

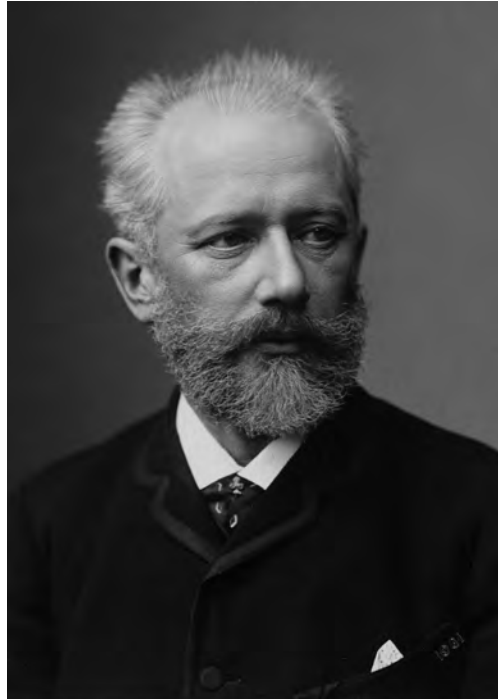
A portrait of conductor Alpesh Chauhan, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a black turtleneck. A pink pocket square is visible in his jacket. He is standing against a dark brick wall. The image is framed by a solid pink vertical bar on the left side.

CHANDOS

TCHAIKOVSKY

Suite No. 2 • Marche slave • The Storm
Entr'acte, Waltz, and Polonaise from 'Eugene Onegin'
Danse des Histrions from 'The Enchantress'

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Alpesh Chauhan



AKG Images, London / Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Bildarchiv / picturedesk.com

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky, c. 1883

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)

Suite No. 2, Op. 53 (1883)

39:26

in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur

(*Caractéristique*)

for Orchestra

Dedicated to Praskovya Tchaikovskaya

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| [1] | I Jeu de sons. Andantino un poco rubato – Animato –
Tempo I – Poco più animato – A tempo –
Allegro molto vivace – Più mosso – Tempo I – Più mosso –
Andantino | 11:07 |
| [2] | II Valse. Moderato. Tempo di Valse – Poco più mosso –
Tempo I – Tempo I molto sostenuto – Più mosso, vivace –
Tempo I – Poco più mosso – Tempo I | 6:27 |
| [3] | III Scherzo humoristique [burlesque]. Vivace, con spirito – [Trio] –
[Scherzo] | 5:07 |
| [4] | IV Rêves d'enfant. Andante molto sostenuto – L'istesso tempo –
L'istesso tempo – Lo stesso tempo, ma un poco capriccioso –
Poco più mosso – Ritardando ad libitum – Tempo I | 12:42 |
| [5] | V Danse baroque (Style Dargomysky). Vivacissimo – Prestissimo –
Meno mosso | 4:00 |

		Excerpts from ‘Eugene Onegin’, Op. 24 (1877 – 78)	12:48
		Lyric Scenes in Three Acts after Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin (1799 – 1837)	
[6]	13	Act II, Scene 1. Entr’acte and Waltz. Andante non tanto – Un poco stringendo – Tempo I – Tempo di Valse	7:47
[7]	19	Act III, Scene 1. Polonaise. Allegro moderato. Tempo di Polacca	5:00
[8]		Danse des Histrions from ‘The Enchantress’ (1885 – 87) (Dance of the Tumblers) Opera in Four Acts Allegro vivace assai	3:47
[9]		The Storm, Op. post. 76 (1864) in E minor • in e-Moll • en mi mineur Overture to the Drama (1859) by Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky (1823 – 1886) Andante misterioso – Allegro – Largo – Allegro vivo – Poco meno mosso – Allegro molto e con passione – Quasi Andante – Allegro vivo – Allegretto – Allegro vivo – Poco meno mosso – Allegro ma non tanto – Allegro molto	12:46

10

Marche slave, Op. 31 (1876)

in B flat minor • in b-Moll • en si bémol mineur

Moderato in modo di marcia funebre – L'istesso tempo –

Più mosso. Allegro – Allegro risoluto

9:56

TT 78:44

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

David Adams leader

Alpesh Chauhan



Martin Shields

Alpesh Chauhan, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra during the
BBC Proms, City Halls, Glasgow, 2020

Tchaikovsky: Orchestral Works, Volume 3

Introduction

The rainbow orchestral range of Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893) continues to dazzle in this third volume of Alpesh Chauhan's bracing survey with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. An early brooding tone poem, dances from operas well-known and unfamiliar, and an occasional piece frame an essential plea in favour of the second of the four orchestral suites which Tchaikovsky composed on holiday from the heavier weather of the symphony – on its own very original terms, as fine a masterpiece as any among his consistent hits.

