jubilee* on June 22, 1897. This was followed by the hallmark *Enigma Variations* and then by a set of bracing and uplifting *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*.

In fact he became Britain's glory, the first native-born composer to gain international prominence after the death of Henry Purcell in 1695 closed England's flourishing musical period with strange and chilling finality. Utilising an essentially Germanic language and without resorting to English folk music, Elgar spoke eloquently for his countrymen and for his time. Gazing at the Age of Edward that was fast passing,

and only reluctantly recognizing the imminent demise of that which he cherished, he built highly personal monuments to grace and taste, to elegance and the noble gesture, and to national pride.

The Cello Concerto of 1919 was the last full-scale orchestral work Elgar was destined to complete. With some deviations from its norm, the Concerto moves from dour to dourer – which I think aptly describes the brief introduction and the main theme that follows. The fact that the Concerto was completed after World War I's armistice, which proved to be the last nail in the Edwardian era's coffin, almost certainly accounts for a reticence and sobriety that before had not been nearly so pervasive in Elgar's works. The composer had been deeply troubled by the war. Further, he was financially insecure and in ill-health. "I am more alone and the prey of circumstances than ever before," he said. "Everything good and nice and clean and fresh and sweet is far away, never to return." This pathetic lament is reflected in the Cello Concerto as possibly in no other of his pieces.

The four-movement work begins with a short cello passage marked with one of Elgar's favoured performing directives, *Nobilmente*. This assertive but morose musical gesture, which returns briefly in the second movement and also at the end of the Concerto, contrasts sharply with the austere, long-limbed main theme of the movement proper given by violas alone. Resignation and bitterness seem to mingle here, with only flickering moments of hope entering the autumnal atmosphere.

The first movement is linked to the second by rhapsodic material in the cello that begins with a pizzicato allusion to the first movement's opening, and then goes on to a perpetual motion, virtuosic course as a Scherzo.

A brief, meditative, and searching slow movement prefaces a finale notable for rich contrasts that include an energetic main theme, an accompanied cadenza, and a return of part of the slow movement's materials as well as that first idea with which the Concerto began. But behold, after all of the deep melancholy that has suffused the work, the ending has about it the kind of bravado that tells much about British fortitude, about the "chin up, carry on" strength of British people. It is a good and a bold stroke.

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 in B Minor, Op. 74 - "The Pathétique"

The emotional turbulence of Tchaikovsky's mature masterpieces often suggests a confessional quality around which it's tempting to construct a narrative. Compounding this tendency is the simple fact that Tchaikovsky was a particular favourite in the early days of radio and the recording industry. This is when classical music was first becoming available to a mass audience, and such narratives abounded as a strategy for making sure the music didn't seem forbidding. Nowadays it's with bemused detachment that we come across the impossibly flowery commentaries (quite apart from Tchaikovsky's own descriptions) to which the composer was subjected. They're of the stereotypical "fickle finger of fate" variety, where melodies chastely pick themselves up despite bruised wings to soar aloft, newly armed for spiritual victory. Tchaikovsky's popularity as a source for Hollywood scores and Tin Pan Alley tunes of that period is hardly coincidental.

All of this eventually led to an unfortunate critical backlash. Tchaikovsky became a whipping boy for the worst excesses of Romanticism: sentimental self-indulgence, emotional exposure, even an out-of-control "hysteria" – "too much information" was the uncomfortable response from the guardians of taste. But the court of popular opinion has proved more far-sighted than that of the critics. Tchaikovsky's best music has remained firmly entrenched in the repertoire because it "says" something far richer, more passionate, and more profoundly moving than any dated characterisation could convey.

