

NAXOS

TCHAIKOVSKY

The Queen of Spades • Voyevoda

Orchestral Suites

(arr. Peter Breiner)



**New Zealand
Symphony Orchestra • Peter Breiner**

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) The Queen of Spades • Voyevoda (Orchestral Suites arranged by Peter Breiner)

It is possibly for reasons of language that only two of Tchaikovsky's operas have found a continuing place in international operatic repertoire. *Yevgeny Onegin* (Eugene Onegin) and *Pikovaya Dama* (The Queen of Spades), both based on Pushkin, are more or less familiar to international audiences, while other operas by Tchaikovsky appear only intermittently in major opera houses. Tchaikovsky left ten completed operas, one in two versions. Peter Breiner's orchestral arrangements of excerpts from two of these operas will do something towards bringing their music into the concert hall to a new audience.

The three-act opera *The Queen of Spades* was completed in 1890 and first staged in the same year at the Mariinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. Based on Pushkin, the libretto was by Tchaikovsky's brother Modest.

In the Summer Garden in St Petersburg friends of Hermann, a young army officer, discuss his strange behaviour, how he watches others gambling, but never takes part. Hermann, entering with Count Tomsy, explains his sadness by his love for a girl whose name he does not know. Prince Yeletsky joins them and is congratulated on his engagement, but Hermann is horrified to find that Yeletsky's betrothed is the girl with whom he has fallen in love, Lisa, grand-daughter of the old Countess. Count Tomsy tells his friends the story of the Countess and why she never gambles. When she was young in Paris, she had been given the secret of winning at cards and had used this to recoup her fortunes. She has been, thereafter, pledged never to play again, and, having revealed her secret to two others, is to die at the hands of the third to whom she confides it. Hermann is agitated at the story, and now left alone resolves to win the hand of Lisa from Prince Yeletsky by means of the Countess's secret.

In Lisa's room at the country house where she and the old Countess live, she and Pauline, with their friends, entertain one another with songs. They are told to restrain themselves by the Governess, sent to them by the Countess. On her balcony, now alone, Lisa has doubts about her betrothal, remembering the young officer she had seen in the park who had looked at her with such intensity. Hermann appears below and the two declare their love for each other,

their meeting interrupted by the Countess telling Lisa to go to bed.

The second act is set at a ball. Yeletsky sings to Lisa of his love for her. Hermann is teased by his friends, who suggest that he will be the third man, the one to learn the secret of the Countess. The Master of Ceremonies introduces a pastoral interlude and Lisa tells Hermann how to reach the Countess's room. There, the same evening, the Countess regrets modern fashions, remembering the past. Hermann breaks in, demanding to learn her secret of winning and threatening her with his revolver. The Countess dies and Lisa, disturbed by the noise, comes in to find that Hermann has apparently used her to learn of the gambler's secret.

In the third act, at his army quarters, Hermann is distraught. The ghost of the Countess appears to him and tells him the secret, three, seven, ace. By the side of the Winter Canal Lisa waits for Hermann, who appears, as the clock strikes midnight. Their meeting is interrupted, however, when Hermann insists on leaving at once for the gaming-house, where he may use what he has learned. Lisa realises Hermann's sole obsession and throws herself into the river. In the gaming-house Hermann plays against Yeletsky, staking everything on the last of the three cards, the expected ace. Instead it is the queen of spades that appears, seeming to look at him with the face of the Countess. In final madness he kills himself.

[1] The first excerpt is based on Tomsy's ballad in the first act, when he tells the story of the Countess. [2] It is followed by a version of Hermann's aria in the first act, when he sings of his love for Lisa, whose name he does not yet know, amazing his interlocutors Chekalinsky, addicted to gambling, and Surin, an army officer. [3] The second scene, in Lisa's room, provides the basis of the third excerpt, when Paulina sings a sad song and Lisa's friends try to cheer her up with a Russian clapping-song. [4] The fourth excerpt is taken from the third act, where Lisa waits for Hermann. [5] The final scene, in a gambling house, has Tomsy sing a song of love, applauded by the company, who join in a chorus, elements of the sixth excerpt. [6] The sixth extract is based on the final scene of the opera, with Hermann's aria,

and the concluding chorus, praying for his soul. [7] Elements of the end of the first act, with its love scene in Lisa's room, when she admits to Hermann her love for him, form the final orchestral arrangement.

