



RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra
Gerard Schwarz

Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908)

Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 1 • Symphony No. 3 in C major, Op. 32

Nikolay Andreyevich Rimsky-Korsakov originally intended a naval career, following the example of his elder brother. He showed some musical ability even as a very small child, but at the age of fourteen entered the Naval Cadet College in St Petersburg in pursuit of a more immediately attractive ambition. The city, in any case, offered musical opportunities. He continued piano lessons, but, more important than this, he was able to enjoy the opera and attend his first concerts.

It was in 1861, the year before he completed his course at the Naval College, that Rimsky-Korsakov met Balakirev, a musician who was to become an important influence on him, as he was on the young army officers Mussorgsky and Cui, who already formed part of his circle, later joined by Borodin. The meeting had a far-reaching effect on Rimsky-Korsakov's career, although in 1862 he set sail as a midshipman on a cruise that was to keep him away from Russia for the next two and a half years.

On his return in 1865 Rimsky-Korsakov fell again under the influence of Balakirev. On shore there was more time for music and the encouragement he needed for a serious application to music that resulted in compositions in which he showed his early ability as an orchestrator and his deftness in the use of Russian themes, a gift that Balakirev did much to encourage as part of his campaign to create a truly Russian form of music. Nevertheless, as Rimsky-Korsakov himself soon realised, Balakirev lacked the necessary technique of a composer, justifying Anton Rubinstein's taunts of amateurism. In spite of his own perceived deficiencies in this respect, in 1871 he took a position as professor of instrumentation and composition at St Petersburg Conservatory and the following year resigned his commission in the navy, to become a civilian Inspector of Naval Bands, a position created for him through personal and family influence.

Rimsky-Korsakov's subsequent career was a distinguished one. Understanding the need for a sure command of compositional techniques, harmony,

counterpoint and orchestration, he set to work to make good these defects in his own musical formation with remarkable success. This led him, as the only real professional of the nationalist group dominated by Balakirev, to undertake the completion and, often, the orchestration of works left unfinished by other composers of the new Russian school.

As early as 1869 Dargomizhsky had left him the task of completing the opera *The Stone Guest*. Twenty years later he was to perform similar tasks for the music of Mussorgsky and for Borodin, both of whom had left much undone at the time of their deaths. Relations with Balakirev were not always easy and Rimsky-Korsakov, who had become increasingly intolerant of the former's obligatory and dogmatic interference in the work of others, was to become associated with Belyayev and his schemes for the publication of new Russian music, a connection that Balakirev could only see as disloyalty. There were other influences on his composition, particularly with his first hearing of Wagner's *Ring* in 1889 and consequent renewed attention to opera, after a brief period of depression and silence, the result of illness and death in his family.

Rimsky-Korsakov was involved in the disturbances of 1905, when he sided with the Conservatory students, joining with some colleagues in a public demand for political reform, an action that brought his dismissal from the institution, to which he was able to return when his pupil and friend Glazunov became director the following year. He died in 1908.

César Cui took the opportunity of the appearance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *First Symphony*, to declare it the first Russian symphony, a deliberate snub to Rubinstein, whose earlier symphonies had won a very much wider international audience by this time. Rimsky-Korsakov had undertaken the composition of a symphony while at the Cadet School and was encouraged to continue by Balakirev, whom he first met in November 1861. The following winter and spring he tackled the *Scherzo* and

Finale. The slow movement was eventually written on board ship off Gravesend, where his naval duties had taken him. For this movement he made use of a folk-song *Pro Tatarski Polon* (On the Tatar Captivity), a theme provided by Balakirev. The *Trio* of the *Scherzo* movement was added in the autumn of 1865 and the symphony, then in its original key of E flat minor, was performed under Balakirev at one of the concerts of the Free Music School in St Petersburg, an institution established largely in opposition to Rubinstein's professional, and therefore foreign, Conservatory. Twenty years later, in the spring of 1884, Rimsky-Korsakov revised and re-orchestrated the work, transposing it into the more manageable key of E minor. The symphony opens with a slow introduction, with the main theme of the following *Allegro* making partial use of a Russian theme. The slow movement proclaims its folk-song origin, a contrast with the following *Scherzo*. Although subjected to later revision and rewriting, it is clear that the seventeen-year-old midshipman boasted a remarkable natural talent, justifying the early enthusiasm of Balakirev, if not the jibes against Rubinstein of the critic Cui.

Rimsky-Korsakov's *Second Symphony*, completed in 1868, he later preferred to consider a symphonic suite, based, as it is, on the story of Antares by the pseudonymous Baron Brambeus. He started his *Symphony No. 3 in C major* in 1873, making use of a *Scherzo* written in 1863 and a *Trio* composed during his honeymoon in Italy in 1872. In his reminiscences he recalled the difficulty he found in the composition of the first and third movements, which he modestly attributed to a lack of technique, as he strove to introduce more and more counterpoint into the texture of the work. He finished the symphony on 18th February 1874, but performance in St Petersburg was

greeted without any great interest. The newly acquired technical competence was praised with unusual warmth by César Cui, but seemed to others too academic, a criticism echoed by Tchaikovsky after a Moscow performance under Nikolay Rubinstein. He revised the symphony completely in 1886, two years after his first revision of the *First Symphony*.