By the time of his final Symphony No. 6, Tchaikovsky developed an esoteric, "private," and unpublished programme. Nevertheless, he drew attention to it by the somewhat provocative working subtitle, "Programme Symphony," and by the dedication to "Bob" Davidov, the nephew with whom he was in love in his final decade. According to one of the many legends that surround the work, Tchaikovsky's brother Modest (as he later claimed) came up with the name "Pathétique" – which suggests "impassioned suffering" in its Russian context. Whether or not the composer acquiesced to this christening before his sudden death just a little over a week after the world premiere (Oct. 28, 1893 in St. Petersburg) it has come to seem uncannily suitable for the devastating psychological drama the Symphony lays bare.

The circumstances of Tchaikovsky's death have further enshrouded the Pathétique in mystery: was an accidental drink of cholera-contaminated water what killed him, or did the "scandal" of his gay affairs result in Tchaikovsky submitting to a kind of Socratic suicide? The debate – much like the one surrounding Shostakovich – rages on unresolved. Meanwhile, a long series of commentators claiming to decipher the Symphony's internal musical codes have contributed to its aura of intrigue, thereby ensuring that this remains the most controversial of all his works (and indeed of the symphonic repertoire).

The first movement immediately ushers us into a world of bleak despair that attains a crushing intensity. Tchaikovsky employs the mastery of his technical skill to give his emotional power resilient shape. He manages his traditional orchestral forces in unexpected ways, with brass chorales as rousing as Judgment Day and delicately sprung wind solos. Even the composer's trademark roulades possess a shattering, nervous energy that seems unique here.

In the middle of the movement, the explosive rupturing of the FF from the pppppp called for in the score must come as a shock, not a hammy and bathetic gesture. This is just one of the formidable challenges interpreters of the Pathétique face, along with establishing a coherence behind what seem on the surface such sharply marked-off, disparate sections (for example, the pause and tempo change before the indelibly lyrical second theme, inspired by Don José's "Flower Song" in Carmen, a favourite opera of the fate-obsessed Tchaikovsky).

Two inner movements of entirely different character turn out to be interludes rather than actual shifts of direction. The second movement's flowing, dance-like charm is given a subtle displacement through the use of 5/4 meter (two beats followed by the triple pattern of the waltz). In the third movement, Tchaikovsky presents a blazing but hollowly triumphant, brass-reinforced march that revels in aggressive, swaggering rhythms.

It's often been pointed out that had Tchaikovsky simply switched the order of the final two movements, he would have preserved the optimistic, Beethovenian model of light over darkness. Yet by reversing that model and ending with the nihilistic, dying fall of the Adagio (the same tempo with which the Symphony began), he introduces a radically new concept of the symphonic journey (Mahler's Ninth would follow a similar pattern). Indeed, Tchaikovsky writes about his novel approach to form here as an aspect that excited his creative fancy. The valedictory plunge into silence from a sustained B-minor chord deep in the strings sets the stage for a new century of bleak requiems. Tchaikovsky declared that he had put his "whole soul into this work." And there it remains – beyond all attempts at reductive explanations – for us to encounter anew.

Written by Ryan Bancroft

Our Conductor – Ryan Bancroft



Ryan Bancroft is a conductor and trumpeter hailing from Los Angeles. Ryan was educated in Los Angeles where he studied under Edward Carroll and Thomas Stevens and is currently studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland under Garry Walker and Alasdair Mitchell. Having completed postgraduate studies in trumpet at the prestigious California Institute of the Arts, he was active as a conductor and freelance trumpeter. Ryan relocated to Glasgow, Scotland in September of 2013.

Ryan has conducted orchestras such as the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, RedNote, and has worked with great conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Plácido Domingo, Donald Runnicles, Ilan Volkov, and James MacMillan. Ryan also has a keen interest in contemporary music; a field in which he has commissioned over 100 works for himself or ensembles. Ryan is currently music director of the City of Carlisle Symphony Orchestra, St. James Orchestra (Paisley), the Clyde Ensemble, and the Scottish Chamber Singers, a choir that focuses on presenting premieres and pieces by female composers. Along with music, Ryan has a background in dance where he focused on ballet and currently focuses on contemporary choreography.