The Storm, Op. post. 76

The Storm (1864) is not a Shakespearean *Tempest*, and not a masterpiece like Tchaikovsky's spellbinding 'symphonic fantasia' on that great play (CHSA 5300), but certainly a more than vaguely promising orchestral starting point. The playwright who inspired this student exercise is Alexander Ostrovsky (1823 – 1886), generally credited as the founding father of the Russian theatrical tradition. His tragedy *The Storm* (1859) has

largely survived elsewhere, through Janáček's searing operatic adaptation as *Kát'a Kabanová* (1919 – 21). The three key elements – the Volga setting of the provincial town in which the oppressed wife Katya yearns for something better; her love for the handsome but weak Boris, brutalised by his uncle as Katya is maltreated by her stepmother; and the storm that accompanies her guilt over her adultery – are here in Tchaikovsky's work, but not quite in that order. This is no 'fantasy overture', led, as Liszt's pioneering example dictated, by an idea; it is sonata form that leads the way.

After a brooding introduction, there is a beguiling arrangement of the folksong 'A young girl went walking', which Tchaikovsky would include among his arrangements for two pianos of Fifty Russian Folksongs (1868 – 69), and which was later used by Mussorgsky in *Khovanshchina* (1872 – 80), in which it is given to the Old Believer Marta, one of the few passages in the opera which the composer himself actually scored. Tchaikovsky introduces the melody on unison first horn and cellos, handing it over to the cor anglais which he would use so poignantly

for the love music in *Romeo and Juliet* (1869 – 80). The storm, which in Ostrovsky's play does not come until the fourth act and in Janáček's opera until the last, now breaks, offset by lyrical woodwind writing, perhaps indicative of Tchaikovsky's original intention to depict Katya's 'yearning for true happiness and love'. Transferred to strings, the theme would shortly become a framing device, but not the main melodic event, in the second movement of the First Symphony (1866 – 74). The development takes the form of a half-hearted fugue, then a bassoon intones a melancholy, very Russian melody, before a full recapitulation of storm and yearning material and an uncertain coda.

There are great ideas here, but it was not until *Romeo and Juliet* that Tchaikovsky would combine sonata form and drama successfully (and that only in the thoroughgoing 1880 revision, the form in which we know the work today).

Marche slave, Op. 31

The interest which Janáček demonstrated in Ostrovsky's *The Storm* formed part of his Slavophilia, as a Moravian Czech looking eastwards for inspiration – his last opera, *From the House of the Dead* (1927 – 28), is based on Dostoyevsky's prison memoirs.

Sometimes Russia returned the compliment. Tchaikovsky's *Marche slave* is an occasional piece composed in 1876 to support Montenegro and Serbia in their war against the Turks.

Clearly, like the many Russian volunteers who left to support their fellow Slavs, Tchaikovsky was personally distressed by the Turkish massacres of Balkan Christians, which prompted the war, and he was happy to oblige a request for a piece in a concert of the Russian Musical Society to raise funds for the Slavonic Charity Committee. He dashed it off in five days, engaging three Serbian folksongs. The first, or part of it, sounds oriental owing to the augmented fourth (D sharp in the context of A minor) and adds a strangeness to the funeral-march lament. After a *fortissimo* reiteration, light relief comes in the form of the jaunty, woodwind-scored contrast of the two other folk tunes, in the relative major (D flat against the home key of B flat minor), until the surprise appearance of the Tsarist national anthem – Russia to the rescue, but not before the funeral march peaks again. Darkness turns to light in the B flat major peroration, which is crowned by a madcap dash that is surely indebted to the final cavalcade of the Overture to Rossini's *William Tell*. No wonder the work had to

be repeated at its première, on 17 November 1876.