The first of Tchaikovsky's operas was *Voyevoda* (The Provincial Governor), based on Ostrovsky's comedy *Son na Volge* (A Volga Dream), written in 1867-68, its libretto originally the work of Ostrovsky and the composer, until Ostrovsky withdrew from the enterprise, leaving Tchaikovsky to reduce the opera from four to three acts, removing the most lively and interesting elements and characters, if we are to accept Tchaikovsky's brother Modest's judgement. After Tchaikovsky's training at Anton Rubinstein's St Petersburg Conservatory, where he had been among the first graduating class in 1866, he had been appointed by Nikolay Rubinstein to teach harmony at the parallel institution in Moscow. Bearing in mind Tchaikovsky's relative lack of experience, it is not surprising that the new opera was a failure. The plot of Ostrovsky's play was far too diffuse to serve as the basis of an opera, and the necessary abridgement of the work made the plot uneventful. The work was staged at the Bolshoy Theatre in 1869 and given five performances before it was withdrawn. Tchaikovsky finally destroyed it, having made use of elements from the score in his ballet *Swan Lake* and in the opera *Oprichnik* in the early 1870s. *Voyevoda* was reconstructed in 1937 by Sergey Popov, using surviving sketches and orchestral and choral parts, and again in 1949 by Pavel Lamm, with the composers Visarion Shebalin and Yuri Kochurov, to a newly devised libretto.

The opera is set in the mid-seventeenth century in a town on the Volga. The opening scene is the garden of Dyuzhoy, a rich merchant. His daughter Praskovya is to marry Shaligin, the Voyevoda; her nurse Nedviga disapproves, while her sister Mariya is impatient for her own marriage and sings a tale of a girl, imprisoned in a tower, but, as she improvises in a new ending, united with her lover, while her parents and guards sleep. Mariya's lover Bastryukov tries to gain admittance, serenades her and is accepted as her future husband, although the opposition of his enemy, the Voyevoda, is anticipated. They pledge fidelity, but are interrupted by the arrival of the Voyevoda, with Dyuzhoy and his wife, with the Jester. Bastryukov hides, while the Voyevoda demands to see his future wife again, a breach of

convention. Mariya rushes in, after an encounter in the bushes with the Jester, who has left the company when no drink came his way. The Voyevoda immediately finds her more acceptable as a wife than her sister, and Dyuzhoy agrees to allow him to marry her. When they have all gone, Bastryukov emerges and, betrayed by the Jester, is only protected from arrest by his servants. The act ends with all determined to achieve their own aims.

The second act opens in the entrance hall of Bastryukov's house. He is sad at the loss of his beloved Mariya. Dubrovin enters. He has been forced to become a fugitive, after the Voyevoda took his wife and ruined him and will now help Bastryukov. It seems that the Voyevoda is to leave the next day on a pilgrimage and his wife, Olyona, and Mariya will wait in the garden for rescue. The scene changes to the Voyevoda's house. Mariya sings of a girl imprisoned and of a nightingale, and freedom. She is joined by Olyona, who explains her own predicament; they are to await rescue the following night.

In the third act, set at night in a courtyard, Bastryukov and Dubrovin have made the guards drunk and prepare to carry out their plan. They are joined by Mariya and Olyona, the latter united once more with Dubrovin. They are interrupted by the unexpected return of the Voyevoda, who threatens death and drags Mariya away. Matters are resolved by a *deus ex machina* in the person of a new Voyevoda, who appears in the nick of time, ensuring a happy ending for the lovers.

[8] The first excerpt orchestrated is taken partly from the opening of the second act, with elements drawn from the preceding scene. [9] The second is Bastryukov's serenade of Mariya in the first act. [10] This is followed by the duet between Dubrovin and Olyona in the third act, when they foresee their future happiness together. [11] The third act provides the fourth excerpt with Dubrovin's opening aria in which he reveals his plan to rescue Olyona and wonders whether she still loves him. [12] The fifth excerpt is taken from the opening of the second scene of the second act, when maidens dance around Mariya, now a prisoner of the Voyevoda. [13] The series of extracts ends with an orchestration based on the *Overture*, which establishes the Russian nature of the story to come.

Keith Anderson

Peter Breiner

Conductor • Pianist • Arranger • Composer

Peter Breiner is one of the world's most recorded musicians, with over 180 CDs released and record numbers sold (1.5 million reached by 2008 alone), including both albums and online streams. A conductor, pianist, arranger and composer, he has conducted, often doubling as a pianist, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, the Vienna Mozart Orchestra, the Hungarian State Radio Orchestra, the Nicolaus Esterházy Orchestra, Budapest, the Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Ukrainian State Symphony Orchestra, the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra, the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Capella Istropolitana, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestra National de Lille, France, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, among many others.

Some of his most acclaimed recordings include *Beatles Go Baroque* [Naxos 8.555010] (over a quarter of a million CDs sold worldwide) and *Elvis Goes Baroque* [Naxos 8.990054] which, together with *Christmas Goes Baroque I and II* [Naxos 8.550301 and 8.550670], represents his commercially most successful Baroque arrangements. His arrangements of national anthems of all participating countries were used during the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004 and illegally in Beijing in 2008. He recorded his own arrangements of the anthems of the participating countries of the Rugby World Cup 2011. Currently under preparation is a huge Transmedia project consisting of audio recording, several interactive videos, and audience-involvement platforms. It is based on Peter Breiner's own 85 minute orchestral piece *Slovak Dances, Nasty and Nice*, which will be recorded by a world renowned orchestra and pull together all the latest trends in technology and communication across the world today.