The symphony starts with a slow introduction in which the theme of the following *Allegro* appears. The strong first subject leads to a much gentler second subject and a central development that introduces further drama, before the triumphant recapitulation, melting into the transposed second subject, leading to a final hushed ending. The *Scherzo*, in its re-orchestrated form, continues to show Rimsky-Korsakov's command of instrumentation, acquired by study and by his experience with naval bands. It seemed to him that the unusual 5/4 metre of this second movement might have deterred conductors undertaking performance of the whole symphony. It offers music of great rhythmic vitality and energy and masterly orchestral colouring, to which the *Trio* provides romantic melodic contrast. The French horn introduces the third movement *Andante*, followed by other wind instruments and then the strings. The movement increases in tension to a dynamic climax, from which the clarinet leads to a further strongly romantic statement of the principal thematic material. The final *Allegro con spirito* brings about an element of cyclic unity in its re-use of the principal themes of the earlier movements, achieved with a technical assurance that is always evident and in a musical language of thoroughly Russian cast.

Keith Anderson

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra



Photo: Kai Bienert

The Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra (Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin, RSB) dates back to the beginnings of music broadcasting in 1923. The orchestra's chief conductors, including Sergiu Celibidache, Eugen Jochum and Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, have all helped to create the ensemble's exceptional sound. Since its foundation, important composers such as Sergey Prokofiev, Richard Strauss and Igor Stravinsky have conducted the orchestra as well as promising young conductors such as Andris Nelsons, Vasily Petrenko, Jakub Hrůša and Lahav Shani. Alongside regular tours of Asia the orchestra also appears at German and European festivals. Since completing the ten-part Wagner cycle in 2013 the orchestra has secured its place among Europe's top concert orchestras. From 2002 to 2015 Marek Janowski was chief conductor and artistic director of the RSB. Vladimir Jurowski has been named as his successor, starting in the 2017-18 season. The RSB is part of the Rundfunk Orchester und Chöre GmbH Berlin (roc berlin).

Gerard Schwarz



Photo: All-Star Orchestra

Internationally recognized for his moving performances, innovative programming and extensive catalogue of recordings, American conductor Gerard Schwarz serves as Music Director of The All-Star Orchestra and the Eastern Music Festival and is Conductor Laureate of the Seattle Symphony. His latest project, The All-Star Orchestra, features a handpicked ensemble of star players from America's leading orchestras coming together for an eight episode Season 1 and four episode Season 2 American Public Television series designed to encourage a greater understanding and enjoyment of classical music. The series has been awarded three Emmys and an ASCAP Award and both seasons are now released by Naxos on DVD. Gerard Schwarz's considerable discography of over 350 albums showcases his collaborations with some of the world's greatest orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, the London Symphony, Berlin Radio Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Tokyo Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, New York Chamber Symphony and the Seattle Symphony among others. Schwarz began his professional career as co-principal trumpet of the New York Philharmonic and has held leadership positions with the Mostly Mozart Festival, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the New York Chamber Symphony. As a guest conductor of both opera and symphony, he has worked with many of the world's finest orchestras and opera companies. Schwarz, a renowned interpreter of nineteenth-century German, Austrian and Russian repertoire, in addition to his noted work with contemporary American composers, completed his final season as music director of the Seattle Symphony in 2011 after an acclaimed 26 years, a period of dramatic artistic growth for the ensemble. In his nearly five decades as a respected classical musician and conductor, Schwarz has received hundreds of honours and accolades including Emmy Awards, GRAMMY® nominations, ASCAP Awards and the Ditson Conductor's Award. He was the first American named Conductor of the Year by *Musical America* and has received numerous honorary doctorates. The City of Seattle has named the street alongside the Benaroya Hall "Gerard Schwarz Place".

Begun when he was a seventeen-year-old naval cadet, Rimsky-Korsakov's *Symphony No. 1* was hailed by the nationalist group 'The Five' as the first truly Russian symphony, in contrast with the German-influenced music of Anton Rubinstein. With its use of Russian folk-songs, this is a work of remarkable natural talent, justifying the early enthusiasm of Balakirev. *Symphony No. 3*, cast in a thoroughly Russian musical language, is notable not only for its significantly enhanced technical competence but for its great rhythmic vitality and subtle orchestration.

Nikolay Andreyevich
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV
(1844-1908)

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Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Op. 1 **25:37**

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|-------------------------|------|
| ❶ Largo assai – Allegro | 7:44 |
| ❷ Andante tranquillo | 7:14 |
| ❸ Scherzo: Vivace | 4:39 |
| ❹ Allegro assai | 6:00 |

Symphony No. 3 in C major, Op. 32 **32:52**

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|----------------------------|-------|
| ❺ Moderato assai – Allegro | 13:42 |
| ❻ Scherzo: Vivo | 6:12 |
| ❼ Andante | 6:55 |
| ❽ Allegro con spirito | 6:03 |

Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra
Gerard Schwarz

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Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

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