Entr'acte and Waltz, and Polonaise from 'Eugene Onegin'

Intimacy, on the other hand, was the keynote, at least in the first act, of Tchaikovsky's 'lyric scenes' based on Pushkin's verse-novel *Eugene Onegin*, begun the following year. We know that the composer was moved to act on a love-letter from a former student whom he barely knew, determined not to behave like the nineteen-year-old dandy Onegin who rejects the epistolary passion of the impressionable Tatyana on the neighbouring country estate. That did not end well; the marriage to hush up gossip about his homosexuality quickly ended in separation and an unsuccessful suicide attempt. The opera, though well-received at its première – students of the Moscow Conservatory playing young people of roughly the same age – became Tchaikovsky's best-loved opera after its much more grandiose revival at the peak of the composer's fame, from the 1880s onwards.

The exuberant waltz for Tatyana's name-day is preceded by a woodwind transformation of the wistful theme at the heart of her letter scene. The next stages of the plot actually unfold to the original vocal lines in the dance,

not least the minor strain to which local gossips irk Onegin to the point that he starts to flirt with Tatyana's sister, Olga, thereby precipitating the tragedy that will involve Olga's betrothed, his friend the poet Lensky.

The varying strains follow on from a similar wealth of 3/4 inspirations in Tchaikovsky's first ballet, *Swan Lake* (1875–76), which also included a Polonaise. The one in *Eugene Onegin* heralds the much grander society in St Petersburg where, years later, Tatyana moves as the wife of a general, and where Onegin arrives, after years as an outcast abroad, to fall in love with her, only too late. The opening fanfares become a figure of fate at the beginning of the near-contemporary Fourth Symphony (1877–78), which suggests that the composer has that in mind here, too.

Orchestral Suite No. 2, Op. 53

After the fallout from the disastrous marriage, and time spent in self-imposed exile in western Europe, Tchaikovsky clearly needed a break from such a strenuously autobiographical work as the Fourth Symphony. One solution was to adopt the form of the orchestral suite, which would allow for an unusual number and order of movements, in different styles if necessary.

There could also be a greater ‘play of sounds’, as the first movement of the Second Suite is called, although the amazing scherzo of the Fourth Symphony, in which *pizzicato* strings are followed by distinct ideas for wind and brass, started the pattern, and the two later ballets, *The Sleeping Beauty* (1888–89) and *The Nutcracker* (1891–92), would give it even greater scope. There had already been a free range of contrasts in the five-movement Third Symphony (1875), the first movement in itself parading a funeral march, court ceremonials, an Odette-like oboe solo a la *Swan Lake*, and a peasant gopak.

The First Suite, of 1878–79, has baroque and classical credentials – a large-scale fugue, a very eighteenth-century gavotte. If anything, the Second, of 1883, which Tchaikovsky orchestrated in the bosom of his sister Sasha’s family in the countryside, ranges more widely. The first movement, in classical sonata form, could belong at the very least to a sinfonietta; the ‘play’ (‘jeu’) is not so much of sounds (‘sons’), though the orchestration is neatly shared between strings and woodwind, as of melodies – five in all, two in the framing *Andantino*, three more in the *Allegro molto vivace* that forms the core of the movement. The development is another fugue, treating the liveliest theme to clean

lines that tumble into its fuller statement by way of recapitulation.

The ‘Valse’ is tender and intimate, the woodwind scoring this time prophetic of the later ballets; but the first true original in the sequence of movements is the *Scherzo humoristique*, and not just because of the optional parts for four accordions (surprisingly, Svetlanov’s recording, from the land which boasts whole orchestras of squeezeboxes, does without them). The two-chord effect is intimated, harmonica-like, by the wind, before an extended build-up towards the climax – Stravinsky may have taken note in *Pétrouchka* (1910–11). There is also a forerunner of one of the street ditties which Stravinsky uses for the St Petersburg Shrovetide fair in Diaghilev’s ballet, boldly introduced by horns, but this is Tchaikovsky’s own invention.

Subtly groundbreaking, what passes as a slow movement foreshadows Debussy by making sure that none of the delectable ideas recurs in exactly the same form. The ‘Rêves d’enfant’ (Childhood Dreams) moves from happy reverie to succumbing to sleep in the writhing of muted strings, from enchantments to brief terror, suggestions that anticipate the magic of *The Nutcracker*. As finale, ‘Danse baroque’ throws us off the

scent; the subtitle, ‘Wild Dance in imitation of Dargomyzhsky’, makes clear homage to that composer’s *Kazachok* (1864), or Cossack Dance, variations on a folk-like dance, which also recall Glinka’s *Kamarinskaya* (1848), of which Tchaikovsky stated that the whole of Russian music was in it ‘as the oak is in the acorn’.