Tonight's Soloist – Kevin Kirs Vestege



Kevin Kirs Verstege (born in Stockholm, Sweden April 23rd, 1992) started playing the cello at age 12 in 2004. Kevin started playing privately with Magdolna Mokos. Later on, in 2006, he was accepted to the Junior Academy of Music in Stockholm, Sweden. He continued his studies with Vladimir Power and Ulrika Edström. During high school, Kevin worked intensely with a string quartet, which later on led to an offer to play a two week concert series in the Royal Stockholm Concert Hall performing works by Haydn, Mendelssohn and String trio works by Dohnany and Sibelius.

Kevin was involved in many different orchestral projects during his high school years at the Junior Academy. From big symphony projects to smaller string orchestras performing Brandenburg concertos and the Vivaldi Four Seasons with Violinist Hugo Ticciati. Kevin played with a small chamber orchestra, conducted by Mark Tatlow for several years. Playing works by Grieg, Elgar, Mendelssohn and Tüür on tour in Italy, Belgium and most of Sweden.

In 2010, Kevin attended the premier of the Swedish National Youth Orchestra, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen at the Baltic Sea Festival in Stockholm, Sweden. He continued playing with the orchestra in 2011 and in January 2012 toured the United States of America playing in venues such as Chicago Symphony Hall and Carnegie Hall.

In May 2011, Kevin was one of 5 string players to be awarded the prestigious 'Per&Ingrid Welin Scholarship for Young String players'. Kevin currently studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with cellist Aleksei Kiseliöv.

The Players - City of Carlisle Orchestra

1st Violins

Robert Charlesworth
Rachel Cosslett
Joan Masters
Sarah Wilson
David Humpston
Graham Barke
Catherine Swarbrick
Nancy McGee

2nd Violins

Susan Campbell
Kath Riley
Yana Palmer
David Howdle
Carolyn White
Zelda Robertson
Hilary Lawrence

Viola

Jon Buchan
Joy Hall
Sue Greenwood
Peter Wood

Double Bass

Jan Forlow
Emma Burt
Wendy Willis

Cello

Kenneth Wilson
Susan Beeby
Joanne Bertram
Lawrence Smith
Pam Przbyla
Joanne Crossley
Steven Thompson
Izzy Roberts
Janet Hornby

Oboe

Glenys Braithwaite
Anthea Lee

Flute

Lyn Young
Terry Mullett
Samantha Willis

Clarinets

Jane Bell
Ian Wilkinson

Bassoon

Ann Bishop
Eleanor Parkinson

Trombone

Graham Harris
Cliff Attwood
Simon Evans

Horn

Pam Harris
Julie Ratcliffe
Tim Barrett
David Logie

Trumpet

Gordon Kydd
Delyth Owen

Percussion

David Birkett

City of Carlisle Orchestra will next be in concert:

Saturday 4th July 2015

Programme of American music

Other Classical concerts coming up soon:

23rd March 2015, 7.30pm - Endymion Ensemble, Penrith Methodist Church
www.penrithmusicclub.com

19th March 2015 - Manus Noble(guitar), St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle
www.carlislemusicociety.weebly.com

13th June 2015, 7.30pm - Wordsworth Singers, St Thomas's Church, Kendal
www.wordsworthsingers.org.uk

18th March 2015, 7.30pm - The Doric String Quartet, Theatre by the Lake, Keswick
www.keswick-music-society.org.uk

And for the younger musician . . .

Carlisle Music Centre - There are fantastic opportunities for young musicians at the various groups run by Carlisle Music Centre from beginner level to advanced, we cater for string players, brass, woodwind and percussion in either an orchestra or wind band setting and meet at Trinity School, Carlisle. Contact Andrew Tugwell (Head of Centre) on 07789 616489 or Andrew.tugwell@cumbria.gov.uk

Carlisle Cathedral Choir - For boys and girls aged 8 and over who like singing. Contact jeremysuter@hotmail.com 01228 526646