The world première recording for Naxos of Breiner's own arrangements of Janáček's *Six Operatic Suites* [Naxos 8.570555 and 56] with him conducting the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra earned tremendous acclaim, *Gramophone* declaring it a "splendid disc conducted with passion and sympathetic understanding. The *Chicago Tribune* added: "Breiner fills the void with beautifully crafted symphonic suites based on the music of *Jenůfa*".

Peter Breiner's compositions and arrangements have been played in concerts worldwide. Films that include his musical scores have enjoyed very wide international exposure, including *Anne of Green Gables*, Timothy Findley's *Piano Man's Daughter*, produced by Whoopi Goldberg, and *The Magic Flute*. His music has been featured many times on the most popular TV shows, including the CBC television show *Wind at My Back* and *Seasons of Love*.

Future projects include a tour of *An Evening of Michel Legrand* across Germany and Europe combining Breiner's own arrangements of the music of Legrand and of Debussy; Valentines' Day programmes in Hong Kong and the United States; further worldwide tours and concert programmes of his acclaimed arrangements, collaborating with such esteemed artists and ensembles as Giora Feidmann, Gitanes Blondes, Takako Nishizaki and his trio *Triango* whose latest album was released in the fall of 2011.

Peter Breiner began to study the piano in early childhood (1961) and his exceptional artistry led to his early acceptance at the Conservatory in Košice in 1971. He studied piano with L. Kojanova and composition with J. Podprocky, as well as conducting and percussion. In 1975–1981 he studied composition at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava with Prof. Alexander Moyzes, one of the most significant figures in modern Slovak music. Peter Breiner lived in Toronto, Canada, from 1992 to 2007, when he moved to New York.

Proficient in seven languages, Breiner has hosted various TV and radio programmes about music. In 1993 he was a co-host and music director of the most popular TV talk show in Slovakia, attracting over two million viewers in a country with a population of 5.5 million. He has his own column in one of Slovakia's most influential weekly newspapers, while his first book *Maple Leaves* came out in April 1998 and immediately became a No. 1 non-fiction national bestseller.

New Zealand Symphony Orchestra

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra is the country's national full size, full-time professional orchestra and one of the world's oldest national symphony orchestras, in existence since 1946. The orchestra is continually on the road, touring as many as a hundred symphonic concerts as well as dozens of dedicated concerts for children and small communities each year. While they present all their main programmes in Auckland and Wellington, they tour New Zealand extensively. In 2010, the NZSO completed the most prestigious and successful international tour in their history, appearing at Lucerne's KKL, Geneva's Victoria Hall, the Shanghai World Expo and Vienna's Musikverein. Earlier tours have featured concerts at the BBC Proms, the Snape Maltings in England and the Aichi World Expo in Japan. Led by Music Director Pietari Inkinen, the NZSO has won consistent praise in the press for its performances, both in concerts and recordings. The NZSO has an extensive catalogue of CD recordings, mostly on the Naxos label. More than one million of these CDs have been sold internationally in the past decade. www.nzso.co.nz



Patrycja Szwarzynska



Photo of Peter Breiner by Gulnara Samoilova

Slovak-born composer and conductor Peter Breiner has received considerable inter-national acclaim for his adaptations, and his Tchaikovsky arrangements are particularly impressive examples of his art. He has already arranged *The Seasons* (8.553510) and *Songs* (8.553332) but here he turns to opera. With deftness and subtlety he has taken motifs from Tchaikovsky's first opera *Voyevoda* to craft six richly scored movements, two of which have rôles for solo strings. *The Queen of Spades* was composed in 1890 and Breiner's selections fully explore the music's romance and drama in their new form.

**Pyotr Il'yich
TCHAIKOVSKY**
(1840–1893)

Orchestral Suites arranged by Peter Breiner

| The Queen of Spades | | 33:15 | Voyevoda | | 32:59 |
|----------------------------|---|--------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|
| 1 | Tomsky's Ballad: Once upon a time in Versailles | 3:40 | 8 | Mariya Vlasheva: Guards were put upon the door | 8:19 |
| 2 | Hermann's Arioso: The name of her I do not know | 4:49 | 9 | Bastryukov's Aria: Burn faster, red skies * | 4:06 |
| 3 | Russian Dance and Romance | 6:11 | 10 | Olyona and Dubrovin: Trust me, my dear | 4:27 |
| 4 | Lisa's Arioso: Night or day, 'tis only him | 4:35 | 11 | Dubrovin's Aria: Silent is the heart in my tortured breast ** | 4:20 |
| 5 | Tomsky's Song and Gamblers' Chorus: They met on an unhappy day | 3:28 | 12 | Dance of the Hay Girls | 5:34 |
| 6 | Hermann's Aria and Finale: You today, me tomorrow | 6:03 | 13 | Overture/Finale | 6:13 |
| 7 | Hermann: Beauty! Goddess! | 4:29 | *Vesa-Matti Leppänen, Violin | | |
| | | | **Andrew Joyce, Cello | | |



**New Zealand Symphony Orchestra
Peter Breiner**

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