Danse des Histrions from ‘The Enchantress’

Of all Tchaikovsky’s mature operas, *The Enchantress* (*Charodeyka*, 1885 – 87) remains the least often performed – partly because its source is less well known than any of the others, and above all because that source is a ramshackle melodrama by Ippolit Shpazhinsky (1848 – 1917). As always, the composer needed an inspirational prompt, which he found in the character of the protagonist – like Carmen a ‘loose woman’ (as he put it) with a moral power and beauty at her core – and in a key scene, in which she falls in love with the young Prince Yuri.

None of this has got far off the ground, though, in the first-act finale, which includes a ‘Dance of the Tumblers’, or *skomorokhi* – there is also one in Tchaikovsky’s earlier incidental music for Ostrovsky’s ‘spring fairy tale’ *The Snow Maiden* (1873). The agility of the entertainers embraces piquant solos

for clarinet and flute; the overall mood is not dissimilar to the final dance of the Second Suite, though less wide-ranging in its contrasts.

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Formed in 1935, the **BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra** has been based at Glasgow’s City Halls since 2006. It has a rich history of performing, broadcasting, and recording across Scotland and the rest of the UK, and of touring overseas, most recently to South Korea, Japan, South America, China, and India. Its huge range of repertoire has developed under its Chief Conductors, who include Osmo Vänskä, Ilan Volkov (currently Creative Partner), Sir Donald Runnicles (now Conductor Emeritus), Thomas Dausgaard, and, since September 2022, Ryan Wigglesworth. It has long been a champion of new music, not least through Tectonics, its annual festival of the new and experimental, and it has established strong links with local communities through its learning and engagement programmes, led by Lucy Drever, its Associate Artist. It maintains a close association with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, in Glasgow, working across a variety of disciplines with conductors, composers, soloists, and orchestral players. The

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra maintains a busy schedule of broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio Scotland, and BBC Sounds, as well as BBC television and BBC iPlayer. It appears regularly at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh International Festival and is a recipient of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award for Ensemble and of four *Gramophone* Awards. www.bbc.co.uk/bbcso

Alpesh Chauhan OBE was born in Birmingham and studied cello under Eduardo Vassallo, at the Royal Northern College of Music, in Manchester, before pursuing the prestigious Master's Conducting Course. He has studied with Stanislaw Skrowaczewski and as Assistant Conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, from 2014 to 2016, was mentored by Andris Nelsons and Edward Gardner. Following his outstanding début in 2015, he was appointed Principal Conductor of Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini, in Parma, and performed much of the great symphonic repertoire, including a complete cycle of Brahms's symphonies. Current posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker and Music Director of Birmingham Opera Company. He appears as guest conductor with the London Philharmonic

Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre national d'Île de France, Orchestre national de Lille, Orchestre national Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, Belgian National Orchestra, Philzuid, Orchestra dell'Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Malmö Symfoniorkester, Oslo Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, and Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, among others, and enjoys collaborations with soloists such as Karen Cargill, Colin Currie, Stefan Dohr, Veronika Eberle, James Ehnes, Pablo Ferrández, Alban Gerhardt, Ilya Gringolts, Benjamin Grosvenor, Brendan Gunnell, Hilary Hahn, Sir Stephen Hough, Zakir Hussain, Pavel Kolesnikov, Johannes Moser, Beatrice Rana, Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider, and Frank Peter Zimmermann. A keen advocate of music education for young people, he is a patron of Awards for Young Musicians, a UK charity supporting musically talented young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. He has worked with the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland and the symphony orchestras of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the Royal Northern College of Music, and was the conductor of the 2015

BBC Ten Pieces film which brought the world of classical music into secondary schools across the UK and received a BAFTA award. Following the success of the 2019 production by Birmingham Opera Company of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* he was declared Newcomer of the

Year in the 2021 International Opera Awards. In 2022 Alpesh Chauhan was named 'Miglior Direttore' by the Italian National Association of Music Critics for concerts given across Italy in 2021, and in January 2022 received an OBE for Services to the Arts in the Queen's New Year Honours.

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BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra/Chauhan

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PYOTR IL'YICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840 – 1893)

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David Adams leader
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